

## **Duties & Responsibilities of a Parish Council Chairman**

### **A Chairman:**

- Holds a statutory post defined in law
- Is a member of the Council and is elected annually
- Has the authority at meetings and must be obeyed when issuing lawful direction or direction in line with Standing Orders.
- Is the interface between the public and Council and sign off any outgoing communications.
- The one to welcome speakers and make them 'feel at home'
- Is to make sure decisions are clear for the clerk to act upon.

### **The Chairman should:**

- Know that the agenda was put up in time and be familiar with business to be covered
- Arrive in good time, adequately briefed and with all the necessary papers in correct order.
- Ensure the meeting is quorate
- Start the meeting on time by declaring it open, and end it by clearly stating it closed and the time it ended.
- Know that he/she has no more statutory power than any other Councillor except that of the casting vote.
- Ensure that all points of view have a clear hearing
- Keep the discussion to the point, and that it is relevant and ensure the Council deals with clear issues
- Ensure the Council/committee acts only within its terms of reference and/or legal powers and functions
- Ensure compliance with standing orders, financial regulations, Council policies, etc.
- To ensure that where and when appropriate and allowable the Council takes a vote to exclude the public and press from Council meetings.
- Understand the principles of debate and voting (see NALC Standing Orders and Good Councillor Guide)
- Remain impartial and not 'guide' Councillors to his/her desired decision.
- Ideally not allow the meeting to continue for more than 2 hours without a break
- Create an atmosphere which encourages participation
- Be in control of the meeting.
- Know that he/she cannot be a committee of one (Hillingdon Case Law)
- Respect and understand the role of the clerk/RFO
- Co-operate with officers and Councillors
- Act as a representative of the Council at civic or local events

The Chairman on his/her own has no power to make decisions without the Resolution of the Council.

The Chairman cannot decide which items should appear on the agenda for meetings. The Clerk is responsible for the agenda, apart from Extraordinary Meetings. Normal practice would be for the Clerk to consult with the Chairman when drawing up the agenda to ensure that appropriate and necessary items are added.

The Chairman should not involve him/herself in the day to day administration of the Council, but can be a point of reference for officers if agreed by Council.

### **Presiding at the first Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council:**

The retiring chairman, or in his or her absence, the vice chair must preside at the meeting for the first item on the agenda (after apologies and checking previous minutes) 'To Elect Chairman'. If it is a meeting after an election then the retiring chair or vice chair presides, even if they are no longer Councillors. If both are absent then the Council may appoint another Councillor to preside. It is illegal for a clerk to take the chair at a meeting.

### **Election of a Chair:**

If the presiding chair is no longer to be a member of the Council then they only have a casting vote. If he/she is still going to be a member then he/she has a vote and a casting vote (he/she can vote for him/herself if he/she wants) Once voted in, the new chair signs his/her declaration of acceptance as the officer of Chairman and takes over the meeting immediately.

### **The Annual Parish Meeting or Parish Assembly:**

To be held at any time between March and May each year to report to the parish electorate on the activities and performance of the Council over the previous year. A finance update must be available at this meeting. The chairman or vice chair should if present preside at this meeting.

Only persons recorded on the electoral register for the Parish are allowed to vote at this meeting. The Parish Council pays for the meeting. If a poll is called for then it must be paid for by the Parish Council.

### **How to Handle Public Disturbances during Meetings:**

No one is entitled to interrupt or obstruct the proceedings of the Council or its committees. It is best to stop an interruption at once before the habit spreads, and although a Chairman would not wish to be rude he/she should cut short an interrupter; if good humour and conciliation fail to produce silence he/she may have to warn them that he/she will turn them out. If the warning is ignored it should be resolved without discussion that the interrupter is excluded. It is not essential to call the police to remove the person but it may be necessary.