



COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Personnel and Governance Advisory Committee was held via Zoom Video Conference on Friday January 21st 2022 starting at 10am.

Attendees: Cllrs. Steve Herra (Chair); Graham Chillcott; Jackie Rhodes; Sylvia Wiggins
Meeting Clerk: David Rigby

A G E N D A (with **DRAFT** notes of discussion)

- 1. Apologies for absence**
None
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
None.
- 3. Review of notes of previous meeting (December 3rd 2021)**
All present were happy that the notes for the previous meeting accurately reflected the discussions
- 4. Consideration of a draft Media Policy**
The Clerk presented a report on a draft Media Policy for consideration. All members were happy with the proposed policy which will now be presented to Council at its meeting on February 8th 2022 for adoption.
- 5. Consideration of a revised Reports Protocol**
The Clerk presented a report on a revised Reports protocol for consideration. All members were happy with the proposed protocol which will now be presented to Council at its meeting on February 8th 2022 for adoption.
- 6. Review of work programme for the Personnel and Governance Advisory Committee through to end of April 2022.**
The Clerk advised that he and GC would be meeting shortly to undertake the review of the Terms of Reference for our Advisory Committees which would then be reported directly to Council for approval.
To assist with the rolling review of Council policies and procedures JR asked if the Clerk could produce a list of them in order of adoption/last review day. The Clerk agreed to do this
- 7. Discussion of any other matters relating to the Aims and Responsibilities of the Personnel and Governance Advisory Committee.**
None
- 8. Agree date for next meeting**
Friday April 29th 2022, 11am.
- 9. Confidential Item – Staffing Matter – Review of recommendations approved at November 9th 2021 Council meeting**
Members discussed this item

PERSONNEL & GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING – JANUARY 21ST 2022

AGENDA ITEM 3 – REVIEW OF DRAFT NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING ON DEC 3RD 2021

A meeting of the Personnel and Governance Advisory Committee was held via Zoom Video Conference on Friday December 3rd 2021 starting at 9.30am.

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 (s.100) the public are able to attend and observe meetings of the Personnel and Governance Advisory Committee but do not have the right to participate (unless invited to do so by the Chairman of the meeting).

Attendees: Cllrs. Steve Herra (Chair); Graham Chillcott; Jackie Rhodes; Sylvia Wiggins
Mr David Rigby (Parish Clerk as observer)

A G E N D A (with DRAFT notes of discussion)

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Review of notes of previous meeting (October 22nd 2021)

All present were happy that the notes of the previous meeting accurately reflected the discussions.

4. Agree date for next meeting (provisionally set for Friday January 21st 2022 at 10am)

Date and time agreed as above

5. Confidential Item – Staffing Matter in confidential report dated November 25th 2021 referenced “P&G/GC 1”

Following a motion to “exclude the press and public” in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960 proposed by SH, seconded by GC, all members in favour, the Clerk left the room and the above report was considered.

The acceptance of the recommendations was proposed by SH, seconded by GC, all members in favour. Subject to approval by the Finance Advisory Committee at its meeting at 11am on December 3rd 2021 the recommendations will then go forward for approval by Council at its meeting on December 14th 2021.

Meeting ended at 9.56am

All recommendations needing to be submitted to Council for approval had been recorded in the notes.

PERSONNEL & GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING – JANUARY 21ST 2022

ITEM 4 – CONSIDERATION OF A DRAFT MEDIA POLICY

BACKGROUND

This Advisory Committee has already accepted the principle of a rolling review of all Council policies and procedures.

CURRENT POSITION

The Parish Council doesn't currently have a policy that sets out the protocols for dealing with the media and press.

I have therefore reviewed a number of template policies for a Media and Press Policy

Attached as Appendix 1 is a proposed policy using an SLCC Model Policy..

RECOMMENDATION

That this Advisory Committee considers the attached draft policy and if thought acceptable presents a report to Council proposing it's adoption.

David Rigby, Clerk
January 10th 2022



Press and Media Policy (adopted on xx/xx/xxxx)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and deals with the day-to-day relationship between the Council and the media.

1.2 It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

2 KEYS AIMS

2.1 The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. The media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.

