



EMAIL GUIDELINES POLICY

This policy sets out guidelines for email use for councillors, volunteers and staff.

Councillor and Staff email addresses

Councillors and staff all have caistortowncouncil.gov.uk email addresses. These are issued via 'Stackmail CP' and can be accessed via - <https://www.stackmail.com/>

Councillors will be provided with log in details, the user name will typically be cllr.n.name@caistortowbcouncil.gov.uk and the password will be unique to this email address.

All councillors and staff must use the official town council email address when conducting council business.

Emails which are sent from a private address should be signed in a personal capacity, without the word 'councillor' attached to the name or sign off. They should not give the impression that they originate from the Town Council. This is in order to distinguish between communications sent in an official capacity, as a councillor, and those sent as a private individual.

Councillors and staff are reminded that e-mail messages transmitted on Town Council IT equipment are entered in the public domain on transmission.

Councillors using personal IT equipment to send e-mails on Council business are responsible for ensuring that their system has adequate internet security software installed and enabled.

E-mails sent on official Council business, from councillors or staff, should contain the approved council disclaimer statement (available from the Clerk). Councillors should be aware that e-mails sent on Council business may also be treated as in the public domain and subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Guidelines for Caistor Town Council email use

Email is a non-secure medium and care should be taken when composing, sending and storing messages.

Email should be regarded in the same way as any other business communication and should be treated as a Council record. You should adopt a style and content for email, in particular those sent to external recipients that present a professional image. It is recommended that you adopt the same standards for email as for letters and memos, although the style may be more informal.

Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council, its customers, prospects, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business and sufficient steps are taken to safeguard security.

Everyone must take reasonable steps to guard against unauthorised access to, alteration, accidental loss, disclosure or destruction of data.

In general, Councillors and staff should:

- Not send or forward private e-mails at work which they would not want a third party to read;
- Not send or forward chain mail, junk mail, cartoons, jokes or gossip either within or outside the council;
- Not open any emails or attachments from an unknown source or junk emails – these should be deleted immediately;
- Not contribute to system congestion by sending trivial messages or unnecessarily copying or forwarding e-mails to those who do not have a real need to receive them;
- Not agree to terms, enter into contractual commitments or make representations by e-mail unless appropriate authority has been obtained from the Clerk or from approved delegated authority from the Council or Committee. A name typed at the end of an e-mail is a signature in the same way as a name written in ink at the end of a letter;
- Not download or e-mail text, music and other content on the internet subject to copyright protection, unless it is clear that the owner of such works allows this;
- Not send messages under an assumed name unless specifically authorised;
- Not send confidential messages via e-mail or the internet, or by other means of external communication which are known not to be secure;
- Not send a message without double checking that the recipient's address is correct;
- Emails to customers, suppliers and other business contacts should be restricted to Council business. Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council, its customers, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business.
- Ensure there is no infringement of copyright when adding attachments to emails.
- Ensure confidential information is not left on display on an unattended device.
- Not distribute sensitive commercial data concerning the Council to competitive sources. Doing so may result in investigation and for employees disciplinary action leading to dismissal without notice for gross misconduct.

Councillors and staff who receive an e-mail which has been wrongly delivered should return it to the sender of the message. If the e-mail contains confidential information or inappropriate material (as described above) it should not be disclosed or used in any way.

Security

Councillors and staff should exercise caution when opening e-mails from unknown external sources or where, for any reason an e-mail appears suspicious. On receipt of an e-mail containing a link to another address, the link should not be "clicked"; rather the full address as shown should be typed in manually (not copied and pasted) to the address bar of the web browser.

Mailbox Management

Guidelines on how long emails should be kept for are vague and there are no definitive GDPR statutory retention periods, per se. The legislation states that a business should keep information for "no longer than is necessary".

Each mail box has a capacity of 2mb which should be sufficient for general use. Please monitor the size of your mail box and clear out unnecessary emails regularly.

Councillors and staff should consider whether it is necessary to blanket copy everyone into an email.

E-mail etiquette and content

E-mail, including text messaging services, is a vital business tool but an informal means of communication and should be used with care. Councillors and staff should always consider if e-mail is the appropriate medium for a particular communication. Messages sent on the e-mail system should be written as professionally as a letter. Messages should be concise and directed only to relevant individuals. Abusive, obscene, discriminatory, racist, harassing, derogatory or defamatory messages must not be sent.

Anyone found with offensive or pornographic material on his or her Council email account or computer will be subject to investigation, which for employees could result in disciplinary action and dismissal for gross misconduct. Councillors will be reported to the monitoring officer