APPENDIX 3

Data Protection Basics for Parish Councillors

Why Data Protection Matters

As a parish councillor, you may handle personal information about residents, staff, contractors, volunteers and complainants. You have a legal responsibility to protect that information and use it appropriately.

Good data protection helps to:

- Maintain public trust
- Protect individuals' privacy
- Comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Reduce the risk of complaints, breaches and reputational damage

What is Personal Data?

Personal data is information that can identify a living person, such as:

- Name
- Address
- Email address
- Telephone number
- Photographs
- Complaint correspondence
- Vehicle registration numbers

Special category data (such as health information, ethnicity, religion or political opinions) requires extra protection.

The 5 Golden Rules

1. **Use Information Only for Council Business**
   Use personal data only to carry out your role as a councillor.

2. **Only Collect What You Need**
   Do not ask for or retain unnecessary personal information.

3. **Keep Information Secure**
   - Use strong passwords.
   - Lock devices when unattended.
   - Store paper records securely.
   - Use council email accounts where possible.

4. **Share Carefully**
   Only share information with people who genuinely need it for council business.

5. **Ask if Unsure**
   If you are unsure whether information can be shared, published or retained, seek advice from the Clerk.

(produced in MS Copilot, AI Chatbot)

Email Dos and Don'ts

✓ Do

- Check recipients before sending.
- Use BCC when emailing groups.
- Remove unnecessary personal details.

✗ Don't

- Forward confidential emails unnecessarily.
- Share resident information on social media.
- Use contact details for political or personal purposes.

Council Meetings

Remember that:

- Personal information should not normally appear in publicly available papers.
- Confidential matters may need to be considered in exempt session.
- Confidential information discussed in meetings must not be shared outside the council.

Data Breaches

Examples include:

- Sending an email to the wrong person.
- Losing paperwork containing personal data.
- Publishing personal information accidentally.
- Losing a laptop or mobile device containing council information.

Report suspected breaches to the Clerk immediately.

Remember

If you need personal information to carry out council business, use it carefully, keep it secure, and share it only when necessary.

Refer to the Council's Data Protection Policy for further information.

When in doubt: STOP and ASK the Clerk.

(produced in MS Copilot, AI Chatbot)