2.2 It is important that the press have access to the Clerk/ Members and to background information to assist them in giving accurate information to the public. To balance this, the Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the governments Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5670/1878324.pdf

3.2 The Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders should be adhered to.

4. CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

4.1 The Clerk and Members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.

4.2 Confidential documents, exempt Minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who is responsible and appropriate action will be taken.

4.3 When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made. Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

4.4 There are a number of personal privacy issues for the Clerk and Members that must be handled carefully and sensitively. These include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone number (although Member contact details are in the public domain); disciplinary procedures and long-term sickness absences that are affecting service provision. In all these and similar situations, advice must be taken from the Clerk before any response is made to the media.

4.5 When responding to approaches from the media, the Clerk or the Chairman are authorised to make contact with the media.

4.6 Statements made by the Chairman and the Clerk should reflect the Council's opinion.

4.7 Other Councillors can talk to the media but must ensure that it is clear that the opinions given were their own and not necessarily those of the Council.

4.8 There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must come from the Clerk.

5 ATTENDANCES OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

5.1 The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports and minutes are sent to the media on request.

5.2 The media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating and workspace will be made available.

5.3 Any filming or taping of Council proceedings by the media must be with prior notice to the Clerk and Chairman of the meeting (see Standing Orders).

6 PRESS RELEASES

6.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the Clerk and Members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial

6.2 The Clerk or any Member may draft a press release, however they must all be issued by the Clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three (Legal Framework) are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

7. CHANGES

7.1 This policy will be a living document and will be able to be altered by the Parish Clerk to allow immediate action should the unexpected arise. This will be key to overcoming teething problems that have not already been identified. Changes to the policy will be highlighted at the next Council meeting to keep Members abreast of the changes.

- ENDS -

PERSONNEL & GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING – JANUARY 21ST 2022

ITEM 5 – CONSIDERATION OF A REVISED REPORTS PROTOCOL

BACKGROUND

At the December 11th 2018 Council meeting the “Document Protocol” attached as Appendix 1 was approved (Item 9). Whilst titled “Document Protocol” it describes how/when reports can be presented to Council and supports a “document Flowchart” that was agreed at the same time.

At the April 13th 2021 Council meeting a report (Item 16) was presented which referenced the “Document Protocol” mentioned above and sought approval for amendments to the content of Chairman’s and Councillors reports. It was agreed that the report be withdrawn and that the Clerk, via the Personnel & Governance Advisory Committee to bring a fresh report to a future meeting.

CURRENT POSITION

The Clerk has reviewed the existing protocol and flowchart and made a few suggested changes. These include updating the flowchart to reflect that paper copies of documents are no longer provided to members. The revised documents are attached as Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

That this Advisory Committee considers the documents within Appendix 2 and if thought acceptable presents a report to Council proposing their adoption.

David Rigby, Clerk
January 18th 2022

APPENDIX 1 – EXISTING “DOCUMENT PROTOCOL” AND ASSOCIATED FLOWCHART

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

Document Protocol

Adopted by the Council on 11th December 2018

The Clerk to the Council is the Proper Officer and employee of the Council and as such is under a statutory duty to carry out all the functions of a local authority's Proper Officer, and in particular to serve or issue all the notices required by law of the Proper Officer of the Council. This is essential to comply with Transparency Requirements.

In order to ensure that these duties are carried out effectively and in accordance with statutory requirements it is essential to have a clear approach to the production and publication of documents. The attached Flo Chart sets out a proposed Document Management Protocol so that all parties involved are clear about process and timing of document production and distribution for discussion at Council.

One key requirement is that Agenda and supporting documents for meetings of the Parish Council and its committees should be circulated and made available to the public a minimum of 3 clear days before the day of the meeting. (A clear day does not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting and excludes weekends and bank holidays). Working back from this deadline there are a number of key steps involved in reaching the point where a final agenda and supporting documents are ready to be distributed.

It is important for the Clerk to be aware of all proposed reports so that there is no omission or duplication no surprises; transparency; no hidden financial or regulatory risks but 'good management'. The Clerk needs time to check, format and make adjustments to reports and agendas and therefore reports must be submitted in open editable format in MS Word to facilitate that.

