1.1 A GOOD COUNCILLOR SUGGESTED PROFILE

Effectively represents the interests of their ward or parish.

Fulfills and enacts any statutory requirements of an elected member of the council

Actively and constructively contributes to good governance.

Actively encourages community participation and citizen involvement in the work of the council.

Encourages people to take up their roles of active and engaged citizenship.

Knows and has contact with key local stakeholders.

Represents the council to the community, and the community to the council, using all appropriate means.

Is a channel of communication for the ward or parish and ensures constituents are informed of services available; decisions that affect them and the reasons for those decisions.

Develops and maintains a working knowledge of organisations (including principal councils) operating within the area which have an impact on the wellbeing of both the community and the council as a whole.

Deals with constituents' enquiries and representations fairly and without prejudice.

Carries out case work for constituents and represents their interests, or enables the constituents to take action to deal with the matter themselves.

Identifies and works with local 'hard to reach' and under-represented groups to ensure their views can be identified.

Contributes to the formation of the council's policies and plans by active involvement in council meetings, committees and working parties.

Undertakes appropriate training and development to help fulfill the requirements of the councillor role.

Acts as the council's representative on outside bodies, and reports back on their activities.

1.2 WHAT DO CHAIRMEN DO?

1. **Plan the meeting with the clerk** and ensure that everything on the agenda is legal.

2. **Brief themselves and prepare fully** — study all relevant information and anticipate the needs and interests of the members. The chairman can then answer questions or deal with requests for information.

3. **Be punctual** —the chairman should set a good example by arriving early to check the arrangements and welcome members, the public and any visiting speakers.

4. **Conduct the meeting**

- Check there is a quorum (minimum number of members needed to make the meeting legal)
- Call the meeting to order and declare it open
- Welcome members, the public and visiting speakers to the meeting
- Introduce the standard items on the agenda – apologies; declarations of interest; confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
- Introduce the agenda items and ensure that all members know what they have to achieve and how they might do it
- Encourage participation
- Stimulate an exchange of ideas and experience
- Ensure that all have a chance to express their views freely
- Keep the members aware of objectives
- Maintain focus
- Guide and progress discussion towards achieving the objectives
- Manage conflict
- Be fair and balanced
- Preserve order
- Enforce rules of procedure
- Rule on disputed matters.

5. Participate, but do not dominate!

- Ask questions
- Clarify misunderstandings
- Correct mistakes
- Reject irrelevancies and stop the meeting going on a tangent
- Co-ordinate the views of members
- Give information if needed
- Summarise the meeting's views and conclusions and confirm what has been decided/voted on
- Listen and analyse the meaning and relevance of members' contributions.

6. Lead the Council

- Plan, organise and control discussion
- Develop harmonious relationships
- Motivate individuals by encouraging and rewarding their efforts and supporting them in difficulties.

1.3 THE ROLE OF THE CLERK

The clerk is the proper officer of the council in law.

The clerk is a vital team member providing legal and financial advice and information to support the council's decisions.

The agenda is the clerk's responsibility. The clerk must sign the agenda and can decide how it will be set out. This process is often undertaken in consultation with the chairman. You may ask the clerk to add items to the agenda if you feel a relevant subject should be discussed.

The clerk writes the minutes as a legal record of what was decided at the meeting. It is important that the minutes are accurate and therefore the minutes of the last meeting are confirmed and signed at the start of the next meeting.

The clerk provides advice and administrative support, and takes action to implement council decisions.

The clerk may have to act as a project manager, personnel director, public relations officer or finance administrator.

The clerk can also be the Responsible Financial Officer (but does not have to be)

The clerk is not just a secretary and is not at the beck and call of the chairman or other councillors; the clerk is answerable only to the council as a whole.

Legally councils can agree to delegate certain decisions to clerks because they are professional officers whose independence allows them to act on behalf of the council.

The best councils will have a clerk and councillors who work as a team to provide a service for the community.

1.4 WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

You need to know:

- The council's powers and duties in law
- Meeting procedures
- Financial procedures
- Planning (as in town and country planning)
- Ideas for community action and engagement

You are advised to have your own copy of:

- A schedule of meetings for the coming year
- The council's standing orders
- The council's financial regulations
- The code of conduct adopted by your council
- Contact details of councillors and the clerk (but note, only contact the clerk during working hours)
- The budget for the current year
- The minutes of meetings that took place during the previous year

The clerk will keep the following documents; we suggest you ask to read them:

- Risk assessment policy;
- Assets register (list of property)
- Lease agreements
- Insurance policies
- The cash book for recording receipts and payments
- Schedule of council charges and fees for services and facilities
- Partnership agreements
- The development plan for the locality and/or the neighbourhood and local plans

You might also need to know:

- The population of the parish and how the population is made up
- How much an average household pays in council tax to the local council
- Contact details of principal authority councillors
- Contact details of local organisations

1.5 DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

New responsibilities can be both an exciting and daunting prospect. It is important that you feel welcome, valued and part of the council as soon as possible.

