



## **WORKING GROUP / COMMITTEE**

### **GENERAL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Committees and Working Groups Explained .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Working Group Membership .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. The Purpose and Role of Working Groups for Bottisham Parish Council.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5. First Meeting of the Working Group .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6. Role of Lead Member .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>7. Powers.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8. Meetings of Working Groups .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>9. Finance .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>10. Conduct .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>11. Formulation of Recommendations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>12. Reviewing Terms of Reference.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>13. Dissolution .....</b>	<b>6</b>

#### **1. Introduction**

All local authorities are required to conduct their business in an open and transparent way and must comply with statutory requirements in relation to decision making and activities undertaken. Effective governance checks are in place to ensure that the decisions and actions of a local authority are lawful and transparent to the public at large and local council taxpayers who have a vested interest in the activities of their parish council.

One of the legal requirements includes the opportunity to delegate functions or powers of a parish council to a committee, sub-committee, working group, or an employee of the council or to another local authority "groups". These "groups" must be given clear and unambiguous terms of reference. Arrangements and activities undertaken must be formally reviewed, evidenced and approved by a parish council.

Bottisham Parish Council, as the parent body, can form a working group and/or committee to carry out specific detailed tasks on any matter that falls within its powers. Bottisham Parish Council must approve specific terms of reference for each such working group and/or committee before it can form. These general terms provide a default baseline starting point for and set of areas that must be covered in per-group terms.

#### **2. Committees and Working Groups Explained**

The Parish Council, as a main council, can delegate some of its statutory functions (responsibilities assigned to a parish council in legislation) to one or more committees or sub-committee or if there's a specific task focussed activity then working groups may be setup.

The Chair and members of standing committees, sub committees, working groups and other representatives will be appointed by the Parish Council at its Annual Meeting. The term of office will generally be one year.

All committees, sub-committees, working groups and representatives work for and on behalf of the Council. They report to the full council at its monthly meetings and can make recommendations.

A committee (or sub-committee) comprises members of the council whilst a working group can include other individuals e.g. residents. Any committee must hold regular open sessions, at which members of the public can speak.

Unlike committees and sub-committees, working groups do not ordinarily have delegated responsibilities however certain groups for example the finance working group may be given specific limited delegated responsibilities. This is at the discretion of full council. Working groups do not have to be open to the public. Findings and recommendations, however, must be documented and updates submitted to the Parish Council. Working groups are ordinarily set up for a specific short-term purpose.

### **3. Working Group Membership**

When establishing the working group members will be appointed by the Parish Council and will consist of at least two councillors.

The working group can “recruit” members of the public (lay members/volunteers) who have specific knowledge / expertise on the subject to assist the working group. Working groups must notify the Clerk when new members join. The opportunity for residents to join such groups will be made through the village newsletter (The Cresset), social media and/or on the Council’s noticeboard and website. Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process at all stages.

The Full Council will establish the remit of the working group and will write and approve its specific terms of reference.

The term of membership for a working group will be for a period of one (1) year or to the next annual meeting of the Full Council or time limited upon completion of the designated task(s). The annual meeting of the Council re-confirms working group’s membership and remit and can appoint other members to serve for the civic year.

Standing orders are not applicable although the Code of Conduct still applies.

Each working group should have a lead person. \* see Section 5 Role of Lead Member

### **4. The Purpose and Role of Working Groups for Bottisham Parish Council**

The purpose of working groups, formed from both councillors and members of the public, is to meet to discuss issues, explore options and develop plans and then report back to the Council or Committee with recommendations. Subsequently, working groups may be tasked to deliver their plans. They have no decision-making powers but simply present the Council or committee with their findings and proposals where relevant. The ability to give particular topics that much more time outside agenda-driven meetings prove to be invaluable. Their key role includes but may not limited to:

- To tackle issues as directed by the Council.

- To be goal specific and time limited.
- To examine an issue in detail, read reports and related materials, examine options, get advice for the Council.
- To function as experts and/or consult with experts.
- To make recommendations to Council.
- To answer questions from the Council.

