



NEWCASTLE HIGHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Guide for New Councillors

2021

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 Town 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 a Maintenance Group and Staffing Group that advise the main Council but cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council.

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 CHAIRMAN

Role: The Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Chairman speaks on behalf of the council as a body, giving a corporate view. The Chairman 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 Chairman 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

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 Chairman, 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 Tuesday – Thursday of each week, 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 Chairman, Deputy Chairman is elected.

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 Chairman, 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 Group:

The maintenance group is not a committee meaning there are no agendas or formal meetings. The group is to advise and consider a response to propose at Full Council Meetings. The maintenance of The Pheasant Field in Pen Y Fai, The Woodland in Aberkenfig and the Square at Aberkenfig.

Staffing Group:

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

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.

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.

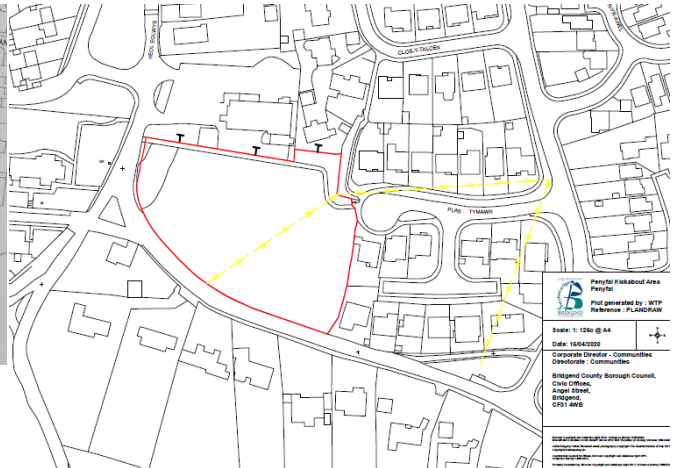
Community Assets

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.