



Kingshurst Parish Council

Induction Pack for new ParishCouncillors

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Congratulations on your election or co-option and welcome to Kingshurst Parish Council.

You are now part of the democratic framework, representing your community at the grassroots level. Local Councils are an essential part of local democracy and have a vital role in acting on behalf of communities they represent by:

- giving views, on behalf of the community, on planning applications and other proposals that affect their area
- undertaking projects and schemes that benefit local residents
- working in partnership with other bodies to achieve benefits for the parish
- alerting relevant authorities to problems that arise or work needing to be done

The Council is made up of 12 Councillors, who are elected or Co-opted.

This Guide is to help you through the early stages of working with council colleagues and the Clerk.

Councillor training and induction

This is to welcome new elected and co-opted Councillors onto Kingshurst Parish Council. If you were elected at a local election your term of office will be for four years. If you were co-opted onto the Council you will serve until the next local elections are held.

It is hoped that the following information will give you an insight into what being a Councillor will entail.

The Council

The Parish Council is a corporate body with a legal existence of its own quite separate from that of its members. Its decisions are the responsibility of the whole body. The Council has been granted powers by Parliament and is the first tier of local government. It can be taken to court and, as a body, is responsible for its actions. No individual Councillor can undertake any action or enter into any agreements with third parties without the prior consent of the whole council

The Council's main source of income is known as the 'precept' which is collected by Solihull District Council.

In order to take up Council duties, and as a reminder, all councilors are required to complete the following, either at the first meeting of the council or when elected:

- Acceptance of Office
- Code of conduct
- Register of disclosable pecuniary interests

SECTION A – GETTING STARTED

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 fulfill your duties of office, including maintaining a level of behavior whenever you are on Council business; a Code of Conduct

Declarations of Acceptance of Office You cannot act in your office as Councillor (including participating in any meetings of the Council or any Committees) until you have signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The relevant form will be available from the clerk at the library on the 9th May, or at the next Parish Council meeting for you to sign in my presence. (18th May)

Registering Financial and Other Interests

All Members of local authorities are statutorily required to register with their authority various financial and other interests.

A registration form is attached for you to complete and return to me within 28 days of signing your declaration.

Full instructions are given on the form regarding its completion. I will ensure that the form, when complete, is lodged with the Council's Monitoring Officer who keeps all forms from Parish Councillors on a public register. The form will also be included on the

County and Parish Council's website. You are required to register any change to the interests previously registered, within 28 days of becoming aware of such a change. If you have any changes to register at any time please inform me so I can arrange for Solihull Council to forward the appropriate form for completion. Please note that Councillors are responsible for keeping their Register entries up to date. The fact that you have registered a particular interest in writing, does not absolve you from making a disclosure of that interest at meetings should circumstances arise. In fact, it should remind you of the need to make a disclosure.

Code of Conduct

The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for its Members, which reflects the compulsory model code prescribed by the Government.

The Code of Conduct is based on the 7 principles of public life. These are **selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.**

Councillors must follow these principles in all they do as a Parish Councillor and be held accountable for all their actions. If they do not, any parishioner or fellow Councillor can make a complaint about them to the Governance Officer at Solihull Council.

A copy of the Code is attached. It is essential that you read this, and become familiar with its contents, before you begin to act as a Councillor

Attending your first meeting

The first meeting you will be able to attend is Thursday 18th May 2023, which takes place at 7.00pm at Seeds of Hope Overgreen drive B37 6EY

An agenda and papers will be sent to you at least 3 clear days before the meeting via e-mail. If you have any queries regarding any item please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk. If it is an election year your first meeting will take place within 14 days of the election

SECTION B – GENERAL INFORMATION

The Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Council

The **Annual Parish Meeting** is not a council meeting. It is a meeting of the Parish electors. Electors can set the agenda, and in practice these meetings often celebrate

local activities and debate current issues in the community. Members will therefore find it useful to be present.

The Chairman calls the Annual Parish Meeting and, if present, will chair it.

The Annual Parish Meeting will usually be held in May at 6pm in the Seeds of Hope before the Annual Meeting of the Council.

The **Annual Meeting of the Council (AGM)** is the first meeting of the Council year at which the chairman for the forthcoming year is elected; this is held on the second Thursday in May and begins at 7.00pm. (Unless an election year where the meeting will take place within 14 days of the election).

More about meetings

Calendar of Meetings

The Parish Council meeting dates are the 2nd Thursday of every other month (except August)

Committees and Sub-committees

Year commencing 23/24, arranged at AGM.

An agenda is produced by the Parish Clerk for each meeting, and copies of the agenda and supporting material are e-mailed to Members before the date of the meeting, giving you the statutory 3 clear days notice. You must give your apologies to the Clerk before the meeting takes place, if you miss 6 consecutive meetings without prior agreement from the Council, you will be disqualified.

Agenda, Reports and Minutes

When you receive agenda and reports for meetings, you will sometimes find a report marked "CONFIDENTIAL". Any information in this report is to be treated as confidential and should not be divulged to anyone who is not an Elected Member of the Council.

After each meeting Minutes are prepared by the Parish Clerk. These are circulated to Members before the next meeting. The Council also has a system of public participation time at its meetings.

Councillors can be automatically disqualified if they do not attend meetings for six consecutive months.

