

SEVERN STOKE AND CROOME D'ABITOT PARISH COUNCIL - WORCESTERSHIRE

Protocol for the Formation, Operation and Closure of **Working Groups**

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Adopted by Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council adopted March 2024.

1. The Parish Council and any of its Committees can set up working groups to carry out tasks as defined by the Council or the Committee. The working group may have different titles eg steering group, task force etc however they all fall within this policy. The opportunity for residents to be aware of/join such groups will be through parish newsletters, social media or on the Council's noticeboard and website.
2. The purpose of Working Groups formed from both councillors and members of the public is to meet to discuss issues, explore options and develop plans and then report back to the Council or Committee with recommendations. Subsequently, Working Groups may be tasked to deliver their plans. They have no decision making powers but simply present the Council or Committee with their findings. However, their ability to give particular topics that much more time outside agenda-driven meetings has proved to be invaluable.
3. When setting up a Working Group, the Council or Committee must set clear terms of reference for it regarding objectives, scope and outcome(s). These will be approved by the Council before the Working Group is formed. Once their work has been completed, the Working Group will be disbanded.
4. The Terms of Reference will include this protocol, the Committee to which the Working Group reports and all members of the Working Group will sign to confirm acceptance (held by the Clerk). The Terms of Reference and membership will be published on the Council's website.
5. The number of Councillors able to join a Working Group will be decided at the time of its formation but it must consist of no fewer than two councillors, one of whom will be the Lead Councillor.
6. The Working Group will notify the Council or Committee, via the Clerk, of the name of the Chair once they are appointed after the first meeting.
7. Quorum for meetings of a Working Group will be three members, one of whom must be a councillor.
8. The role of the Council or sponsoring Committee is to consider and question the recommendations put to it by the Working Group before a decision is taken and, in the case of a Committee, to be satisfied with them before making any recommendations to the full Council.
9. A Working Group will be accountable to its sponsoring Committee unless agreement is made, due to expediency and subject to agreement via email of a majority of members of that sponsoring Committee, for recommendations to be made directly to the Parish Council.

Continued overleaf

10. The lead councillor shall provide regular updates to its sponsoring Committee on progress made against the items as detailed in its Terms of Reference. Before the Working Group is closed or disbanded the lead councillor shall provide a report to the Parish Council including key events, issues encountered, achievements and outcomes against the items as detailed in its Terms of Reference.

11. The Working Group must provide the Council or Committee with as much information as possible to ensure it can make an informed decision on its recommendation(s).

12. A Working Group will not have a budget. Budgets remain with the Council/Sponsor Committee.

13. Working Groups do not meet in public, therefore the Council's Standing Orders are not applicable. However, the Code of Conduct still applies and declarations of pecuniary and other interests will be required at each meeting.

14. All Working Groups will follow all relevant Council policies including data protection policies.

15. The Clerk will ensure that a new email account is set up for each working party members. Personal email accounts will not be permitted.

16. All documents and records produced and emails shared by working groups will be retained for the duration of project and once the debate and decision of the Council is minutes at full council, all email accounts will pass back to ownership of the Parish Clerk for an audit of retention requirements to take place. Nb, all non-essential records and emails will be deleted by the Clerk upon cessation of the Working Party.

Protocol for the Formation, Operation and Closure of Committees

Published by WCALC: N/A.

Adopted by Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council adopted March 2024.

Terms of Reference common to all committees.

1. All meetings of PC committees will be convened in accordance with the PCouncil's Standing Orders.

2. Committee agendas and minutes will be structured and formalised by the Clerk/Officer in discussions with the Committee Chair and meetings will be minuted by a delegated officer.

3. Committee rules are supplementary and do not override PC Standing orders or financial regulations

4. Cllrs can be members of one or more committees and the Council's Chair and Vice Chair are ex-officio members with voting rights. Members of the public cannot be committee members.

5. Committees may authorise expenditure or amend fees provided the decision is consistent with the responsibilities of the committee and within the budget set for that activity or within any additional budget for work authorised by full council during the financial year.

6. Minutes will be circulated to all council members and will be presented at full council for agreement. Agreement is given to acknowledge that the decisions have been reached within the powers delegated to that committee

Continued overleaf

7. Membership of all the committees will be as decided at the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The committee shall be subject to a **quorum** of half of its members or three whichever is the greater. If a committee or subcommittee is created outside of this period, membership will be authorised by full council. Any Cllr joining Council after this will be considered for a committee by Full Council.
8. A substitute member maybe nominated and appointed to a committee or subcommittee if an ordinary member cannot attend and the meeting maybe inquorate without that substitute.
9. The chairman and vice chair of the committee will be elected by the committee at its first meeting after the Annual Parish Council meeting or agreed at a subsequent full council meeting. Until a new chairman is elected, the chairman from the previous year retains that office.
10. Parish Councillors not on a committee may attend meetings but cannot vote, they assume the same standing as a member of the public. If they have points, they wish to include they are encouraged to email the Chair and Clerk directly 48 hours before the meeting.
11. The press and public may be excluded from committee meetings if their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons.
12. Committees may create advisory groups or working groups to deliver a specific objective. These groups will work within an agreed brief. These groups will be wound-up at the completion of their task.
13. Committees may create sub-committees. These may consist of councillors and non-councillors with equal voting rights. Advertising the time and place of the sub-committee will be at the discretion of the members but is not required as the public do not have an automatic right to attend. Sub-committees may make such decisions as have been delegated to them, but these decisions will be reported to the responsible committee.
14. The meeting calendar will be agreed annually where possible, though it is admitted that for example in the case of Planning Committee, extra ordinary meetings may need to be scheduled, with 3 clear working days notice issued.
15. Committee budgets will be derived through the agreed annual budget for the business as usual elements.
16. Delegated powers will be defined with a scheme of delegation to be confirmed at the Annual Parish Council meeting.
17. Committees can be reviewed at any time in the year and their effectiveness assessed by all Councillors to the Council. Nb. The Clerk must be approached to add this to the next agenda.
18. Parish Councillors may use their parish council email account for committee purposes. The rules governing emails and subsequent retention can be advised to councillors by the Clerk. The parish council retakes ownership of all parish council email accounts, including all documentation associated with committees at the resignation of a councillor.

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