
FELMERSHAM & RADWELL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22 MAY 2018

Attendees:

Councillors: Peter Hartop (Chair); Marjorie Pipe (Vice Chair); Jason Boswell, Rosie Cheetham, Vanessa Coleman, Rosemary Drewery and Clive Just

Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer: Trevor Roff

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

		Action
1/18	Appointment of Chairman and Declaration of Acceptance	
	The meeting received a nomination for Peter Hartop for the position of Chairman from Cllr. Jason Boswell and this was seconded by Cllr. Vanessa Coleman. All Councillors voted in favour of the appointment. <u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cllr. Peter Hartop be elected as Chairman for the next annual period. Cllr. Hartop, having been elected to the office of Chairman of Felmersham & Radwell Parish Council, completed the declaration of acceptance that he will duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of it according to the best of his judgement and ability and to observe the code of conduct that is expected of the role of Chairman of the Parish Council.	Cllr. Hartop
2/18	Appointment of Vice Chairperson and Declaration of Acceptance	
	The meeting received a nomination for Mrs Marjorie Pipe for the position of Vice-Chairperson from Cllr. Rosemary Drewery and this was seconded by Cllr. Just. All Councillors voted in favour of the appointment. <u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cllr. Marjorie Pipe be elected as Vice-Chairperson for the next annual period. Cllr. Marjorie Pipe, having been elected to the office of Vice-Chairperson of Felmersham & Radwell Parish Council, completed the declaration of acceptance that she will duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of it according to the best of her judgement and ability and to observe the code of conduct that is expected of the role of Vice-Chairperson.	Cllr. Pipe

3/18	Appointment of Portfolio Holders	
	This item concerns Councillor's responsibilities – these are the Parish Council's spokespersons and focal point for various issues and duties. By having these areas of responsibility covered it gives Parish Councillors the opportunity, if necessary, to formally report as part of the Parish Council agenda and thus all Parish Councillors can be informed of issues and progress as necessary. The assignment of responsibility to the following Portfolio Areas was proposed by Cllr. Marjorie Pipe and seconded by Cllr. Rosie Cheetham. All Councillors voted in favour of these appointments: · Communications (Cllr. Just) · External Affairs (Cllr. Drewery) · Grounds Maintenance (Cllr. Boswell) · Highways (Cllr. Pipe, with help from Cllr. Boswell for Radwell) · Parish Assets including the Parish Burial Ground (Cllr. Just) · Parish Litter (Cllr. Cheetham) · Planning (Cllr. Hartop) · Radwell Matters (Cllr. Boswell) · Security (All Parish Councillors) · Traffic Issues (Cllr. Coleman) · Parish Trees (Cllr. Cheetham) · Village Hall Representative (Cllr. Pipe) · Neighbourhood Plan (Cllr. Drewery) · Town Lot Charity Trustee (Cllr. Hartop) All Councillors expressed a commitment to duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of office, including portfolio holder responsibility, according to the best of their judgement and ability and to observe the code of conduct expected of the role.	Note Note All
4/18	Parish Council – Roles and Responsibilities	
	All Parish Councillors received a briefing note, attached at Appendix A, outlining the role and responsibilities of the Parish Council itself, Parish Councillors, Chairman and Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer.	All

FELMERSHAM & RADWELL PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL'S ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES - MAY 2018

1. **What are Parish Councils?**

Parish and Town Councils (known collectively as Local Councils) are the first tier of local government and the closest to the community they serve. A Town Council is a Parish Council which has resolved to call itself a Town Council; the Chairman of a Town Council can also be called the Town Mayor. There are some 8,500 Parish and Town Councils in England. As a tier of local government they are elected bodies, with discretionary powers and rights laid down by Parliament to represent their communities and provide services for them. All local authorities are constituted in the same way with Councillors elected by the Local Government Electorate and a Chairman, who must be one of them. Local Councils vary in size and capacity; many are very small, representing a few hundred people, others represent communities of over 30,000 people with budgets over £1m and expenditure and staffing levels per head of population similar to a small District Council.

A Local Council is a body corporate with perpetual succession and a name. It comprises a Chairman (or Town Mayor), and Councillors. The number of Councillors is fixed by the Borough Council. A local Council must act within the law. It can only spend, raise or use money if it has a statutory power to do so, otherwise it acts *ultra vires* (beyond its powers). Local Councils have a wide range of powers under different Acts of Parliament. Most of these powers are discretionary, i.e. the Council *may* do something, rather than it *must* do something. The exercise of these powers may be subject to various consents, from, for example, the owner of land or another public body such as the Highways Authority. Almost all Local Council powers are concurrent with those of the Borough Council, i.e. the power may be exercised by either the Parish/Town Council or the Borough Council.

