



NEWCASTLE HIGHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Guide for
New Councillors

GUIDE TO NEWCASTLE HIGHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Guide is to give new councillors an insight and guide to the day to day workings and practices of the Community Council. It will hopefully also be a useful reference point for the more experienced councillors.

You should be aware that some of the rules and regulations that govern the administration of the council are set in statute (law) and cannot be changed. These will be found in the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which are held on the Council's website

COUNCIL'S ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES - THE COUNCIL AS A BODY

Newcastle Higher Community Council has a full complement of 12 Councillors and a Clerk. The Annual Council Meeting is held in May at which the Members elect a Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

As an elected Councillor this would be the first meeting you attend. If elected at a bi-election or are co-opted, this could happen anytime throughout the year. At your first meeting you will be required to sign a formal declaration of acceptance of office and an agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct. You cannot act as a councillor until this has been done. You will also be required to complete a Register of Interests.

The Council has the following Committee's Maintenance Committee, Staffing Committee, Wellbeing Committee and Audit, Finance and Policy Committee that advice the main Council with its own objectives and references. The Committee's do not require full Councils permission to propose projects and spend money on the behalf of the Council although full Council can amend proposals presented in a Committee meeting.

COUNCILLORS AS INDIVIDUALS

Role: Councillors are elected by the electors of the community every five years. A councillor's role is to listen to and represent the views and interests of the community as a whole through being well informed on local issues and by consultation with local people.

Responsibilities: A councillor is part of a 'corporate body' and must work with all members of the council to make legal and responsible decisions as a whole body. A councillor should work in partnership with and appreciate and respect the role of the Clerk. All councillors must be aware of their obligation to abide by the council's Code of Conduct.

Duties: A councillor must attend meetings on a regular basis and be fully prepared to discuss and make decisions on items on the agenda, sent out in advance. He/she should take an active part in meetings to form a best judgement for the needs of the community and abide by majority decisions. A Councillor should maintain proper standards of behaviour and not bring the Council into disrepute. A councillor must act openly and honourably in the public's interest.

Skills/Training: Councillors have many and varied skills and interests that they can offer to the council as a body. These skills can frequently be put to good use through the committees on which you choose to sit, and the

projects, with which they get involved. All Councillors are given the opportunity to attend relevant training courses, ie all new Councillors to attend courses put on by One Voice Wales. All costs incurred for these events are paid for by the Council.

Allowances: Councillors are able to claim reimbursement for all travel outside of the Community; Councillors are not able to claim for travel within the Community boundary. Councillors receive a small allowance that is taxable. The Chairman, is granted a modest sum, agreed by Council, for expenditure incurred in representing the Community.

THE CHAIRPERSON

Role: The Chairperson of the Council has authority created by statute and he/she is, if present, the person that presides at all Full Council meetings. He/she has a second or casting vote and is appointed annually by vote of the Council's annual meeting. Apart from this the Chairman has no greater authority than any other councillor.

Responsibilities and duties:

Main Task: The Chairperson should work in partnership with the Clerk to ensure that the council's proceedings are carried out promptly, clearly and lawfully.

Team Work: He/she should bond the councillors into an effective team, encouraging members to take on projects/representations in accordance with their individual expertise, experience and interests.

Public Relations: The Chairperson speaks on behalf of the council as a body, giving a corporate view. The Chairperson must ensure that all council proceedings are transparent.

Council Meetings: He/she should consult with the Clerk, to ensure that meetings are held on a regular basis; the content of the agenda is pertinent and legal, and that councillors are provided with sufficient data to make informed decisions. The Chairperson should remain impartial during proceedings. He/she should try to involve all councillors in debate whilst emphasising the need for brevity and relevance.

THE CLERK

The clerk is employed by the council to provide professional and administrative support.

Proper Officer: The Clerk is the Chief Executive ('Proper Officer') for the council, and in many cases is also the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), although this is not a legal requirement.

The Clerk works from home at 171 Ffordd Cadfan Brackla Bridgend CF31 2DR

Payroll:

The Clerks pay is managed by an external organization who submit HMRC payments and provide a payslip and supporting documentation to be provided to the Chair and deputy Chair of the Council for approval at the next meeting.

Responsibilities & Duties:

The Clerk's main responsibility is to carry out the policies and decisions of the council as a body. The Clerk should be an independent and objective servant of the council, able to guide and advise the council in matters of law and procedure. Whilst the Clerk liaises closely with the Chairperson, the Clerk works for the Council as a body, not individual councillors.

Skills/Training:

Clerks need to keep up to date with all developments that are relevant to the council's work and will therefore attend training courses and carry out research on behalf of the council, whenever appropriate.

Clerk's Terms & Conditions:

The current Clerk is contracted to work 13 hours per week. These hours are worked evenings and weekends, to include one evening per week for meetings. Additional pay, or time off in lieu, is contractually paid for additional hours worked.

Salaries are paid according to national NALC/SLCC agreed salary scales.

PROCEDURES

Meetings:

The Council holds 11 Full Council meetings per year – monthly, excluding August.

The Annual Meeting is held in May of each year, when the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson is elected.

There are an additional 2 committee meetings per year for each committee with further possible if required.

Format for**Meetings:**

Full Council meetings are held virtually under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Meetings take place on the second Tuesday in the month and, by law, are open to members of the public and press. If a confidential matter is to be discussed, e.g. to discuss tenders for contracts, a resolution to exclude public and press may be proposed.

Agenda:

It is the Clerk's responsibility to issue a summons to councillors to attend a meeting and to provide the Agenda for the meeting. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairperson, will prepare the agenda and send it out by post, or more usually by email, to all Councillors 3 full days prior to the meeting excluding Sundays. Any Councillor can request an item to be included on the Agenda. Such a request should be with the Clerk 7 clear days before the meeting.

