Tanworth in Arden Parish Council IT. Phone & Copier Policy

Date Adopted: 17/10/2024 Date for Review: October 2026

Computer misuse

Some employees now have access to computers in the workplace for the use by them in connection with the Parish Council business. Abuse of the Parish Council's computers is prohibited. Employees who are discovered unreasonably using the Parish Council's computers for personal and private purposes will be dealt with under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure. Vandalism of the Parish Council's computer network constitutes a potential gross misconduct offence and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure.

E-mail and the internet

Some employees also have access to internal and external e-mail and the internet for the exclusive use by them in connection with the Parish Council's business. Only duly authorised personnel have the authority to use e-mail and the internet at work. Any employee found to be contravening this may face serious disciplinary action under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure.

The purpose of these rules is to protect the Parish Council's legal interests. Unregulated access increases the risk of employees inadvertently forming contracts through e-mail and increases the opportunity for wrongful disclosure of confidential information. In addition, carelessly worded e-mail can expose the Parish Council to an action for defamation for libel.

Employees who are authorised users are not permitted to surf the internet or to spend time 'chatting' by e-mail for personal and private purposes. Employees are also prohibited from using e-mail to circulate any non-business material. In addition, sexist, racist or other offensive remarks or jokes sent by e-mail are capable of amounting to harassment. Employees who are discovered may face serious disciplinary action under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure.

Logging on to sexually explicit websites or the downloading and/or circulation of pornography constitute gross misconduct offences and render the employee liable to summary dismissal under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure.

The Parish Council reserves the right to read employees' e-mails and to monitor employees' use of the internet, both during routine audits of the computer system and in specific cases where a problem relating to excessive and/or unauthorised use is suspected. The purposes for such monitoring are:

· To promote productivity and efficiency.

· To ensure there is no unauthorised use of the Parish Council's time.

· To ensure that all employees are treated with respect and dignity at work, by discovering and eliminating any material that is capable of amounting to harassment under the terms of the Parish Council's anti-harassment policy.

Computer software

The Parish Council licences the use of computer software from a variety of outside companies. The Parish Council does not own this software or its related documentation and, unless authorised by the software developer, neither the Parish Council nor any of its employees have the right to reproduce it. To do so constitutes an infringement of copyright. Any employee found to be contravening this may face disciplinary action under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure.

Computer viruses

The Parish Council's computer network makes it vulnerable to viruses. Therefore, only duly authorised personnel have the authority to load program software onto the network system. Data compatible with the Parish Council's system may be loaded only after being checked for viruses by authorised personnel. Any employee found to be contravening this may face disciplinary action under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure.

Telephone misuse

The Parish Council's telephone lines are for the exclusive use by employees in connection with the Parish Council's business. Whilst the Parish Council will tolerate essential personal telephone calls concerning an employee's domestic arrangements, excessive use of the telephone for personal calls is prohibited. This includes lengthy, casual chats and calls at premium rates. Not only does excessive time engaged on personal telephone calls lead to loss of productivity, it also constitutes an unauthorised use of the Parish Council's time. If the Parish Council discovers that the telephone has been used excessively for personal calls, this will be dealt with under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure and the employee will be required to pay to the Parish Council the cost of personal calls made.

Employees should be aware that telephone calls made and received on the Parish Council's telephone network will routinely be monitored and recorded to assess employee performance, to ensure customer satisfaction and to check that the use of the telephone system is not being abused.

Photocopier Usage

The photocopier will be used only for Parish Council business, unless exceptional circumstances require the use. This will be authorised by The Clerk or Chair of the Parish Council as deemed necessary.