We recognise that councillors who are welcomed into the council constructively and who are given at an early stage the relevant information, resources and support needed to carry out their duties are more likely to become productive and settle in more quickly than those who are left isolated.

This audit and personal development plan has been designed to help you realise and value what you already have experience of, identify what you may need to know in your role as a councillor and encourage you to think about areas for personal development.

By reading through the audit you may also gain ideas about the direction you wish to take, for example, you may like to be a chairman in the future.

The audit can be completed on your own as a self-audit or with guidance from an experienced councillor, or the clerk. You will bring a wealth of experience and transferable skills with you to the role of councillor from other areas of your life, some of which may not always be obvious. The audit helps you to explore your existing knowledge and skills and how best to apply or enhance them.

Once you have completed the audit you could complete the personal development plan and think about what future training or other development you wish to undertake. Your council should have a development budget for councillors and this will help you consider the best ways to make use of that support and to plan out the activities you wish to undertake.

1.6 IDENTIFYING YOUR DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Skills and knowledge	Experience	Development need	Comments
Being an Effective Councillor			
1. Understanding the councillor's role			
2. Understanding the clerk's role			
3. Working with your communities			
4. Codes of Conduct, Ethics & Probity			
5. The council as an employer			
Developing Personal/Communication Skills			
6. Public speaking & presentation skills			
7. Media skills			
8. Influencing & negotiation			
9. Questioning			
10. Listening			
11. Interviewing			
12. Assertiveness			
13. Handling conflict			
14. Letters, reports and e-mails			
15. Giving advice			
16. Problem analysis / solving			
17. Working in a team			
18. Project management			
19. Coaching and mentoring			
20. Using a computer			
Managing Yourself			
21. Time management			
22. Managing stress			
23. Managing information			
24. Speed reading			
25. Managing change			

Skills and knowledge	Experience	Development need	Comments
Community Skills			
26. Dealing with case work			
27. Advice surgeries			
28. Area forums			
29. Keeping records			
30. Setting up meetings			
31. Chairing meetings			
32. Facilitating groups			
33. Working with partners			
34. Networking			
35. Advocacy			
36. Empowering the community			
Understanding the council and its services			
37. Council's objectives and main policies			
38. The services the council provides			
39. Getting value for money			
40. Delegated decision making			
41. Our corporate image/ complaints procedure			
42. How our council compares with others			
43. How we develop policy			
44. Quality council status			
Understanding Local Council Finance			
45. Sources of finance			
46. How the precept is set			
47. Setting the budget			
48. Managing and monitoring the budget			
49. Capital and revenue spending			
50. Financial regulations			

1.7 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Name:

Covering the period from:

What do I want/ need to learn?	How will this be achieved?	What resources or support will I need?	How will I know if I've been successful?	Target dates for review, action or completion

2.1 POWERS
HOW CAN YOU...?

	Power (if yes)
1. Public clock	
2. Arts festival	
3. Grant to youth club	
4. Tree planting on roadside	
5. Ambulance	
6. Citizens Advice Bureau	
7. Local orchestra	
8. Bicycle park	
9. CCTV	
10. Duck house	
11. Repair war memorial	
12. Library	

MODEL ANSWERS

	Power (if yes)
1. Public clock	Parish Councils Act 1957 s2
2. Arts festival	LGA 1972 s145
3. Grant to youth club	LG(MP)1976 s19 if the grant is for recreational purposes, or possibly Crime and Disorder Act 1998 s17.
4. Tree planting on roadside	Highways Act 1980 s96
5. Ambulance	LGA 1972 s137
6. Citizens Advice Bureau	LGA 1972 s142 (2A)
7. Local orchestra	LGA 1972 s145
8. Bicycle park	Traffic Regulation Act 1984 s57
9. CCTV	LG & Rating Act 1997 s31
10. Duck house	Open Spaces Act 1906 s10, Public Health Act 1875 s164, Public Health Act 1936
11. Repair war memorial	War Memorials Act 1923 s1, extended by Local Government Act 1948, s 133
12. Library	LGA 1972 s133, s142, s145

