

CRINGLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL

PROPOSED RE-ORGANISATION OF PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Introduction

The Parish Council is responsible for providing and managing a range of services to the parish community. In the case of Cringleford these are at present

- Some street lighting
- Oakfields recreation ground (including pitches, tennis courts and a play area)
- The Pavilion
- The Willow Centre and associated park, pitch and play area
- Children's play areas at Round House Park
- Bus shelters
- The Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Commenting on planning applications
- Cutting road verges (under contract from the County Council)
- Maintaining a safe and pleasant environment
- Interfacing between the local community and the higher levels of government (district, county and national).

To carry out these responsibilities the Council employs its own staff and lets contracts. It also lets its facilities to local community groups and others.

2.0. Decision-Making

The Parish Council determines policy and makes decisions on a wide variety of subjects in the interests of the parish community. Individual councilors cannot make decisions on Council business. As a corporate body, the Parish Council makes its decisions collectively at its monthly meetings. The interval between meetings, however, creates delays in decision-making and can produce crowded agendas and long meetings. The Council's administrator is the Parish Clerk. Her/his duties normally include summoning and attending meetings of the Council; keeping minutes; responsibility for the Council's books, deeds, and documents; preparing financial accounts; and giving advice. The Clerk's precise duties are set out in a contract and attached schedule.

2.0. Simplification of Parish Council Business

Experience suggests that effective decision-making and management by the Council requires a simplification of its processes and clarity of purpose. Since the focus of Parish Council activity is the Council meeting, this is where we should start. Simplification here can be achieved in two ways.

2.1. Councillors undertake to read the papers sent to them in advance of Council meetings and do not expect to have them summarized orally. Meetings will focus on discussing key issues and decision-making.

2.2. Advisory groups should be established or reactivated for the following areas. A possible membership is suggested*

a) Finance: Chris Hopper (Chair) Annette Howlett, John Canham

b) Facilities: Isabelle Kirk (?Chair), Dylan Baldwin + 2 representatives of the users

c) Environment and Planning**: Malcolm Wagstaff (Chair), Annette Howlett, Isabelle Kirk, Maswood Jalil.

d) A users' group. This would consist of one representative for each group. This could be a large autonomous group, but would have representation on the Facilities Advisory Group (c).

I have not included a personnel committee. Personnel matters can be handled by the appropriate line manager and ultimately by the chairman. Appraisals and appointments can be handled on an ad hoc basis, as can grievances and disciplinary matters.

2.3. The Parish Clerk and Assistant Clerk will normally be expected to attend meetings of the Parish Council and the advisory groups.

2.4. Members of the advisory groups will be expected to develop expertise in their field and to attend appropriate training, if this available.

2.5. The advisory groups will debate such business as is handed to them by the Parish Council but may initiate business themselves. They will not make decisions, though the Environment and Planning Group has authority to comment on routine planning applications.

* Actual membership will depend upon councillors' choices and will need amendment when new councilors are co-opted

** This is now a committee. As a result due notice must be given of its meetings, which are open to the public, and its minutes must be published. Advisory groups have no such constraints.

2.6. Each group will provide minutes or notes of its meetings to the Parish Council and indicate any recommendations, especially where decisions are required.

3.0. Standing Orders

At present the Parish Council uses model Standing Orders issued by NALC and adopted in December 2013. They govern not only the conduct of meetings but also the behaviour of councilors and officials. They require re-writing to meet our requirements better.

4. Staffing Requirements

4.1. The Parish Council is required to employ a Clerk and appoint a 'responsible financial officer'. They are often the same person, as in Cringleford.

4.2. Other staff are employed to carry out particular functions. These are largely determined by the management and maintenance requirements of the facilities for which the Council is responsible, and by the type and volume of work required.

4.3. These are discussed in the *Facilities Management* document.

JMW
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