

PEASEDOWN ST. JOHN PARISH COUNCIL PROTOCOL FOR NEW COUNCILLOR INDUCTION

Written: January 2019

Adopted: Full Council on 19th February 2019 (minute C295 – 19/02/2019 refers)

Last Reviewed:

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on being elected or co-opted as a Parish Councillor and welcome to Peasedown St John Parish Council.

This document is to help you understand your role and obligations as a councillor and to explain the rules and procedures for council business.

If you have any queries during your term of office your first point of contact is the Parish Clerk who can be contacted via:

Tanya West – Parish Clerk and RFO
Beacon Hall
French Close
Peasedown St John
Bath
BA2 8SN

Tel. 01761 433686

Out of hours 07583 091284

General Office Email – clerk@peasedownstjohnparishcouncil.gov.uk

Direct Email – twest@psjpc.onmicrosoft.com

PRELIMINARIES

Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Once elected/co-opted, you must sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which validates your appointment and confirms that you agree to fulfil your duties of office, including maintaining a level of behaviour whenever you are on Council business; a Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct is based on the 7 principles of public life (Nolan Principles). Councillors have a duty to disclose their interests that are pecuniary or otherwise relevant, as part of this Code.

The Code of Conduct also applies to any non-councillors, so long as they are entitled to vote as a member of a committee.

Members of the public can make an official complaint if they believe the behaviour of a member has breached the Code of Conduct. Conduct complaints are submitted to the Unitary Authority for investigation.



The signing of your Declaration of Acceptance of Office may be done in the Parish Office or immediately prior to a Council meeting. It should be done in the presence of the Clerk.

Register of Interests

As a councillor you are required to complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which is held by the Clerk, shared with the Monitoring Officer at B&NES Council and published on the Parish Council website (signature redacted). You are required to declare interests held by yourself and your spouse/civil partner under the following headings:

- Employment;
- Sponsorship;
- Contracts held with the Council;
- Land held in the parish (owned, rented or leased);
- Licences;
- Tenancies;
- Securities and Capital held in bodies which have a place of business in the parish;
- Gifts and hospitality.

Further guidance and clarification on this Register and the Code of Conduct can be found in the induction pack.

Website

The Parish Council has a website which includes a page on Councillors:

<http://www.peasedownstjohnparishcouncil.gov.uk/TheCouncil.aspx>

Please provide the Clerk with some text that you would like included on this page (generally people give a little about their background and what they hope to concentrate on/achieve whilst serving on the council).

You will also need to arrange a mutually convenient time with the Clerk to have your photograph taken for the web page (this can be done before/after a meeting).

Parish Council Email Address and Login

Once you have signed your Acceptance of Office you will be issued (by the Clerk) with a Parish Council specific email address.

Due to General Data Protection Regulations all Parish Council related correspondence should be made through this address; personal/work email addresses must not be used.

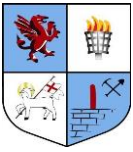
The below link will take you to the home page of the Parish Council's intranet site; so, if you click on the link below it should prompt you to log in.

<https://psjpc.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Home.aspx>

within the site there some areas you will access regularly, these are detailed below.

There is a 'Meeting Records Library' which can be located via the following link:

<https://psjpc.sharepoint.com/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?viewpath=%2FShared%20Documents%2FForms%2FAllItems.aspx>



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Here you will find the pre-reading for meetings, minutes and agendas, also helpful reference documents for further reading. Each Committee has its own folder, which contains sub-folders for each meeting.

The Asset Register can be located via the following link:

<https://psjpc.sharepoint.com/Lists/Asset%20Register/AllItems.aspx>

All the Parish Council's assets are included on this list. You will be assigned some items, such as street furniture, street lights, bench seats, etc. (usually those that are closest to where you live) for you to undertake annual verification checks.

The Actions Register can be located via the 'Planner' application. This is a log of all the actions decided at each meeting which is regularly updated for each item. Some will be a one-action response, others will be more complex projects with many actions and tasks assigned to several people. If you wish to be kept informed of any updates to an action, then you must assign yourself to it.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

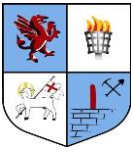
Statutory Powers and Duties

All Parish Council activities must be linked to a legal 'power' (something they choose to do) or 'duty' (something they are obliged to do). In all cases, both Members and Officers must work within the law. The Clerk will act as advisor to the Council to ensure that it always acts legally. Any activity undertaken ultra vires could have legal/financial consequences.