A copy of the agenda is also posted on the Councils notice board and

the website. It is a requirement by law that such a Notice is displayed a least 3 clear days before the meeting.

Meeting Procedures:

During the meeting a time is allowed for 'public speaking' providing the subject is pertinent to the agenda (it is required by law that all meetings are open to members of the public). After receiving apologies for absence (which should, whenever possible, be sent in advance to the Clerk), the Council will confirm the minutes of the previous meeting. Declarations of Interest must be declared and will be accepted and minuted during the meeting where appropriate; Councillors should refer to their Code of Conduct for more information on this matter. If in doubt, seek advice from the Clerk or contact the Monitoring Officer at Bridgend County Borough Council for advice.

Decisions can only be made on items published on the agenda.

Minutes of the Meeting:

Minutes are a brief account of the proceedings and decisions made, not a verbatim account. They are circulated to all Councillors prior to the next meeting. (Should a Councillor note any item requiring correction, please inform the Clerk as soon as possible). Draft Minutes are published on the Council's Web Site, followed by the version ratified at Full Council.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The Council covers a large amount of business, and it is important to deal with it all in a timely manor.

Maintenance Committee:

The Maintenance Committee's role is to manage all aspects of the Council's properties as set out in its terms of reference:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Aberkenfig Woodlad | Aberkenfig Square |
| Aberkenfig Allotments | The Pheasant Field |
| Dog Waste Bins | Hanging Baskets |
| Christmas Lighting | |

Staffing Committee:

The Staffing Committee is to make arrangements for the appraisal of staff, including suggested reviewing and updating contracts

Wellbeing Committee:

The Wellbeing Committee is to work with the partner organisations to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the residents in Aberkenfig and Pen Y Fai. To develop strategies for the Community Council and, working with external organizations, to develop better Health and Wellbeing for the Community.

Audit, Finance and Policy Committee:

The Audit, Finance and Policy Committee key purpose is to suggest, advise on, decide on and implement all matters regarding policy, resources and finance, under its delegated powers, and to make recommendations to the Council on any matters requiring its attention.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Council's financial procedures are regulated by the Government's Accounts and Finance Regulations and the Council's Financial regulations.

Bank: Newcastle Higher Community Council holds a bank account with Co-Operative Bank. This is used for all monies paid to the Council (primarily the *Precept) and is a cheque account from which all the council's bills are paid. There is also a savings account held with Co-Operative Bank. Every payment is approved and confirmed by at least two councillors. Each cheque needs the signature two Councillors. The Council has online banking that is monitored by the clerk and designated Councillors to approve payments after Council approval.

Income: *The bulk of the council's income comes from the 'Precept'. This is the amount requested from the Borough Council by the Council, this is in addition to the sum all residents of the Borough are charged. The local precept is determined by the Council's budget process which takes place in November/December each year. The Precept is paid to the Council in 1 payment.

Additional income is received from allotments and refund of VAT paid by the Council.

Accounting: The Council accounts are a simple computerised Receipts and Payments cash book system. A reconciled Receipts and Payments Summary is presented to Council, and an Income and Expenses Statement produced at the end of each financial year. The Clerk/RFO is responsible for employing and meeting with the Council's Internal Auditor annually, or more often if appropriate. The Council and the Internal Auditor is required to sign and complete an Audit Return for annual examination by the External Auditor, to a strict timetable.

Copies of the Council's Annual Accounts are available upon request.

Internal Auditor: It is a requirement of the Financial Regulations that a council appoints an 'Internal Auditor' independent of the council to carry out the 'Annual Internal Audit'. This is to assure that procedures and securities are sufficient to purpose.

Insurance: The Council holds a policy, currently with BHIB Insurance - the main summary of cover as follows:

Any Business, undertaking work for the Council, is required to hold its own public liability insurance.

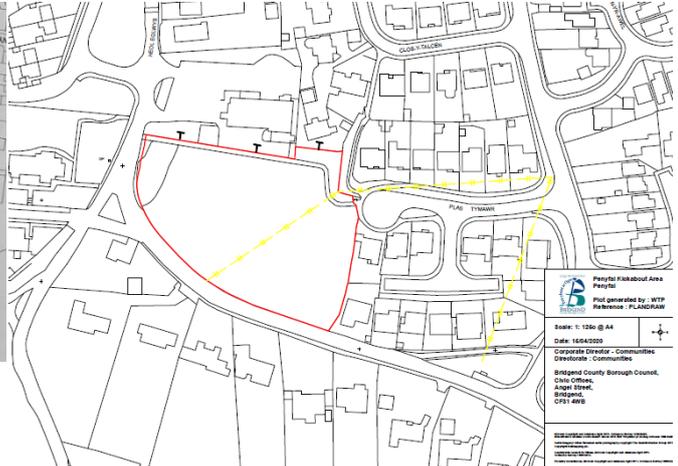
Community Assets

The Council has Community Assets under lease from Bridgend County Borough, they include:

Aberkenfig Woodland



The Pheasant Field



Maintenance contracts are arranged yearly ready for the new financial year.

Hanging Baskets

The Council provides hanging baskets to both wards in Pen Y Fai and Aberkenfig Wards.

Christmas Lighting

The Council provides a number of Christmas lights to both Pen Y Fai and Aberkenfig Wards.

Aberkenfig Allotment

The Council owns Aberkenfig allotments with the Council giving overall responsibility of the management of the Allotments to Aberkenfig Allotments Association who manage liability insurance and vacancies at the allotment site. The Council charges a nominal fee for the use of the allotment dependant on size.

Aberkenfig Square

The Community Council managed and improved Aberkenfig Square and are now reasonable for its upkeep and maintenance.