Upper Heyford
Parish Council

Upper Heyford Parish Council
IT (Information Technology) Policy

Reviewed and Approved at the Parish Council Meeting on the 17th July 2025
Minute Reference 19. a)
Next review July 2027

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how Upper Heyford Parish Council will manage and use information technology (IT) systems, equipment, and data. The aim is to ensure secure, effective, and responsible use of IT in support of the Council’s functions and legal obligations.

---

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, councillors, contractors, and volunteers who use IT systems or devices to conduct Council business
- All devices, systems, and digital platforms used for Council purposes, whether owned by the Council or the individual (Bring Your Own Device - BYOD)

---

3. Acceptable Use

All Council IT systems and data must be used:

- For official Council business only
- In a lawful, respectful, and ethical manner
- With regard for confidentiality, integrity, and transparency

Unacceptable use includes:

- Accessing or distributing offensive, illegal, or inappropriate material
- Using IT systems for personal financial gain or commercial activity
- Downloading unauthorised or pirated software
- Introducing viruses or malicious software

---

4. Email and Communications

- All official communications should use a Council-provided email account (e.g. clerk@parishcouncil.gov.uk)
- Personal email accounts should not be used for Council business
- Emails should be written professionally and stored appropriately
- Councillors and staff must not send confidential information unless it is encrypted or sent via a secure method

---

5. Passwords and Security

- Strong passwords must be used and kept confidential
- Devices should be protected by a PIN, fingerprint, or password
- Automatic screen locks should be enabled after a short period of inactivity
- Council data should be backed up regularly and stored securely
- Antivirus software must be installed and updated regularly

---

6. Personal Devices and BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)

- Personal devices may be used to access Council emails or documents only with approval
- Any personal device used for Council business must be secured with a password and appropriate security software
- Council data must not be stored permanently on personal devices
- If a personal device is lost, stolen, or compromised, the Clerk must be informed immediately

7. Data Protection and Confidentiality

All users must comply with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Council's Data Protection Policy.

- Personal data must be stored securely and only for as long as necessary
- Councillors and staff must avoid discussing confidential matters via unsecured or public channels
- Personal data should never be shared without lawful basis or consent

8. Use of Social Media

Any use of Council-affiliated social media must follow the Social Media Policy. Staff and councillors must avoid:

- Posting inappropriate or inflammatory content
- Sharing confidential information
- Misrepresenting the Council or their role in it

9. Equipment and Software

- All software used must be properly licensed
- Only authorised software may be installed on Council devices
- Faulty or lost equipment must be reported immediately to the Clerk
- Council equipment remains the property of the Council and must be returned upon request or at the end of employment or term

10. Cybersecurity

- Users must be alert to phishing emails and cyber threats
- Suspicious messages or activities must be reported to the Clerk
- Links and attachments from unknown sources should not be opened
- Training and updates on cybersecurity will be offered as needed

11. Monitoring and Compliance

The Council reserves the right to:

- Monitor usage of Council-provided systems or email accounts
- Audit compliance with this policy
- Investigate breaches and take appropriate action

12. Breach of Policy

Breaches of this policy may result in:

- Revocation of IT access
- Disciplinary action
- Referral to the Monitoring Officer (for councillors)
- Legal action in serious cases