

ALDWORTH PARISH COUNCIL
Information Technology (IT) Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets clear, practical rules for the safe and appropriate use of council IT systems and equipment. It aims to:

- Protect council data and systems
- Support efficient working
- Reduce security, legal and reputational risks
- Clarify acceptable and unacceptable use

2. Scope

This policy applies to all councillors, employees, contractors and other authorised users who access council IT systems or data, whether working remotely or on personal devices (where permitted).

3. Acceptable Use of IT Equipment

3.1 Council Equipment

- Council IT equipment is provided for council business only.
- Devices must be locked when unattended.
- Equipment must be handled with care and kept clean.
- Only authorised hardware, software and storage devices may be used.
- Faults, loss or damage must be reported to council promptly.

3.2 Portable Devices

- Portable devices holding council data (laptops, tablets, smartphones) must be kept secure at all times and never left unattended in public places or vehicles.
- Devices holding council data must be protected by strong passwords/PINs and encryption where possible.
- Lost or stolen devices must be reported to council immediately.
- Photography, recording or webcam use on council premises is only permitted for authorised council purposes.

3.3 Use of Personal Devices (BYOD)

- Personal devices may only be used with council approval.
- The same security and conduct standards apply as for council equipment.
- Council data must be kept separate from personal data and stored securely.
- Council emails must be sent from council accounts with the domain Aldworth-pc.gov.uk.
- The council may require access to devices for legal or security reasons.

4. Information Security

4.1 Passwords and Authentication

- Strong passwords must be used (e.g. three random words).
- Passwords must not be shared or written down insecurely.
- Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) must be used where available.
- Passwords must be changed immediately if compromised.

4.2 Data Protection

- Council data must only be stored on approved systems.
- Confidential or personal data must not be saved to personal cloud services.
- Data must be securely deleted when no longer required.

5. Monitoring

- The council may monitor IT usage, including email and internet access, where lawful, necessary and proportionate.
- Monitoring is carried out to protect systems, investigate incidents and ensure compliance with this policy.
- Data obtained through monitoring will be handled in accordance with data protection law.

6. Remote Working

When working away from council premises:

- Use secure networks and log out of systems when finished.
- Protect screens from being overlooked.
- Keep paper and electronic records secure at all times.
- Do not use public or shared computers to access council systems.

7. Email and Internet Use

- Council email accounts are to be used for council business.
- Emails should be professional, accurate and lawful.
- Copyright laws must be respected when downloading or sharing material.
- Internet use must not expose the council to security, legal or reputational risks.

8. Social Media

- Councillors and staff must not post content that could damage the council's reputation or breach confidentiality.
- Views expressed online must not be presented as council views unless authorised.
- Council information, personal data and confidential matters must never be shared on social media.
- Media enquiries must be referred to the Parish Clerk and the Chairman.

9. Health and Safety

- Appropriate workstations must be used.
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) requirements must be followed.
- Any concerns about workstations or equipment should be discussed with the Chairman.

10. Misuse and Breaches

- Misuse of IT systems may result in disciplinary action or termination of access.
- Serious breaches may lead to dismissal or legal action.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as required to reflect changes in legislation, technology or council practices.