

MPC(19)43.07

MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

A GOOD COUNCILLOR

It is hoped that all new councillors will attend a training course but in the meantime here are a few thoughts from a very old councillor for our new colleagues – and perhaps a reminder to some of the longer-standing ones too!

You must attend meetings and should read the papers. You are not “invited” to meetings, you are “summoned”. If you cannot attend, you should send your apologies via the clerk. In order to take part in the meeting, you need to have read the papers in advance as there is not time during the discussions.

You cannot speak or act for the council. No-one, not even the chair, has any authority to speak or act on behalf of the council unless authorised at a previous meeting. It is really important that we are all circumspect in our words and actions when we have our “councillor hats on”. We must not raise expectations or bring the council into disrepute. There are certain circumstances when the clerk can act without reference to the council but a councillor cannot.

The council has a set of Standing Orders (<http://www.melton-suffolk.pc.gov.uk/Standing%20Orders%20v9%20October%202018.pdf>) which must be followed at all times. We also have Financial Regulations (<http://www.melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk/Financial%20Regulations%202017.pdf>). It’s a good idea to read these.

You must respect the council’s employees. It shouldn’t be necessary to say this but we have a duty of care for our employees and they should be treated with total respect at all times. We do have a Complaints Procedure and Code of Conduct, both available on our website on the FERM page.

You should respect each other. Again it should not need saying but we owe each other respect. At meeting, we should all listen to what others are saying. That's not to say we cannot disagree but should do so with consideration.

You should join in. Having become a councillor, you should speak at meetings, join committees and working groups and play your part in the business of the council. This includes being prepared to chair committees or even the council. It is important for the good of the whole council that chairs change every few years. We do not want to stagnate nor be seen to be in a rut. It is really good to have new members who will bring new ideas, experiences and opinions. There are 14 (maybe 15) of us and if everyone does their share, it is not too onerous. It is not fair to expect a few colleagues to shoulder most of the burden.

Katy Martin, April 2019