



Warbleton Parish Councillor – Information for new Councillors (September 2021)

Congratulation and welcome to Warbleton Parish Council. This information is designed to help you find your way around your new role and responsibilities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The Council

Warbleton Parish Council has 11 councillors. Elections are held every 4 years, with the next due in May 2023. The parish is divided into 2 wards: Warbleton (9 elected seats) and Bodle Street Green (2 elected seats). If there are insufficient candidates at the election, or a councillor stands down mid term, then the Council may “co-opt” new councillors.

All councillors, whether elected or co-opted must stand for re-election in May 2023, if they wish to continue to serve on the Parish Council.

Councillors

Elected – Warbleton

Andy Long
Richard Reading
Chris Wells

Elected – Bodle Street Green

Steve Williamson

Co-opted

Mike Smythe
Celia Davies
Karen Cook
Dave Powell
Keith Graham
Roy Iremonger

Council and Committee Structure

a) Parish Council

The Parish Council meets 10 times a year, normally on the 3rd Thursday of a month (excluding August and December). A calendar of all meetings is on the website. All councillors are members of the full Parish Council. If they cannot attend a meeting, they must submit apologies, with reasons, to the Parish Clerk in advance of the meeting.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman are elected annually at the Annual Statutory Meeting (ASM) in May each year. Currently, the elected Chairman is Andy Long and Vice Chairman is Mike Smythe.

b) Committee Membership

There are 4 Committees. Councillors are elected to Committees by the full Parish Council. This takes place annually at the Annual Statutory Meeting (ASM in May) or from time to time if there are vacancies. Current Committee Chairman for 2020/21 are:

- CIL – Chairman: Celia Davies
- Environment - Chairman: Andy Long
- Planning and Devt - Chairman: Roy Iremonger
- Finance and General Purposes - Chairman: Steve Williamson

The P&D committee meets every 3 weeks, whilst other committees normally meet 4 times per year.

It is encouraged and hoped that Councillors will volunteer to sit on those committees where they have an interest and/or expertise or where it is helpful to maintain the correct numbers.

c) Attendance at Meetings

Councillors are expected to attend full Council and any Committees on which they sit, unless there are specific reasons not to do so (eg work commitments, holiday, sickness). If you are unable to attend a meeting you must advise the Parish Clerk as soon as possible, with reasons.

d) Quorum

For any Council and Committee to proceed it must be quorate. There is a requirement for a third of the membership to attend, minimum 3 councillors.

Personal information

As a councillor, it is expected that members of the public can be able to contact you about Parish Council issues. Contact details are provided on the website.

You should advise the Parish Clerk as soon as possible what information you are happy to have displayed. Normally this would be:

Name, address, contact phone number, email address, photograph.

You should set up an email address for Parish Council business. This will be styled: cllrsurnamewarbletonpc@gmail.com

The Council is currently reviewing its data protection policy, but you should not retain any electronic or paper information which contains personal information of anyone outside the council. The Parish clerk will guide you through this process

Governance

The Parish Council has a set of policies and procedures, which governs how it operates. These were all reviewed in 2020/21.

As a new councillor you are expected to understand these policies and follow them. However, it is recommended that you make sure you have initially read and understood the following:

- Code of Conduct – how you are expected to act as a councillor and to avoid any conflict of interest
- Standing Orders – how the Council/Committees operate

- Financial Regulations – how the Council’s finances are managed and what authority the Council/Committees have to spend money.

Personal or Prejudicial Interest

As councillors you are expected to maintain the highest standards of integrity. If there is any conflict of interest in any subject under discussion, you must declare it. It is important to understand these obligations and full details are found in the Code of Conduct. Whilst rare, if a councillor has a prejudicial interest, they cannot participate in a debate or vote on a motion.

Audit

A key part of governance is the annual internal audit. This is undertaken by an independent auditor, shortly after the financial year end on 31st March.

It is recommended that new councillors read the audit reports for 2019/20 and 2020/21, which are available on the website.

If a Parish Council has either income or expenditure exceeding £25,000 the Council is subject to an external audit review by PKF Littlejohn.

The Parish Council has to complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) each year. The AGAR submission must be agreed at a full Council meeting. It is important that all councillors have an understanding of the governance requirements for the Council, although the detailed work will be prepared by the RFO/Parish Clerk, checked by the Chairman FGP Committee and recommended by FGP Committee.

Notice of Public Rights

Following completion of the audit and submission of the AGAR, the Parish Council is required to issue a Notice of Public Rights. This gives members of the public the right to inspect various financial documents held by the Council. There are specific timescales for how long and when the Notice should be issued. The Notice is placed on the website and noticeboards.

Budget

In September annually the Chairman of the FGP Committee will ask the Chairman/Vice Chairman and Committee Chairman for any items they would like to include within the budget process. This is reviewed by the FGP Committee and a recommendation is passed to the full Council in January. Only the full Council can approve the budget.

The FGP will also recommend to full Council how the budget should be financed, which can be through the precept and/or reserves.

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)/Parish Clerk will provide a monthly update on actual and planned expenditure and a bank reconciliation. This is independently checked by the Chairman of the FGP Committee.

There are strict rules/legislation governing what a Parish Council may spend money on. Any external expenditure must be under a “Power” which the Parish Council holds. The RFO is responsible for ensuring the Council complies.

Committees can agree expenditure of up to £500 as long as it part of the annual budget. If any expenditure is above this amount or is unbudgeted, it can only be agreed by the full Council.

Precept

The precept is the amount of tax raised each year from adult residents in the Parish. The precept must be agreed by mid January and advised to Wealden DC. The precept is raised as part of Council Tax by Wealden DC (itemised separately on Council Tax bills) and paid to Warbleton PC in 2 equal amount in April and October annually.

Unlike District Councils, Parish Councils have freedom to set the precept at a level to reflect their budgetary plans for the following financial year.

In 2021/22, the precept will raise £20,002, which matches the budget.

Reserves

The Parish Council holds some financial reserves as a contingency for unexpected items that might arise. It is normally recommended that Councils hold reserves equivalent to c50% of the annual budget. Warbleton PC agreed in January 2021 to maintain existing reserves between 60-70% of the current budget.

CIL

The Parish Council also receives, from time to time, a Community Infrastructure Levy from Wealden DC based on historic planning applications which have been approved and commenced. Amounts are unknown in advance, but paid half yearly, if applicable. The Council currently holds c£13,000 of CIL funds.

The CIL Committee conducted a community survey in 2020 to establish priorities of residents in the Parish. This can be found on the website.

Noticeboards and website

There are strict legal requirements about what information must be posted on a Parish Council noticeboard (and website). For example, all meeting agenda must be posted 3 clear days before a meeting – not including the day of posting, Sundays/bank holidays or the day of the meeting. A failure to publish an agenda renders the meeting invalid.

Warbleton Parish Council has 3 noticeboards at: village green, Rushlake Green; village hall, Bodle Street Green; near Warbleton Church.

A new website (www.warbletonparishcouncil.co.uk) was launched in 2020, and is maintained by the Parish Clerk/Chairman FGP.

Further Reading

Further useful information:

AGAR

<https://www.pkf-l.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/practitioners-guide-2020-1.pdf>

<https://www.pkf-l.com/services/limited-assurance-regime/submission-requirements/>

CIL

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>

Transparency Code for Smaller authorities

[https://www.pkf-l.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/transparency code for smaller authorities.pdf](https://www.pkf-l.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/transparency_code_for_smaller_authorities.pdf)

National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC)

<https://esalc.co.uk>

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk>

Ask the Parish Clerk for the passwords to access these sites