

BARROW UPON TRENT PARISH COUNCIL

Guide for

New Councillors

MAY 2019

GUIDE TO BARROW UPON TRENT PARISH COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Guide is to give new councillors an insight and guide to the day to day workings and practices of the Parish Council. It will hopefully also be a useful reference point for the more experienced councillors.

You should be aware that some of the rules and regulations that govern the administration of the council are set in statute (law) and cannot be changed. These will be found in the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which are held on the Parish Council's website. If you require a paper copy, please ask the Clerk.

In addition to the normal Parish Council powers and duties, Barrow upon Trent Parish Council is responsible for the following:

- The village magazine. The Council prepares, publishes and arranges delivery of the Parish News. This contains a report of the Council meetings, Church and School information and details of forthcoming events. There are 10 issues per year and the magazine is distributed free of charge to every household in the parish.
- A row of 10 cottages, which are listed buildings.
- A Cemetery
- Six allotments
- Greenacres Lagoon
- The Susie Dixon Memorial Park
- The War Memorial

COUNCIL'S ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES - THE COUNCIL AS A BODY

Barrow upon Trent Parish Council has a full complement of 6 Councillors, a Clerk and a Parish Lengthsmn. The Annual Parish Council Meeting is held in May at which the Members elect a Chairman and Deputy Chairman, appoint the Council's committees and representatives.

As an elected Councillor this would be the first meeting you attend. If elected at a bi-election or are co-opted, this could happen anytime throughout the year. At your first meeting you will be required to sign a formal declaration of acceptance of office and an agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct. You cannot act as a councillor until this has been done. You will also be required to complete a Register of Interests for lodging with the Monitoring Officer at South Derbyshire District Council.

COUNCILLORS AS INDIVIDUALS

Role: Councillors are elected by the electors of the parish every four years. A councillor's role is to listen to and represent the views and interests of the community as a whole through being well informed on local issues and by consultation with local people.

Responsibilities: A councillor is part of a 'corporate body' and must work with all members of the council to make legal and responsible decisions as a whole body.

A councillor should work in partnership with and appreciate and respect the role of the Clerk. All councillors must be aware of their obligation to abide by the council's Code of Conduct.

Duties: A councillor must attend meetings on a regular basis and be fully prepared to discuss and make decisions on items on the agenda, sent out in advance. He/she should take an active part in meetings to form a best judgement for the needs of the community and abide by majority decisions. A Councillor should maintain proper standards of behaviour and not bring the Council into disrepute. A councillor must act openly and honourably in the public's interest.

Skills/Training: Councillors have many and varied skills and interests that they can offer to the council as a body. These skills can frequently be put to good use through the committees on which you choose to sit, and the projects, with which they get involved. All Councillors are given the opportunity to attend relevant training courses. All costs incurred for these events are paid for by the Parish Council.

Allowances: Councillors are able to claim reimbursement for all travel outside of the parish; Councillors are not able to claim for travel within the parish boundary. Councillors do not currently receive an allowance

THE CHAIRMAN

Role: The Chairman of the Parish Council has authority created by statute and he/she is, if present, the person that presides at all Full Council meetings. He/she has a second or casting vote and is appointed annually by vote of the Parish Council. Apart from this the Chairman has no greater authority than any other councillor.

Responsibilities and duties:

Main Task: The Chairman should work in partnership with the Clerk to ensure that the council's proceedings are carried out promptly, clearly and lawfully.

Team Work: He/she should bond the councillors into an effective team, encouraging members to take on projects/representations in accordance with their individual expertise, experience and interests.

Public Relations: The Chairman speaks on behalf of the council as a body, giving a corporate view. The Chairman must ensure that all council proceedings are transparent.

Council Meetings: He/she should consult with the Clerk, to ensure that meetings are held on a regular basis; the content of the agenda is pertinent and legal, and that councillors are provided with sufficient data to make informed decisions. The Chairman should remain impartial during proceedings. He/she should try to involve all councillors in debate whilst emphasising the need for brevity and relevance.

THE CLERK

The clerk is employed by the council to provide professional and administrative support.

Proper Officer: The Clerk is the Chief Executive ('Proper Officer') for the council, and in many cases is also the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), although this is not a legal requirement.

Responsibilities & Duties:

The Clerk's main responsibility is to carry out the policies and decisions of the council as a body. The Clerk should be an independent and objective servant of the council, able to guide and advise the council in matters of law and procedure. Whilst the Clerk liaises closely with the Chairman, the Clerk works for the Council as a body, not individual councillors.

Skills/Training: Clerks need to keep up to date with all developments that are relevant to the council's work, and will therefore attend training courses and carry out research on behalf of the council, whenever appropriate.

Clerk's Terms & Conditions:

The current Clerk is contracted to work 15 hours per week. These hours are worked Monday – Friday of each week, to include one evening per week for meetings. Additional pay, or time off in lieu, is contractually paid for additional hours worked.

Salaries are paid according to national NALC/SLCC agreed salary scales.

