Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Community Policy

Introduction

1 This is the Community Policy of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council and it, the Protocols, and the Guidance listed below, adopt the definitions in the Council's Policy Guidance and Glossary.

2 This Policy brings together a number of Policies, a Protocol, and the Guidance, previously held as separate documents or within another Policy, the edited texts of which, together with new texts created within the context of this Policy, form the Protocols and Guidance listed below:

- Appendix 1 - Community Engagement Protocol;
- Appendix 2 - Community Communication Protocol;
- Appendix 3 - Advertising and Fly Posting Protocol;
- Appendix 4 - Community Award Protocol;
- Appendix 5 - Community Grant Protocol;
- Appendix 6 - Biodiversity Protocol;
- Appendix 7 - Annual Parish Meeting (and Parish Meeting) Guidance;
- Appendix 8 - Elections and Co-Option Protocol.

Appendix 1 - Community Engagement Protocol

Introduction

1 This Protocol sets out how the Council will engage with the local community, encourage participation in Parish affairs, and seek the views of residents and other interested parties in relation to matters within its purview.

2 The Council recognises that effective community engagement is a two-way process involving, for example:

- listening to the community;
- seeking to understand local needs; and
- taking account of the communities view when developing Policies, setting priorities and making decisions.

3 The Council aims to develop an open and constructive relationship with the community, encouraging residents to take an interest in local affairs and to contribute to the wellbeing and development of the Parish.

Principles of Community Engagement

4 The Council will seek to ensure that its approach to community engagement is:

4.1 Open and transparent: providing clear information about matters under consideration and explaining how decisions are made;

4.2 Inclusive: making reasonable efforts to involve different sections of the community, including those who may not normally participate in Parish affairs;

4.3 Proportionate: choosing methods of engagement appropriate to the importance, nature and likely impact of the matter concerned;

4.4 Meaningful: giving people a genuine opportunity to express their views at a stage when those views can still influence the outcome;

4.5 Respectful: listening to differing opinions and treating contributions courteously and objectively;

4.6 Accountable: explaining, where appropriate, how feedback has been considered and why particular decisions have been reached.

Methods of Engagement

5 The Council may use a variety of methods to engage with residents, community organisations, businesses and other interested parties, including (but not limited to):

- in accordance with the Standing Orders:
  - setting aside time for public questions at the start of Meetings that are open to the public;
  - permitting, at the Meeting Chairman's discretion, members of the public to speak during a Meeting in relation to an item under discussion;
- holding public meetings and consultation events;
- undertaking surveys and questionnaires;

- inviting comment and feedback as more specifically detailed in the Community Communication Protocol (eg through the Website, Facebook, Bulletins, emailed notifications, noticeboards and the Annual Newsletter);
- attendance by Councillors at community events and other local activities;
- the Annual Parish Meeting and other relevant public meetings.

6 The Council will seek to use a combination of methods where appropriate, recognising that not everyone has access to, or regularly uses, digital communications (eg delivering hardcopies of Bulletins to certain senior residents).

7 The Council may also work with other organisations, including WBC, voluntary organisations and community groups, to facilitate engagement on matters of shared interest.

Consultation on Council Matters

8 The Council will consider whether community consultation or engagement is appropriate when developing significant new Policies, proposals, projects or initiatives which are likely to have an impact on the Parish or its residents.

9 The nature and extent of any engagement will be proportionate to the significance of the matter, eg in terms of community impact or expenditure.

10 Where consultation is undertaken, the Council will aim to:

10.1 explain clearly what is being proposed and why;

10.2 provide sufficient background information to enable people to express informed views;

10.3 identify the questions on which views are particularly sought;

10.4 allow a reasonable period for responses;

10.5 make clear how and by when responses should be submitted;

10.6 explain whether the Council is seeking views on a proposal which it can determine itself or on a matter where another authority or organisation has the final decision.

11 Consultation should take place at an appropriate stage of the decision making process – early enough to inform that process, but late enough to ensure that any questions raised are meaningful and relevant to the issues under discussion.