2.2 LEGAL POWERS AND DUTIES WHAT CAN LOCAL COUNCILS DO?

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provision
Allotments	Powers to provide allotments. Duty to provide allotment gardens if demand unsatisfied and if reasonable to do so	Small Holding & Allotments Act, 1908, s. 23
Borrowing Money	Power for councils to borrow money for their statutory functions or for the prudent management of their financial affairs	Local Government Act 2003,, Schedule 1, para. 2
Baths and Washhouses	Power to provide public baths and washhouses	Public Health At 1936, s. 221
Burial grounds, cemeteries and crematoria	Power to acquire and maintain	Open Spaces Act 1906,
	Power to provide	Sections 9 and 10, Local Government Act 1972, s. 214,
	Power to agree to maintain monuments and memorials	Parish Councils and Burial, Authorities (Miscellaneous, Provisions) Act 1970, s.1
	Power to contribute towards expenses of cemeteries	Local Government Act 1972, s. 214 (6)
Bus Shelters	Power to provide and maintain shelters	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1953, s. 4
Byelaws	Power to make byelaws in regard to pleasure grounds	Public Health Act 1875, s. 164
	Cycle parks	Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s.57(7)
	Baths and washhouses	Public Health Act 1936, s.22
	Open spaces and burial grounds	Open Spaces Act 1906, s.15
	Mortuaries and post-mortem rooms	Public Health Act 1936, s.198

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provision
Charities	Duties in respect of parochial charities,	Charities Act 1993, s. 79
	Power to act as charity trustees	Local Government Act 1972, s. 139 (1)
Clocks	Power to provide public clocks	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.2
Closed Churchyards	Powers to maintain	Local Government Act 1972, s.215
Commons and common pastures	Powers in relation to Inclosure, regulation and management and providing common pasture	Inclosure Act 1845; Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, s.34
Conference Facilities	Power to provide and encourage the use of facilities	Local Government Act 1972,s.144
Community Centres	Power to provide and equip buildings for use of clubs having athletic, social or educational objectives	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19,
	Power to acquire, provide and furnish community buildings	Local Government Act 1972,s.133
Crime Prevention	Powers to spend money on various crime prevention measures	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.31
Drainage	Power to deal with ponds and ditches	Public Health Act 1936, s.260
Entertainment and the arts	Provision of entertainment and support of the arts	Local Government Act 1972, s.145
Environment	Power to issue fixed penalty notices for litter, graffiti and offences under dog control orders	Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, s.19, s.30, Part 6
Gifts	Power to accept	Local Government Act 1972, s.139

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provision
Highways	Power to repair and maintain public footpaths and bridle-ways	Highways Act 1980,sections. 43,50,
	Power to light roads and public places	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.3; Highways Act 1980, s.301
	Provision of litter bins	Litter Act 1983, ss.5,6
	Power to provide parking places for vehicles, bicycles and motor-cycles	Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, ss.57,63
	Power to enter into agreement as to dedication and widening	Highways Act 1980, ss.30,72
	Power to provide roadside seats and shelters, and omnibus shelters	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.1
	Consent of parish council required for ending maintenance of highway at public expense, or for stopping up or diversion of highway	Highways Act 1980, ss.47, 116
	Power to complain to district council as to protection of rights of way and roadside wastes	Highways Act 1980, s.130.
	Power to provide certain traffic signs and other notices	Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s.72,
	Power to plant trees etc. and to maintain roadside verges	Highways Act 1980, s.96

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provision
Honorary titles	Power to admit to be honorary freemen/ freewomen of the council's area persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area	Local Government Act 1972, s. 249 (5), s. 249 (9)
Investments	Power to participate in schemes of collective investment	Trustee Investments Act 1961, s.11
Land	Power to acquire by agreement, to appropriate, to dispose of	Local Government Act 1972, ss.124, 126, 127
	Power to accept gifts of land	Local government Act 1972, s.139
Litter	Provision of receptacles	Litter Act 1983, ss.5,6
Lotteries	Powers to promote	Gambling Act 2005, s.252, 258
Markets	Power to establish or acquire by agreement markets within their area and provide a market place and market buildings	Food Act 1984, s.50
Mortuaries and post mortem rooms	Powers to provide mortuaries and post mortem rooms	Public Health Act 1936, s.198
Newsletters	Power to provide information relating to matters affecting local government	Local Government Act 1972, s.142
Nuisances	Power to deal with offensive ditches	Public Health Act 1936, s.260
Open spaces	Power to acquire land for public recreation and maintain	Public health Act 1875, s.164,
	Power to acquire and maintain land for open spaces	Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provision
Parish Property and documents	Powers to direct as to their custody	Local Government Act 1972, s.226,
	Duty to deposit certain published works in specific deposit libraries	Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003, s. 1
Public buildings and village hall	Power to acquire and provide buildings for public meetings and assemblies	Local Government Act 1972, s.133
Public Conveniences	Power to provide	Public Health Act 1936, s.87
Recreation	Power to acquire land for or to provide recreation grounds, public walks, pleasure grounds and open spaces and to manage and control them	Public Health Act 1875, s.164, Local Government Act 1972, Sched.14 para.27, Public Health Acts Amendment, Act 1890 s.44, Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10
Town and Country Planning	Right to be notified of planning applications if right has been requested	Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Sched.1, para.8
Tourism	Power to contribute to organisations encouraging tourism	Local Government Act 1972, s.144
Traffic calming schemes	Powers to contribute financially to traffic calming	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.30
Transport	Powers to spend money on community transport schemes	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.26-29
War memorials	Power to maintain, repairs, protect and adapt war memorials	War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923, s.1; as extended by Local Government Act 1948, s.133
Water supply	Power to utilise well, spring or stream and to provide facilities for obtaining water from them	Public Health Act 1936, s.125
Websites	Power for councils to have their own websites	Local Government Act 1972, s.142

