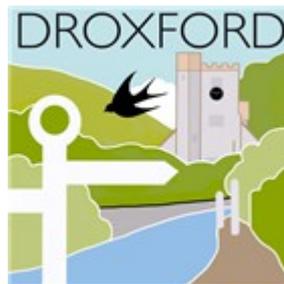


Droxford Parish Council

A Local Guide for New Councillors

March 2017



[Droxford Village Community](#)

Introduction

The aim of this document is to give new councillors an insight and guide to the day to day workings and practices of Droxford Parish Council (DPC). It will, hopefully, also be a useful reference point for the more experienced councillors. This guide should be used in conjunction with the [Good Councillor's Guide 2016](#) and the Droxford Community website, [policies](#) page.

Given the need to meet statutory requirements, details on how the council is organised and run may appear rather dry and prescriptive. In reality, whilst the council always operates within published guidelines and statutes we also ensure we do so in a way that is rewarding, enjoyable and as engaging as possible.

The information contained within this document is correct at the time of writing. You should be aware that some of the 'rules and regulations' that govern the 'running' of the council are set in statute (law) and cannot be changed.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Council as a Body

Droxford Parish Council when at its full complement consists of seven councillors and a clerk. The councillors are appointed to offices (jobs) each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which in Droxford proceeds the Annual Parish Meeting (APM). The AGM will be the first meeting you attend as an elected councillor. At this meeting members of the council will elect its officers, the first being to appoint a Chair. You will be required to sign a formal declaration of acceptance of office, sign an agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct and provide a Declaration of Interests. You cannot act as a councillor until you have signed these agreements. Members also appoint a Vice Chair and members of working groups for Finance, Planning; Open Spaces, Cemetery & Allotments; Roads, Transport & Highways; Strategic Planning; Footpaths and various other representatives. You will find more information on the roles of officers and Working Groups further on in this guide.

Councillors as Individuals

Role: Councillors are elected by the electors of the parish every four years, or can be co-opted by the council between elections if a vacancy for a councillor arises. A councillor's role is to listen to and represent the views and interests of the community as a whole through being well informed on local issues and by consultation with local people. A councillor acts in a voluntary capacity for and on behalf of the community.

Responsibilities: A councillor is part of a 'corporate body' and must work with all members of the council to make legal and responsible decisions as a whole body. A councillor should work in partnership with, and appreciate the importance of the role of, the clerk and other employees of the council. All councillors must be aware of their obligation to abide by the council's 'code of conduct'.

Duties: A councillor must attend meetings and/or working groups on a regular basis having prepared beforehand by studying the agenda. They should take an active part in meetings to form a best judgement for the needs of the community and abide by majority decisions. A councillor should maintain proper standards of behaviour and not bring the council into disrepute and act openly and transparently in the public's interest.

Skills/Training: Councillors have many and varied skills and interests they can offer to the council as a body. These skills can frequently be put to best use through the committee system. It is anticipated that all new councillors will attend a basic training course provided by the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC). The course is held in Winchester, and the clerk will liaise with you over a suitable date for you to attend. Councillors are also offered the opportunity to attend other training events, conferences and courses over the course of their tenure. The Parish Council can reimburse training costs for these events. Councillors and the Chair are not paid any allowances. There is no specific allotted time a councillor works per week. It is for the individual councillor to decide how to make the best use of their time and skills for the benefit of the community. As a general rule of thumb, most councillors allocate a couple of hours a week.

The Chair

Role: The Chair of the parish council is first among equals. Their authority is created by statute and, if present, is the person that presides at a council meeting and has a second or casting vote. The Chair is appointed annually by vote of the parish council.

Responsibilities and duties

Main Task: The Chair should work in partnership with the clerk to ensure that the council's proceedings are carried out promptly, clearly and lawfully.

Team Work: The Chair should bond the councillors into an effective team, delegating tasks through the Working Groups and responsible officers. The Chair will need to work collaboratively with the Vice-Chair.

