

Crimplesham Parish Council

Members' Handbook 2021

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Introduction

Crimplesham is a small residential parish on the outskirts of Downham Market. It is important for the Council to be operating, and be seen to be operating, in a professional and organised manner.

This pack has therefore been put together with the combined purposes of: -

- Providing guidance to the Chair and Clerk.
- Providing a point of reference for existing Councillors.
- Helping new Councillors understand the procedural arrangements under which the Council conducts its business.
- Giving confidence to the public, auditors and others.

It should be considered therefore as a working document.

A more in-depth coverage of the more common issues will be found in the 'Parish Councillor's Guide' held by the Clerk. This also contains references to the relevant acts of parliament such as the Local Government act 1972, the LG Miscellaneous Provisions act 1976, the LG Finance act 1986 and the Accounts and Audit regulations 1996.

Many of the procedures contained in the enclosed pages are discretionary and have been adopted by Crimblesham Council as 'Good Practice'. However, certain of those contained within the 'Standing Orders' are laid down by acts of parliament and are therefore not discretionary. Where this is the case the items are shown in **bold type**. Any discretionary item may be suspended, if and when appropriate, by a normal vote.

Permanent changes will only normally be made as part of the annual review. The purpose of the procedures is to assist, not obstruct the Council and Councillors are therefore encouraged to propose changes where they feel these would be of benefit. It is the responsibility of all to ensure that the procedures are followed and any member who has reasonable grounds for feeling that this is not the case may make this known by calling a 'point of order'.

Crimplesham Parish Council Chairmanship

The authority of the Chair is limited to procedural matters. He/she has no preferential rights, other than for the casting vote, over other Councillors regarding policy or the merits of a case.

This procedural authority is placed on the Chair by the Council as a whole and any rulings must be obeyed by individual Councillors. However, the Chair cannot overrule the Council as a whole and any appeal against a decision must be put to the vote.

The duty of the Chair is to ensure that the Council reaches clear and lawful decisions, for the right reasons and without undue delay. In detail the Chair must: -

1. Ensure that issues put before the Council are clear and that as far as possible, all the information required is to hand.
2. Ensure that everything discussed is lawful and within the Council's powers.
3. Allow everyone with a point to have a fair hearing but to make sure that points are relevant to the agenda item in hand and that discussion of peripheral matters are discouraged.
4. Ensure that business is conducted as quickly as practicable by allocating a specific time for each agenda item and not allow undue repetitions or for matters already decided or for issues to be reopened.
5. Ensure that business is conducted in a friendly manner and without personality intrusion.
6. Constructively co-operate with the Clerk/Finance Officer & all other Councillors.
7. Ensure that issues to be decided by the Council are clearly understood, that any decisions are made by a majority of those present through a normal vote and that clear instructions to act are given following decisions. To ensure accountability, specific action points will be set and completion dates agreed.
8. Protect Council meetings from external interruptions and any attempts to obstruct proceedings, e.g. by members of the public.

Finance, Accounting and Auditing Regulations

The Parish Council has adopted the NALC model Financial Regulations and follows The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG), which is responsible for issuing proper practices about the governance and accounts of smaller authorities.

The Council subscribes to Scribe Accounts, a software package that tailored to an online cashbook with end of year account preparation features. This software can save significant time in preparation and maintenance of accounts and is supported by a team of specialists on a helpline. Whilst the software has an annual subscription the value to new clerks or those without spreadsheet competency of an adequate level to maintain their own. Additionally, Scribe provides reporting features and bank reconciliation summary. It also ensures continuity of account management following clerk changeovers.

The Clerk is also the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and responsible for the preparation of a budget for approval by the Council. The budget takes into account routing income and expenditure and has ear-marked reserves for contingencies, infrequent planned expenditure and future projects. The budget is monitored during the year and in Nov the RFO initiates the annual review process which is circulated for consideration by councillors in preparation for approving the budget and setting the Precept demand (portion of Council tax paid to the Parish Council in April).