12 The Council will consider all relevant responses received within the consultation period, but:

- it will not necessarily be possible to accommodate every view expressed; and
- consultation should not be regarded as a referendum or a commitment to adopt the majority preference.

13 Where appropriate, the Council will publish or otherwise communicate the outcome of a consultation, including a summary of the responses received and an explanation of how the findings have informed its decision.

Community Initiatives and Partnerships

14 The Council recognises that community engagement extends beyond consultation on Council decisions, and also involves encouraging residents and local organisations to participate in activities and initiatives which benefit the Parish.

15 The Council will seek opportunities to:

15.1 support and encourage local community groups, voluntary organisations and other bodies and the volunteers working within them (see, in particular, the Community Award and Community Grant Protocols)

15.2 work in partnership with local organisations on events, activities and projects;

15.3 encourage residents to contribute ideas and take part in community initiatives and participate in local democracy;

15.4 identify opportunities for volunteers to become involved in projects which benefit the Parish.

15.5 promote awareness of local activities, facilities and opportunities for participation.

16 The Council may facilitate or support community events and initiatives, subject to available resources, Council priorities and any relevant Policies.

Accessibility and Inclusion

17 The Council wishes to encourage participation from all sections of the Parish community, irrespective of age, disability, background or personal circumstances (see also the Equal Opportunities Protocol to the Personnel Policy).

18 In arranging engagement activities, the Council will have regard, where reasonably practicable, to:

18.1 the accessibility and suitability of venues;

18.2 the timing and format of meetings and events;

18.3 the availability of non-digital methods of participation;

18.4 the use of clear and accessible language;

18.5 the needs of people who may face barriers to participation.

19 The Council will seek to avoid relying solely on responses from those who are already actively involved in Parish affairs, recognising the importance of hearing from a broad cross-section of the community.

Responsibilities

20 The Council, through its Committees and individual Councillors, will be responsible for identifying opportunities for community engagement within their respective areas of responsibility.

21 The Community Committee will have a particular role in developing and promoting the Council's approach to community engagement and identifying opportunities for wider community involvement.

22 The Clerk will support the practical organisation and administration of engagement activities, including the publication of consultation information and the collation of responses, as appropriate.

23 Individual Councillors are encouraged to maintain contact with residents and local organisations and to bring relevant issues, suggestions and feedback to the attention of the Council.

24 Any communication issued formally on behalf of the Council will remain subject to the provisions of the Community Communication Protocol and the Council's other relevant Policies and Protocols.

Feedback and Review

25 The Council will seek to provide feedback to participants following significant consultations or engagement activities, where appropriate.

26 The Council will periodically review its community engagement activities to assess whether they are reaching a sufficiently broad range of people and providing meaningful opportunities for participation.

27 The Council will consider what has worked well, what could be improved and whether different approaches are needed to encourage wider involvement.

Appendix 2 – Community Communication Protocol

Introduction

1 This Protocol sets out the Council's policy regarding communications by the Council with parishioners and the wider public.

2 This Protocol is to be read in conjunction with:

- the Code of Conduct and in particular the Communications Protocol appended to it;
- the Standing Orders and in particular those elements relating to Summonses, Agendas and Minutes;
- the Advertising and Fly Posting Protocol.

Communications generally

3 Contact details for the Council (address, email address and telephone number) will be advertised on:

- the "Official Noticeboards" (the wooden noticeboards adjacent to (a) the Library entrance, and (b) the Baobab – to be distinguished from the eight blue metal Parish noticeboards used for general notices);
- the Website;
- correspondence.

4 There shall be a facility for incoming callers to leave messages on the Parish telephone number, and where relevant messages should be responded to within two working days.

5 Formal notices (Summonses, Agendas, Minutes, official notices, etc) shall be displayed:

5.1 on the Official Noticeboards within the timescales required to comply with statute;

5.2 as notices (etc) on the Website; and

5.3 elsewhere as the Clerk may determine.

