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ECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL **Internet Policy & Procedure**

The use of the Internet is now an essential and commonplace tool for most Employees. Those who use the internet have a responsibility to do so in a professional manner. To assist with this, we are issuing the following guidelines which you are asked to read and comply with:

The Council reserves the right to access and monitor any or all areas of any computer and computer software systems which it owns (including email boxes and messages and telephone calls) from time to time for business reasons and training purposes. You should not therefore assume that any information held on the computer is private and confidential to you.

Inappropriate use

You must not send internally or externally or obtain material (whether in the form of text or images) which is libelous or defamatory, illegal, obscene, sexually explicit, bullying, discriminatory or disparaging of others particularly in respect of their race, national origins, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs.

You are reminded that material that you find acceptable might be offensive to others. It is recommended that you take care and give sufficient thought to what you send. Messages can be misconstrued and should not become a substitute for "one to one" conversations. You should not send humorous material to business contacts. It can frequently be misunderstood or cause offence. In particular, the Council recommends that criticisms or complaints are not dealt with by email.

Examples of inappropriate use include, but are not limited to:

1. Sending, receiving, downloading or displaying or disseminating material that insults causes offence or harasses others.
2. Accessing pornographic, racist or other inappropriate or unlawful material.

3. Engaging in on-line chat rooms, on-line gambling sites, social networking sites or blogging.
4. Forwarding electronic chain letters or similar material.
5. Downloading or disseminating copyright materials.
6. Transmitting confidential information about the Council or its customers externally and not in the course of the Council's business.
7. Downloading or playing computer games.
8. Copying or downloading software.

Serious instances of inappropriate use may be considered gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

Internet access

Internet access is granted for business reasons only during working hours. Usage is limited to work related activities. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material considered to be offensive. Anyone found to have used the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or non-related employment issues, are liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

Under no circumstances must users download files without the consent of the Clerk.

If you wish to use the Internet out of office hours for personal purposes, please contact the Clerk who will be able to grant you access and explain how to use this facility, if appropriate.

Anyone believed to have been visiting pornographic sites, downloading or circulating pornographic material will be subject to disciplinary action. Offences of this nature may be considered gross misconduct and lead to your dismissal, and if necessary, the police will be informed.

Please note that the main servers maintain a record of Internet access by user and these will be monitored as necessary and results forwarded to the Clerk and the police, if appropriate.

Unauthorised Use of Internet, Email and Social Networking Sites

- 1 Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the Internet, Email and Social Networking Sites may result in formal disciplinary action which could include dismissal.
- 2 The Council will not tolerate the use of E-Mail, Internet or any Social Networking Site by Employees for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including: -
 - I. Any messages produced by Employees, either during or outside of normal working hours, that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment to colleagues, our business or anyone associated with the business.
 - II. Personal use during working hours (e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters)
 - III. On-line gambling.
 - IV. Accessing or transmitting pornography.
 - V. Transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user.
 - VI. Posting confidential information about other Employees, the Council or its customers or suppliers.
 - VII. Posting any comments, opinions, views or remarks, either during or outside of normal working hours, which could be considered detrimental to the Council, its Employees, customers, suppliers or anyone else connected to the business, or bring the Council into disrepute.

Please note, breaching these procedures will constitute an act of Gross Misconduct. Consequently, anyone who is accused of breaching these procedures will be subjected to a Formal Disciplinary Investigation and may be dismissed if found guilty.