2.3 THE BUDGETING PROCESS

The preparation of the annual budget is one of the key tasks to be undertaken in any local council, irrespective of its size. The budget is the foremost control mechanism in a council's financial affairs and its importance should not be underestimated. Most important it is a vital tool for managing the potential risks to public money. This is a summary of key stages in the preparation of the annual budget for both revenue and capital purposes and provides practical advice on the factors to be taken into account in this process.

The revenue budget is a plan for financing the running costs of the council and its activities whereas a capital budget plans the council's investments in substantial new assets.

THE ANNUAL REVENUE BUDGET

All local councils need to produce an annual revenue budget which sets out the financial requirements for the forthcoming year. This becomes the basis upon which spending policy is approved and the amount of cash required to finance spending plans is calculated.

The cash required can be raised in many ways (fees, charges, sales, bank interest, and grants for example) but the gap between planned expenditure and this variety if income is filled through the precept. The precept is a demand that the district or unitary council collects from the parish electorate on the parish council's behalf. The precept demand is made each year before March 1st and often, to accommodate district arrangements, an earlier date is agreed.

The budget starts with the council's action plan or its policies drawn up or reviewed in the autumn; sometimes a council has a five-year business plan. The first stage in preparing the paperwork of the annual budget normally occurs in late autumn and involves drawing up a schedule of headings related to planned activities. The council will spend or receive cash under each of these headings. Many of the headings will stay the same year-on-year but each year some headings may change as projects come and go. The clerk and/or the RFO are usually responsible for preparing the paperwork in a format that helps councillors decide precisely how spending will be allocated and how money will be raised in the forthcoming year. The budget document should show in the first column how much money was raised and spent against the agreed headings (listed in the second column) in the previous financial year. The third column shows the figures from the agreed budget for the current year while a fourth column shows a revised budget for the current year based on the most likely outcome. It's not until the fifth column that proposals for the next financial year are listed. This technique provides a very useful comparison for three financial years. An example of these five columns is shown in Table 1.

It helps the council to make appropriate decisions if the paperwork includes a statement of total planned expenditure from which planned income (excluding the precept) is subtracted. The answer produces payments net of income – and suggests the precept figure. It helps if the RFO knows how to convert this to an average Band D household figure for the year.

It is usually the clerk and/or the RFO who has a first stab at entering the figures for the next financial year taking into account wage and price inflation, new projects, possible repairs or replacements and changes in legislation and financial guidance. It is the RFO's job to price all these things. This first attempt is then open for discussion. If committees have been established to manage different elements of the councils work then each committee will then discuss its own aspect of the budget and make further recommendations. Sometimes the council has a Finance and General Purposes Committee which takes responsibility for debating the budget and coming up with firm proposals. To meet the possible deadline for a precept setting meeting in February, this process often takes place in December or January.

TABLE 1. EXTRACTS FROM A DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET

	1	2	3	4	5
	Last year		Current year		Next year
	Actual	Description	Original budget	Revised Outcome	
Reciepts	250	Hall lettings	300	300	400
	650	Allotments	700	700	800
	500	Grant	1400	1300	1800
	1400		2400	2300	3000
Payments	1600	Administration	1700	1700	1900
	1800	Village Hall	3000	3000	3200
	3400	Total	4700	4700	5100
Net Payments	2000		2300	2400	2100

Every council needs to retain a 'working balance' which is sufficient to avoid a cash overdraft during the year and which will provide adequate cover against contingencies. This balance is held on behalf of the local council taxpayer and, where possible, any excess should be used to reduce future council tax bills. On the other hand, depleted balances (or reserves) will need to be built up to an acceptable level. The level of the 'working balance' should therefore be reviewed as part of the budget setting process each year. Some reserves will be earmarked for a particular project and should not therefore be used to cover for contingencies. The district or unitary council will advise the clerk each year of the number of properties in your area and the formal council tax base. From these figures the annual charge for an average Band D household can be calculated. The council must determine whether or not such a charge can reasonably be made and revise spending plans if necessary.

Finally having completed the process, the full council must formally approve and adopt the budget and authorise the issue of a precept upon the district or unitary council.