#### **5. First Meeting of the Working Group**

- To review the specific group objectives and scope(s) and expected outcomes along with if relevant its specific Terms of Reference.
- To consider the request(s) of the Parish Council and develop an action plan for work
- Establish a meeting schedule

#### **6. Role of Lead Member**

- A leader will be appointed, for the working party, by the Parish Council. This will typically be a Parish Council member except when deemed appropriate by the Parish Council.
- Be accountable for any reasonable expenses, wholly, necessarily and exclusively incurred in connection with any genuine working group / Council business and submit to Parish Council Clerk for processing.  
\* See Finance
- The leader will be the main point of contact for the Parish Clerk, Council members and members of the public.
- To arrange date, time and place of meetings, in consultation where necessary with the Parish Clerk
- To create the meeting agenda and take notes of meetings or assign/designate a minute-taker for all meetings held.
- Ensure all recommendations are recorded correctly, and submit these to the Parish Clerk in good time to meet the agenda for the next Full Council meeting.
- The leader of the working group, if unable to attend a meeting of the Full Council, will nominate another member of the working party to attend and deliver the progress report.

## **7. Powers**

Working groups cannot make decisions, (*except where explicitly given delegated powers e.g. finance working group*), spend any money on behalf of the Parish Council. Any recommendations made by working parties will be subject to approval by the Full Council.

## **8. Meetings of Working Groups**

- Meetings will take place regularly and when deemed appropriate for task(s) and/or updates.
- Meetings of the working group can be held via video conferencing platforms e.g. Zoom, Teams, a private residence or a local community centre.
- The Parish Clerk should ideally be notified of planned meetings.
- Dates of meetings should, ideally but it is not mandatory, be publicly available via the Parish Council noticeboard, website and Bottisham Cresset.
- Agendas for meetings will be emailed to members of the working group at least 3 working days before a meeting.
- Minutes must be taken for all meetings and circulated to the group members and subsequently provided to the Parish Clerk in a timely fashion. All documents and records produced and shared by working groups will be retained for 7 years in accordance with the Council's Freedom of Information Act Procedure. For a copy of minutes and/or working group notes please contact the Parish Clerk.
- Declarations of pecuniary and other interests will be required at each meeting.
- Decision(s) made by the group should normally be by consensus. Where a vote is required, each member shall have one (1) vote. A minimum of 4 members shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken/voted on. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion.
- Decisions and/or proposals can be reached/made asynchronously (ie without the need for a face-to-face meeting), for example via email thread discussions, video conferencing etc). Any decisions and/or proposals the Parish Clerk must be notified and where necessary provided to council
- The quorum of the group should be four (4) members of which at least one must be a Parish Councillor
- The lead or a designated member of the working group, following each meeting, must provide an update and report to Full Council meetings.
- The working group will report formally to the full council at its Annual Parish Meeting if required.

- The working group is expected to be time limited. The continuing need for a working group will be reviewed by the Full Council at least on an annual basis.

## **9. Finance**

- All grants and funding must be applied for and approved by Parish council and be ring-fenced, where necessary, for stated project in the Parish Council bank account.
- The working group will notify the Clerk and Parish Council, requesting and justifying a needed expenditure before it is incurred. Working groups must follow the procedures / rules laid out in the council's Financial Regulations policy.
- Members of the working group, including volunteers, may claim back any previously agreed expenditure incurred during related work. Expenses should be submitted, with supporting evidence including debit/credit card receipts and/or invoices, to the Parish Clerk. No Councillor, employee or member of Parish Council working group should be financially disadvantaged or advantaged because of genuine Parish Council expenses.
- The working group must submit the following financial year's projected spend when requested by either the Parish Clerk or a member of the Finance working group.

## **10. Conduct**

Unlike Parish Council Committee meetings, working groups do not meet in public, therefore the Council's Standing Orders are not applicable. However, the Code of Conduct still applies. All working groups will follow all relevant Council policies including but not limited to the:

- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Act Policy & Procedure
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Communications Policy & Procedure
- It is expected that all working group members abide by the principle and best practices of the Parish Council Code of Conduct (which is available on the Bottisham Parish Council website including any declarations of interest).
- The working group, as a whole, is accountable to the Bottisham parish community for ensuring that any activity/project work reflects their collective expectations

## **11. Formulation of Recommendations**

- The Parish Clerk will determine that the recommendation given is legal and enough information has been presented for full council to decide and will ascertain funding if necessary.
- Full Council must direct the working group and set clear terms of reference for them regarding objectives, scope and outcome.

- The role of full council is to there to question and assess recommendation before making a decision. Note that there is no requirement for the council to implement any working group recommendation.
- The working group must facilitate the Full Council with as much information as it requires to ensure it can make a properly informed decision on its recommendations.

## **12. Reviewing Terms of Reference**

The Parish Council will review and update or re-approve the Terms of Reference including those produced specifically for set working groups and any future relevant amendments regularly to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

## **13. Dissolution**

The working group will be dissolved once its purpose has been achieved



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