Email subscription list

6 The Council maintains a register of email addresses provided to it by parishioners and other interested persons who have signed up to receive, by electronic means, either/or both:

6.1 a periodic Council bulletin ("Bulletin"); and/or

6.2 general information of interest (eg media releases from WBC).

7 The Clerk shall maintain the register which shall be subject to the Council's Policies and Protocols relating to data maintenance and storage.

Publications and Media Releases

8 The Council Chairman and the Clerk are the Council's nominated Media Officers authorised to issue media releases and statements.

9 No other Member or Officer should issue public statements on behalf of the Council unless authorised by the Council Chairman or the Clerk.

10 A physical newsletter shall be produced at least once per year ("the Annual Newsletter"), generally following the Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Meeting, for such distribution as the Clerk in consultation with the Community Committee Chairman shall think fit.

11 The Community Committee shall determine the content and publication of the Annual Newsletter, Bulletins, etc, on behalf of the Council in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

12 Bulletins shall generally be distributed electronically in accordance with 6.1, but physical copies shall also be produced and made available to the public as the Clerk in consultation with the Community Committee Chairman shall think fit.

13 All other media releases, advertisements, notices, etc, shall be determined by the Clerk as deemed desirable:

13.1 on their own volition; or

13.2 following consultation with the Council Chairman; or

13.3 following a request from a Body or Body Chairman; and

13.4 shall be published as the Clerk thinks fit after any consultation deemed appropriate.

Social Media

14 The Clerk shall be responsible for posting on all Council managed or subscribed social media.

15 The Clerk shall ensure that posts (etc) by the Council on social media shall be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Appendix 3 – Advertising and Fly Posting Protocol

Introduction

1 The policy of the Council is to manage advertising and minimise fly posting within the Parish.

2 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 ("the 2007 Regulations"), the Council does not allow indiscriminate advertising / fly posting on telegraph poles, trees, street furniture, road signs, fences or highway verges etc. Advertising material which contravenes this Protocol may be removed by the Council.

3 In particular, the Council:

3.1 owns and manages eight (blue metal) notice boards within the Parish ("the Notice Boards");

3.2 uses two wooden noticeboards adjacent to (a) the Library entrance, and (b) the Baobab ("the "Official Noticeboards") in accordance with the Community Communication Protocol;

3.3 controls the use of the Fairground (and, thus, manages any displays on the Fairground fence ("the Fence")).

Permitted advertisers and priority – Notice Boards and Fence

4 Commercial advertising is not permitted except in the limited circumstances stated below.

5 Non-commercial advertising will be permitted from the organisations below, in the following order of priority where space is limited:

- the Council;
- charitable or not-for-profit organisations based within the Parish;
- charitable or not-for-profit organisations based outside the Parish, running events within the Parish;
- charitable or not-for-profit organisations located outside the Parish, running events in an adjacent parish.

Notice Boards - locations

6 The Notice Boards are available to advertise events or matters of local interest in accordance with this Protocol and are located as follows:

- Victoria Road (outside Mortimer Library);
- Victoria Road (at the entrance to College Piece);
- St Catherine's Hill (opposite the entrance to Sweetzer's Piece);
- Windmill Road (near to the entrance to Spring Lane);
- The Street (at the entrance to the Fairground Car Park);
- The Street (outside St Mary's School);
- West End Road car park;

- Alfred Palmer Memorial Field (at the entrance)

Notice Boards – permitted advertising

7 Format and display

7.1 The maximum size permitted for an advertisement placed on a Notice Board is A4 (297mm x 210mm).

7.2 Paper notices should be laminated to protect them from the weather.

7.3 Only push pins/drawing pins may be used to fix advertisements to Notice Boards – staples may not be used.

8 Display period

8.1 Council notices are not subject to period restrictions.

8.2 Where agreed by the Council or its Community Committee, advertising for a major village event (eg Fun Day) may be permitted at any time leading up to the event.