THE ANNUAL CAPITAL BUDGET

Payments of a capital nature relate to the acquisition, construction or enhancement of an asset which will last for several years. This work generally involves high levels of payments, which need to be properly planned over an appropriate time scale. If the council embarks on a major capital scheme, it should have a long term capital budget or a rolling capital programme, reviewed annually with its impact on the revenue budget.

2.4 TRUE OR FALSE QUIZ

Which of these statements are true and which are false?

1. The council can appoint an internal auditor and a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) from amongst its members and officers.
2. If the council has an appointed an internal auditor, it does not need an external auditor.
3. A local accountant can act as the external auditor, as long as he or she is professionally qualified.
4. All local councils must ensure that they are providing value for money for their communities .
5. A very small local council (with an annual budget of less than £2000) is exempt from the requirement to produce an annual return.
6. As an individual councillor you would not be responsible for any financial discrepancies in the accounts. The chairman or clerk would be.

MODEL ANSWERS

1. The council can appoint an internal auditor and a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) from amongst its members and officers.
FalseThe internal auditor is an independent and competent person appointed by the council to carry out checks on its system of internal control. The independent internal auditor cannot be involved in any business of the council and cannot, therefore, be a serving member of the council. Another clerk or an accountant could be suitable (but reciprocal arrangements between councils are not permitted). The internal auditor carries out tests focusing on areas of risk and after reporting to the council signs a report on the annual return (required by law) to confirm that the council's system of controls is in place and operating.

Councilors can be asked to carry out internal financial controls by checking financial procedures. But this is different from the internal audit.

2.If the council has an appointed an internal auditor, it does not need an external auditor.
False The law requires yet another audit to be carried out so that local taxpayers can be assured that the risks to public money have been managed. The Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments procures and appoints external audit services for all parishes in a county (known as external auditors) to review the council's annual return.

3. A local accountant can act as the external auditor, as long as he or she is professionally qualified.
False See answer to question 2

4.All local councils must ensure that they are providing value for money for their communities.
True It is essential that the council is seen to provide value for money. This means ensuring that public money is spent efficiently to provide an effective service. The aim is to get more council activity for the least possible expense without compromising quality.

It helps the council to assess 'value for money' if it regularly asks whether it is really necessary to spend the money or whether it can find a way of doing it better. Perhaps another supplier can do the job with greater efficiency and effectiveness. It is good practice to consult other councils and to engage with service users and the wider community to find out what they think. It might even be possible to join with other councils to deliver a more economic service to the community. The Government is considering ways in which the community can have more influence over local council budgets.

5.A very small local council (with an annual budget of less than £2000) is exempt from the requirement to produce an annual return.
False The annual return is the principal means by which the council is accountable to its electorate and most councils must complete an annual return to confirm that everything is in order. Signed statements confirm responsibility for governance arrangements during the year. In particular they show that:

- the accounts have been properly prepared and approved;
- a system of internal control is in place - this includes the appointment of a competent and independent internal auditor - and the effectiveness of both the system and the appointment has been reviewed ;
- the council has taken reasonable steps to comply with the law;
- the council has assessed all possible risks to public money;
- the accounts have been publicised for general inspection so that electors' rights can be exercised;
- there are no potentially damaging or hidden issues such as an impending claim against the council;
- significant differences in the figures from the previous year have been explained.

This will not change under the new audit regime from 2018, those under £25,000 will still need to complete an annual return, but they won't have to submit it for audit if they have certified themselves as exempt. They will still have to continue complying with the transparency requirements.

6.As an individual councillor you would not be responsible for any financial discrepancies in the accounts. The chairman or clerk would be.
False All councillors, as members of the corporate body, are responsible for monitoring financial processes. The council must take whatever action it can to manage any risks to public money. This includes making sure that there is no fraud and that bad debts are pursued.

3.1 CONTRIBUTING TO AN EFFECTIVE MEETING CHECKLIST

1. **Attend all meetings regularly and punctually** — whether you were co-opted, elected, or volunteered, having accepted the position you are under an obligation to attend as and when required.

2. **Brief yourself** — read the agenda, minutes, and supporting material sent to you before the meeting. Ask yourself – do I need more information on the subject(s), so that I can make an informed contribution to discussions. Who might I need to speak to?

3. **Participate** — give the benefit of your ideas and experience and local knowledge. Listen, try to understand and respect the views of other members, even when you do not agree with them.

4. **Support the chairman** — recognise and accept the authority of the chairman whatever your personal opinion of them.

- learn the rules of procedure and keep to them
- make helpful, relevant contributions
- help resolve conflicts – don't generate them
- clarify issues, don't confuse them
- offer any specialised knowledge or skills

5. **Support other members:**

- don't monopolise the discussion and prevent others from speaking
- help less able or experienced members to contribute
- avoid personal feuds
- co-operate with other members to achieve the objective(s) of the meeting.

6. **Support the objective of the meeting** — recognise that you are bound by the meeting's conclusions, even if you opposed them in discussion.