To avoid this councillors need to submit reasons for their non attendance and their council has to accept the reasons for non-attendance. If their reasons are not accepted they face automatic disqualification.

Who to contact

The Parish Clerk – Paula Coyle - can be contacted on **07865294345** or email kingshurstparishcouncil@gmail.com The Parish Clerk will deal with any complaints, or requests for action or matters concerning the business of the Council.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

The Council is obliged by law to make information on its activities available to the public on request. It maintains a scheme known as a Publication Scheme, which is available to the general public and contains classes of information, which are routinely available to the public. All information held by the Council will be available to the public except that in certain cases an exemption may apply which could enable the Council to refuse to supply information. Information held by Members of the Council will also be covered by FOI and therefore Members may be approached to produce their records if a specific enquiry warrants it.

SECTION C – ROLES OF MEMBERS AND THE CLERK

The Respective Roles of Members and the Parish Clerk

Introduction

This short note has been prepared with the intention of giving newly elected / co-opted Members of the Council some guidance as to the respective roles of both Members and the Clerk in helping the Council to function, and on how these roles work in practice.

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 Parish 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 you speak as a “Parish Councillor” and not on behalf of the Council as a whole.

Generally, the Chairman or Clerk on behalf of the Council issues Press statements.

Role of the Clerk

The Clerk is the professional officer employed by the Council as a whole to provide professional advice and administrative support. The clerk prepares the council for taking decisions, before, during and after meetings, implements decisions and protects the Council as a Corporate Body. Responsibilities range across organising meetings and events, managing sites, facilities, staff and finance, to marketing, negotiating and public relations.

The role of the Parish Clerk is twofold, for which she is accountable to the Council.

Firstly, she is the professional advisor to the Council on matters of policy and, secondly, the executor of Council policy, i.e. in carrying out the instructions of the Council.

The Clerk is also the RFO – Responsible Financial Officer.

The duties of the RFO are to ensure that the Council’s financial records and activities comply with the ‘proper practices’ referred to in the Accounts and Audit regulations.

Statutory Powers and Duties

The Council derives its powers from statute. A few of these are mandatory (i.e. the Council must carry them out) but most are discretionary (i.e. the Council can carry them out if it wishes). In all cases, both Members and Officers must work within the law.

Summary

Members are responsible for making Council policy, but do not have executive authority.

The Clerk is responsible for advising Members on the making of Council policy and for ensuring that such policy is carried out. Many matters are delegated to the Clerk, who can make decisions on them working within established Council policies.

The day-to-day management of services is the responsibility of the Clerk. Both Members and the Clerk must work within the law.

Mutual respect between the Clerk and Members is essential in order for the Council to function effectively. Personal attacks on the Clerk should be avoided (and would be contrary to the Code of Conduct), as, under the convention of Local Government, Officers are unable to defend themselves from such comments in public.

SECTION E – GUIDANCE NOTES

Guidance Notes

Website

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

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

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.

Parish Activities

To be actively involved in all Parish events, activities held throughout the year.

List of important documents:

The three governing policy documents which provide procedural guidance for Council members and its clerk

- Code of Conduct/Acceptance of the Code of Conduct:

This is the most important document and all Councillors must read the Code of Conduct and sign the Acceptance form confirming that they will abide by its terms.

- Standing Orders: The Standing Orders are agreed and adopted by the Full Council and sets out the rules for the way in which the Council conducts all its business, proceedings and procurements. Some of the items contained in the Standing Orders (those in bold lettering) are mandatory ie covered by law. These are not the same as the policies of a Council but may refer to them. The Standing Orders sets out the procedures covering Full Council meetings and meetings of Committees including the number of councilors required for the meeting to be quorate.
- Financial Regulations The Financial Regulations are agreed and adopted by the Parish Council and govern the conduct of financial management by the Council. They may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council.

Other useful documents:

Terms of Reference for the Council and Committees of the Council:

This sets out the terms of reference for the Full Council and all the committees.

Kingshurst Parish Council members will normally be expected to serve on at least two of the committees appointed by the Full Council. No Committee

has any delegated powers, apart from the Planning and Finance Committee to allow comments on any planning applications to be submitted within a time frame

All recommendations made at Committee meetings must be considered and adopted by the Full Council, unless specific authority is granted by the Full Council to a committee to make a decision

Good Councillors Guide: This is a document drawn up by the National Association of Local Councillors which introduces the work of local councils and the part that Councillors play in the tier of local government which is closest to the people and is a useful reference booklet.

Training:

Councillors are elected at Parish Council elections held every four years. Following the elections training for new councillors is offered to all Council members **by Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC)**. Throughout the four year term of office, regular training is held for Councillors on various subjects and the Parish Council will fund the cost of attendance at any of these sessions.

Additional in house training will be carried out by the Clerk on items specific to the Parish Council i.e. budget setting .

Policies:

The Parish Council has a comprehensive list of policy documents both statutory and non-statutory which are reviewed regularly by the Council
kingshurstparishcouncil@gmail.com

[Kingshurst Parish Council - website](#)

Useful Publications

NALC's 'The Good Councillors Guide'

- [THE GOOD COUNCILLOR'S GUIDE 2018](#)
- 'Being a Good Employer – A Guide for Parish & Town Councils' NALC, SLCC- LGE
[Being a good employer](#)
- Governance and Accountability for Local Councils: A Practitioners'
[Governance and Accountability – ...ask your council](#)

