

Easebourne Parish Council

Councillor Participation Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is not to provide guidance about conduct which is covered in detail in the 'Code of Conduct', but to outline the required and expected participation of an Easebourne Parish Councillor. Included in this policy are their duties, responsibilities, general input into the role and involvement in the everyday operation of the Parish Council.

Constitution of a Parish Council

A Council must consist of the Council as an individual, a Clerk, a Chairman, Councillors and a Responsible Financial Officer. Each of these roles are defined in legislation. A Council, its members and staff have a number of 'duties' which they must carry out and 'responsibilities' to ensure they serve residents and the environs appropriately.

The Role of a Parish Councillor

Councillors are not paid employees and must commit to attend all Parish Council meetings and the meetings of sub-committees and working parties they sit on. A Councillor is required to make a declaration of acceptance when initially elected or co-opted in the presence of the Council's proper officer, and is required to complete a 'register of interests' under sub-sections 26-34 of the Localism Act 2011.

Councillors are legally separated from the Council, this means that they are not liable as individuals for the actions of the Council. The Parish Council's lawful acts, assets and liabilities are its own and not those of its members.

Councillors main responsibilities are to represent the views, interests and concerns of the parishes residents. A Councillor must ensure these views are considered when debating issues and making decisions at formal Council meetings.

At each meeting a Councillor will have an opportunity to declare an interest in any items on meeting agenda as appropriate and must then withdraw from any debate on that matter or voting in connection with it. Individual Councillors do not have powers to make decisions on behalf of the Council.

Motivations of becoming a Parish Councillor

The role of a Parish Councillor as with many voluntary roles in other organisations has a significant commitment attached to it and therefore all potential Councillors should give extensive consideration to this before standing for election or co-option. The motivation for becoming a Councillor may be questioned during difficult periods or when the work-load is substantial, but the role is often extremely rewarding, particularly when improvements in the lives of residents can be seen due to a Parish Council initiative, a local issue resolved, an appropriate decision taken or a project brought to fruition. Time spent as a Parish Councillor can provide the satisfaction of a job well-done and a future knowing that a part has been played in the community's well-being.

Expectations of a Parish Councillor

Easebourne Parish Council is a committed and busy Council and therefore requires each of its Councillors (maximum number eleven) to play their part in ensuring it can perform its functions and deliver appropriate services and facilities to its residents. Attending meetings is just one of these duties and is likely to be around a third of the total input required from a Parish Councillor.

It is important that a Parish Council has a diverse selection of Councillors both to ensure it properly represents the residents and that there is the range of skills and knowledge to make appropriate decisions, carry out some practical

tasks and ensure that the views of the community are made known to statutory and commercial service providers as and when required.

Attendance at Full Parish Council Meetings, Extraordinary Meetings, Annual Meetings, Committee Meetings and Meetings of Working Parties

The full Parish Council currently meets once in January, March, April, May, July September and November. Meetings last up to two hours and all Parish Councillors are required to attend. Extraordinary meetings are called as and when necessary and Councillors are also required to attend these meetings.

The Parish Council also has a Finance Committee, which meets in public monthly, and a Planning Committee which meets every three to four weeks dependent upon the planning applications which have been submitted and also in public. The Parish Council also has an Emergency and Winter Planning lead Councillor, a Footpath Working Party, a Highways Working Party, a Communications Working Party, a Volunteer Working Party and other project working parties dependent upon projects in progress. Parish Councillors will be required to sit on at least two Committees or Working Parties, attend all meetings and make a full contribution including completing any research required or practical tasks necessary to progress the work of those committees or working parties.

Parish Councillors must do all they can to attend scheduled and extraordinary meetings and if they are unable to attend, an apology with a reason must be given to the Parish Clerk in advance of the meeting. If a Parish Councillor does not attend and does not provide an apology, their absence will be recorded in the minutes as 'absent without apology'. Continuous absence or erratic attendance without apology or apologies given without an appropriate reason may result in a Councillor being asked to reconsider their commitment to the role of a Parish Councillor. If a Parish Councillor is absent for a six-month continuous period without a 'statutory excuse' they will automatically cease to be a member.

Projects – Research and Writing, and Practical Tasks

The Parish Council will have a number of projects scheduled or in progress at any one time. Such projects may include tasks to be undertaken such as research and writing, surveying the views of residents, identifying potential contractors, or practical projects such as the annual litter pick or burial ground tidy, or delivering leaflets. Parish Councillors will be expected to share the Parish Council's workload and take part in a number of projects, particularly when a Councillor has a specific expertise or skill which will enhance or improve a project or outcome.

Events

The Parish Council will take part in local events such as the village fair. Parish Councillors will be expected to be present at such events and therefore must make every effort to keep their diaries free and undertake any necessary preparation prior to the event.

External Meetings and Conferences

Parish Councillors will be required to attend occasional external meetings and conferences. Such attendances will be shared as equally as possible amongst Councillors.

Training

Easebourne Parish Council has a Training Policy which outlines the training Councillors are expected to undertake including attending internal and external training courses.

Annual Review Meeting

Once a year, Councillors will meet individually with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to discuss their input during the last twelve months and how they would like to be involved in committees, working parties and projects over the coming year. Councillors are also expected to initiate new ideas and projects to be considered by the Parish Council for the benefit of the residents and the environs of the parish.

This Policy was approved and adopted by Easebourne Parish Council on 19th September 2017 and a review will take place in September 2018.

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