

WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council Standing Orders Meeting held at 'The Old Stables'

Tuesday 8.00 15th January 2019

Present

Chairman – Jim Donahue

Vice Chair – Rachel Hatcher

Councillors – Cllr Warren Beard

Cllr Sarah Hanfrey

Cllr Katherine Higley

Clerk – Ina Chantry

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr David Bowen and Cllr Keith Brooks sent their apologies. Cllr Higley explained due to unforeseen circumstances she might have to leave the meeting early.

2. GDPR

This item was brought forward on the agenda. It was agreed by everyone that an extended session on GDPR was needed. Cllr Higley explained Data Protection Officers (DPO) can be shared between parishes and that parish councils can also buy in relevant skills. Cllr Hanfrey added some law firms can also be employed to support parish DPOs. Cllr Higley volunteered to develop an action list for the DPO. It was stated that in a previous council meeting councillors had been asked to take on the role of DPO but no one had come forward.

Action: Cllr Higley to develop action list for Parish Council DPO

Action: Parish Clerk to share Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) GDPR check list with Cllr Higley

Action: Parish Clerk to email all councilors to have written confirmation they are happy to have their names on the website. The email is to make it clear their email addresses are stored.

3. Meeting Cycle

Cllr Donahue shared a proposed monthly calendar that demonstrated the meetings cycle. Items from parish councilors are to be included on the agenda. If there are any questions about motions not being seconded, the Clerk or Chairman will ask for someone to second the motion before putting it on the agenda.

Agenda items are to be limited to required standing items e.g. finance, planning etc. and all other items to be proposed by the councilors. A 10 to 15 minute standing item should include Action Review that can cover all previous issues the Council has agreed to follow-up on. The Chairman should prioritize actions to review that

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may require discussion in the meeting. Councillors can use this agenda item to provide updates on any previous action.

Updates from working groups should be provided in writing and shared with council members before the meeting. If agreed, this update can be added to the minutes. It was agreed that working groups updated the Parish Council generally once a quarter, with one WG providing an update each meeting.

Extenuating circumstances can mean urgent items can be raised by the Chair less than three days before the meeting. These would be urgent items for the village, such as late planning applications that require a swift resolution, and not just items for discussion that were submitted late.

4. Meeting Debates

When a motion is being presented it is important that people can speak without interruption. Healthy debate is good. It was agreed that we should try to keep to the Standing Order rule that the proposer has up to three minutes to speak and each councilor should have the opportunity to comment once on the motion or to propose and amendment. It was felt this would maintain momentum, succinctness and focus on the motion.

It was agreed the proposer of a motion really needed to be present, however, it was recognized the seconder could well be in a position to propose clearly.

5. Norms of Communication

This is in reference to emails and meetings. Both Cllr Hanfrey and Cllr Hatcher felt councilors should make recommendations and give possible solutions with supporting information to maintain focus on the agenda item. Evidence could come from a range of sources e.g. village survey.

Cllr Donahue reiterated councilors are all volunteers, councilor emails must be used for parish council business, and should not be critical of an individual or each other. Councillors should feel empowered to challenge inappropriate behavior in accordance with the Nolan Principles, our Code of Conduct, and our Standing Orders. The Standing Orders that define the actions a Chairman can take during a meeting to address disorderly behavior were reviewed.

The following proposed language to be added to a new section of the Standing Orders:

Communication between councillors during meeting should confirm to the following norms:

- Be respectful to other councillors.
- Be supportive of other councillors.
- If there is a disagreement on views, we should refrain from criticizing, but instead offer a constructive recommendation.
- Those making recommendations should provide solutions with supporting information wherever possible.
- Discussions should stay on the topic of the agenda item.

Email communications from councillors should use the following norms:

- Councilor email addresses must be used for parish council business.
- Councilor emails are generally only appropriate for information sharing.
- Councillors are free to share views, but debates on issues should be held in meetings where decisions can be made, and not via email. If a debate on a topic is required, a councillor should raise a motion for and agenda item.

- Emails should not be critical of an individual.
- Emails should be respectful in tone.
- Emails raising issues should also offer constructive recommendations where possible.
- Any email requesting an 'action' or a 'response' from one or more councillors should have this clearly stated in the heading and body of the email e.g. Action Required: Review Planning Application, otherwise emails will be considered for information only.

Cllr Beard stated he felt there was a lack of integration within the Parish Council. He suggested two formal meetings a quarter with the third becoming a community meeting. Cllr Hatcher suggested finishing one meeting up to an hour early and moving to one of the two local pubs to have informal discussions and build community links.

6. Mission Statement

It was agreed that the following Mission Statement should be read out at the beginning of each meeting:

'As a Parish Council, along with the members of the public here today, we have volunteered our time because we care about our village. Our meeting today is to make decisions as a team and share progress on our joint mission to continually improve and look after our village.'

Action: Jim to raise the communication norms and mission statement as a motion to amend Standing Orders at the next meeting.

Action: Jim to update Standing Order summary presentation with changes agreed at this meeting.

7. Planning Application Review

Cllr Donahue explained the allocation of planning applications within the parish council. It was agreed Cllr Higley and Cllr Beard would be allocated areas in the next few months. Cllr Hanfrey stated the Conservation Plan would highlight some key planning areas to be considered.

Action: Parish Clerk to develop a checklist for councilors to use when checking a planning application.

Action: Parish Clerk to contact SODC regarding planning requirements and what they mean.

Meeting closed 10.00pm

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Date _____

Next meeting 8.00pm 21st February 2019, The Village Hall