

EATON BRAY PARISH COUNCIL

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Last updated: 01/12/2008

EATON BRAY PARISH COUNCIL
The Parish Council
Parish Councils are local authorities first created by statute in 1894. They are the first tier of local government and as such are the ones closest to the electorate. The Parish Council acts as a corporate body, raises money to be spent on services for the local community, and balances the needs of different groups of people within the parish when deciding what action should be taken. The Parish Council represents the whole community, is corporately responsible for the decision it takes. Employing a Clerk and other staff as necessary.
The Parish Clerk
The Parish Clerk is employed by the Parish Council to ensure the council acts within the law, to manage resources, maintain financial records and administer finance for audit, being responsible for other council employees. The Clerk keeps up to date with Council business, advising Councillors on action required and how to manage the resources available to them. The Clerk is not part of the decision making of the Parish Council; however the Clerk can give guidance and can be asked for a view on the implication of an action.
POLICIES & PROCEDURES
Health & Safety
Eaton Bray Parish Council recognises its legal obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to provide appropriate health and safety training and to ensure safe and healthy premises for all employees and visitors. Employees are expected to co-operate with management on health and safety matters, take care of their own health and safety, the health and safety of others and not to interfere with or misuse anything provided for health and safety purposes.
Equality & Diversity
The council is committed to the policy of equal treatment of all employees/councillors, of whatever grade or authority, to abide by this general principle. In its employment policies all employees will be given, in the application of their conditions of service, recruitment and training, equal opportunities, regardless of sex, disability, age, marital/family status, sexual orientation, race, religion/belief, political persuasion or colour.
Parish Councillor Applications
Applications for the position of Parish Councillor must be made in writing and returned to the Parish Clerk. The application would then be put forward to the Parish Council at their monthly meetings, when an invitation to attend would be offered to the applicant. Applicants would then be put to vote to be co-opted onto the Parish Council.
Standing Orders
The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, s 42 gives Parish Councils the power to make Standing Orders which lay down the rules of debate. A full copy of the Parish Council's Standing Orders can be obtained by applying to the Parish Clerk.
Parish Council Committees
The General Purposes Working Group, Financial Working Group and Coffee Tavern Working group are set up as an advisory group who make recommendations to the Parish Council but do not have the power to make a decision on behalf of the Parish Council. The Planning Working Group is an executive committee who do have delegated powers to make decision on behalf of the Parish Council. The committees/working groups are appointed at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.
Parish Council Meetings
Eaton Bray Parish Council holds their full meetings on the first Monday of each month (excluding August when no meeting is held). The meetings are open to press and public. The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s2 allows the Parish Council to exclude public and press from a meeting to deal with confidential matters. This power is only used when the Parish Council feel it is in their best interest to do so. Notice of the intention to exclude press and public would be given on the agenda. The Parish Council posts its notice of the meeting/agenda, giving at least three clear days notice, on the Parish Council notice boards at Knights Close and The Coffee Tavern; also on the Parish Council website. At each full council meeting, there is a section in which the public are allowed to speak. This gives members of the public an opportunity to comment on items or to raise issues. Matters raised in the public session, unless noted within that meeting's agenda, should be put on a future agenda for Parish Council discussion.

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The Annual Parish Meeting of the electorate, not of the Council, is held once a year (May/unless an election year) in which the Chairman of the Parish Council will chair. This meeting is for the electorate and to review activities in the parish over the previous year. There is an Annual Meeting of the Parish Council which is held in May, or within 14 days of Councillors taking office in an election year.

Parish Council Minutes

The Parish Council has a duty to keep minutes of all meetings as a legal record of their decisions. Attendance, apologies recorded along with the number of local electors present. The minutes are a concise and accurate record of decisions. Resolutions by the council will be recorded; there is no legal requirement for details of majorities to be recorded, only the majority result. However a councillor may ask for the way members vote to be recorded for particular decisions. The draft minutes are made available as soon as practicable after the meeting, with the final minutes being signed off and agreed by the Parish Council at the next arranged meeting. The minutes become a legal document once they are agreed by the Council and signed by the Chairman as a true record. Each page of the minutes and any amendments are initialled.

Parish Council Finance

The Local Government Act 1972 section 151 states that all councils must appoint an officer to be responsible for the financial administration of the Parish Council, in Eaton Bray this is the Parish Clerk's responsibility as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The RFO is responsible for putting in place the council's accounting system, keeping it under review in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 and the Accounts and Audit (amendment) (England) Regulations 2006. The RFO advises the Parish Council and ensures that all expenditure complies with the relevant legislation and being able to identify the statute used for this spend.

The Parish Council must ensure that public business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used prudently and correctly. The Parish Council has a duty to manage risk and should regularly address the risks associated with what they do and the services they provide. They must be able to identify clearly all financial transactions showing a clear audit trail.

Financial Regulations

Eaton Bray Parish Council is responsible in law for ensuring its financial management is adequate and effecting and has adopted financial standing orders to govern the conduct of financial transactions. A full copy of the Parish Council's Financial Regulations can be obtained by applying to the Parish Clerk.

Internal/External Audit

Eaton Bray Parish Council produces end of year account for audit. It is the responsibility of the council to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit and must appoint an independent internal auditor. The independent internal auditor must be both independent of the management of the council's affairs and competent, which includes having an understanding of local council powers and procedures. The Parish Clerk will display a notice informing the electorate of their rights of inspection, the notice is displayed at The Coffee Tavern for a period of 14 days and indicates where the accounts and supporting documentation is available for inspection during a period of 20 working days (date given on notice). The annual return is completed and signed by the RFO, Internal Auditor and then submitted to the Parish Council for approval – the Chairman signs on behalf of the Parish Council.

Following completion of the audit process a notice is displayed at The Coffee Tavern for a period of 14 days indicating that the statement of accounts is available for inspection within that period. A summary of the accounts can also be obtained from the Parish Council's website.

Planning

Eaton Bray Parish Council has the right to be consulted on all planning applications submitted from their parish and on the local and structure plans, under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, s1 Para 8. The Parish Council has only a limited timescale within which to comment on planning applications, this is usually done at the full Parish Council meeting however the Planning Committee has delegated powers to meet to look at planning applications should the need arise. The Parish Council can comment on applications in the light of policies contained within the Local Plan (and Local Development Framework). The Planning Authority cannot refuse an application which is supported by these policies. The Parish Council ensure that their comments are not subjective or emotional, addressing only material relating to genuine planning issues. A detailed list showing decisions/comments made by the Parish Council and South Bedfordshire District Council can be found on the Parish Council's website.