8.3 An advertisement for a dated event other than a major village event may be displayed from 21 days prior to the event.

8.4 Undated / ongoing event advertisements may be placed on a Notice Board for a maximum of 14 days but must then be removed.

The Fence

9 The Council manages temporary notices on the Fence.

10 Such notices must meet the requirement of Class 3D of the 2007 Regulations, ie they relate to any local event being held for charitable purposes but not for any commercial purpose*.

11 Commercial and profit-making organisations are not allowed to advertise on the Fence, *with the exception that temporary notices announcing the visit of a travelling circus or fair are permitted (these have deemed consent under Class 3F of the 2007 Regulations).

12 Organisations wishing to advertise on the Fence must apply, in writing and separately for each event, to the Clerk to the Council to obtain permission – such permission will detail where the notice is to be located.

13 Unless agreed by the Council or its Community Committee, notices may be displayed for a maximum of 14 days in advance of the event.

14 Any advertising material must be secured using a method which will not damage the Fence (ties, string, etc) - the use of nails, screws, etc, is not permitted.

15 The maximum size of any rigid notice is A0 (1189 mm x 841mm).

16 The maximum size of any banner is 2.4m x 1m.

Removal of advertisements

17 Event notices must be removed:

17.1 from the Fence by the day following the event;

17.2 from Notice Boards as soon as possible following the event.

18 Advertisements that fail to comply with this Protocol may be removed and destroyed.

Other Locations within the Parish

19 Advertisements placed at other locations within the Parish must comply with the five 'standard conditions' of the 2007 Regulations, and:

- have the permission of the owner of the site on which they are displayed (this includes the West Berkshire Council Highway Department if the sign is placed on highway land);
- be kept clean and tidy;
- be kept in a safe condition;
- not obscure, or hinder the interpretation of official road, rail, waterway or aircraft signs, or otherwise make hazardous the use of these types of transport;
- be removed carefully where so required by the planning authority.

20 Thus, advertisements must not be attached to telegraph poles, trees, street furniture, road signs or fences.

21 The Council will assist WBC in the removal of unauthorised signs.

Appendix 4 – Community Award Protocol

Introduction

1 The Council has established the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award ("the Award") which may be awarded annually to recognise outstanding service by an individual, or more than one individual jointly, to the community of Stratfield Mortimer in accordance with the guidance below.

2 Unless there are reasons otherwise, the physical award will be a commissioned decorated plate ("the Plate") reflecting the interests of the Award recipient(s) ("the Recipient(s)").

3 The decision as to who, if anyone, to make the Award to and the nature of the physical award to be made shall be determined by a panel ("the Award Panel"), and:

3.1 subject to any conflicts of interest, the Award Panel will consist of the Council Chairman and Council Vice-Chairman, the Community Committee Chairman, and all past Chairmen of the Council that are Councillors (if any);

3.2 the Council Chairman shall chair the Award Panel;

3.3 the Award Panel will be treated as a Working Party of the Council, brought into existence annually for the single purpose of determining any Award.

Nominations

4 The Clerk in conjunction with the Community Committee shall control the nomination process and period, and ensure that the fact that nominations are open, and for what period, is communicated to the public (see guidance below).

5 Anyone, whether resident in the Parish or not, may nominate a person or persons to be (a) potential recipient(s) of the Award.

6 Serving members of the Council or WBC will not be eligible for nomination for their work as Councillors.

7 A nominee need not reside within the Parish.

Notification and Award Presentation

8 (A) successful nominee(s) shall be contacted by the Clerk and, if they indicate their willingness to accept the Award, the Clerk will take steps to agree the nature of, and commission, the Plate.

9 The presentation of the Award and the Plate will be made by the Council Chairman or their nominee, usually at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Guidance

- Posthumous nominations will not be considered.
- It is not possible to define the exact number of years of service necessary to qualify for nomination for an Award.
- Although an Award would normally be for voluntary work within the community, it is not intended to entirely preclude exceptional work for which remuneration in some form has already been received.