3.2 GOOD PRACTICE AGENDA EXAMPLE 1

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of
Go with Hope Parish Council at the Village Hall, Banner Road, Hopeville
on Tuesday, 28 June, 2011 at 7pm.

J Smith (signed)

Clerk to the Parish Council

Tel 0123 456789

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

AGENDA

1. To accept apologies for absence.
2. To approve the minutes of the last meeting.
3. To record declarations of interest from members in any item to be discussed.
4. To hear representations from the public.
5. To discuss the provision of a street light at the junction of the crossroads
6. To discuss the request for a grant towards the upkeep of the school playground
7. To consider planning applications.
   Plan No.............
   Application to add side extension to the property..............
8. To receive items for information.

Date of next meeting: 3 September 2011

EXAMPLE 2

Any Village Parish Council

Clerk to the Council: J Smith, 2 Main Street, Any Village. Telephone —

To Members of Any Village Parish Council 5 October 20xx

You are hereby summoned to attend the next meeting of Any Village Parish Council to be held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 11 October 20xx at Any Village Hall

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend. Members of the public may make representations to the council under item 4 according to the council's Standing Orders

Signed

John Smith, Clerk to Any Village Parish Council

AGENDA

1. **Apologies:** To receive apologies
2. **Declarations of Interest**
   a. Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded of the need to update their register ofinterests.
   b. To declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in items on the agenda and their nature. (Councillors with prejudicial interests must leave the room for the relevant items).
3. **Minutes** To approve the minutes of the last meeting of the Council on 13 September 2011 (attached).
4. **Progress reports** To receive reports for information only from
   a. Clerk
   b. Cllr .... (Village Hall improvements)
   c. Cllr ..... (Footpath survey)
   d. Cllr ..... (Parish Plan Steering Group)

5. Anywhere District Council, Refuse Collection (letter attached):
to consider and comment upon new arrangements for refuse collection.

6. Anywhere County Council, highways grass cutting:
to consider forming a Grass Cutting Working Group to investigate the County Council's proposals to delegate grass cutting to the Parish Council (letter attached).

7. CALC:
to consider the latest issue of the Shire Mail (previously circulated) and attendance by Clerk and Councillors at forthcoming training events described in the latest Information Bulletin.

8. District and County Councillors' reports for information only.
(Items raised for Decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting.)

9. Planning
a. Local Development Framework: To consider sending representatives to a presentation by Anywhere District Council on 31 October 20xx.
b. To receive the minutes of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 27 September 20xx.
c. To consider requesting the Planning Committee to undertake a photographic record of the Conservation Area.

10. Local Council Award Scheme
To consider setting up a Steering Group consisting of two Councillors and the Clerk with the remit to investigate Local Council Award Scheme requirements and to make recommendations to Council thereon.

11. Finance
a. To make recommendations to the Responsible Financial Officer to inform budget proposals for 20xx/xx..
b. To consider payments to be made as on list attached.

12. **Street Lighting Working Group**
    To consider the verbal report of the Working Group investigating the request for street lighting in Church Street.

13. **Correspondence f**or Information
    To note the attached appendix of items which will be available for inspection at the meeting.

14. **Councillors' reports and items for future agenda**
    Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision-making.

15. **Date of next meeting**
    To confirm the date of the next meeting which is scheduled for 8 November 20xx.

16. **To exclude the public and press in the public interest for consideration of the following items:**
    a. Personnel issues.
    b. Legal issues.

Signed

John Smith, Clerk to Any Village Parish Council

20th September 200x

PLEASE NOTE

- This is an example agenda, illustrating how typical items are dealt with
- the agenda must state the business to be transacted
- each decision item is self-explanatory with relevant information attached where possible
- the term "to consider" is used to identify an issue requiring a decision by the Council
- information items are clearly distinguished and are not for decision
- short bullet-point working party reports and recommendations may be circulated with the agenda for clarity
- Councillors requiring more information should be encouraged to contact the Clerk BEFORE the meeting

3.3 THE AGENDA

The clerk will draft the agenda. It should:

- Give a structure to discussions
- Inform members of the topics and why they are being discussed. Members can then think about the issues in advance and decide what contribution to make. This will save time at the meeting. To help this the agenda should contain enough information for members and guide them on what is expected by using wording such as 'to consider', 'to decide'. The Council will not be able to make decisions unless sufficient information is available to enable them to do so
- Help the chairman to keep to time. To do this, make sure there aren't too many items to be discussed in too short a time. If appropriate, put a rough time limit against each item to make sure it is possible to deal with all the business. Some councils have a rule that a meeting will not continue beyond a specified time, for example 9p.m. If your council does not have such a rule, consider whether it would make it easier to keep your meetings to time if you had one.

