EAST WINCH
WEST BILNEY
PARISH COUNCIL

Openness Statement

1. A guide for the public attending and speaking at meetings

1.1 The Council hopes that this short guide will encourage members of the public to attend and participate at its meetings and will also be helpful to those who are unfamiliar with procedures at Council meetings.

2. Why are meetings held?

2.1 There is a statutory obligation for the council to meet at least four times a year. Our council meets 6 times a year. Meetings are the council's principal means by which they discuss and agree things relating to parish matters, and to formulate policies relating to their governance. (Note that occasionally decision making may be delegated to the clerk e.g. in the event on an emergency.)

3. When are meetings held?

3.1 Meetings of the parish council and its committees are held at The East Winch Village Hall commencing at 7.30pm. A timetable of meetings can be found on the Council's web site and also on our noticeboards. You also find on our website and noticeboards a copy of our agendas and minutes. When you come along to our meetings there will be a copy of the agenda, the minutes of the last meeting and copies of other agenda papers available for you.

3.2 Please note that working parties are not open to the public.

4. Who can attend meetings?

4.1 Anyone. However, if the council needs to consider certain matters in private (employment matters, negotiating contracts or pursuing/defending a legal action), then councillors may vote to exclude the press and the public for that particular item. You will be advised the reason for excluding press and public from that part of the meeting. If this is the case, then this item will generally be held at the end of the meeting, to allow the press and public to leave.

5. Why should you attend?

- ✓ You may have a matter you wish to discuss or bring to the attention of the council
- ✓ You may want to become better informed about topical issues
- ✓ You may want to observe councillors' participation at meetings

6. When can I speak?

6.1 There is an item on the agenda of every council meeting for public participation. When this item is reached, the chairman invites questions from the public. The chairman and the clerk will endeavour to address the issue you have raised but please be aware that the council may make decisions only if the matter has been included on the agenda.

6.2 You may be advised that the council requires more time in order to investigate your concern before you receive a full response. When you want to speak, please raise your arm so that the chairman can see that you want to speak. It is the chairman who determines who shall speak, in which order and for how long. Note that there are other opportunities to raise concerns with the council including contacting councillors directly or contacting the clerk.

6.3 Please keep your question as brief as possible.

7. What happens at meetings?

7.1 If you have a hearing or visual impairment, please advise the clerk as we have seats set aside. Council meetings are relatively informal, and councillors will often address each other by their first name, but no personal details are disclosed. The order of business at every meeting will be as set out on that meeting's agenda and we ask that everyone attending respects the office of the chairman who is responsible for the conduct of the meeting and for ensuring that the agenda as detailed is followed. It is the clerk's role to support the chairman including ensuring that decisions taken are informed procedurally correct and lawful.

8. Still unsure about attending?

8.1 The council appreciates that some people may find the prospect of attending a meeting for the first time a little intimidating. If you have any concerns at all about attending a meeting, please do contact the clerk for help and guidance.

9. Openness at our meetings

In the interests of openness and transparency, councillors and members of the public are reminded that the law permits any person to film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of a meeting of the council or its committees when they are open to the public. This does not extend to live verbal commentary.

9.1 Filming and photography will only be permitted from the area designated. (the left side of the room).

9.2 No flash photography or additional lighting should be used without prior consent. Anyone wishing to report on the meeting should notify the clerk or chairman so that they can be afforded reasonable facilities.

9.3 People under the age of 18 or other members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed should notify the clerk or chairman and should sit in the area designated for this purpose which is on the right side of the room. **Improper conduct or any disruptive behaviour could result in expulsion from the meeting**.

10. The Council agenda

10.1 The agenda of the council meeting and the order in which those items on the agenda appear are laid down in law or are detailed within our standing orders.

10.2 The first item on the annual parish council meeting agenda (which is held in May) is the election of chairman. At all other meetings the agenda follows the following order:

- Welcome by the chairman (note that if the chairman is not in attendance, then the vice chairman will take the meeting. If neither are able to attend, then the other councillors elect a chairman for that meeting.)
- Receive and accept apologies from councillors
- Declaration of interests and requests for dispensations
- To agree the minutes of the meeting held previously
- To note any matters arising not included on the agenda and for information only
- To receive reports from the district and county councillors and the police if present

- Public question time
- To discuss and agree any items (the details of those items are given on the agenda)
- To discuss and make decisions on any planning applications as detailed (although please note it is the district council who have the final say on planning applications – we are only consultees in the planning process)
- To discuss and take action on any items of correspondence notified by the clerk (those items will be posted on our website and the notice boards)
- To agree the financial statement as presented
- To note items for inclusion on the next council agenda
- To note the date of the next meetings

11. How to contact us

11.1 The clerk can be contacted at:

Tel 07368 861696
Email clerk@eastwinchandwestbilney-pc.gov.uk

Website: https://eastwinchandwestbilney-pc.gov.uk/