Howden Town Council

IT Policy

Assertion 10 of the Practioners' Guide 2025 states that all Town and Parish Councils should have an IT policy.

1) **Introduction**
   Howden Town Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations and communications.
   This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers and contractors.

2) **Scope**
   This policy applies to all individual who use Howden Town Council's IT resources, including computer, networks, software, devices, data and email accounts.

3) **Acceptable Use of IT Resources and Email**
   Howden Town Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities and tasks or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4) **Device and Software Usage**
   Where possible, authorised devices, software and applications will be provided by Howden Town Council for work-related tasks. Unauthorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

5) **Data Management and Security**
   All sensitive and confidential Howden Town Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Howden Town Council use Microsoft OneDrive for Cloud back-ups.

6) **Network and Internet Usage**
   Howden Town Council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyright material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7) **Email Communication**

Email accounts provided by Howden Town Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted. All users should be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Users should verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links. All Councillors and staff should be provided with a .gov.uk email address and use only this for all Council e-mail communication.

8) Password and Account Security

Howden Town Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

9) Remote Work

When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in the office.

10) E Mail Monitoring

Howden Town Council reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

11) Retention and Archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.

12) Reporting Security Incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the Proper Officer for investigation and resolution.

13) Training and Awareness

Howden Town Council will provide training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns and technology updates. All employees and councillors will receive training on email security and best practices.

14) Compliance and Consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

15) IT Support

Howden Town Council will continue to engage the services of an IT company via an SLA to assist will all IT issues and queries.

Policy to be reviewed annually