

Weston under Penyard - Parish Council Working Groups

The Proposal

An extension of the current arrangements for working groups is proposed as detailed below.

Why extend the use of working groups?

Working groups are a normal feature in the organisation of parish councils, and ours should be clarified and extended for the reasons set out below.

1. The Parish Council has been increasing the work they do to support the parishioners they represent.
2. Next year the financial budget indicates that the activities of the Parish Council will need to increase dramatically if the impressive spending plans are to be achieved.
3. The parish council normally meets for only about 20 hours per year. In order to successfully undertake all necessary work, the full benefit of working groups should be applied so that formal meetings can concentrate on decision making. Twice each year the Parish Council has a two-month gap between meetings, when it is even more important for the business of the working groups to continue.
4. Working groups submit written reports to Parish Council, thereby promoting more effective communication and freeing up valuable meeting time.
5. In recent years some Councillors have not always been fully engaged in their role and may have felt underutilised and undervalued.
6. To build bridges with the community, greater use of residents within working groups could be implemented (except in a working group dealing with Finance, in compliance with Standing Order 4(b)).
7. A working group can share ideas and be more effective than an individual.
8. Having at least two members in a working group allows the business to proceed in the absence of another member, particularly in Parish Council meetings.

Proposed Working Groups

The organisation is shown below, and Terms of Reference are described in the later section. As may be decided by the Council from time to time, working groups can be added or removed as the need arises.

Name of Group	Composition of Group
Finance, Administration and Communication	The Parish Clerk and 3 or 4 Councillors including the Chair of the Council
Planning	3 or 4 Councillors
Highways and Public Rights of Way	2 or 3 Councillors and the Parish Footpaths Officer ¹
Environment	1 or more Councillors and the Tree Warden ²

¹ The Parish Footpaths Officer may be a Councillor or just a resident of the parish.

² The Tree Warden may be a Councillor or just a resident of the parish.

Notes

- a) The Chair will be an ex-officio member of all working groups, although not be expected to attend them all.
- b) The working group will appoint a Chair who will not be the Chair of the Council.
- c) Working groups should always consult the Parish Clerk as required and respect his roles and responsibilities.
- d) With the approval of the Council a working group may co-opt up to two non-Councillor residents to join a working group at any time provided that the number of non-councillors in a working group does not exceed the number of Councillors.
- e) Working groups must comply with the policies of the Parish Council.
- f) Each working group will submit a written report to the Parish Clerk in advance of each Parish Council meeting.

Terms of Reference

Finance, Administration and Communication

Finance

- Prepare annual budget and precept and present to Parish Council
- Monitor income and expenditure against budget on a monthly basis
- Ensure adequate financial controls are in place
- Maintain asset register
- Review the Financial Regulations annually and recommend amendments
- Monitor and effect compliance with laid down internal and external audit and other financial procedures, regulations and statutes
- Monitor the Council's risk assessments and recommend changes where necessary
- At least quarterly, verify the bank reconciliation produced by the RFO
- Recommend the annual accounts to the Council

Administration

- Review all Parish Council Policies and Processes in accordance with the Parish Council Standing Orders and make recommendations for updating / improvement as and when necessary

Communications

- To ensure that the Council is efficient and effective in communicating with members of the parish in a timely and informative manner, with particular attention to:
 - Weston News
 - Press
 - Website
 - Facebook and social media
 - Monitor compliance with Parish Council's Email Communications Policy
 - Notice Boards
 - Newsletters
 - Annual Parish Meeting report

Planning

- Management of Planning matters in accordance with the Parish Council's Policy for Managing Planning Applications and Related Matters
- The Planning Group will represent the interests of the Council by actively engaging with Herefordshire Council and landowners/developers throughout the planning and development process, including:
 - a) Pre-Application,
 - b) Planning Application,
 - c) Pre-Submission of detailed matters previously reserved,
 - d) Monitoring during the construction phase,
 - e) Compliance with the conditions of planning approvals,
 - f) Compliance with the NP throughout the process,
 - g) Any other planning related matters.
- The Planning Group will manage the implementation of the NP and routine reviews.

Highways and Public Rights of Way

Road Safety

- Manage SID project
- Promote traffic calming
- Promote road safety improvements

Road Maintenance

- Supervise Lengthsman activities on highways³
- Report defects to Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) and monitor remedial work
- Monitor waste bins and grit bins

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- Maintenance and improvement of PROW in accordance with Parish Council management plans
- Report defects to BBLP and monitor remedial work
- Supervise Lengthsman activities on PROWs⁴

Environment

- Promote biodiversity
- Promote wildflower areas
- Promote tree preservation
- Promote tree planting
- Any other matters prescribed under Project 3 of the Neighbourhood Development Plan

³ The Parish Clerk will be responsible for administration of the Lengthsman contract

⁴ The Parish Clerk will be responsible for administration of the Lengthsman contract

Other Accountabilities

One Councillor will be accountable for each of the following three matters and will submit a written report to the Parish Clerk in advance of each Parish Council meeting.

Defibrillators

- Manage maintenance and report defects
- Promote public awareness
- Manage VETS system and routinely check its effectiveness
- Organise necessary training

Climate Change

- Promote local solutions
- Raise local awareness

Village Hall Representative

- Liaise with the Village Hall Committee
- Attend meetings of the Village Hall Committee

Implementation

Each year Councillors will be appointed to all working groups and other positions at the Annual Meeting in May.