Parish Assembly Procedures

(extracted from NALC recommendations 1999)

1. **The Parish Assembly must take place each year between 1 March and 1 June inclusive, starting not earlier than 6 pm.** Normally this will be immediately before the May meeting of the Council and start at 7.30pm.
2. The meeting will be organised by the Parish Council.
3. All attempts should be made to generate interest in the meeting within the local community & to encourage participation.
4. The meeting should be as informal as possible, consistent with maintaining ordered proceedings.
5. Two weeks notice will be given via the press release and parish notice boards. Electors will be invited to submit items for the agenda, which will be placed on the Council notice board.
6. Depending on availability, **the meeting will be taken by the Council Chair, Deputy Chair or a member elected as acting Chair** for the meeting.
7. **The first items will always be election of acting Chair (where necessary)** and approval of the previous minutes as a true record. **The current Chair will sign the minutes** and only the accuracy may be discussed.
8. County and District Councillors will be invited to attend.
9. The press & public will be permitted to attend, and all parish electors must be allowed to speak & vote. If agreed by the electors, the meeting may be adjourned for non-electors to speak.
10. To ensure speakers keep to the point, a maximum of 5 minutes will be allotted to each.
11. A vote on any matter raised will normally be by a show of hands. However, a poll of all electors, conducted by the BC returning officer, may be requested by ten or more of those electors present.
12. Binding decisions may only be taken on issues contained in the agenda
13. Decisions regarding the provision of allotments are binding on the Council.
14. Given sufficient attendance, the Chairman will give a report on Council activity over the year. In addition, the County and District Councillors will be invited to speak.
15. Any costs will be met by the Council.
16. Items in **bold type** above may not be suspended.

Crimplesham Parish Council Diary

	Procedural	Financial
April	Staff annual performance appraisal. Pay Church and Village Hall Grants	Year End Accounts Prepared NALC subs due Year End Payroll Prepared VAT Reclaim. Staff Salary Review
May	Annual Meeting ("AGM") Annual Parish Assembly Set meeting dates for the following year.	Council insurance review Annual Return & Governance Statement Prepared.
June		
July	Ordinary Meeting	
August		
September	Ordinary Meeting	
October		
November	Ordinary Meeting	Budget review
December		
January	Ordinary Meeting.	Budget/Precept Setting
February		
March	Ordinary Meeting. Standing Orders review (adopt May) Risk Assess. review (adopt May)	Review of Assets

Community Engagement Strategy

Statement of Intent

Introduction

Crimplesham Parish Council is committed to improving our engagement with all sections of the local community: residents, voluntary groups, young and elderly, businesses and local groups and organisations. The overall aim is to increase the involvement of people in the life of their communities and in the Council's decision making processes. In doing this the Council will become more responsive to the needs of the Community and be able to better reflect its views and aspirations.

Engagement

Crimplesham Parish Council intends to actively engage with the following sections of the community:

- Residents of the parish
- Local youth groups
- Groups representing the elderly
- Residents Associations
- Voluntary Organisations
- Community Associations
- Schools
- Businesses within the Parish
- Church Groups
- Councillors - public service representatives and staff

Effective engagement can only be achieved through providing information to these sectors and seeking residents' views. The Council already employs a number of methods to do this:

- Contact details of the Council staff and individual Councillors are available in the Council's quarterly newsletter and on the Council's website.
- The Newsletter informs the community of the activities of the Council and is made available at public venues throughout the Parish.
- Notices of meetings are posted on the Council's notice boards at Crimplesham village hall, Playing Field and on its website.

The notices indicate that the Council gives the public the opportunity to participate in meetings. The Council's policy on public participation is available on its website and on agenda notices.

The Council's website provides details of its services and activities and provides access to the Council minutes and number of documents.

The Council publishes an Annual Report which is made available on its website and from the clerk on request.

Representatives of the Council attend local voluntary organisations and some Councillors are members of these voluntary organisations in their own right.

