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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy is to establish clear rules and expectations for the use of council-provided ICT systems, services, and equipment by councillors, employees, volunteers, contractors, and other authorised users in the course of their duties.

1.2 This policy seeks to:

- Set clear expectations for appropriate and responsible use of Council ICT resources.
- Raise awareness of the risks associated with the use of ICT.
- Protect and safeguard the Council's data, information, and digital assets.
- Define acceptable and unacceptable use of Council systems.
- Outline the consequences of breaches of this policy.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 This policy applies to all individuals who access or use the Parish Council's ICT systems, including:

- Councillors.
- Employees.
- Volunteers.
- Contractors.
- Third-party service providers (where applicable).

2.2 The policy covers the use of:

- Council-owned computers, mobile phones, tablets, and other electronic devices.
- Council email systems and internet access.
- Software, data, and digital services.
- Remote access, cloud-based systems, and collaborative platforms (including SharePoint and OneDrive).

Adopted: 25.02.2026 Minute Number: GR26/02/7.2

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3. General Principles of Use

3.1 Council ICT equipment and systems are provided primarily for official Council business.

3.2 Reasonable personal use may be permitted at the discretion of the Clerk, provided that such use:

- Does not interfere with Council duties.
- Does not compromise security.
- Does not bring the Council into disrepute.
- Occurs outside core working hours or during official breaks.

3.3 All users must act responsibly, lawfully, and in accordance with this policy, the Council's Code of Conduct, and all relevant legislation.

4. Monitoring and Compliance

4.1 The Council reserves the right, where legally permitted, to monitor the use of its ICT systems, including email and internet usage, to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant legislation.

4.2 Monitoring may be carried out for purposes including:

- System maintenance and security (including virus protection).
- Investigating faults or suspected misuse.
- Ensuring compliance with Council policies.
- Meeting legal or regulatory obligations.

4.3 Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with:

- The Investigatory Powers (Interception by Councils etc. for Monitoring and Record-keeping Purposes) Regulations 2018.
- Data protection legislation.
- An impact assessment to ensure monitoring is necessary and proportionate.

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4.4 Information obtained through monitoring may be shared internally with relevant councillors, officers, or ICT staff where necessary for their roles, and externally with professional advisers (e.g. HR or legal advisers) where appropriate. Any external advisers must have suitable data protection arrangements in place.

4.5 Monitoring information will be retained only for as long as necessary to identify and investigate any breach.

4.6 Users have rights in relation to their personal data, including the right to make a subject access request. Further details are set out in the council's Data Protection Policy.

4.7 Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action, withdrawal of ICT privileges, reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), or referral to law enforcement in serious cases.

5. Hardware and Equipment Use

5.1 Council-Owned Equipment

5.1.1 All Council equipment must be handled with care and kept in good condition. Food and drink should be kept away from equipment.

5.1.2 Users must lock their computers or devices whenever they leave them unattended.

5.1.3 Users must not dismantle, modify, or attempt to repair equipment. All faults or damage must be reported promptly to the Council's ICT support provider.

5.1.4 Any purchase of ICT equipment must comply with the Council's Financial Regulations and the Quotations and Tenders Policy.

5.1.5 Personal storage media (e.g. USB sticks, CDs, external drives) should be avoided and may only be used by Council officers where expressly authorised.

5.1.6 The Council's wireless networks must be used where provided. Creating personal Wi-Fi hotspots to bypass council networks is prohibited.

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5.2 Portable Equipment

5.2.1 Portable equipment includes laptops, tablets, mobile and smart phones, and any device capable of accessing Council systems.

5.2.2 Portable equipment must be stored securely at all times and must not be left unattended in vehicles.

5.2.3 Devices with access to Council systems (including SharePoint and OneDrive) must use encryption and appropriate security controls.

5.2.4 Loss, theft, or damage of portable equipment must be reported immediately to a Council Officer and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance, Resources and Projects Committee.

5.2.5 The taking of photographs, videos, or audio recordings of Council documents or non-public meetings is prohibited unless explicitly authorised or required as part of official duties. Statutory rights under the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014 are not affected.

5.2.6 Webcams may only be used for Council-related conference calls. If there is uncertainty about a device, advice must be sought from Council Officers.

6. Use of Personal Devices (BYOD)

6.1 The use of personal devices to access council systems must comply with the Council's Data Security and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy.

7. Health and Safety

7.1 Councillors and employees working in council offices will be provided with appropriate workstations and Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments.

7.2 Employees who use display screen equipment are entitled to regular eye tests in line with the Council's DSE Policy.

7.3 Any concerns about workstation setup or health and safety hazards must be reported to the line manager or ICT support provider.

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8. Passwords and Authentication

8.1 All devices holding Council data must be protected by a PIN, password, or biometric security. Security controls must not be disabled.

8.2 User accounts must be protected by strong passwords in line with National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidance, such as the use of three random words.

8.3 Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) will be implemented where available.

8.4 Password management requirements:

- Initial passwords are generated by the ICT provider.
- Default passwords must be changed immediately.
- System and service account passwords are managed by the ICT provider.
- Passwords must never be shared or written down insecurely.
- Passwords must be stored using an approved encrypted password manager.
- Suspected compromise must be reported immediately.

8.5 A SharePoint administrator account will be held in reserve. Access is delegated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council. Any activation of this account will be reported formally to all members at the next council meeting.

9. Remote Working

9.1 When accessing council systems remotely:

- Passwords must not be saved on non-council devices.
- Users must log out fully.
- Public or insecure devices (e.g. internet cafés) must not be used.
- Screens must be positioned to prevent unauthorised viewing.
- Printed documents must be collected and stored securely.
- All electronic files must be saved only to council systems.

9.2 Data must be disposed of securely in line with council policies.

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10. Email Use

10.1 Users will normally be provided with a council email account where email is required for their role.

10.2 Council email accounts are for council business only. Personal use is not permitted.

10.3 Email usage must comply with the council's Email Etiquette Policy.

10.4 The council reserves the right to withdraw email access where it is no longer required or where misuse occurs.

11. Internet Use

11.1 Copyright

- 11.1.1 Users must comply with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.
- 11.1.2 Material found on the internet must not be copied, downloaded, or reused without proper permission.
- 11.1.3 Where copyright conditions are stated, these must be followed. If there is doubt, material must not be copied.

11.2 Trademarks, Links, and Data Protection

- 11.2.1 New domain names or trademarks relating to the council may not be registered without authorisation.
- 11.2.2 Links from council websites must comply with the Useful Links Page Policy.
- 11.2.3 Personal data must be processed in accordance with the council's Data Protection and GDPR Policies.

11.3 Accuracy of Information

- 11.3.1 Users should be aware that information obtained from the internet may be inaccurate or misleading and must be checked before use.

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12. Social Media

12.1 Use of social media must comply with the council's Social Media Policy.

13. Review and Approval

13.1 This policy will be reviewed at least annually by the council to ensure it remains up to date and effective.

13.2 The policy is approved by Illogan Parish Council and takes effect from the date of adoption.

Adopted: 25.02.2026 Minute Number: GR26/02/7.2