- Councillors could be eligible to receive an award for services other than those connected with Council work.
- Public notice of the Award and an invitation for nominations will normally be commenced in December or January to allow time for nominations to be received, the Recipient(s) to be identified, and the Plate to be commissioned.

Appendix 5 – Community Grant Protocol

Introduction

1 The Council has the power to award grants under its General Power of Competence and may from time to time allocate an annual sum into an Earmarked Reserve for that purpose and decide upon the maximum sum available per successful grant.

2 The Community Committee ("the Committee") shall, at such time or times as it may decide, consider applications for community grants in accordance with this Protocol from non-profit, voluntary, or charitable organisations which can demonstrate a clear need for financial support to achieve an objective in accordance with this Protocol.

3 There will be one round of applications per financial year, advertised via the Bulletin, the Annual Newsletter, Website, etc.

4 The award of any grant shall be at the Committee's sole discretion and based on the merits of the application, eligibility criteria, and the funds available – for the avoidance of any doubt, the Committee is not obliged to award a grant just because an application has been made.

5 This Protocol sets out:

- eligibility for funding;
- the application process;
- decision criteria; and
- conditions of funding.

Eligibility

6 Applicants must be:

6.1 a registered charity;

6.2 a voluntary group; or

6.3 a non-commercial organisation.

7 The applicant should be properly constituted and have its own bank account or earmarked section within another organisation's account (although the Committee may relax these requirements in limited circumstances).

8 Applications must support an initiative that is not, as a matter of course, funded by the Council, and is for the benefit of the Parish or its inhabitants by:

8.1 providing a service; or

8.2 enhancing the quality of life; or

8.3 improving the environment; or

8.4 promoting the Parish in a positive way.

9 Applications may be for one-off capital or revenue costs, but:

9.1 applications for capital grants may be given preference over those for revenue costs; and

9.2 applications for revenue costs must clearly demonstrate how future revenue costs will be funded.

10 Retrospective applications will not be funded (eg where the expenditure has been made, the project has been carried out or the event has taken place).

11 An organisation must not have previously applied for a grant in the current financial year.

Application process

12 To be considered within the annual round, applicants must complete a Community Grant Fund Application Form (available from the Website or by emailing the Clerk – contact details on the Website), and submit such within the time-limit detailed.

13 All questions on the application form should be fully answered and supporting information provided.

14 Each application may be for a sum up to the maximum per award detailed on the Website.

15 Applications will be considered by the Committee and a representative of each applicant having an application considered will be invited to the relevant Meeting to answer any questions and support the application.

16 The Committee will usually make its decision in Part II (ie in private) and may decide to award the full amount sought, or a lesser amount, or decline to award anything. Applicants will be informed of the outcome after the Meeting.

17 Payment of grants for successful applications will usually follow within one calendar month of the decision (a form to be completed by the applicant will accompany the grant).

Decision criteria

18 The criteria that the Committee will consider in deciding whether to award a grant will include:

18.1 the eligibility of the application;

18.2 the likely effectiveness of the initiative and the benefit of the grant to the parish or its inhabitants (that benefit must be commensurate with the amount sought).

18.3 whether the amount sought is appropriate and realistic;

18.4 what level of contributions have been sought or secured from other sources, including the organisation's own fund-raising activities;

18.5 whether sufficient funding could be raised from a more appropriate source.

Conditions of funding

19 The administration of and accounting for any grant shall be the responsibility of the applicant.

20 All grants shall be accounted for, and evidence of expenditure shall be supplied to the Committee on request (and any form requesting details of how the grant has been used shall be returned to the Clerk as required by it).

21 A grant must only be used for the purpose for which it was awarded unless the written approval of the Council has been obtained for a change of use.

22 In the event that the grant is not used, in part or in full, a full explanation shall be submitted to the Committee within one year of the grant being paid – in such circumstances the Council reserves the right to require the grant or any balance to be repaid.

23 Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Council's contribution in relevant publicity.