All documents - reports, briefing notes and information should only be circulated to Councillors via the Clerk to ensure an accurate audit trail of communications. The only exceptions are where there is a prior agreement for an individual Councillor to deal with it - e.g. drafts of the Parish Council Newsletter.

There shall be no 'tabled reports'. The only exceptions are urgent items under three headings: -

- a) where there is an urgent financial matter to address which if not addressed would cause an issue for the Parish Council;
- b) where there is an urgent regulatory matter to address which if not addressed would cause an issue for the Parish Council, and
- c) where not to address an item as a matter of urgency, could bring the Parish Council into disrepute.

Decision as to urgency rests with the Clerk RFO.

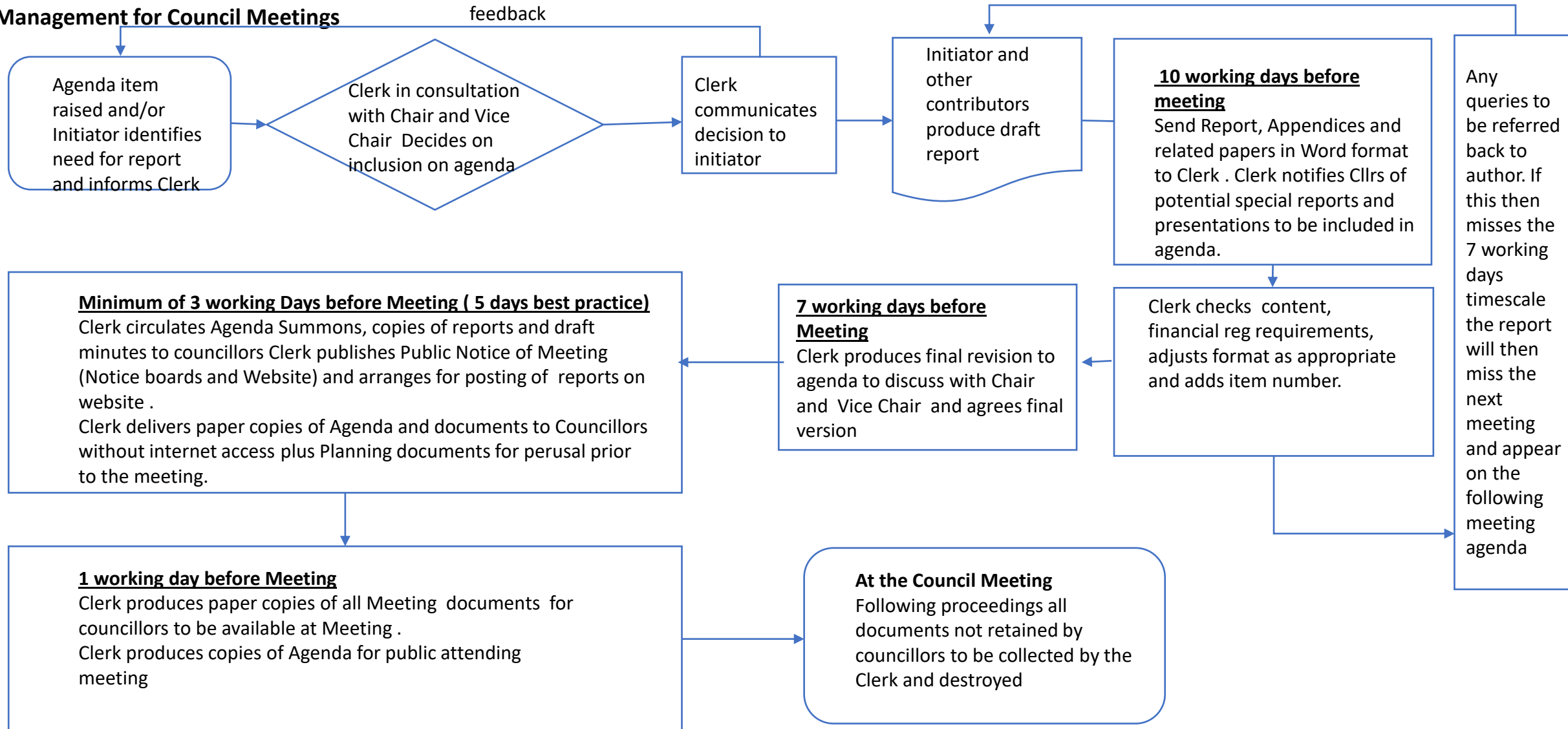
When sources of further information are identified during discussion of the report then this can be added to a follow on report which will be published in the normal way with meeting agendas, for the sake of transparency.