Aims and Objectives

The Council's aims and objectives for seeking community engagement and the outcomes it hopes to achieve are:

- To enable an involved and active community through consultation with residents on local issues, reaching all sectors of the community including hard to reach groups, and seeking the views of young people.
- To communicate information clearly and factually through the management of the Council's website and the publication of a quarterly newsletter.
- To improve communication with partner organisations
- To actively be involved in local organisations such as Resident's organisations, youth groups and community groups.
- To raise the profile and reputation of the Council through
 - Inviting residents to take part in council meetings through public participation.
 - Publicising the Annual Parish meeting throughout the Parish area.
 - Informing the press of the activities of the Council, when appropriate.
 - Encouraging the Chairman to fulfill his civic role by accepting invitations to community events.
 - To enable each Councillor to effectively perform their role as elected representatives of the community through the issue of a new members handbook
 - Encouraging Councillors to attend meetings of community organisations or take up places on community groups and organisations.
 - To ensure Parish Council staff represent the interest of the Council at community events
 - To encourage staff to have an effective input into the Council's decision-making process.

Action Plan for Effective Community Engagement

Minutes	Ensure copies of minutes are available in hard copy and on the website and that copies are sent to the relevant County & Borough Councillors.	Staff	Ongoing
Notice of Meeting	Ensure notice is posted on Council notice boards, on website and in the village newsletter.	Staff	Ongoing
Annual Report	Ensure report is available in hard copy and on website.	Staff	Annually
Office Opening Hours	Publicise on noticeboards, website and in newsletters	Staff	Ongoing
Annual Parish Meeting	Publicise throughout Parish via noticeboards, the website, the quarterly newsletter.	Staff	Annually
Public Participation	Publicise Councils policy on public participation on website and on noticeboards	Staff/ Members	Monthly
Website	Maintain website with information on Council functions and activities	Staff	Ongoing
Newsletter	Produce and distribute quarterly newsletter	Staff and Members	Quarterly
Youth Groups	Maintain contact with local schools and youth groups	Staff and Members	Ongoing
Local Groups and Organisations	Maintain contact through local representatives and attendance at meetings or events	Staff/ Members	Ongoing
Press	Inform press of Council's activities and meetings	Staff	Ongoing
County and Borough Local Authorities and Norfolk Constabulary.	Maintain contact with local members and Authority staff to ensure sharing of information	Staff and Members	Ongoing

When Parishioners Raise A Concern...

This document details how Crimplesham Parish Council will deal with a concern or comment received from a parishioner about a local issue. It does not concern itself with complaints made against Crimplesham Parish Council – there is a separate Complaints Handling Policy that deals specifically with that issue.

Procedure To Be Followed When an Issue is Raised:

If a parishioner raises an issue of concern with a local councillor, that councillor should follow the steps set out below:

- Advise the complainant that they will take their concerns seriously and will bring the matter to council.
- Ask the complainant to make a written complaint, directed to the Clerk, if appropriate.
- Take a full account of the complaint/issue. Write this down if at all possible making sure that accurate names/addresses/details are recorded.
- Take the complainant's name, address, telephone number and email details so that the Clerk can keep in contact with them regarding the progress of the issue. It is to be emphasized that this information is kept confidential in a single location (by the Clerk) and will not be disclosed under the data protection act. The complainant has the right to ask for the information to be removed from the file once the complaint has been dealt with.
- Pass this information to the Clerk immediately.
- The Clerk will then consider the nature of the issue, consult with the Chairman and add the item to the next full council agenda unless it is
 - A matter that can be easily resolved,
 - an emergency,
 - appropriate for raising at committee level.
- At the next full council meeting the issue will be discussed under the agenda item 'Parish Affairs'.
- Councillors will be provided with the full text of the complaint prior to the meeting and will be asked to make a decision about how they wish to proceed.
- Where appropriate, a councillor or the Clerk will be nominated to discuss the issue informally with the person against whom the complaint has been made. This includes the owner or tenant of a property under discussion or the manager of any such premises.

The objective of such a visit is to clarify the situation, hear the other side of the story and alert the subject to the fact that some aspect of their property or actions is causing problems for other residents. Councillors should not apportion blame with any individual at this time. It is hoped that a personal intervention will prevent the need for further, more formal action.

- The complainant will be contacted to discuss the situation and advised of the outcome of the informal meeting.
- If further, more formal action is required; the Clerk will be notified and will pass on the relevant information to councillors with a suggested action plan.
- Once Councillors have provided comment/feedback about the proposed actions the Clerk will carry out all further activities whilst liaising with the complainant and council members at all times.
- If a further visit is required to the complainant or subject of the complaint, the Clerk will carry out this visit accompanied by a councillor with full knowledge of the issue. The Clerk will ask for a councillor to make him/herself available for this visit based on knowledge of the situation and availability.

