



Advice notes 06 Aug 2025

PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL EMAIL ADDRESSES

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More and more parish and town council business is being conducted online, which means that all council staff should be aware of and follow best email use and management practices. This resource describes the importance of using official council email accounts and offers practical guidance on email security.



importance of using official email addresses

The **Practitioners' Guide 2025** requires every authority to “have a generic email account hosted on an authority-owned domain, for example clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abcparishcouncil.org.uk” (1.47). We strongly advocate the use of official email addresses by all elected members and staff for council work. We have teamed up with the Government Digital Service (GDS), the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) to recommend using an official gov.uk email domain. The **ICO factsheet** states that “councils must process data securely, which may be more difficult to achieve if it is being processed through personal email accounts”. There are some significant reasons for using official, rather than personal, email addresses:

- Official correspondence should reflect the professionalism of the council. An official email address enhances the credibility of the sender and the council itself. Emails sent from gov.uk addresses are less likely to be sent to spam or blocked and more likely to be read and responded to quickly.
- With an official email address, changes in council staff or members are easier to manage. Compliance with the council’s legal obligations around data protection is more straightforward; information can be retained or archived appropriately. Before closure, the clerk can complete administrative tasks, such as accessing historic emails/data. Residents will not be confused, and former staff or members will not accidentally receive council-related emails.
- By separating your personal life from your professional life, you ensure members of the public, partners, and suppliers understand you are emailing them in your role as a councillor or clerk. Recipients will be clear about who the email is from and in what capacity it is being sent.
- Suppose a subject access or freedom of information request is made, and then all emails to and from that account about that request may need to be reviewed and/or released. Using a personal email account can be a complex and invasive process. Using an official account protects your personal information and makes managing such a request straightforward.

- Council email accounts facilitate the creation and maintenance of official records. This is crucial for the proper functioning of the council, for auditing purposes, transparency, and accountability. It helps track decisions, discussions, and other vital communications.
- Official gov.uk email addresses are continuously monitored by central government for potential security vulnerabilities and give better legal protection because they're based in a UK jurisdiction.

How much does a gov.uk domain cost?

- The wholesale cost of a gov.uk domain has reduced significantly and is now in line with other domains.
- The cost to the council depends on the services the council takes alongside the domain name. Always check that you are only buying services that your council needs.
- Approved registrars have different price points, with some offering incentives to switch, so it is worth shopping around.
- Councils should get at least three different quotes before they choose a registrar and ask for a full breakdown of costs, as prices can vary.
- As a rule, keeping your existing website and opting for a simple webmail service, as opposed to one of the big suppliers like Microsoft, is cheaper. You do not have to buy a new website to get a new domain or comply with accessibility laws if doing so places a disproportionate burden on the authority. However, you must include an **accessibility statement** on your website and review it regularly.
- Ask around, speak to other councillors and clerks who have switched to gov.uk recently and ask what they paid.

Support to help you switch to a gov.uk email address

- There is comprehensive guidance on **moving your parish council to a gov.uk domain** on the GOV.UK website. Set out in easy-to-follow steps, this guidance takes you through the whole process, from getting approval to the move to a gov.uk domain and understanding the services your parish or town council

needs, to choosing a registrar to set up your domain and being your point of contact if you need help. A list of suppliers who have experience of working with parish councils and have agreed to provide extra support to help you move to, or set up, a gov.uk domain can be found on the [**GOV.UK website**](#).

- You can also [**sign up for a 45-minute workshop for more information on moving to a gov.uk domain**](#).

Roles

While the parish or town council must decide to move to a gov.uk domain, it is the clerk's role to facilitate and manage the move. This is because the clerk is a permanent council staff member, and only they have the authority to complete some of the key steps required, such as being named the domain registrant.

Need help deciding your email address or website name?

- Website: acmeparish.gov.uk, acmeparishcouncil.gov.uk or acme-pc.gov.uk
- Councillor email addresses: cllr.firstname.lastname@xyz.gov.uk
- Clerk email addresses: clerk@xyz.gov.uk

Good practice in password management and email security

To comply with privacy and data protection rules, council staff must securely operate their email account. Here is some crucial advice on keeping your email account secure:

- Choose a strong password. [**The National Cyber Security Centre's guidance**](#) recommends combining three random words to create a strong password.
- Do not share your password with anyone else or write it down where others can find it.
- Use [**multi-factor authentication**](#) (MFA). This means providing additional information alongside your password to log in, providing the best security.
- Ensure your computer is password protected and automatically locks if you are away from it for more than five to 10 minutes. You can also lock it manually: on

Windows devices, this is usually done by pressing CTRL + ALT + DELETE at the same time.

- Do not routinely redirect council emails automatically from one account to another.
- Make sure other staff (where these exist), or the chair, know the process and who to contact in an emergency, such as a sudden absence. This is best achieved through contacting the IT/email provider and arranging for an out-of-office, with alternative contact details to be added to the inaccessible account, or by forwarding emails to someone else for a very limited period. As a precaution, you should not store crucial information that colleagues may need within your email system.
- Clerks should be able to get access to mailboxes if needed for specific purposes, for example, in the event of a Freedom of Information request. Clerks also need to be able to reset accounts and retain information in an inbox in the event of a change in council staff or members. Such access to emails should be properly managed, usually via your email host or IT provider, to ensure compliance with data protection. Providers should have clear instructions on who is able to request access or changes to accounts to maintain security and ensure all staff members and councillors have confidence in the privacy of their emails.
- We offer **online courses**, such as basic cybersecurity, password management, and phishing.

Useful links

- [**GOV.UK - Benefits of getting a .gov.uk domain**](#)
- [**GOV.UK - Moving your parish or town council to a .gov.uk domain**](#)
- [**Parish Council Domains Helper Service - Virtual workshop**](#)
- [**Practitioners' Guide 2025**](#)

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