Assets and Services

Peasedown St John Parish Council provides, manages and maintains several facilities and services in the village, including:

- Public open spaces: the Village Green, the Tump and Ecewiche Green
- Ashgrove Cemetery
- The Recreation Field, including the football changing rooms and play areas
- Braysdown Lane Allotments
- Street lighting (126 lights are owned and funded by the Parish Council)
- Maintenance of footpaths
- The Council Office
- Parish newsletters
- Maintenance of roundabouts and flower beds
- Floral displays in hanging baskets and planters
- Festive lights and decorations
- Funding for the School Crossing Patrol
- BMX track and skate park
- Parish Council website and Facebook page
- Winter support for all residents - grit bins and the snow warden scheme
- The Beacon Field and Beacon Field play areas
- The Beacon Hall
- Litter bins and litter picking around the village
- Street furniture, including bench seats and the telephone kiosk in Carlingcott



The Role of Members

Members are collectively responsible for making Council policy, for which they are accountable to the electorate.

Members are not directly involved in the day-to-day provision of services to the public. This does not of course mean that there should be no contact between Members and the Clerk on such matters, and indeed, Members may often find that they are asked by electors to pursue matters on their behalf. However, Members have no executive authority, and will need to deal with all matters either through their collective Council membership or in liaison with the Clerk concerning a local problem.

It therefore follows that there are no circumstances where an individual Member can issue an instruction to the Clerk or a Contractor. Likewise, a Member must never act 'on behalf of the Council' in the organisation of any function or service. Particular care should be taken in letters/comments to the press, to ensure they understand that you speak as a 'Councillor in a personal capacity' and not on behalf of the Council as a whole. Generally, the Clerk, on behalf of the Council issues press statements.

The Role of the Clerk

The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council providing objective advice and ensuring that the Council is operating within the law. They are also the executor of Council policy, i.e. they carry out the instructions of the Council. Some of their main responsibilities include:

- Arranging meetings; including the writing of agendas, supporting paperwork and reports, minutes, publications etc.
- Responding to correspondence sent to the council.
- Actioning any decisions made by the Council.
- Researching into potential projects, issues raised, strategic plans.
- Event planning/facilitator/marshal.
- Project manager; facilities manager; services manager.
- To line manage other members of staff.
- To undertake any decisions delegated by the Council, particularly in urgent/emergency situations.

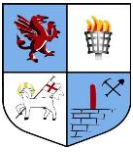
It should be noted that many Clerks are also the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) of the Council and are also responsible for the Council's finances, ensuring that they are managed in line with the Financial Regulations and relevant legislation.

The Role of the Chair

To preserve order and manage the running of council meetings. Also, to be the figurehead for the Council at civic events. The Chair is elected by the Council.

Some of their main responsibilities include:

- Liaising with the Clerk regarding the setting of agendas.
- Managing discussion at meetings ensuring that all members get the opportunity to put forward their comments/points of view and that voting is undertaken in line with Standing Orders.
- To make the casting vote at meetings when there is an equality of votes.
- To undertake a training course in Chairmanship.



MEETINGS

You can only attend your first meeting once you have completed your Declaration of Office and your Register of Interests.

You will receive a summons to attend meetings. This will be sent by email (at least three clear working days before the meeting) and will include an agenda for the meeting and a web link to the pre-reading papers. You should familiarise yourself with these items prior to the meeting.

You will sometimes notice that a report paper is marked 'CONFIDENTIAL'. Any information on such a report is to be treated as confidential and should not be divulged to anyone who is not a member of the Council; where the paper relates to a Committee meeting this may also include other councillors who are not members of that particular Committee.

The Council has a ten-minute public session at the beginning of every meeting; where members of the public can attend to express their view on matters relevant to the agenda or the parish in general.

If you wish to have an item included on an agenda for discussion, please contact the Clerk.

If you cannot attend a meeting, you should submit your apologies, as soon as possible, to the Clerk, specifying the reason for your absence. This will be reported to the Council at the meeting.