Agenda items can include:

- Regular items such as declaration of interests, apologies for absence, minutes of the previous meeting and correspondence
- Matters deferred from the previous meeting or needing further information.
- Matters which members have requested
- Matters referred from a committee or working group

POTENTIAL DANGER ZONES:

- ‘Matters arising’. If the issues are important they should be put on the agenda in their own right. A council cannot make a decision on an item under ‘matters arising’ ‘Matters arising’ can slow the meeting down and result in attempts to repeat previous discussions.
- Correspondence received can dominate proceedings. To prevent unnecessary discussion distinguish between correspondences which needs to be discussed and that which is for information, perhaps by using italic type. Consider with your clerk, how the correspondence can be made manageable. Some council’s put their correspondence into folders in plastic wallets so that any members wishing to

read the letters can do so more easily.

- Have controversial items been placed early in the agenda? The public will want to attend for these. If a large number of the public are expected to attend, it will help to consider them as early as possible.
- Any Other Business’ should be avoided. The summons to a meeting must by law specify the business to be transacted. The words ‘any other business’ do not specify any item of business. So any other business can only be used for an exchange of information or to give preliminary notification of important business for the next meeting.
- Declarations of interest are a matter for individual councillors. The chairman can prompt members for any declarations but cannot insist they are made.

3.3 TRUE OR FALSE QUIZ

Which of these statements are true and which are false?

1. The chairman can make a decision on behalf of the council between meetings if there is an emergency.
2. The press and public have a right to attend all council and council committee meetings.
3. The public can speak at all council meetings.
4. If you were elected in May, your first meeting will be the Annual Parish or Town Meeting.
5. Chairmen can use their casting vote in whatever way they see fit.
6. If there are 17 councillors, the quorum is six.
7. A councillor can propose making a donation to the local youth club under any other business.
8. 'A point of order' can be used to interrupt debate at any time.
9. If a local councillor submits a planning application to build two houses in his/her front garden, he/she must declare a personal interest in the matter when it is considered by the council.
10. A councillor must register the name of their employer in the Register of Interests.
11. The council's standing orders do not apply to workshops or partnership meetings.
12. The minutes of a council meeting can be used as evidence in a court of law.

MODEL ANSWERS

1. The chairman can make a decision on behalf of the council between meetings if there is an emergency

False The council must not allow delegation to a single councillor – not even to the chairman. It is good practice to specify in standing orders the kind of decisions that the clerk can make such as routine decisions, dealing with emergencies or spending small sums of money. Standing orders may require decisions to be taken after consultation with two councillors (including the chairman) but the decision remains with the officer.

2. The press and public have a right to attend all council and council committee meetings

True The press and public have a right to observe and record how the council operates. Exceptions are when sensitive issues are discussed (such as legal, contractual or staffing matters and then the council can agree to exclude the press and public for just that item of business. Council and committee meetings (and, subcommittee meetings) must all be advertised and open to the press and public. The council should decide on a schedule of meetings for the year.

3. The public can speak at all council meetings

True The council must advertise the meetings by putting up public notices; electors have a right to attend. Many councils encourage members of the public to speak and ask questions in a short, defined period, early in the meeting. Standing Orders should clarify this. In addition, principal authority councillors and police officers attending can be invited by the chairman to present a report under an appropriate agenda item.

4.If you were elected in May, your first meeting will be the Annual Parish or Town Meeting

False If you are elected in May your first meeting will be the Annual Meeting of the Council. This is where you elect a chairman and probably a vice-chairman, and appoint committee members and representatives to other bodies. Remember that this is a meeting of the council.

5.Chairmen can use their casting vote in whatever way they see fit
True When a vote is tied, the chairman may use a second, or casting vote. In many councils it is common practice for the casting vote to be used to maintain the status quo. This is a convention, not a legal requirement. The chairman can use their casting vote as they see fit.

6. If there are 17 councillors, the quorum is six
True For example, a third of the councillors (or three, whichever is the greater) must be present for the meeting to go ahead; this is known as the quorum. The council can set a higher quorum for committees through standing orders if it wishes. The meeting must remain quorate at all times, so if you need to leave during a council meeting always warn your clerk and chairman beforehand.

7.A councillor can propose making a donation to the local youth club under any other business
False It is actually unlawful to make a decision, especially a decision to spend money, without sufficient (three clear days) warning. Vague agenda items that don't specify exact business (such as Matters Arising, Correspondence and Any Other Business) are dangerous and should be avoided, because the council cannot make unexpected decisions.

8.'A point of order' can be used to interrupt debate at any time
False This is one of the most abused pieces of procedure - it is used too often by members to interrupt and take the floor out of turn. Points of order must deal with the conduct of procedure of the meeting. It is not justified simply because a statement has been made which someone feels is incorrect.

