GRINDON & THORPE THEWLES PARISH COUNCIL

EMAIL AND TEXTING POLICY

All Parish Councillors and employees of the Council emailing on behalf of the Council must use email and text messaging responsibly.

Text messaging includes the use of electronic communication platforms such as WhatsApp and Messenger.

The term 'email' is used in the following to include these forms of text messaging as well.

Responsible use of email means:

1. Email correspondence should be undertaken in a professional and responsible manner respecting personal privacy and the requirements of data protection legislation.

2. Those writing or replying to emails should check to see that the email is only being copied to the person or persons intended; and that there is no sensitive information contained in any attached document or any accompanying email 'trail', that is, previous emails attached to the email being sent.

3. Sensitive or confidential parish council information is not sent or copied to people outside the parish council; if you are unsure consult the Clerk.

4. Where emails are sent which contain personal details the personal details should be limited to that information which is required for the business of the council.

5. If inappropriate material is sent accidentally this must be reported immediately to the Clerk or Chair, or the Vice Chair of the Parish Council in the absence of the Chair.

6. Emails must not contain inappropriate or unlawful material, which includes, but is not limited to, abusive, threatening, sexual, discriminatory, racial, obscene or hate text or images.

7. Parish Councillors and the Clerk should make use of a specific council email address for all email communication concerning Parish Council business, unless technical difficulties make this impossible. Under no circumstances should a Parish Councillor or employee use an email address that can be accessed by another person.

If you are unsure about anything above, please consult the Clerk who can advise on email etiquette.

Emails broadcast to mailing lists on behalf of the Parish Council must be authorized by the Clerk and/or Chair, who may give delegated authorisation to other Parish Councillors.

DISPOSAL

Emails will be retained for a minimum of three months by the Parish Council. Where an email is of importance, for instance, an important email which could form part of a complaint, project, planning matter, agreement, or contract, then the email may be retained for longer than three months subject to the Council's Retention and Disposal of Records and Documents Policy.

MONITORING

The Clerk will monitor email use by contractors, Councillors and members of the public emailing the Parish Council and will report to the Parish Council if email is being used inappropriately. Where the Clerk advises that email is being used inappropriately the Parish Council reserves the right to take disciplinary action or refer the matter to Stockton Borough Council's (SBC) Monitoring Officer, and in the case of unlawful emails to refer the matter to the police. This includes emails sent by members of the public where such emails transgress the law.

Where the Clerk suspects that email or text used has caused, or anticipates it will cause, a serious breach of security or confidentially they may, after consultation with the Chair, or the Vice Chair in the absence of the Chair, take action to restrict the distribution of sensitive or confidential emails.

If you receive an email or text that contains material contrary to this policy report the matter immediately to the Clerk or Chair, or the Vice Chair in the absence of the Chairman. They will investigate and may call in the SBC Monitoring Officer or police if necessary.

The Parish Council will use all reasonable efforts to ensure emails and texts used in connection with its business by councillors, employees and members of the public are within the law. It cannot be held responsible for damages resulting from the misuse of email in a way contrary to this policy.

ADOPTED: 10 January 2023

Last Updated: February 2026