Public Relations: The Chair is the public face of the council and speaks on behalf of the council as a body, giving a corporate view. The Chair must ensure that all council proceedings are transparent.

Council Meetings: The Chair should consult with the clerk, to ensure that meetings are held on a regular basis, on the content of the agenda, and that councillors are provided

with sufficient data to make informed decisions. The Chair should remain impartial during proceedings and should try to involve all councillors in debate whilst emphasising the need for brevity and relevance. In the event of non-attendance at a particular meeting, the Vice-Chair will stand in and take on the responsibilities of the Chair.

The Clerk

The clerk is employed by the council to provide professional and administrative support to the council.

Proper Officer: The clerk is normally the 'proper officer' for the council. In law this is interpreted as the appropriate officer for a relevant function, i.e. for finance as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

Responsibilities & Duties: The clerk's main responsibility is to carry out the policies and decisions of the council as a body. The clerk should be an independent and objective servant of the council, able to guide and advise the council in matters of law and procedure. It is usual for the council to 'delegate power' to the clerk enabling the clerk to make decisions on behalf of the council in an emergency situation. These powers should be written into the council's Financial and Standing Orders. The clerk's duties should be clearly defined in a contract of employment and job description.

Skills: A clerk should possess good administrative, secretarial and bookkeeping skills. Being a clerk can be likened to running a small business. Frequently, clerks to small councils work from home and therefore have sole responsibility for managing their workload and time and that of any other staff (if applicable). Clerks need to keep up to date with all developments that are relevant to the council's work, and should be willing therefore to attend training courses and carry out research on behalf of the council.

Clerk's Terms & Conditions: The clerk's hours and salary are reviewed annually. Due to the nature of her job, s/he manages their working hours flexibly with their availability posted on the website for members of the public. The clerk is remunerated for the use of their home as an office, for all travelling expenses and miscellaneous costs, supported by receipts.

Procedures

Meetings: The Parish Council holds 11 full council meetings per year, with the exception of August. The elected representatives for Hampshire County Council and the District Councillors will endeavour to attend full council meetings. The APM is held in April/May of each year, dependent on local or general elections being held at this time. Working Group meetings are held on an ad hoc basis throughout the year to support the running of the full council meetings. Further information is available from the clerk. You will be invited to join one or more of these depending on any specific skills or interests you have. On occasion, DPC holds an 'Open Meeting' whereby all residents of the Parish are invited to attend. This is usually in order to discuss an item of significant interest or importance within the Parish.

Format for meetings: Full council meetings are held in Droxford Village Hall on the third Thursday of the month and start at 7.30 pm, unless otherwise agreed, and finish at approximately 9.30 pm. With the exception of August, when there is no meeting.

Agenda: It is the clerk's responsibility to issue a summons to councillors to attend a meeting, to provide the Agenda for the meeting and to ensure procedures are adhered to. In practice, the clerk and the Chair liaise preceding the full council meeting, to agree on the agenda for the meeting. Councillors are able to request items be added to the agenda in advance of it being circulated to the members and posted on the website on the Friday preceding the full council meeting the following week. It is a requirement by law that the agenda is displayed a least three clear days before the meeting. The majority of day-to-day correspondence is managed by email.

Meeting Procedures

Adjournment for public participation: At the specific agenda item, the meeting is adjourned for 10 minutes to allow participation of members of the public (it is requirement of law that all meetings are open to members of the public).

Apologies for Absence: Apologies should always be sent in advance to the Clerk; in an emergency it is acceptable to send an apology via the Chairman or another Councillor.

Declarations of Interest: Councillors should refer to their 'Codes of Conduct' for more information on this matter. If ever in doubt seek advice from the clerk before the meeting.

The meeting continues following the published agenda. It is usually possible to fit in any urgent matter that has arisen since the publication of the agenda, but cannot legally result in an action. Routine matters must be held over until the next meeting. Please note that 'Any Other Business' is not a legal agenda item for Parish Council meetings.

