

Terms of Reference for Working Parties

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The Role of a Working Party

Working Parties are formed to assist the Full Council and Standing Committees to oversee a 'task and finish' project or to champion an initiative with a smaller membership of specialised or interested members. They may be formed or disbanded at any time dependent upon the lifespan of any given project. They will:

- Examine a matter in detail, read reports and related materials, examine options, find information for the Council¹
- Act as experts and/or liaise with experts
- Make recommendations to committee /council meetings
- Explain the recommendations, reasons and options and provide a brief written summary
- Ensure no funding or monies are spent or committed without prior endorsement at Full Council or Committee.
- Answer questions from the Council
- Meet within the timeframes specified by Council
- Work within the Standing Orders of the Council

Operations of a Working Party

- Working parties do not have a budget, and they cannot make any financial decisions
- The number of councillors on a working party is decided at the time of formation
- There is no elected Chairman of a Working Party, and a Chairman is chosen on a meeting by-meeting basis
- Administrative support will be provided by the Clerk, RFO, or the Administration Assistant
- The Chairman of a meeting will provide a written report prior to the next Council or Committee meeting and will answer questions at the meeting
- Depending upon the nature of the meeting, all notes from a meeting will be published on the Council's website

¹ This may include finding out:

- any requirement for a public consultation and planning permission
- identifying costs including set up and maintenance costs
- sources of funding (for example, external, RPC contributions/donations)
- offsetting costs: reduced contract grass cutting, possible absorption of tasks within established RPC hours
- costs of equipment maintenance, consumables, depreciation,
- training requirements, for example skilling staff to operate/maintain new equipment.
- health and safety: risk assessments, method statements.

Membership

- Members will be selected at a Council meeting and confirmed in the minutes for the public record.
- The number of members will be defined and will be dependent upon the project.
- Depending on the purpose, membership from non-councillors will be actively encouraged.

Powers

Working parties have no powers, they cannot make decisions on behalf of the Parish Council, but they can explore options and present recommendations to a Council meeting for a decision.

Attendance & Apologies

- Attendees are not formally summoned to a meeting; however, if a Councillor or non-Councillor has committed to join a Working Party, then their attendance is expected.
- Apologies in a timely manner should be notified to the Clerk or to the Appointed Officer providing administration support.

Quorate

A minimum of three attendees comprising of at least two Councillors is required before proceeding with a meeting.

Declarations of Interests

All members of a Working Party must declare any interests if anything comes up in the discussions.

Meeting Etiquette

- Although more informal than a meeting of Full Council or Committee meetings, the Council's meeting etiquette and the Councillors Code of Conduct, Member/Officer protocol still applies.
- Transparency
- Depending upon the commercial or confidential nature of a Working Party, all meeting notes will be published on the Council's website.

Meetings

- The working party shall meet as often as required within the dates set by the Council.
- Meetings will take place at the parish office, or other venue where confidentiality can be maintained.
- Meetings will take place within the working hours of the Clerk, RFO, or Administration Assistant. This does include weekday evenings.