Beausale Haseley Honiley Wroxall Parish Council – IT and Media Policy

Adopted September 2026
Review Date ……

1**. Introduction**
BHHW Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT), social media 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, Clerk, volunteers, and contractors.

2. **Scope**
This policy applies to all individuals who use BHHW Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. **Acceptable use of IT resources and email**
BHHW Parish Council's 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 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 BHHW Parish Council for work-related tasks. Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

5. **Data management and security**
All sensitive and confidential BHHW Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

6. **Network and internet usage**
BHHW Parish Council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7**. Email communication**
Email accounts provided by BHHW Parish 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. Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

8. **Password and account security**
BHHW Parish 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. **Messaging Apps & Social Media**
Employees and councillors need to be aware that the information they post on their personal social media profile can make them identifiable to residents and service users, as well as people they know in a private capacity.
Online sites such as Facebook are in the public domain, and personal profile details can be seen by anyone, even if users have their privacy settings on the highest level. If a user's profile is linked to other sites, any changes to their profile will be updated there too.
Employees and councillors who have set their privacy level to the maximum can have their privacy compromised by 'friends' who may not have set their security to the same standard.

Employees and councillors must not:

- Use the Cllr or Councillor title on personal social media
- Present personal opinions as that of the Parish Council
- Bring the Parish Council into disrepute or cause embarrassment, including through content posted in a personal capacity
- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council
- Disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk
- Post comments about employees or councillors without their prior approval

- Upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent. This includes use of an individual's name without written permission to do so; publishing photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- Post any information that infringes copyright of others including any link to a third-party website without checking that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.
- Post, forward or link to controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks, engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications as this may constitute bullying or harassment and will bring the Parish Council into disrepute.
- Conduct any online activity that is against regulation or law e.g., may be deemed libellous or that constitutes a criminal offence.

10. **Mobile devices and remote work**
Mobile devices provided by BHHW Parish Council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in the office.

11**. Email monitoring**
BHHW Parish 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.

12**. Retention and archiving**
Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

13. **Reporting security incidents**
All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the Clerk for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the Clerk immediately.

14 **Training and awareness**
BHHW Parish Council will make available, regular training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. The Clerk and councillors will receive regular training on email security and best practices.

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

16. **Policy review**
This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

17. **IT-related enquiries or assistance**
Clerk and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of BHHW Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, BHHW Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.