PROCEDURES

Meetings: The Parish Council holds 11 Council meetings per year – monthly, excluding August.

The Annual Meeting is held in May of each year, when the Chairman, Deputy Chairman is elected.

Format for Meetings:

Parish Council meetings are held in the Village Hall, usually on the first Tuesday in the month except July where it is held later and, by law, are open to members of the public and press. If a confidential matter is to be discussed, e.g. to discuss tenders for contracts, a resolution to exclude public and press may be proposed. Public Question Time is at 7 p.m. immediately before the commencement of the meeting. The Chairman will endeavour to close meetings by 9.30 p.m.

Agenda:

It is the Clerk's responsibility to issue a summons to councillors to attend a meeting and to provide the Agenda for the meeting. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, will prepare the agenda and send it out by post, or more usually by email, to all Councillors 3 full days prior to the meeting excluding Sundays. Any Councillor can request an item

to be included on the Agenda. Such a request should be with the Clerk 7 clear days before the meeting.

A copy of the agenda is also posted on the Parish notice board and the Parish website. It is a requirement by law that such a Notice is displayed a least 3 clear days before the meeting.

**Meeting
Procedures:**

During the meeting a time is allowed for 'public speaking' providing the subject is pertinent to the agenda (it is required by law that all meetings are open to members of the public). After receiving apologies for absence (which should, whenever possible, be sent in advance to the Clerk), the Council will confirm the minutes of the previous meeting. Declarations of Interest must be declared and will be accepted and minuted during the meeting where appropriate; Councillors should refer to their Code of Conduct for more information on this matter. If in doubt, seek advice from the Clerk or contact the Monitoring Officer at South Derbyshire District Council for advice.

NB. Decisions can only be made on items published on the Agenda. An urgent matter that has arisen since the publication of the agenda may be addressed through delegated powers as detailed in the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, but this practise should be avoided, as there should be public notice of any matter to be dealt with. Routine matters must be held over until the next appropriate meeting. Please note that 'Any Other Business' is not a legal agenda item for Town/Parish Council meetings and therefore does not appear on the Agendas.

**Minutes of the
Meeting:**

Minutes are a brief account of the proceedings and decisions made, not a verbatim account. They are circulated to all Councillors prior to the next meeting. (Should a Councillor note any item requiring correction, please inform the Clerk as soon as possible). Once ratified minutes are published on the Council's Web Site, aper copies are available from the Clerk.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Council's financial procedures are regulated by the Government's Accounts and Finance Regulations and the Parish Council's Financial Standing Orders.

Bank:

Barrow upon Trent Parish Council holds a bank account with Nat west Bank. This is used for all monies paid to the Council (primarily the cottage rents and secondly the *Precept) and is a cheque account from which all the council's bills are paid. There is also a savings account held. Every payment is approved and confirmed by at least two councillors. The Parish Council also hold an account with the Deposit Protection Service where all cottage deposits are lodged

Income:

The bulk of the council's income comes from the rental of the 10 grade II listed cottages owned by the Parish Council. *The 'Precept' is the amount requested from the Borough Council by the Town Council, this

is in addition to the sum all residents of the Borough are charged. The local precept is determined by the Parish Council's budget process which takes place in November/December each year. The Precept is paid to the Council in 2 half-yearly instalments.

Additional income is received from Cemetery fees, Allotment Rental, Parish News Advertising and refund of VAT paid by the Parish Council.

Accounting: The Parish Council accounts are a simple computerised Receipts and Payments cash book system. A reconciled Receipts and Payments Summary is presented to Council and an Income and Expenses Statement produced at the end of each financial year. The Clerk/RFO is responsible for employing and meeting with the Council's Internal Auditor annually, or more often if appropriate. The Parish Council and the Internal Auditor is required to sign and complete an Audit Return for annual examination by the External Auditor, to a strict timetable.

Copies of the Council's Annual Accounts are available upon request.

Internal Auditor: It is a requirement of the Financial Regulations that a council appoints an 'Internal Auditor' independent of the council to carry out the 'Annual Internal Audit'. This is to assure that procedures and securities are sufficient to purpose.

Insurance: The Council holds a policy, currently with Aviva for the cottages and Ecclesiastical Insurance for everything else- the main summary of cover as follows:

Combined Buildings	insurance cover of £1,150,869.00
Public and Products Liability:	insurance cover of £10,000,000
Employer's liability:	insurance cover of £10,000,000
Officials' indemnity	insurance cover of £500,000
Employee Personal Accident	insurance cover of £50,000.00
Libel and Slander:	insurance cover of £10,000,000
Property – loss/damage:	insurance cover of £810,000 (not including land)

Any Business, undertaking work for the Council, is required to hold its own public liability insurance of at least £5 million.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT: PUBLICATION SCHEME

Councillors should be aware that the public can request sight of all communications, notes, e-mails, documents, etc. relating to the Parish Council held by the Clerk and Councillors. The Council's Publication Scheme can be viewed on the website or is available from the Clerk.