A Local Council has the unfettered right to raise money by precept (a mandatory demand) on the Borough Council. The precept required by the Local Council is then collected by the Borough Council as part of the council tax levied on tax payers in that Parish. Local Councils act as a sounding board for local opinion and have important rights of consultation. County and District or Unitary Councils are obliged by law to consult the Local Council on certain matters affecting the Parish.

The range of services and amenities provided by Local Councils varies enormously. All play an important role in maintaining and improving local services and facilities, supporting local voluntary organisations and activities and influencing and lobbying on local development. While some larger councils are run along party political lines, there is no expectation that you have to join a political party. The vast majority of parish councils are not split by party politics.

Parish Councillors are volunteers who are either elected or co-opted onto the Council, and once elected Councillors serve for a period of 4 years. Felmersham & Radwell has seven Parish Councillors representing the villages. You can become a Councillor if you:

- are British, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union;
- are 18 years of age or over;
- are registered to vote in the area or if you have lived, worked or owned property in the area for at least 12 months before an election.

Felmersham & Radwell Parish Council has bi-monthly meetings, in January, March, May, July, September and November. Parish Councillors have a responsibility to be well informed about diverse local issues and views and:

- Prepare for and attend meetings;
- Take part in discussions at meetings and form sound judgements based on what they hear, and then abide by majority decisions;
- Ensure with the other Councillors that the Parish Council is properly managed;
- Represent all the village and not small sections of it;
- Maintain proper standards of behaviour.

Residents and the public are welcome to attend Parish Council meetings. There is a 15 minute session on the agenda for members of the public to speak.

2. Roles & Responsibilities

Parish Councillors

Main purpose

Representing the views of all residents within your parish.

Secondary purpose

- As part of a local council you will have responsibility for running a range of local services which may include: open spaces, play areas, village halls, and potentially much more.
- Deciding on how much to raise through the council tax in order to deliver your council's services.
- Influencing and shaping the long term development policy for the parish, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish.
- Improve the quality of life and the environment in their local area.
- Working to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent.
- Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies.
- Attending meetings.

Chairman

The Chairman is elected by the members of the Council at the Annual Council meeting and serves for twelve months (Section 15 (1) of the Local Government act 1972).

The Chairman's main role is to run council meetings. He/she can suggest the content and design of the agenda, but as legal signatory, the Clerk has the final say. The Chairman is responsible for ensuring that effective and lawful decisions are taken at meetings of the council and, assisted by the Clerk, guides activities by managing the meetings of the council. The Chairman is responsible for involving all councillors in discussion and ensuring that councillors keep to the point. The Chairman summarises the debate and facilitates the making of clear resolutions and is responsible for keeping discussions moving so that the meeting is not too long. The Chairman has a casting vote. His/her first vote is a personal vote as a member of the council. If there is a tied vote, the Chairman can have a second, casting vote. The Chairman cannot legally make a decision on behalf of the Council.

The Chairman will often be the public face of the council and will represent the Council at official events. He/she may be asked to speak on behalf of the Council and, in such circumstances, should only express the agreed views of the Council and not his/her personal views.

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

The Clerk is employed by the Council (under section 112 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972) to provide administrative support for the Council's activities. Any other staff, although employed by the Council, answer to the Clerk who is their manager and is responsible for their performance.

The Clerk's primary responsibility is to advise the Council on whether its decisions are lawful and to recommend ways in which decisions can be implemented. To help with this, the Clerk can be asked to research topics of concern to the Council and provide unbiased information to help the Council to make appropriate choices. The Clerk has a wide range of other responsibilities which are set out in his/her job description.

The Clerk must recognise that the Council is responsible for all decisions and that he/she takes instructions from the Council as a body. The Clerk is not answerable to any individual councillor - not even the Chairman. The Council must be confident that the Clerk is, at all times, independent, objective and professional.

'Proper officer' is a title used in statute. It refers to the appropriate officer for the relevant function. In town and parish councils, the proper officer is normally the Clerk. In financial matters, the proper officer is known as the Responsible Financial Officer.

Trevor Roff
Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer
May 2018