

# Town Council Communication Strategy Review Report

## Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an in-depth analysis of the current communication landscape within the Town Council and propose recommendations for enhancing efficiency and compliance with UK GDPR legislation. The review underscores the challenges posed through using personal email accounts for official communication and highlights the imperative to transition to Office 365 to mitigate security risks and improve data protection measures.

## 1. Introduction:

Effective communication lies at the heart of the Town Council's operations, facilitating collaboration and decision-making processes. However, the reliance on personal email accounts for official correspondence creates inefficiencies, presents significant security concerns and raises compliance issues with UK GDPR legislation.

## 2. Current Communication Landscape:

- **gov.uk Accounts:** The use of .gov.uk email addresses incurs charges. This financial aspect needs consideration in the context of budgetary constraints.
- **Challenges with Current Email System:** The existing email system experiences issues such as email overload and missed attachments, which necessitate the exploration of a more robust solution.
- **Colbek Web Services:** Colbek's provides webmaster services. There have been minor issues such as broken links, which necessitate attention to maintain an effective online presence.
- **Digital Media Policy:** The Digital Media Policy outlines guidelines for social media usage and online communication, emphasizing the importance of adhering to data protection regulations.  
<https://kenilworthweb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/11.-Digital-and-Social-Media.pdf>
- **Inbound Communications:** Typically reach the council by email, phone and post.

## 3. Identified Challenges:

**Efficiency Issues with Email Communication:** The current email system within the Town Council faces significant efficiency challenges. Email overload and missed attachments are more likely. This could result in delays in decision-making, miscommunication among council members, and hindrance in tracking important information.

**Implications of Poor Email Communication:** Inefficient email communication can lead to several detrimental consequences for the Town Council. It increases the likelihood of important messages being overlooked or lost in the clutter of inboxes, resulting in delayed responses to inquiries, missed deadlines, and ultimately, a breakdown in communication between council members and with external stakeholders. Moreover, reliance on email as the primary mode of communication inhibits effective collaboration and hampers the sharing of critical information in a timely manner, thereby impeding the council's ability to address community needs promptly and efficiently.

**GDPR Compliance Concerns:** The use of third party accounts for official communication and authentication exposes Kenilworth Town Council Staff and Councillors to significant GDPR compliance risks. Individuals often inadvertently grant access to third-party services when using personal email accounts, potentially exposing sensitive data to unauthorized access or breaches. Moreover, the lack of control over personal email accounts makes it challenging to ensure compliance with GDPR requirements, such as data minimization, encryption, and secure storage of personal information, thereby exposing the Town Council to legal and reputational risks.

**General Security Risks:** In addition to GDPR compliance concerns, the use of personal email accounts for official communication presents broader security risks to the Town Council. Personal email accounts may lack the robust security features and protocols necessary to safeguard sensitive information against cyber threats, such as phishing attacks, malware infections, and unauthorized access attempts. This exposes the council to the risk of data breaches, financial losses, and damage to its reputation, undermining public trust and confidence in its ability to protect confidential information.

**Fragmented Communication Channels:** The absence of a centralized communication platform exacerbates communication challenges within the Town Council. Fragmented communication channels hinder efficient information sharing and collaboration among council members, which can lead to duplication of efforts and confusion.

**Lack of Standardization in Email Addresses:** The use of disparate email addresses with external domains and third party email accounts complicates email management and raises concerns about data security and identity verification. Standardizing email addresses under the @kenilworth.org domain would facilitate email management, enhance data protection measures, and establish a unified communication identity for the Town Council.

## 4. Proposed Solutions:

- **Transition to email provided by Office 365:** To mitigate security risks and enhance data protection measures and ensure compliance with GDPR legislation it is important to transition to first party email provision. The recommendation of this group is for all KTC staff and councillors to receive an Office 365 account, including email provision. This platform offers comprehensive email management features and robust security protocols to safeguard sensitive information.
- **Utilization of Teams:** Teams serves as a secure platform for internal communication, enabling real-time collaboration, threaded conversation and group-level document management while ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

- **Email Address Standardization:** Standardizing email addresses under the @kenilworth.org domain enhances security and establishes a unified communication identity, bolstering compliance with UK GDPR legislation.
- **Digital Signage Exploration:** Exploring digital signage options, including noticeboards in town or in the library, can augment communication with the community while adhering to data protection guidelines.

## 5. Cost Implications:

- £4.90 per person per month
- 17 council members + 3 Council Officers = 20 seats.
- = £98 per month
- = £1176 per year

Colbek have requested a one off payment to support migration of existing Google accounts used by KTC office: £2200

This cost could be offset by the number of existing seats and deprecation of services made redundant, for example existing cloud storage solutions (£72 per month for Google Cloud)

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/business/compare-all-microsoft-365-business-products>

## 6. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Town Council's communication strategy requires urgent modernization to address security risks and ensure compliance with UK GDPR legislation. Transitioning to Office 365 and implementing robust data protection measures are crucial steps towards safeguarding sensitive information and maintaining the trust of constituents.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Town Council prioritizes the adoption of Office 365 and implements the proposed solutions outlined in this report to mitigate security risks, enhance data protection measures, and ensure compliance with UK GDPR legislation.

## Addendum:

Since the publication of this report, guidance on transference to a .gov.uk domain for our web provision has been received from Central Government. This has previously been raised by this group and it is pertinent to tackle both issues concurrently, to avoid later revisions.

Revisions:

- Cost implications should include £150 in the first year for .gov.uk domain name registration and £80 per year thereafter. There is a £100 grant we should be eligible for to offset some of this cost.
- Implementation planning should include the assignment of .gov.uk email addresses and to the new office365 accounts.
- Colbek migration cost should be itemised, to identify those migration activities included/discluded.
- Costings for a migration including .gov.uk and Office365 should be put forward to council for approval once the revised comprehensive plan has been confirmed between the Communication Strategy Task & Finish Group, The Town Council Clerks and Colbek.