Standing orders Remember, these include rule of procedure laid down in law and additional regulations chosen by your council. Standing orders help the council to operate smoothly. Standing orders will determine, for example:

- the order of business
- the length of meetings and the duration of speaking time

- the schedule of meetings for the year
- delegation to committees and officers
- voting requirements
- procedures for public participation

9.If a local councillor submits a planning application to build two houses in his/her front garden, they must declare a personal interest in the matter when it is considered by the council)

False They must declare a disclosable pecuniary interest! At a meeting, you must declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest in business being considered before discussion of that item begins. A person's pecuniary interests are their business interests (for example their employment, trade, profession, contracts, or any company with which they are associated) and wider financial interests they might have (for example trust funds, investments, and assets including land and property). If you are present at a meeting of your council and you have a disclosable pecuniary interest relating to any business that is or will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your disclosable pecuniary interest during the meeting participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public. In certain circumstances you can request a dispensation from these prohibitions.

10.A councillor must register the name of their employer in the Register of Interests

True You have a duty to register specific financial interests within 28 days of election or co-option to the council. You must register the name of your employer, landholdings in the parish and business interests; you also record your membership and positions of control (such as treasurer) in other organisations. If you are not sure what is meant by the register of interests, then ask your clerk. Your signed register of interests goes to the

Monitoring Officer at the principal authority and the clerk keeps a copy of it. Monitoring Officers can also give advice as they oversee the framework for standards in local government called the ethical framework.

11. The council's standing orders do not apply to workshops or partnership meetings

True Working groups, workshops and partnership meetings are not covered by Standing Orders. However, councillors attending such meetings would be subject to the requirements of the Code of Conduct. It is important that such meetings and events are run in a professional way as they can affect the public's perception of the council.

The code of conduct - The code of conduct adopted by your council is a legal document that guides you, to make sure you maintain proper standards as a councillor. The essence of the code is that you agree to act openly and honourably in the public interest. You must never use your position to secure personal advantage for you, your family or friends. You must not do anything that brings the council into disrepute. As a councillor, the code reminds you that you must:

- treat others with respect;
- comply with equality legislation;
- not bully or intimidate anyone;
- not disclose confidential information;
- not bring the council into disrepute by your conduct;
- not use your position or the council's resources for improper purposes.

12. The minutes of a council meeting can be used as evidence in a court of law

True The minutes are a legal record of decisions (with short summaries of reasons for making the decision without requiring references to councillors names so debate isn't recorded verbatim). Also note that proposers and seconders are not required by law.

4.1 DEALING WITH CASEWORK HINTS AND TIPS

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM:

- Listen to the constituent.
- Are you the first port of call?
- What is the history of this case?
- Don’t promise to solve everything or to be able to get a quick solution.

REFER TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE:

- In writing, e-mail or by phone.
- Keep copies of letters and a record of conversations.
- Is this a local or principal council problem?
- Keep your constituent informed.

MONITOR PROGRESS:

- Keep a casework log.
- Use a ‘bring forward’ system.

CHECK THE RESPONSE:

- Have you or the Council dealt with the problem to the constituent’s satisfaction.
- How would you feel about the outcome if you were the constituent? (See it from their viewpoint, not the Council’s).
- If you aren’t satisfied, challenge the outcome or response.
- Could the constituent go to another source for help?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Has this case raised wider policy issues?
- Is a trend emerging? If so, does our policy need to be reviewed? Do we have a policy covering this issue?

ANALYSING YOUR CASEWORK:

- How many people brought problems to you in the last year?
- What was their age, gender, ethnic origin, social class, employment status?
- How did they contact you?
- How many cases did you resolve to their satisfaction?
- What type of problems did they bring?
- How does this compare with previous years?
- How does your caseload compare with other councillors?

4.2 TOOLS FOR ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY

The tried and tested tools noted below are just some ways in which people can express their hopes and wishes for the community. They provide valuable opportunities for local people to identify features of the parish that need improving or are worth protecting. They stimulate discussion; they inform the decision makers and usually lead to action. Surveys and questionnaires give residents, including children, an opportunity to express their views about where they live. The response rate from households can be impressive — usually over 50% — and in smaller communities, with personal delivery and collection, it can reach 90%.

- **Design Statements** involve communities in a review of the built and natural environment of their area. The published results can be used by your principal authority to help make planning decisions.
- **A Parish Map** can be a creative exercise; for example, it might be a painting, tapestry or model of the parish. People identify local features that matter as they work on the map.
- **Community conferences or workshop**s provide more opportunities for bringing people together to talk about the future of the parish.
- **Community Plans** might be led by the local council, drawing in community groups, residents and others, to produce an action plan for improving the local quality of life and the environment. These plans can be based on the findings of a variety of consultation exercises. Local people from all parts of the community should have their say.

In addition to helping your council identify real improvements, the process of using tools like these can strengthen people's sense of purpose and belonging. The process is as important as the product.