

## **TOPIC NOTE 3 – MEETINGS**

Council meetings are where Councillors play their part as decision makers. They are formal events where the public and press have a right to observe how the Council operates, the exception being when sensitive matters are discussed such as legal, contractual or staffing matters. A resolution must be passed at the meeting that such matters be discussed 'in camera'.

Decisions are normally called 'resolutions' and are normally made by the full Council and are 'corporate decisions'. Decision making can be delegated to Committees where they exist and sometimes to the Clerk. Such delegations must be recorded in the minutes and/or Standing Orders.

The Annual Parish Council Meeting takes place in May and, in an election year (every four years) the Council must meet on or within 14 days following the fourth day after the day of the election. There must, by law, be at least 3 other Council meetings in the year and in Broadbridge Heath there is a meeting every month on the first Monday **except** in August. The schedule is usually set at the beginning of the year but in an election year will be reviewed at the Annual Parish Council or subsequent meeting.

The Annual Parish Meeting may take place on any date between 1 March and 1 June inclusive. This is not a Council meeting, but is hosted by the Parish Council. It is an opportunity for parish electors to speak and set the agenda to consider local issues.

### **Meetings, Conduct of Business, Standing Orders**

Rules about the way meetings must be run, some of which are set by legislation, are contained within the Council's **Standing Orders**.

Standing Orders set out the order of business, rules about debate, voting requirements, and the procedures for public participation. Members are asked to read Standing Orders to ensure they are aware of the protocol on the conduct of meetings. Broadbridge Heath Parish Council Standing Orders are reviewed annually.

### **Council Meetings**

At least three working days (excluding bank holidays and Sundays) before a meeting a public notice of the meeting will be placed on the Council's noticeboards. The agenda and accompanying papers will be published to the Council's website.

At the same time, members will receive by email a '*summons*' to attend. Topics requiring a decision cannot be added to the agenda after its issue.

An invitation is also sent by e-mail to the county and district Councillors for the parish to attend to present a report on their respective roles.

If you wish to raise an item for inclusion on the agenda, please use the Motion Request Form on the Sharepoint – available here: **[Agenda Request Form.docx](#)**

It is the responsibility of the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to set the agenda and as much information should be provided to members to ensure good decisions are made.

Agenda items headed 'matters arising' or 'any other business' do not give sufficient information on which to base decisions and are not used. Councillors should not be expected to make decisions or decide on expenditure without sufficient warning, research or preparation.

### **Agenda and Reports**

- The agenda and associated supporting reports will be published no later than 3 clear days before the meeting, and a summons will be issued by email/meeting request
- Upon receipt read the agenda and associated reports to identify key items
- Make sure you understand what actions are being proposed
- Think about what the result(s) will be of those actions are taken
- Are the costs involved justified?
- Think about whether there are any alternatives that could be explored
- If you have any queries, contact the Clerk, Chair or author of the report in advance of the meeting

### **Ahead of the Meeting**

Having read the agenda and associated documents in advance of the meeting as above:

- Identify the areas where you feel you have a contribution to make
- Prepare yourself – check your facts, the background – please ask if additional information is required
- Be aware of meeting procedures as set out in Standing Orders
- Remember it is your duty alone to declare an interest. If in doubt, ask the Clerk.

### **During the Meeting**

- Indicate a wish to speak by alerting the Chair
- Beware of bringing the council/yourself into disrepute

### **Apologies for Absence**

You have a duty to attend but if something prevents you doing so, please notify the Clerk as soon as possible so that your apology and reason can be recorded in the minutes. If you fail to attend six consecutive meetings without formal council approval you are disqualified and cease to be a Councillor.

### **After the Meeting**

It is the responsibility of the Clerk to write the minutes as a legal record of the Council's decisions which are confirmed by Council resolution and signed by the Chair at the next ordinary meeting. No discussion can take place on the minutes other than to their accuracy.

Minutes contain a heading and a decision at the least. They are not a verbatim record of discussions, but the Clerk is likely to minute any advice given. Councillors can request that their comments be recorded in the minutes and may also call for a recorded vote to be taken (see Standing Orders).

The Clerk aims to circulate the draft minutes for comment within two working weeks of the meeting in order that they can be published in draft well in advance of the next meeting.

**[All former meeting documents may be found on the website](#)**