Minutes of the meeting: The clerk makes notes during the meeting; these notes are produced as minutes and circulated to all councillors, published on the website and made available for the public to inspect on the village noticeboard. The minutes are a brief account of the proceedings (not a verbatim account). From time to time an error is made in recording the minutes. Amendments to the minutes are generally made when they are circulated in their final draft format. Occasionally, they will be amended at the following full council meeting before being formally approved by the council. The minutes are usually published within ten working days of a meeting.

Financial Regulations

The Council's financial procedures are regulated by the Government's Accounts and Audit Regulations, the Parish Council's Financial Regulations, Statement of Internal Controls and the internal auditor. The council has an online account with Unity Bank where payments are made electronically or by cheque. There are three authorised signatories for the account.

Income: The bulk of the council's income is generated from the 'Precept' and is set by the Parish Council on an annual basis. It comprises an element of the council tax raised by Hampshire County Council for the delivery of local services. The Precept is awarded to the Parish Council in two stages: April and September of each year.

Accounting: DPC operates a Receipts and Payments form of accounting on Excel spreadsheet. The accounts are reported on a monthly basis, and reconciled on a quarterly and annual basis. The clerk/RFO meets with the council's Internal Auditor on a twice yearly basis; once to complete a 'six monthly' audit check and again at the end of the financial year for a full audit.

Internal Auditor: An internal auditor is appointed by the Parish Council on an annual basis to complete the annual audit required by external auditors appointed by the Audit Commission. The process is currently under review for parish councils with a turnover of under £200,000.

Working Groups

Reasons for the Groups: The Parish Council covers a large amount of business and it has become impractical to deal with it in a single monthly meeting; agendas would become unmanageable and meetings too lengthy. Thus, work is delegated to Working Groups (WG), which report back to the council and is then formally minuted at the next full council meeting.

Finance WG: All councillors share the responsibility for the council's finances. Finances are managed by the clerk/RFO. The Finance & Audit WG's role is to scrutinize - ensuring that the RFO is acting within the law, to assist in producing a draft annual budget for presentation and acceptance by the full council and to meet when necessary to discuss major financial transactions and variations to the annual budget.

Strategic Planning WG: The WG consists of all councillors and meets on an as needed-basis during the year. It has been set up to establish large capital projects that have been identified by consultation or feedback from residents. It has a long-term goal to raise funds either by loans, grants, donations, or the precept in order to achieve its aims.

Parish Council Collaboration: The Parish Council endeavours to work closely with other parishes on points of mutual benefit.

Officers and Representatives

Planning: Generates a monthly report to be presented at the full council meeting for discussion. The report incorporates enforcement and appeals.

Footpath, cemetery & allotments: Works closely with the clerk to ensure maintenance of footpaths within the parish and collection of fees for cemetery and allotments.

Highways: Liaises with Hampshire Highways Department for the safety of the residents and members of the public.

Open spaces: Management of the recreation ground, Village Green and Parish Green.

Assets owned by the Parish Council

The [Asset Register](#) is published on the website

Glossary, Acronyms & other useful information

Precept – Parish Council's Income raised through the Council Tax

Standing Orders – The rules that govern the running of the Council

Financial Regulations - The rules that govern the Council's financial actions

APCM – Annual Parish Council Meeting

APM – Annual Parish Meeting

DPC – Droxford Parish Council

HCC – Hampshire County Council

HALC – Hampshire Association of Local Councils

HCC – Hampshire County Council

HPFA – Hampshire Playing Fields Association

NALC – National Association of Local Councils

PC – Parish Council

RFO – Responsible Financial Officer

SDNP – South Downs National Park

WCC – Winchester City Council

Links

Droxford Village Community website: <http://www.droxfordweb.co.uk>

Hampshire County Council: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/azindex/>

Hampshire Association of Local Councils: <http://www.hampshirealc.org.uk>

National Association of Local Councils: <http://www.nalc.gov.uk>

South Downs National Park: <http://southdowns.gov.uk>