24 Awarding a grant does not imply a commitment to awarding further grants in future years (but on the other hand applicants are welcome to apply for grants in subsequent financial years regardless of the outcome of previous applications).

25 The Committee may make the award of any grant subject to such additional conditions and requirements as it considers appropriate.

Appendix 6 – Biodiversity Protocol

1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by section 102 of Environment Act 2021, imposes a duty upon parish councils to consider what action the council can take, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective ("*the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity … through the exercise of (its) functions*").

Biodiversity

2 According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth and includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

3 Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our ecosystems that, in turn, provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

Aims and Objectives

4 The object of this Protocol is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Stratfield Mortimer.

5 The Council (references to the Council include Sub-Bodies as relevant) will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

6 In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- considering the potential impact on biodiversity in relation to its policies (including the Neighbourhood Plan) and planning applications;
- managing its land and property, and undertaking any other operations, using practices that promote biodiversity;
- encouraging and supporting local businesses, organisations and residents to enhance and promote biodiversity.

Actions

Planning

7 When considering planning applications, the Council will:

- support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats;
- support the protection of sensitive habitats from development and consider whether a proposal would mean the loss of habitats;
- consider what any development proposes in terms of biodiversity net gain.

Land and Property Management

8 The Council will:

- carry out and keep under review a biodiversity audit of its landholdings;
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces (including adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations for plant protection products);
- when commissioning grounds maintenance contracts ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment;
- seek where possible to source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use;
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local Community

9 The Council will seek to:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through the Website and communications;
- engage with local businesses, organisations and residents:
    - regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference;
    - to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the Parish;
- involve (where feasible) the community in biodiversity projects on its land.

Appendix 7 – Annual Parish Meeting (and Parish Meeting) Guidance

Introduction

1 A Parish Meeting ("PM") is a meeting of the people of the Parish (as contrasted with a Meeting of the Council).

2 The law relating to PMs is set out in sections 9 and 13, and Schedule 12, Part III, of the 1972 Act.

3 This Protocol is primarily concerned with the Annual Parish Meeting ("APM"), but the same principles apply to other PMs called in accordance with the statutory provisions (and thus the procedural elements of an APM apply to other PMs as well).

4 An APM consists of the local government electors of a parish and the purpose of the meeting is to discuss parish affairs – whilst there is no statutory definition or case law to determine what constitutes a 'parish affair', the National Association of Local Councils has expressed the view that a parish affair could be any local issue, activity, or subject matter which specifically affects a particular parish and which a parish meeting may wish to discuss, debate and potentially influence.

5 An APM is an effective forum for parish councils to engage with the local electorate, and even if the parish council ultimately disagreed with the issues raised, or related arguments, the councillors' attendance and involvement in the APM would seek to demonstrate that the council is prepared to take account of local residents' views, which may be held strongly.

Convening a PM/APM:

6 By Schedule 12, Part III, Paragraph 14(1) of the 1972 Act, "*The parish meeting of a parish shall assemble annually on some day between 1st March and 1st June, both inclusive, in every year" and, by Paragraph 14(2), "parish meetings shall be held on such days and at such times as may be fixed by the parish council*".

7 A PM shall not be scheduled to commence earlier than 18:00 and may not be held in premises which are used for the supply of alcohol unless no other room is available free or at a reasonable cost.

8 A PM may be convened by any of the following:

8.1 The Council Chairman;

8.2 any two Councillors;

8.3 any six local government electors of the Parish.

9 Public notice of the meeting must be given at least 7 clear day beforehand.

10 The notice must:

10.1 specify the time and place of the intended meeting;

10.2 include an agenda specifying the business to be transacted at the meeting;

10.3 be signed by the person or persons convening the meeting.