NOTE: When investigating issues alongside external authorities or contractors (such as NCC Highways or MHB Service, for example) the Clerk should ensure they have good knowledge of the local area or issue under discussion, and where possible use the local knowledge of a Councillor to accompany them.

Crimplesham Parish Council Issues Register

Issue Ref	Date Received	Raised By	Brief Summary of Issue	Date To Chair	Investigator	Outcome	Completion Date
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Ordinary Council Meeting Agenda Template

An Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Monday, xxx xx at Crimplesham Village Hall. The meeting will commence at 7.30pm.

All councillors are summoned to attend.
The Press and Public are welcome to attend.

Standing Agenda:

1. To consider apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To hear reports from County/Borough Cllrs and Norfolk Constabulary.
4. Public forum for electors to address the Council
5. To accept minutes of meeting held on xxx
6. To discuss Finance matters
 - To approve monthly expenditure
 - To agree the reconciled cashbook
7. To consider Planning Application consultation response and review Planning Decisions made by the County and/or Borough Council.
8. To consider and receive reports on Health and Safety issues
9. To hear Correspondence received
10. To consider Parish affairs
11. To consider Internal Council affairs
12. To propose agenda items for the next meeting
13. To confirm the date of the next meeting, scheduled xxx at 7.30pm in Crimplesham Village Hall.

Signed..... Dated: xxx
M Inder: Clerk

A draft agenda will be posted on Parish notice boards at least three clear days before each meeting.

Statutory Powers of the Parish Council

(source NALC)

Function	Powers & Duties	Statutory Provisions
Allotments	Powers to provide allotments. Duty to provide allotment gardens if demanded unsatisfied	Small Holding & Allotments Act 1908, ss. 23, 26, and 42
Baths and Washhouses	Power to provide public baths and washhouses	Public Health Act 1936, Ss 221, 222, 223 and 227
Burial grounds, cemeteries and crematoria	Power to acquire and maintain Power to provide Power to agree to maintain monuments and memorials Power to contribute towards expenses of cemeteries	Open Spaces Act 1906, Ss 9 and 10; Local Government Act 1972, s. 214; Parish Councils and Burial Authorities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970, s. 1 Local Government Act 1972, s. 215(6)
Bus Shelters	Power to provide and maintain shelters	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1953, s. 4
Bye Laws	Power to make bye-laws in regard to pleasure grounds Cycle Parks Baths and Washhouses Open spaces and burial grounds Mortuaries and post-mortem rooms	Public Health Act 1875, s. 164 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s.57(7) Public Health Act 1936, s.223 Open Spaces Act 1906, s.15 Public Health Act 1936, s.198
Charities	Duty to receive accounts of parochial charities	Charities Act 1960, s.32
Clocks	Power to provide public clocks	Parish Councils Act 1957, s.2
Closed Churchyards	Powers as to maintenance	Local Government Act 1972, s.215
Commons and common pastures	Powers in relation to enclosure, as to regulation and management, and as to providing common pasture	Enclosure Act 1845; Local Government Act 1894, s.8(4); Smallholdings and Allotments Act 1908, s.34
Conference facilities	Power to provide and encourage the use of facilities	Local Government Act 1972, s.144
Community centres	Power to provide and equip buildings for use of clubs having athletic, social or educational objectives	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19
Crime prevention	Powers to spend money on various crime prevention measures	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.31
Drainage	Power to deal with ponds and ditches	Public Health Act 1936, s.260
Education	Right to appoint school governors	Education (No.2) Act 1986, s.4
Entertainment and arts	Provision of entertainment and support of the arts	Local Government Act 1972, s.145
Gifts	Power to accept	Local Government Act 1972, s.139
Highways	Power to repair and maintain public footpaths and bridle-ways Power to light roads and public places Provision of litter bins Power to provide parking places for vehicles, bicycles and motor-cycles Power to enter into agreement as to dedication and widening Power to provide roadside seats and shelters, and omnibus shelters Consent of parish council required for ending maintenance of highway at	Highways Act 1980, ss.43,50 Parish Councils Act 1957, s.3; Highways Act 1980, s.301 Litter Act 1983, ss.5,6 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, ss.57,63 Highways Act 1980, ss.30,72 Parish Councils Act 1957, s.1

