

# Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hartlebury Parish Council

## A Strategic Advisory Group Discussion Paper

### Current Concerns

#### Efficiency

1. The major expenditure of the Council is for the services of the Clerk. The use of Clerk time should be of prime concern of the PC
2. Council meetings are required for decision making. Currently meetings last for 2 plus hours. With preparation, circulation of papers, attendance, minutes and action the efficiency of meetings is key to controlling expenditure.
3. Reports from advisory groups should be circulated to councillors but do not need to be presented at PC meetings. Instead, the PC should take responsibility for informing the public of its activities through other channels. PC meetings and minutes are not an efficient way of communicating with the public.
4. The Clerk works for the Parish Council as a body, not for individual councillors. Requests from individuals directed to the Clerk result in expenditure and should be limited. Discussions with fellow councillors will usually resolve questions.
5. It is not the responsibility of the Clerk to deal with conflicts between councillors.
6. Preparation of proposals. Proposals should be circulated well ahead of PC meetings allowing for any concerns to be raised prior to the PC meeting so that amendments can be made and issues are clearly stated at the meeting and decisions can be speedily reached.
7. Some communications from residents are not helpful to the Council or the residents involved. The results in unnecessary expenditure and should be of concern to the Council and in particular the Finance Advisory Group

#### Effectiveness

1. The structure of advisory groups is based on that of previous councils and ad hoc decision of the current council. Below are proposals for streamlining the groups.
2. Advisory groups are useful but not required. Individual councillors can put proposals to the PC meeting.
3. Advisory groups can co-opt onto the group anyone that they consider useful. In particular where specialist knowledge or skills are required.
4. There are three types of groups
  - a On-going responsibilities e.g. planning, finance, estate management
  - b Projects such as CCTV, car park lease. Once the purpose is complete, they disband
  - c Developmental such as strategy, community building, communications which may run for some time.
5. Advisory groups are not empowered to make financial decisions in buying materials or labour. However, when the PC has set a budget e.g. for ground maintenance the group can inform the Clerk of what actions are required. This does not need to be brought before the PC as the decision has already been made.

6. Advisory groups have been self-generated by councillors. They have not been formed in the process of the Council planning to fulfil the requirements of the residents they represent. Indeed the PC does not have a mechanism for determining residents wishes and intentions.
7. The Council does not have groups concerned with communication from or to residents
8. The Council does not have a group concerned with developing wellbeing in the community

## Thoughts on Restructuring advice Groups

Current		Future
Planning Advisory Group		Planning Advisory Group
Strategy Advisory Group		Strategy & Communication Advisory Group
Digital communications and Data Protection Advisory Group		
Recreation and Amenities Advisory Group		Estate Advisory Group
Allotment Advisory Group		
Working party fpor action regarding the car park		
Staffing Advisory Group		Staffing Advisory Group
Crime, Speeding, Traffic and Road Safety Group		Community Involvement
Events Advisory Group		
Finance Advisory Group		Finance Advisory Group
Audit Review and Financial Affairs Advisory Group		

Current		Future
Planning Advisory Group		Planning Advisory Group
Strategy Advisory Group		Strategy & Planning Group
Recreation and Amenities Advisory Group		Estate Advisory Group
Allotment Advisory Group		
VAS and CCTV		
Working party for action regarding the car park		Working party for action regarding the car park
Staffing Advisory Group		Staffing Advisory Group
Crime, Speeding, Traffic and Road Safety Group		Community Involvement and Communication
Events Advisory Group		
Digital communications and Data Protection Advisory Group		
Finance Advisory Group		Finance Advisory and Governance Group
Audit Review and Financial Affairs Advisory Group		