

Email Policy

Adopted by Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

On 05.04.2023

Reviewed 7th May 2025

Next reviewed May 2027 or on change of Legislation

This Council has agreed that all councillors, employees, volunteers and any other person who is directly connected with the council will use the adopted official email addresses for ALL Parish Council email communications.

- **Where communications are relevant to Full Council that correspondence must be copied to all Councillors when details are sent to the Proper Officer (thus avoiding unnecessary work by the having to circulate separately) and that independent/unilateral communications circulated outside the Council by Councillors highlighting their individual views are also copied to all Councillors demonstrating clear transparency and respect for fellow Councillors.**

- No councillors, employees, volunteers and any other person who is directly connected with the council 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 in “Bring Your Own Devices” and has opted to exceed the standards suggest by adopting 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 with 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 but before

Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

you can make use of this facility, there are some things you need to know.

Councillors will have been/will be provided with an email account in the form of Cllr.surname.SCPC@gmail.com a specifically for your work with the Parish Council.

- a. First, and most important: do 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 are clear on the rules of debate and you should check them if you are in any doubt.
- b. Next, the law does not allow councillors to act independently and you should make sure that you do not imply that the content of your email represents the opinion or policy of the council as a whole. As an individual, you can think, say and write what you like, but as a councillor, your view can only be the view of the whole council.
- c. When you use the parish account to send an email, the recipient can be excused for thinking it is an 'official' communication sent on behalf of the council. You should be particularly careful if you are agreeing to do something as it may be seen as a commitment by the Parish Council.
- d. Third, your parish 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, it is better to avoid disclosing anything personal or confidential in the first place; email is not a secure medium.
- e. Fourth, no disclaimer will help if you send an email that contains illegal, offensive, obscene, racist, abusive material or libellous, defamatory or discriminative material which may bring the council into disrepute.
- f. Finally, the only person who can author an official email is the Clerk who writes on your behalf 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 you have been asked to do so, but if there is any doubt about your authority to write or send such an email, please check with the Clerk first.

Terms and conditions of use

- a. Account holders within the Domain consent to receive Summons and Notices of Meetings by electronic means if previously agreed with the clerk.

Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

- b. The number of email accounts may be amended from time to time as the Council sees fit.
- c. 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
- d. An email may be signed by the Clerk by using his/her name, title and the words "Sampford Courtenay Parish Council". An email authored by the Clerk shall be the same as if it had been authored by the Council itself.
- e. 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 shall be distributed by blind copy only.
- f. Members may use the Council's email accounts for council business only.
- g. 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.
- h. Members should be aware that any or email 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 we comply with Data Protection.

Good practices

- a. 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, whilst a quick telephone conversation can prevent extensive email "ping-pong" conversations clarifying an email's meaning.
- b. Users should not send or forward any chain emails (e.g. jokes and virus warnings) from their Council email account as both of these can contain malware. In addition, almost all virus warnings and police warnings circulating via email are actually hoaxes designed to clog up email systems by scaring people into forwarding them across the internet.
- c. Remember that the authenticity of any email received cannot be guaranteed, especially with the prevalence of email "spoofing" (emails pretending to come from a source gathered through dubious means). In particular, users should always avoid opening any attachments to emails that are unexpected.
- d. 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.
- e. 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

- a. The Parish Clerk (or other designated person) will set up a new email account as required.
- b. For new councillors, this will normally be within 48 hours of becoming a councillor for any other position it will normally be within 7 days.
- c. 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

- a. If it becomes clear that any councillor, employee, volunteer or any other person who is directly connected with 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.
- b. This will only normally occur if:
 - i. A person is sending inappropriate emails.
 - ii. A person is sending emails that are deemed to be harassing.
 - iii. A person is sending emails that are in breach of equality law.
 - iv. A person is sending political emails.
 - v. A person is sending deliberately damaging emails.
 - vi. A Person is sending emails that do not represent Council doctrine.
 - vii. A person is sending emails containing confidential information to third parties, without express permission.
 - viii. A person is sending emails that deliberately breach of Data Protection Laws or General Data Protect Regulations.
 - ix. A person is found to be forwarding council business via personal emails that have been sent to them via the council email system

Disclaimer wording

For and on behalf of Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

The content of this email is confidential and intended for the recipient(s) specified in message only. It is strictly forbidden to share any part of this message with any third party, without the written consent of the sender. If you received this message by mistake, please reply to this message and follow with its deletion, so that we can ensure such a mistake does not occur in the future.

Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulations 2016, The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Cabinet Office Guidance (2010 – 2020), the Standards Board of England Guidance, NALC Guidance and the Government Transparency Code 2015