Aylesford Parish Council
Cyber Security Policy

Policy brief & purpose

Aylesford Parish Council cyber security policy outlines our guidelines and provisions for preserving the security of our data and technology infrastructure.

The more we rely on technology to collect, store and manage information, the more vulnerable we become too severe security breaches. Human errors, hacker attacks and system malfunctions could cause great financial damage and may jeopardise Aylesford Parish Councils' reputation

For this reason, we have implemented a number of security measures. We have also prepared instructions that may help mitigate security risks. Aylesford Parish Council have outlined both provisions in this policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all our employees, contractors, volunteers and anyone who has permanent or temporary access to our systems and hardware.

Policy Elements

Confidential data is secret and valuable. Common examples are:

- Unpublished financial information
- Data of customers/partners/vendors
- Patents, formulas or new technologies
- Customer lists (existing and prospective)

All employees are obliged to protect this data. In this policy, Aylesford Parish Council will give their employees instructions on how to avoid security breaches.

Protect personal and company devices

When employees use their digital devices to access company emails or accounts, they introduce security risk to our data. Aylesford Parish Council advise employees to keep both their personal and any company-issued computer, tablet and cell phone secure. They can do this if they:

- Keep all devices password protected.
- Choose and upgrade a complete antivirus software.
- Ensure they do not leave their devices exposed or unattended.
- Install security updates of browsers and systems monthly or as soon as updates are available.
- Log into company accounts and systems through secure and private networks only.
- We also advise our employees to avoid accessing internal systems and accounts from other people's devices or lending their own devices to others.

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Review May 2027

Keep emails safe

Emails often host scams and malicious software (e.g., worms.) To avoid virus infection or data theft, Aylesford Parish Council instructs employees to:

- Avoid opening attachments and clicking on links when the content is not adequately explained (e.g., “watch this video, it’s amazing.”)
- Be suspicious of clickbait titles (e.g., offering prizes, advice.)
- Check email and names of people they received a message from to ensure they are legitimate.
- Look for inconsistencies or give-aways (e.g., grammar mistakes, capital letters, excessive number of exclamation marks.)
- If an employee isn’t sure that an email, they received is safe, they can refer to management

Manage passwords properly

Password leaks are dangerous since they can compromise Aylesford Parish Council entire infrastructure. Not only should passwords be secure, so they won’t be easily hacked, but they should also remain secret. For this reason, Aylesford Parish Council advise employees to:

- Choose passwords with at least eight characters (including capital and lower-case letters, numbers and symbols) and avoid information that can be easily guessed (e.g. birthdays.)
- Remember passwords instead of writing them down. If employees need to write their passwords, they are obliged to keep the paper or digital document confidential and destroy it when their work is done.
- Exchange credentials only when absolutely necessary. When exchanging them in-person isn’t possible, employees should prefer the phone instead of email, and only if they personally recognise the person they are talking to.
- Change their passwords every two months.

Transfer data securely

Transferring data introduces security risk. Employees must:

- Avoid transferring sensitive data (e.g., customer information, employee records) to other devices or accounts unless absolutely necessary. When mass transfer of such data is needed, Aylesford Parish Council request employees to ask for help from its computer management company.
- Share confidential data over the company network/ system and not over public Wi-Fi or private connection.
- Ensure that the recipients of the data are properly authorised people or organisations and have adequate security policies.
- Report scams, privacy breaches and hacking attempts

Aylesford Parish Council need to know about scams, breaches and malware so it can better protect the infrastructure.

For this reason, we advise our employees to report perceived attacks, suspicious emails or phishing attempts as soon as possible to management so that Aylesford Parish Council can investigate promptly, resolve the issue and send an alert when necessary.

Management is responsible for advising employees on how to detect scam emails. Aylesford Parish Council encourage our employees to reach out to them with any questions or concerns.

Additional measures

To reduce the likelihood of security breaches, Aylesford Parish Council also instruct employees to:

- Turn off their screens and lock their devices when leaving their desks.
- Report stolen or damaged equipment as soon as possible.
- Change all account passwords at once when a device is stolen.
- Report a perceived threat or possible security weakness in company systems.
- Refrain from downloading suspicious, unauthorised or illegal software on their company equipment.
- Avoid accessing suspicious websites.

Aylesford Parish Council also expect our employees to comply with our social media and internet usage policy.

Aylesford Parish Council should:

- Install firewalls, anti-malware software and access authentication systems.
- Arrange for security training to all employees.
- Inform employees regularly about new scam emails or viruses and ways to combat them.
- Investigate security breaches thoroughly.
- Follow this policies provisions as other employees do.

Remote employees

Remote employees must follow this policy's instructions too. Since they will be accessing Aylesford Parish Council systems from a distance, they are obliged to follow all data encryption, protection standards and settings, and ensure their private network is secure.

Aylesford Parish Council encourage them to seek advice from management.

Disciplinary Action

Aylesford Parish Council expect all employees to always follow this policy and those who cause security breaches may face disciplinary action:

- First-time, unintentional, small-scale security breach: Aylesford Parish Council be may issue a verbal warning and train the employee on security.
- Intentional, repeated or large-scale breaches (which cause severe damage): We will invoke more severe disciplinary action up to and including termination
- We will examine each incident on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, employees who are observed to disregard Aylesford Parish Council security instructions will face progressive discipline, even if their behaviour hasn't resulted in a security breach.

Take security seriously

Everyone, from Aylesford Parish Council, customers and partners to our employees and contractors, should feel that their data is safe. The only way to gain their trust is to proactively protect Aylesford Parish Council systems and databases. Aylesford Parish Council can all contribute to this by being vigilant and keeping cyber security top of the mind.

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