

PADDOCK WOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Email Usage Policy

Introductory Note

The attached document is basically an Advice Note for Councillors setting down what is seen as good practice in the use of the e-mailing facility as far as Town Council matters are concerned.

In drawing up this advice, it is acknowledged that Councillors' own private e-mail accounts cannot be monitored in any way. There are however certain protocols which should be observed such as, for example, contact with the press.

It should be noted also that despite extensive enquiries no precedent has been found amongst other Town and Parish Councils for a defined e-mail usage policy for Councillors. Council staff who have access to council-owned computers can however be subjected to a strictly defined e-mail policy.

EMAIL USAGE POLICY

This document outlines the protocol which Councillors are recommended to follow when using email correspondence in the course of discharging their duties and responsibilities as Town Councillors. **It is recommended that councillors set up a dedicated email address for their council work.**

In the interest of good practice Councillors should refrain from creating unnecessary e-mail congestion by sending messages of a trivial nature to the Council's e-mail address or by copying e-mails to persons who do not need to see them.

Councillors should be aware that they must never forward information of a confidential nature to outside parties.

Councillors are reminded that Standing Order 21 states that written statements or written articles (which of course includes e-mail messages) to the press should be in accordance with the Council's Press and Media Policy. Councillors should bear in mind at all times that decisions of the Council are binding on all members and that comments should be confined to matters on which the Council has reached agreement. More details concerning this will be found in the Council's policy document relating to contact with the press and other media.

One aspect to be borne in mind is that Councillors should always consider how they would feel if an email message originating from them were to be read out and used as evidence in a court. Under current law email messages may in certain circumstances have to be disclosed in litigation.

25th April 2016

Councillors will be aware that distributing or disseminating e-mail messages which might be considered discriminatory, offensive or abusive would constitute unacceptable behaviour.

Inappropriate use of email could be considered a breach of the Councillors Code of Conduct.