

# FORTON PARISH COUNCIL

[www.fortonstaffs-pc.gov.uk](http://www.fortonstaffs-pc.gov.uk)

## Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy

### 1. Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the requirements for Councillors and staff using personal electronic devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops) to access or store Forton Parish Council ("the Council") information. It ensures the Council meets its legal obligations as a **Data Controller** under the Data Protection Act 2018.

### 2. General Principles

- **Voluntary Participation:** Use of personal devices for Council business is voluntary. The Council does not require members to use personal equipment.
- **Council Ownership of Data:** All emails, documents, and data created or received in the course of Council business remain the property of the Council.
- **Liability:** The Council is not responsible for the purchase, maintenance, insurance, or repair of personal devices.

### 3. Security Requirements

Users must adhere to the following technical standards:

- **Access Control:** Devices must be protected by a strong password, PIN, or biometric lock (fingerprint/face ID).
- **Auto-Lock:** Devices must be set to automatically lock after a period of inactivity (maximum 5 minutes).
- **Software Updates:** Users must ensure their device operating system and security software are kept up to date with the latest patches.
- **Public Wi-Fi:** Secure VPNs should be used when accessing Council data via public or unencrypted Wi-Fi networks.

### 4. Data Management and Email

- **Official Email Only:** All Council correspondence must be conducted using an official "@fortonstaffs-pc.gov.uk" email address. The use of personal email accounts for Council business is strictly prohibited.
- **Confidentiality:** Users must not share their devices with family members or third parties if Council data is accessible.

## 5. Incident Reporting and Leaving the Council

- **Reporting Breaches:** Any loss, theft, or suspected data breach (e.g., a "phishing" success) must be reported immediately to the Parish Clerk.
- **Ceasing Office:** Upon leaving the Council, all Council-related data must be permanently erased from personal devices. The Council reserves the right to request confirmation or evidence of this deletion.
- **Remote Wipe:** In cases of device theft or loss, the Council may require a remote wipe of Council-specific applications and data where possible.

## 6. Legal Discovery

Users should be aware that if a personal device is used for Council business, it may be subject to legal discovery or Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, which could require the inspection of the device by authorised parties.

## 7. Acceptable Use of Social Media & Messaging

### 7.1 Social Media Principles

- **Capacity and Branding:** Councillors must distinguish between personal and professional accounts. Personal accounts should not use the title "Councillor" or the Council's logo if the content is not official. A disclaimer such as "The views expressed here are my own" is recommended for personal profiles.
- **Conduct:** Members must not post content that is libellous, offensive, or brings the Council into disrepute.
- **Confidentiality:** Non-public information, such as content from "exempt" or private sessions, must never be shared on social media.
- **Predetermination:** To avoid legal challenges to Council decisions, members must not post views on planning applications or other pending matters that suggest they have a "closed mind" before the official debate.

### 7.2 Use of Messaging Apps (e.g., WhatsApp)

- **Informal Use Only:** WhatsApp or SMS should be used for logistical purposes only (e.g., "Meeting starts at 7pm," or "Agenda has been emailed").
- **No Decision Making:** Formal decisions must not be made via messaging apps. All official decisions must be made in a duly convened meeting and recorded in the minutes.
- **FOI and Transparency:** Any message relating to Council business—even on a personal device—is potentially subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. Important information received via text or WhatsApp should be forwarded to the Clerk's official email for the record.
- **Group Administration:** Official Council groups (if any) must be administered by the Clerk or a nominated officer. Members must be removed promptly upon leaving the Council.

### **7.3 Use During Meetings**

- **Discretion:** Personal devices should be used sparingly and discreetly during meetings. Using social media while a meeting is in progress can give the impression of inattention and may lead to complaints of disrespect or predetermination.

**Adopted on: 13 May 2026**

**Review Date:** May 2027