The Clerk needs sufficient time to consult with the Chair, who has responsibility for the proper conduct of the meeting and needs to be involved in planning the meeting. This consultation requires agendas and reports to be prepared well in advance of the publication date and for Councillors to have sufficient time to read and digest the contents of any report.

- END -

Draft Protocol for Document Management for Council Meetings

feedback



APPENDIX 2 – PROPOSED “DOCUMENT PROTOCOL” AND ASSOCIATED FLOWCHART

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

Document Protocol

The Clerk to the Council is the Proper Officer and employee of the Council and as such is under a statutory duty to carry out all the functions of a local authority's Proper Officer, and in particular to serve or issue all the notices required by law of the Proper Officer of the Council. This is essential to comply with Transparency Requirements.

In order to ensure that these duties are carried out effectively and in accordance with statutory requirements it is essential to have a clear approach to the production and publication of documents. The attached Flowchart sets out a proposed Document Management Protocol so that all parties involved are clear about process and timing of document production and distribution for discussion at Council.

One key **legal** requirement is that the Agenda ~~and supporting documents~~ for meetings of the Parish Council and its committees should be circulated and made available to the public a minimum of 3 clear days before the day of the meeting. (A clear day does not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting and excludes Sundays and bank holidays). **Best practice, which the Clerk should look to follow, recommends a minimum of 5 clear days for publication of both the agenda and supporting papers.** Working back from this deadline there are a number of key steps involved in reaching the point where a final agenda and supporting documents are ready to be distributed.

It is important for the Clerk to be aware of all proposed reports so that there is no omission or duplication no surprises; transparency; no hidden financial or regulatory risks but 'good management'. The Clerk needs time to check, format and make adjustments to reports and agendas and therefore reports must be submitted in open editable format in MS Word to facilitate that.

All documents - reports, briefing notes and information should only be circulated to Councillors via the Clerk to ensure an accurate audit trail of communications. The only exceptions are where there is a prior agreement for an individual Councillor to deal with it - e.g. drafts of the Parish Council Newsletter.

The published agenda for a Council meeting must include all items upon which the Council is expected to make a decision. In addition, the reverse applies in that no decision can be taken on an item that is not on the agenda (i.e there shall be no “tabled reports”). The only exceptions are urgent items under three headings: -

- a) where there is an urgent financial matter to address which if not addressed would cause an issue for the Parish Council;
- b) where there is an urgent regulatory matter to address which if not addressed would cause an issue for the Parish Council, and
- c) where not to address an item as a matter of urgency, could bring the Parish Council into disrepute.

Decision as to urgency rests with the Clerk **as the Council's proper officer**

When sources of further information are identified during discussion of the report then this can be added to a follow on report which will be published in the normal way with meeting agendas, for the sake of transparency.

The Clerk needs sufficient time to consult with the Chair, who has responsibility for the proper conduct of the meeting and needs to be involved in planning the meeting. This consultation requires agendas and reports to be prepared well in advance of the publication date and for Councillors to have sufficient time to read and digest the contents of any report.

Agenda items such as Clerk's; Chairman's; and Councillors Reports are for matters such as the sharing of information; reporting on meetings attended; recording particular events that have taken place in the Parish.

Councillors should continue to raise issues regarding local matters such as the need for reports to Hampshire Highways for roadway problems or items requiring the attention of the County or District Councils on an ongoing basis. Councillors can contact the Clerk with the relevant information between meetings for him to investigate and / or advise appropriate action. The results are then, if relevant, summarised in the Clerks Report at the next meeting.

Items not on the agenda for a Council meeting that Councillors wish to debate can either be raised during the agenda item calling for "Suggested items for the next meeting" or as outlined in the flowchart previously mentioned in this protocol.

- END -

Draft Protocol for Document Management for Council Meetings