Highways	public expense, or for stopping up or diversion of highway Power to complain to district council as to protection of rights of way and roadside wastes Power to provide traffic signs and other notices Power to plant trees etc. and to maintain roadside verges	Highways Act 1980, ss.47,116 Highways Act 1980, s.130 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s.72 Highways Act 1980, s.96
Investments	Power to participate in schemes of collective investment	Trustee Investments Act 1961, s.11
Land	Power to acquire by agreement, to appropriate, to dispose of Power to accept gifts of land	Local Government Act 1972, ss.124, 126, 127 Local government Act 1972, s.139
Litter	Provision of receptacles	Litter Act 1983, ss.5,6
Lotteries	Powers to promote	Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976, s.7
Mortuaries and post-mortem rooms	Powers to provide mortuaries and post-mortem rooms	Public Health Act 1936, s.198
Nuisances	Power to deal with offensive ditches	Public Health Act 1936, s.260
Open spaces	Power to acquire land and maintain	Public health Act 1875, s.164 Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10
Parish Property and documents	Powers to direct as to their custody	Local Government Act 1972, s.226
Postal and telecom facilities	Power to pay the Post Office, British Telecommunications or any other public telecommunications operator any loss sustained providing post or telegraph office or telecommunication facilities	Post Office Act 1953, s.51; Telecommunications Act 1984, s.97
Public buildings and village hall	Power to provide buildings for offices and for public meetings and assemblies	Local Government Act 1972, s.133
Public Conveniences	Power to provide	Public Health Act 1936, s.87
Recreation	Power to acquire land for or to provide recreation grounds, public walks, pleasure grounds and open spaces and to manage and control them Power to provide gymnasiums, playing fields, holiday camps Provision of boating pools	Public Health Act 1875, s.164 Local Government Act 1972, Sched.14 para.27 Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1890 s.44 Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19 Public Health Act 1961, s.54
Town & Country Planning	Right to be notified of planning applications	Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Sched.1, para.8
Tourism	Power to contribute to organisations encouraging	Local Government Act 1972, s.144
Traffic Calming	Powers to contribute financially to traffic calming schemes	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.30
Transport	Powers to spend money on community transport schemes	Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.26-29
War memorials	Power to maintain, repairs, protect and adapt war memorials	War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923, s.1; as extended by Local Government Act 1948, s.133
Water Supply	Power to utilise well, spring or stream and to provide facilities for obtaining water therefrom	Public Health Act 1936, s.125

Governance Documentation Index

	Policy	Reference	Date Adopted/ Reviewed
1	Standing Orders	Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12	Sep 2021
2	Financial Regulations	Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.	Sep 2021
3	Code of Conduct	Localism Act 2011	May 2021
4	Parish Council Risk Management Plan		Sep 2021
5	Health & Safety	Health and Safety at Work Act 1974	Sep 2021
6	Transparency & FOI Publication Scheme	The Freedom of Information Act 2000, Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 & Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities	Sep 2021
7	Scheme of Delegation		Sep 2021
8	Data Protection & Privacy (GDPR) Policy		Sep 2021
9	Documentation Retention & Disposal Policy		Sep 2021
10	Disciplinary and Grievance Policy		Sep 2021
11	Complaints Policy		Sep 2021
12	Unreasonably Persistent or Vexatious Complaints Policy		Sep 2021
13	Recording, Recording and Reporting Policy		Sep 2021
14	Press and Media Policy		Sep 2021
15	Approach to Planning		Mar 2021
16	Grants & Donations Policy		Sep 2021
17	Volunteers Policy		Sep 2021
18	Training & Development Policy		Sep 2021
19	Staff Appraisal Policy		Sep 2021
20	Equal Opportunities Policy	Equal Opportunities Act 2010	Sep 2021
21	Business Continuity Plan		Sep 2021
22	Safeguarding Policy		Sep 2019*

Files are saved on Google Drive and accessible via the hyperlink or on request from the clerk.

* Reviewed every 3 years