Full Council Meetings

Meetings are generally held once a month, they take place at Beacon Hall and commence at 7pm (unless otherwise specified). Some items will appear on the agenda each month e.g. planning applications, reports from Outside Bodies and Committees, etc. Other irregular items will be project work, consultations from B&NES Council, issues raised by residents etc.

Annual Meeting of the Full Council

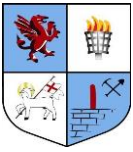
The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council is held in May. Its main purpose is to formalise policies and procedures for the year ahead. The agenda must include certain items, which includes:

- The election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the year;
- Confirmation of the Council's Standing Committees;
- Appointment of members to the Standing Committees;
- Appointment of representatives to Outside Bodies.

Standing Committee Meetings

You will receive copies of all agendas, and most papers, relating to the Council's Standing Committees. If you have been formally appointed to one of these Committees, you will be expected to attend (the summons will list your name). However, if you are not appointed and you still wish to attend one of these meetings, you will need to contact the Chair of that Committee and request their permission (please also remember to advise the Clerk so the meeting rooms can be set up to accommodate your attendance).

If permission is granted, you will be able to attend that meeting and join in the discussions, but you will be unable to vote.



Sub-Committee Meetings

Sub-Committees are appointed by those Standing Committees that may need to make urgent decisions, for example, the Burial Sub-Committee or the Personnel Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee meetings are generally only called when such decisions are required to be made as the '3 clear day notice' period for the issuing of the agenda does not apply to Sub-Committee meetings.

Advisory Panel Meetings

The Parish Council makes use of less formal groups called Advisory Panels to aid the process of information gathering and free discussion in order to support their governance decisions. These panels can benefit from the presence of residents who are not councillors and from external consultants. While less formal than Council and its committees, they are nevertheless formally constituted with terms of reference, statements of aims and other agreed characteristics.

Advisory Panels may be formed for limited periods or may be on-going. Their formation and reporting both have procedures that must be followed.

Annual Village Meeting

The Annual Village Meeting is a meeting of the Peasedown St. John electorate which must be run and paid for by the Parish Council, but it is not a formal council meeting. The purpose is to enable the electors to discuss parish affairs and is a good opportunity for the Parish Council to report on their actions over the past year also for community groups to provide reports on their activities. Any registered elector may ask a question of the Council (often submitted in advance).

Minutes

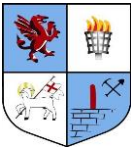
After each meeting minutes are issued by the Clerk. These should be circulated within eight working days of the meeting. They will also be published on the Parish Council's website. All Councillors should read these minutes and report any discrepancies back to the Clerk as soon as possible.

OTHER ASSISTANCE

Reference Information and Further Reading

All new councillors will be provided with access to the following documents forming an induction pack:

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Committee Structure and Terms of Reference and Delegations Document
- Code of Conduct and the 7 Principles of Public Life
- Guidance document on the Code of Conduct and Register of Interests (currently in draft progress)
- Calendar of Council Meetings
- Protocol on Councillor and Officer Relations
- NALC publication Good Councillors' Guide
- A list of Statutory Powers and Duties
- Policy and Strategic Documentation Register



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- Latest Precept leaflet and accounts
- Latest Parish Council newsletter

Training

You will be expected to attend an ALCA-run training session on 'Being a Good Councillor'. This shall be undertaken within the first three months from taking office. The Clerk will provide possible training dates.

Provision of additional training will depend on training needs and the budget available.

Mentoring

An existing (or previously experienced) councillor will be agreed to be a mentor for new councillors. Where possible, the new councillor chooses who they would like to mentor them from those councillors who have volunteered.

The role of the mentor will be to:

- Review queries on agenda items prior to meetings;
- Provide background information on any key items being discussed;
- Sit next to the new Councillor during meetings so as to provide any support required; and
- Review the meetings with the new Councillor after each meeting to ensure they understood the conduct of the meeting and the debate.

The mentor will be nominated for a period of three Full Council meetings. At the end of this period the mentor and the new Councillor will discuss whether any additional mentoring is required.

The Chairs of each Standing Committee will explain to the new Councillor the role of their Committee and the key issues for the committee. Conversations with all Chairs should be undertaken within the first three months from taking office.

At the end of the initial mentoring period the Chair and the new Councillor will agree what training, if any, the new Councillor would like and, where possible, this will be arranged through the Clerk or taken to the next available Council meeting for consideration.