

## KEY FACTS

### Guidance & purpose of a Parish Council meeting open to the public. (as per 1972 Local Govt Act - embodied in Standing Orders)

1) A Council is required to hold at least three public meetings and an AGM per year.

The AGM is held in May and is usually followed immediately afterwards by one of the 3 standard meetings.

The public are invited to attend the meetings and observe the process of their Councillors resolving (voting upon) the agenda items that have been prepared for this particular meeting and result from previous Council committee work on the various topics.

Under direction of the Chair members of the public can ask clarification questions at various points in meeting. Although it should be understood that this is purely for the public's clarification and is not a working part of the process nor will it alter the result of the Council's work they are observing.

To influence a council's future work, members of the parish should contact their council, preferably in writing via the web site, which could result in new topics being placed on forthcoming meeting agendas, if Councillors believe there is sufficient public interest.

#### 2) **At the AGM**

In May each year, under direction of the Chair, the various roles in the Council for the coming year are confirmed - Chair, Vice Chair (Clerk/RFO), RR Liaison, communications etc: The process requires each role to be proposed and then seconded prior to receiving a majority vote from Councillors present.

It is not unusual for Councillors who have performed these various roles to be re-elected into them again.

Once offices have been allocated, the new /re-elected Chair proceeds through the agenda

i) Minutes of the previous meeting are passed /resolved

ii) Confirmation that all Parish Councillors have submitted a Declaration of interests

iii) To receive an annual finance update and the closing performance against budget for the year just ended and confirm its information for inclusion in the AGAR returns.

iv) Reconfirm, Standing Orders, annual governance, and finance policy.

#### 3) **AT ORDINARY MEETINGS:**

The public are invited to observe the Council at work in these meetings as the Councillors in quorum vote through or reject agenda items that have been previously prepared by the Clerk in consultation with Councillors.

Such agendas will be placed in the public domain at least three clear days before the meeting. In the public domain is defined as notice boards and web site.

- 4) During these meetings, at prescribed times under the direction of the Chair, the public may ask questions about a particular topic, as that topic is arrived at on the Agenda.

It should be noted that this public invitation is not part of the decision making process of that particular meeting or topic, but can be seen more as an opportunity for the public to add to the knowledge or seek clarity about a topic once it has been presented by the Councillor who is leading or sponsoring the topic.

After the presentation of the Agenda topic Councillors vote to resolve (approve) or reject.

Public questions are strictly time limited and during the working part of the meeting as a total across all topics should not equate to more than 15 minutes. (ie only 2 or 3 minutes for each person on each topic)

- 5) Once all the agenda topics have been resolved or rejected by Councillors, and the prepared work of that meeting is effectively ended, the Chair can manage an open forum on past questions raised during a topic or new questions the public want the Council to be aware of, or issues for future possible consideration.

The public or others must speak by addressing the Chair when invited to do so to maintain order and clarity and to avoid people speaking over one another.

- 6) In topic questions or items raised in the public forum at the end of meeting, discussions or questions should not be considered as ways for the public to try and influence the Agenda of the next meeting.

It is important to understand that the most effective way to try and influence a future Agenda topic is for the public to interact with the Clerk and Councillors between meetings and preferably via succinct e-mail.

The Clerk ultimately decides in consultation with Councillors what is placed on the Agenda of the next meeting and there is no automatic right for your submission to be included, although if a topic receives several supporters it is more likely to find its way onto an agenda.

- 7) **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS:** The proceedings and resolutions of the council are recorded by the Clerk, and then after consultation with Councillors prepared with a financial update and performance against action plan grid, which will be posted into the public domain as "DRAFT" minutes, awaiting ratification at the next Open Parish Meeting at which point they become "Resolved minutes" which are signed off by the Chair in the meeting.

It should be noted that the minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting but show a summary and action points relevant for the successful and suitable working of the Parish Council.