

# BEARSTED PARISH COUNCIL

## EMAIL ETIQUETTE POLICY

### Document Reference – BPC\_POL40

#### Version History & Change Control

Version	Release Date	Distribution	Notes	Adopted?	Date Adopted
1.0	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2016	Full Council	For adoption at Full Council meeting 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2016		

#### Document Sign Off and Adoption

Signed off for Adoption by Councillor 1:

Signed off for Adoption by Councillor 2:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Adoption Witnessed by the Clerk to Bearsted Parish Council:

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

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## **Document Purpose**

This document describes Bearsted Parish Council's policy for email etiquette. It is based on industry best practice and guidance and must be followed by all Bearsted Parish Council Staff and Councillors.

## **Email etiquette and guidance**

### **1. When to use email**

- 1.1. Email tends to be used for a variety of reasons and can be as informal as arranging refreshments for a meeting to communicating a formal business decision.
- 1.2. Email is not always the best way to communicate information as email messages can often be misunderstood and the volume of email messages people receive can be prohibitive to receiving a meaningful reply as a result of email overload.
- 1.3. All staff that use email have the responsibility of deciding whether email is the most appropriate form of communication. Staff should consider the following factors before sending an email:
  - 1.3.1. the subject:  
some subjects are too sensitive to be sent via email, e.g. employee information. Careful consideration needs to be given as it is the responsibility of the sender to decide whether or not email is the most appropriate vehicle for communication in these circumstances
  - 1.3.2. speed of transmission:  
where information is needed to be communicated urgently and the recipient is expecting it then this is fine, however, if an urgent message need to be sent and the recipient(s) is/are not expecting anything, then it is probably better to use the phone
  - 1.3.3. speed of response:  
there is no guarantee that an email will be read as soon as it is sent; if the email requires immediate action then this is probably not the best way to communicate
  - 1.3.4. number of recipients:  
do not necessarily use reply all as not everyone in the previous communication necessarily needs to receive the email

## 2. Writing emails

- 2.1. When writing an email, it is important to compose the message with the same care and clarity applied to drafting letters and memos, particularly as emails form part of the corporate record under the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.
- 2.2. Always ensure that when sending an email the following disclaimer is included:

*This communication may contain privileged or confidential information which is exempt from disclosure under English law and such information may not be used or disclosed except for the purpose for which it has been sent. If you are not the intended recipient of this email, please do not disclose, copy, distribute, store or act in reliance on it or any attachments. Instead, please notify the sender that you have received the email in error and then permanently delete it.*
- 2.3. Always ensure that your Recipient List is appropriate to avoid causing a nuisance to other colleagues.
- 2.4. Always complete the Subject Line with a clear description of what the email is about as recipients cannot always distinguish between what they need to look at immediately and what can wait. For example, *full council minutes February 2016 for approval*
- 2.5. Don't be a novelist when composing an email. Ensure language is simple, unambiguous and to the point.
- 2.6. Avoid using abbreviations and emoticons - don't trade clarity for confusion. Be aware that other colleagues may not know the meaning of informal expressions, such as FWIW (for what it's worth).
- 2.7. Be polite. Terseness can be misinterpreted. Please and thank you go a long way.
- 2.8. Be patient. Not everyone can respond immediately or necessarily have the confidence to communicate using email.
- 2.9. Be careful when replying to an email message with many recipients. Do you really want everyone to see your reply?
- 2.10. Never reply in anger. Take a break or sleep on it before responding.
- 2.11. Never write your email in CAPITAL LETTERS. This implies shouting.
- 2.12. Don't conduct an argument on email - it is unprofessional.
- 2.13. Never 'flame' anyone. A flame is an electronic verbal attack. If a flame is received, then please do not respond in anger as this may be regretted later. Users should not engage in exchanging flames and create a 'flame-war'.
- 2.14. Always, always read email before sending it and consider the resultant reaction. Ensuring clarity in the message is time well spent.

### **3. Out of office replies**

- 3.1. Users are required to use this facility within the email system to inform senders of email of absence and expected return to work date. Including an alternative contact is helpful.