



# Newton Poppleford & Harpford Parish Council

## Email Policy

This Council has agreed that all councillors and employees will use the adopted official email addresses for **ALL** Parish Council email communications. No councillors or employees will use any other email address (including any personal email address) for **ANY** Parish Council email communications.

This Parish Council acknowledges the Information Commissioners Office Guidance on use of emails and personal emails and has opted to adopt a unified email address system.

This has been agreed as, under the Freedom of Information Act, the Data Protection Acts and the General Data Protection Regulations, all email accounts that contain council emails may be inspected by a competent authority. This will ensure full compliance without the need to compromise personal information.

The council believes this is the most efficient and effective way of working together and keeping in touch with the community.

Councillors will be provided with an email account in the form of [Cllr.surname@newtonpopplefordandharpford-pc.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.surname@newtonpopplefordandharpford-pc.gov.uk) specifically for Parish Council business.

### Use of email by Councillors

Councillors should not use email to make decisions or influence decisions that should be made at a meeting of the council. Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct set out the rules for debate.

The law does not allow councillors to act independently and Councillors should ensure that they do not imply that the content of any email represents the opinion or policy of the council as a whole. As a councillor, your view can only be the view of the whole council.

When using the parish account to send an email, the recipient is entitled to believe that it is an 'official' communication sent on behalf of the council. Councillors should be particularly careful when agreeing to do something as it may be seen as a commitment by the Parish Council.

Parish Council emails are not confidential; every email is stored in the archive and is available to the public through a Freedom of Information request. Although the emails will be cleared of any personal data before they are released, Councillors should avoid disclosing anything personal or confidential; email is not a secure medium.

No disclaimer will absolve a Councillor who sends an email that contains illegal, offensive, obscene, racist, abusive material or libelous, defamatory or discriminative material which may bring the Parish Council into disrepute.

The only person who can author an official email is the Clerk who writes on behalf of the Council to give the Council's views. Sometimes there will be good practical reasons why these official emails should be sent or forwarded from a Councillor's account. Normally it will be because a Councillor has been asked to do so, but if there is any doubt Councillors should check with the Clerk first.

On page three of this policy are the terms and conditions for the NewtonPopplefordandHarpford-pc.gov domain. By using the Parish Council's email address, Councillors agree to abide by these Terms and Conditions.

## Terms and conditions of use

1. Whereas Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council (the Council) is the licensee of the domain *newtonpopplefordandharpford-pc.gov* (the Domain) it authorises its members, officers and employees to hold and use email accounts within the Domain. The account holders agree that the Council is a legal entity in its own right and separate from any of its members.
2. Account holders within the Domain consent to receive Summons and Notices of Meetings by electronic means if previously agreed with the Clerk.
3. The number of email accounts may be amended from time to time as the Council sees fit.
4. The names of any email accounts including any aliases shall have no meaning or context beyond that of being a device to identify and differentiate the account holders within the Council's Domain.
5. The council shall be held harmless from any claims made or views expressed or any other content within an email distributed from the domain by its members through the inclusion of a footnote Disclaimer, the wording of which shall be determined by the Clerk and included here. The Disclaimer should be appended to all outgoing emails (if email clients allow).
6. An email may be signed by the Council itself by using only the words "Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council". Any such email must be sent by the Clerk or by a member acting under the Clerk's instruction.
7. An email may be signed by the Clerk by using his/her name, title and the words "Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council". An email authored by the Clerk shall be the same as if it had been authored by the Council itself.
8. All outgoing emails from the domain regardless of the author shall observe relevant data protection legislation and, where there are multiple private addressees who have no association, such emails should be distributed by blind copy only.
9. Members may use the Council's email accounts for council business only.
10. Members should not deliberately delete emails that refer to council business, however, members may delete emails that do not refer to council business such as unintended SPAM email or marketing emails.
11. Members should be aware that any emails received or sent may be retained in an overall system archive, even if they have been deleted from your own email account, this is to ensure that the Council complies with Data Protection laws and in accordance with the Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council's Document Retention Policy

## **Good practice**

Before sending an email message, consider if it may be more effective to communicate face to face or by telephone. It is easy to misconstrue the contents of an email which can lead to confusion and poor communication.

Users should not send or forward any chain emails (e.g. jokes) from their Council email account as both of these can contain malware.

Remember that the authenticity of any email received cannot be guaranteed - always avoid opening any attachments to emails that are unexpected.

When sending an email, users should only "cc" and "bcc" people who really need to be informed. Users should take care when using the "Reply to All" function as this may be inappropriate, especially when you have been the blind recipient.

Email etiquette construes capitalisation as SHOUTING, so it's best to avoid inappropriate use of upper case in messages.

## **Setting up and Closing an Email Account**

The Parish Clerk (or other designated person) will set up a new email account as required.

For new councillors, this will normally be within 7 days of becoming a councillor, for any other position it will normally be within 10 days.

When councillors, employees, volunteers and any other person who is directly connected with the council ceases to be part of the Parish Council, their email account will be closed down and all emails (sent or received) will be archived in accordance with the law.

## **Restriction of Email Service**

If it becomes clear that any councillor or employee of the council is misusing the email system and using it in a way that a competent person would deem as being inappropriate, then the Parish Clerk (after consultation with the Chair of the Council or in their absence the Vice-Chair) may restrict or suspend the account.

This will only normally occur if a person is:

- a. Sending inappropriate emails.
- b. Sending emails that are in breach of equality law
- c. Sending political emails
- d. Sending deliberately damaging emails
- e. Sending emails that do not represent Council policy

- f. Sending emails that contain confidential information without express permission.
- g. Sending emails in breach of GDPR or Data Protection laws
- h. Forwarding emails relating to Council business via their personal email address

**Disclaimer wording:**

**Councillors:**

*XXX, Councillor, Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council.*

*Unless stated otherwise the views expressed are personal to the sender & are not representative of the views of the council.*

*The content of this email is confidential and intended for the recipient(s) specified in the message only. It is strictly forbidden to share any part of this message with any third party without the written consent of the sender.*

**Clerk:**

*For and on behalf of Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council*

*The content of this email is confidential and intended for the recipient(s) specified in the message only. It is strictly forbidden to share any part of this message with any third party without the written consent of the sender.*

**Adopted by Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Minute Ref: 22/175/F**

**To be reviewed every two years or on change of legislation**