11 In the case of an APM called by the Council Chairman, the notice should also:

11.1 advise that the draft minutes of the previous APM will only be on display on the evening of the APM and no individual copies will be given out at the meeting;

11.2 advise that copies of those draft minutes will be available on the Website or by hard copy upon application to the Clerk;

11.3 include an agenda item relating to an annual report from the Council Chairman as to the matters dealt with by the Council over the previous year ("the Chairman's Annual Report");

11.4 include an agenda item relating to the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award;

11.5 include agenda items relating to matters and topics agreed by the Community Committee;

11.6 include an agenda item for an open forum and questions from those present;

11.7 be published in accordance with the procedures for official notices set out in the Community Communications Protocol.

12 An APM called by the Council Chairman will generally be set for a date towards the end of April, and prior to the Annual Meeting of the Council in May.

Conduct of the APM

13 The Council Chairman, if present, must preside at the meeting. If the Council Chairman is absent, the Council Vice-Chairman must, if present, preside. If the Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman are both absent, those present may appoint (by a show of hands) a person to take the chair, and that person shall have the powers and authority of a Meeting Chairman.

14 Only local government electors for the Parish are qualified to vote at the APM or a poll consequent thereon, and:

14.1 each elector can give one vote on any question and no more;

14.2 a question to be decided by an APM shall, in the first instance, be decided by a majority of those present at the meeting and voting thereon;

14.3 the decision of the Meeting Chairman as to the result of the voting shall be final unless a poll is demanded; and

14.4 in the case of an equality of votes, the Meeting Chairman shall have a casting vote, in addition to any other vote they have.

15 A poll may be demanded before the conclusion of an APM on any question arising at the meeting, but no poll shall be taken unless either:

15.1 the Meeting Chairman consents; or

15.2 the poll is demanded by not less than ten, or one third of the local government electors present at the meeting, whichever is the fewer.

16 A poll consequent on an APM shall be a poll of those entitled to attend the meeting as local government electors and shall be taken by ballot in accordance with the Parish and Community Meetings (Polls) Rules 1987 as amended (which provide that if a poll is demanded, the Meeting Chairman shall notify WBC, and WBC shall appoint an officer to be a returning officer – in essence the procedure is similar to that for electing a Councillor).

17 Those present at the APM may nominate someone to take the draft minutes, but generally the Clerk will be available to take the draft minutes in the absence of an alternative nomination.

18 The Meeting Chairman shall ask if the minutes of the previous APM may be taken as read. If this is not accepted by a show of hands then a synopsis of the minutes will be read out by the Meeting Chairman before they are put to a vote by a show of hands by those present and, if agreed, then signed by the Meeting Chairman.

19 If the minutes are not agreed and there is no reasonable resolution to the issue that has caused dissent (eg by amendment), then they will be placed in the minute book unsigned with a note by the Chairman with the reason why this is so.

20 Any questions that are raised during the open forum session which cannot be readily answered by the Meeting Chairman or anyone else present will be noted and placed on the Agenda for the next relevant Council Meeting.

21 The expenses of the APM (including the expenses of any poll) shall be met by the Council (see section 150 of the 1972 Act).

22 A resolution passed at an APM shall not be binding on the Council save in circumstances set out in legislation, and in all other circumstances such a resolution shall be persuasive only and the Council shall decide what regard to take of it.

Publicity following the APM

23 The Annual Newsletter and any relevant Bulletin following the APM shall contain the Chairman's Annual Report and advise that a copy of the draft APM Minutes will be available on the Website, or by hard copy upon application to the Clerk, within 3 months of the meeting.

Appendix 8 – Elections and Co-Option Protocol

Introduction

Elected Councillors

1 By virtue of s16(3), 1979 Act:

1.1 Ordinary Elections to the Council take place in May every four years (counting from 1979); and

1.2 the whole number of parish councillors retire together, and the newly elected councillors come into office, on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election (*but see the Standing Orders as to the Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman remaining in office until the election of the Council Chairman at the Annual Meeting following Ordinary Elections*).

Co-Opted Councillors

2 The co-option of a Councillor may take place when there is:

- a vacancy after an election due to a lack of candidates ("Ordinary Vacancy"); or
- a vacancy due to a resignation, death, disqualification, etc ("Casual Vacancy").

