

EMAIL POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2023

PART 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

The purpose of this policy is to address the arrangements, terms and conditions whereby a specific email account can be provided to assist councillors to fulfil their duties on behalf of the council. The provision of an email account for such purpose shall comply fully with the following and shall not be used for any other purposes than the sole purposes of Council business.

If it is agreed to provide an email account name@rayleightowncouncil.gov.uk specifically for the purposes requested for the work involved in delivering the agreed product or service on behalf of the Town Council. It will be because it is considered to be the most efficient and effective way of working together and engaging with the community in the delivery of the agreed product or service. But before it can be used there are some things those applying need to know.

- First, and most important: do not use email to make decisions or influence decisions that should be made at a meeting of the relevant standing committee or 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.
- 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 standing committee or 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. When you use the 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 Town Council so you must remember to put the Disclaimer at the bottom whenever possible.
- Third, remember emails from this account 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.
- 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.
- Finally, the only person who can author an official email is the Town 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.

On this policy are the terms and conditions for the Rayleightowncouncil domain. By using an approved Town Council's email address, you are agreeing to abide by them so please make sure you understand the rules.

On the final page is the Disclaimer wording and a list of Good Practices for the use of email. These are designed to help keep the email system healthy and avoid potential misunderstandings

Terms and Conditions of Use

Whereas Rayleigh Town Council (the Council) is the licensee of the domain RayleighTownCouncil.gov.uk (the Domain) it can authorise its members, officers and employees to hold and use email accounts within the Domain. The account holders agree that the Council is a legal entity in its own right and separate from any of its members.

- Account holders within the Domain consent to receive Summons and Notices of Meetings by electronic means.
- The number of email accounts may be amended from time to time as the Council sees fit.
- The names of any email accounts including any aliases shall have no meaning or context beyond that of being a device to identify and differentiate the account holders within the Council's Domain.
- 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 Disclaimer, the wording of which shall be determined by the Clerk and included here. The Disclaimer should be appended to all outgoing emails (if email clients allow).
- A member should not include the words "Rayleigh Town Council" in their signature without their Town Councillor title as this may imply to the reader that the email has been authored by the Council itself.
- A member may not use the words "on behalf of" or "for" in front of the words "Rayleigh Town Council" or otherwise give any impression that they are representing the Council.
- An email may be signed by the Council itself by using only the words "Rayleigh Town Council". Any such email must be both sent from the Clerk's account and authored by the Clerk.
- An email may be signed by the Clerk by using his/her name, title and the words "Rayleigh Town Council". An email authored by the Clerk shall be the same as if it had been authored by the Council itself.
- 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.
- Members may use the Council's email accounts for council business only.
- Members may not delete emails from their Council email accounts except where allowed by Rayleigh Town Council's Document Retention Policy

Disclaimer wording

Disclaimer: This email may contain privileged and/or confidential information. If you receive this in error, please notify the sender immediately and do not use, or disclose its content to any other party. Any views or opinions expressed are those of the author and do not represent those of Raleigh Town Council nor do they represent or imply any kind of agreement or contract.