



CLENT PARISH COUNCIL PROCEDURES – GENERAL INFORMATION

Meetings

- Items requiring a decision must be on a meeting agenda. The wording of the agenda item will indicate whether the council or committee is asking to decide something – the words *decide*, *approve*, *endorse*, *resolve* or some similar wording will be used. The point of giving councillors prior notice about decisions is that it prevents the council being ‘bounced’ into a decision without having to give it some prior thought, consider any relevant factors and background information, and whether any further information is required before a decision is made.
- Items on the agenda *for information* are not for discussion – any decisions required must be placed on the next appropriate agenda for the reasons above.
- Councillors can request to the Clerk that items be placed on a meeting agenda or can raise items at Council meetings under Councillors items – again these will be placed, if a decision is required, on the next appropriate agenda.

Decisions

- Decisions can only be made by the Council or its committees, under delegated powers, or if urgent by the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman or Vice Chairman.
- Council decisions are implemented by the Clerk and all formal communication on behalf of the Council is undertaken by the Clerk.

Council Representative Roles and Contact with the Public

- Councillors who attend meetings as the Council’s representative or contact other organisations on behalf of the Council have no delegated decision making powers. They cannot commit or speak on behalf of the Council except to report or explain already agreed Council policies or decisions. Their role is to facilitate good communication between the Council and other organisations, to bring relevant information back to the Council, and to identify decisions the Council needs to make.
- One of the Councillors’ main roles is to represent the electors of their area. So they need to be accessible and to listen to residents’ concerns. Residents may contact Councillors by phone, letter or email about parish issues.

Through appointment via the Clerk. Councillors will often be able to explain what is happening about a particular issue or how the Council is handling something. But if the resident raises something that requires a formal decision or explanation of Council policy then it will need to be raised at a Council meeting or passed to the Clerk as appropriate.

- When Councillors are offering an explanation of Council decisions or policies they should do so with respect. There is no collective responsibility, and no requirement to show support for a decision, but any explanation should, as relevant, describe opposing views fairly (and briefly).

Public Participation in Meetings

- The Council changed its Standing Orders quite recently to permit public participation in meetings. Previously standing orders had to be suspended to allow members of the public to speak.
- Members of the public may now speak during meetings on *agenda items* at the invitation of and under the direction of the Chairman of the meeting.
- At main Council meetings standing orders are still suspended near the start of the meeting to enable members of the public to raise any issue relating to the parish – it does not have to be on the agenda. These items are noted for future discussion if appropriate.

Contact with Clerk

The Clerk is always happy to speak to Councillors or respond to their emails.

But to manage time effectively and ring fence Council work to some extent, the following arrangements will apply:

- The Clerk will generally be available to respond to phone calls Monday – Friday from about 10.00am – 4.00pm. But messages can be left outside these times.
- The Clerk will not generally be available on weekends unless the matter is urgent.
- Requests for information will be dealt with as time and other priorities allow. But in general it is preferable for information to be provided to all Councillors at or in preparation for Council meetings so that everyone receives the same information and work can be prioritised to focus on Council decision making.