Qualification

3 To be eligible to stand for election or co-option as a Councillor, an individual must not be disqualified (see below) and be (*s79, 1972 Act*):

3.1 at least 18 years of age; and

3.2 a British citizen or a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a Republic of Ireland citizen or a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights; and either

3.3 a local government elector for the Parish; or

3.4 have during the whole of the preceding twelve months:

3.4.1 resided in the Parish or within three miles of it; or

3.4.2 occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the Parish; or

3.4.3 had their principal or only place of work in the Parish.

Disqualification

4 An individual is disqualified from being a Councillor (*s80, 1972 Act*) if they:

4.1 hold a paid office with the Council (the Council Chairman using any Chairman's Allowance does not count);

4.2 are subject to certain bankruptcy or debt-relief restrictions;

4.3 have had a custodial sentence of at least three months (suspended or not) within the previous five years;

4.4 have been convicted of specified corrupt or illegal practices;

4.5 have been convicted for a failure to register or declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

Co-Option

Ordinary Vacancy

5 If there are insufficient candidates to fill all the seats on the Council at an Ordinary Election:

- any candidate who was validly nominated will be automatically elected to the Council;
- any remaining vacancy will be an Ordinary Vacancy; and
- the Council may proceed to seek to fill such Ordinary Vacancy or Vacancies in accordance with the procedure set out below, but without needing to give electors the opportunity to request an election.

Casual Vacancy

6 A Casual Vacancy occurs when a Councillor:

6.1 fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;

6.2 resigns;

6.3 dies;

6.4 becomes disqualified (see above); or

6.5 (*s85(1) & (2), 1972 Act*) fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend any meeting of:

6.5.1 the Council; or

6.5.2 a Body to which they have been appointed; or

6.5.3 an Outside Body to which they have been appointed by the Council; unless

6.5.4 the failure to attend was due to some reason approved by the Council before the expiry of the period.

7 If a Casual Vacancy occurs the Clerk shall (*see Regulation 5, The Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006*):

7.1 notify WBC of the vacancy;

7.2 advertise it; and

7.3 give electors the opportunity to request an election.

8 If at least 10 electors write to WBC within the statutory time frame (14 days not including a Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, a bank holiday and any day of public thanksgiving or mourning) for an election to be called, WBC will inform the Council.

9 Unless WBC informs the Council of the need for an election, the Council is free to fill the Casual Vacancy by co-option as soon as is practicable (unless it is within six months before the date of Ordinary Elections, in which case the Council may choose not to seek to co-opt).

Procedure for Co-Option

10 In accordance with the Community Communication Protocol, the Clerk shall arrange for a notice to be placed on the Official Noticeboards and announcements to be made via the Website, the Bulletin, etc.

11 The notice shall set out the statutory eligibility criteria (see above) and a deadline for applications.

12 If no, or insufficient, candidates come forward, a second round of advertising will commence.

13 The Clerk will send any candidate an application form to include:

- confirmation that they meet the eligibility criteria and are not disqualified for being a Councillor;
- a brief biography/cv;
- details as to:
  - why they are interested in becoming a Councillor; and
  - how they can contribute to the work of the Council.

14 Upon receiving any completed application form(s) the Clerk shall:

14.1 table an agenda item for the next relevant Council Meeting;

14.2 invite each candidate to that Meeting;

14.3 make each completed application form available to Members as a confidential item for the Meeting.

15 At the relevant Council Meeting, in Part I, each candidate in attendance will be invited to introduce themselves, add any further information they consider to be helpful, and answer questions from Members (but it shall not be a condition of selection for a candidate to attend or speak at the Meeting).

16 The Meeting shall consider the application(s) in Part II and, to be co-opted, a successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of those present and voting.

17 The Council is not obliged to co-opt any candidate.

18 A successful candidate may take their seat immediately after co-option and sign an acceptance of office (unless the Council Resolves for this to be done at a later date).