

WHITCHURCH TOWN COUNCIL OPERATING FRAMEWORK

This statement summarises how Whitchurch Town Council operates. It is designed as a quick reference point for members of the public, and an “aide memoire” for officers and Councillors.

It is a summary only. Further information can be obtained from the Town Clerk, and/or by consulting the Town Council’s Standing Orders.

The Full Council

Council is made up twelve Councillors elected every 4 years (2011, 2015 etc). If a vacancy occurs during the 4 years, an election will be held if no less than 10 residents call for one. Otherwise the remaining Councillors may co-opt an eligible person on to the Council.

The Full Council is ultimately responsible for all the functions and decisions of the Council.

Committees

The Council has appointed Standing Committees to carry out some of its functions.

These are: Development
 Leisure & Environment
 Resources and Policy

Committees have the power to appoint sub-committees, working parties or advisory groups for specific purposes who report back to the Committee.

Each Committee has its own Terms of Reference. These are a set of powers given to it by Full Council. Each Committee is able to take decisions within the limits given to it. Anything falling beyond those limits must be referred to Full Council.

In general, Committees are responsible for advising on, monitoring and reviewing their areas of responsibility, and working up proposals for the future. They cannot change existing Council policy or decisions. If they think such a change is desirable, they must refer the matter to the Full Council, with a recommendation. A full copy of the Terms of Reference of each Committee is available from the Town Clerk.

The Clerk or her Deputy/Assistant will attend all meetings and will be able to advise Councillors generally, including on whether a decision can be taken by the Committee or whether it needs to be referred to the Full Council.

Councillors

Councillors are democratically accountable to the residents of the Town. Their over-riding duty is to the whole community.

Councillors have to follow a Code of Conduct, setting out the behaviour expected of them while acting in their official capacity.

Councillors cannot make decisions or instruct the Council Staff individually. They cannot undertake action on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so by the Council or a Committee (or Sub-Committee).

When communicating with the public about a Council matter, Councillors should make it clear whether they are speaking or writing on behalf of the Council, or as an individual.

Meetings of Council and Committees

Full Council Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month, excepting January, August, (Councillors' Recess), and October. Development Committee Meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month, excepting August. Leisure & Environment Committee Meetings are held on the 3rd Monday in the month, excepting August. Resources and Policy meetings are generally held on the 4th Monday of each month excepting August. All meetings are open to the public, except when confidential items are discussed. Minutes of meetings are published on the Council's website, in hard copy at the Library, or can be obtained from the Town Clerk.

Minutes are not a verbatim record of a meeting. However, any decisions the meeting makes must be recorded.

The Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is the Chief Officer of the Council. His/her main role is to carry out the wishes of the Council, manage and oversee the delivery of its services, and advise on constitutional matters. He/she is also responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. He/she is responsible to and will adhere to instructions from the Full Council or authorised Committees and may not take instruction from individual Councillors.

Financial matters

The Council and Committees have capital and revenue budgets they can spend to carry out their duties. The budget for each Committee is approved annually by the Full Council at the November or, (and no later than), the December Full Council Meeting for the forthcoming financial year. Committees can incur or approve expenditure only within their budget.

Except in case of extreme urgency, any other expenditure must be approved by the Full Council. Refer Standing Orders/Financial Policy.

Relationship between Clerk, other officers and Councillors

A close working relationship between Councillors and the Town Clerk (and any other officers the Council may employ) is important, and they should treat each other with mutual respect (the Councillors' Code of Conduct in any event requires Councillors to treat others with respect). However, the relationships should not become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question Councillors' or the Clerk's ability to deal impartially with others.

Other Useful Information:

Clerk: Mrs Catherine Burt

Deputy Clerk: Mrs Sharon Woodman

The Office is open to the public on Mondays, Thursday and Fridays 9.30 am - 11.30 am; Tuesdays 9.30 am - 12.30 pm and by appointment at other times in the working week.

Telephone: 01256 892107

E-mail: clerks@whitchurch-hampshire-tc.gov.uk

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman Elect are nominated by the Full Council in February each year, and formally elected as Chairman/Mayor and Deputy Chairman/Deputy Mayor at the beginning of the Annual Meeting in May. The Deputy Chairman generally follows as the Mayor for the following year, if they wish to do so.

From time to time, Councillors may receive information regarding websites/written information which is available to Councillors and Council administrative staff only. You may be asked to sign a declaration stating that access details will not be passed to anyone who is not a member of Whitchurch Town Council or its staff.

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