



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

MPC(23)22.03

Working Groups

The January Council asked the Clerk, Chairs and Vice Chairs to develop proposals for a new way of working based on ten Full Council meetings per year, with Committees being replaced by Working Groups.

The purpose of this report is to outline those proposals which, subject to agreement by Full Council, would lead to updated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations being brought to the first meeting of the new Council in May, for approval.

Under the new way of working for Melton Parish Council, all key decisions would be made at Full Council as before. The day-to-day management of key projects, finance and other routine activities would be managed through Working Groups with Councillors being assigned to the Working Groups according to their preference and skills. This would allow quick operational decisions to be made to guide the office on a regular basis so long as they are in line with the overarching decision already made by Full Council.

Meetings of Working Groups will only take place when needed rather than the scheduled meetings we have now. The overall objective of the new way of working is to reduce the number of meetings Melton Councillors and staff need to attend and prepare for.

The key purpose of the Working Groups will be to debate and agree a course of action needed so long as it remains in line with the overarching decision made by Full Council. This will also allow a group of Councillors time to discuss and debate more contentious issues prior to Full Council so that a recommendation can be put forward for Full Council's decision. Some meetings may be called to scrutinise and prepare papers for Full Council eg Staff management, scrutiny of Finance and bank accounts and preparation of budgets. The Chair of the Working Group will agree an agenda prior to any Working Group meeting and circulate it at least 48 hours before coming together. This will enable Councillors to consider the matters to be discussed and prepare accordingly. The Clerk or the Assistant Clerk will attend as required and when necessary.

At Full Council meetings, Councillors will be expected to read all the papers being presented and can ask questions about the matter being discussed, after the Chair of the Working Group has summarised the matter. The Working Group Chairs will be expected to highlight any specific concerns they have identified along with any risks or items that they consider are 'out of the ordinary'.

The Standing Orders have been reviewed. On the whole, they remain sound but Section 4 "Committees and Sub-Committees" would need to be changed to reflect the Council's move from Committees to Working Groups. Cllr Banks has kindly drafted additional text for this section (see Appendix A)

Each Working Group will review their Terms of Reference and present them to Full Council in May for formal adoption.

Councillors are asked to agree to:

- The new way of working using Working Groups;
- The new method of operating allowing Working Groups to make operational decisions as part of the process of delivering Full Council decisions
- Amend the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Terms of Reference for Working Groups (formerly Committees) to reflect the change in Melton Parish Council's operating model. These will be presented at the first meeting of the new Council in May 2023 for formal approval.

Cllr Gradwell, Vice Chair Melton Parish Council

March 2023

Appendix A

Proposed additional text for Section 4 of the Standing Orders – Committees and Sub-Committees

The Council shall be the primary decision-making body. The Council may create Working Groups to provide specialist expertise for defined functions.

Working Groups shall not be decision-making bodies except where Council has granted delegated authority on a specific matter.

The Council shall appoint the Chair, Deputy Chair and other members of each Working Group. The membership of a Working Group may include non-councillors. The Council may dissolve a Working Group.

The Council shall agree the terms of reference (ToRs) for Working Groups. The ToRs shall reflect Working Groups' purpose to conduct more forensic investigation and scrutiny of topics than is possible within the time-constraints of formal Council meetings. The following examples are not exhaustive:

- research or scrutiny in preparation for a report to Council
- providing advice to Council
- strategic planning
- oversight of significant projects
- forward budgeting
- incident management
- regular management of the Council's amenity assets
- reviews of governance-related topics

The Council shall require the Chair and Deputy Chair of each Working Group to acquire in-depth knowledge of the range of activities within their portfolio and take the lead at Council meetings in scrutinising and advising on matters within their specialism. The Council shall also require the other members of Working Groups to develop a reasonable understanding of their portfolio.

The Clerk or their representative shall normally attend each Working Group meeting. In exceptional circumstances, and following consultation with the Clerk, a Working Group meeting may be held in the Clerk's absence.

The Chair and Deputy Chair of a Working Group, following consultation with the Clerk, may invite a person or persons from outside the core membership to join a meeting for a particular topic.

Working Groups shall decide the frequency of their meetings. The Council may also ask a Working Party to meet on a particular topic. The meetings shall not take place in public and there would be no requirement to give the press & public notice of the meetings, nor to publish formal agendas or minutes. In exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the Clerk, the press & public may be invited to a Working Group meeting.

A Working Group shall maintain a brief written note of each of its meetings. When a Working Party makes decisions under delegated authority, or when it makes recommendations, the Clerk shall report them to Council.

Working Group meetings would usually be face to face but a Working Group shall have discretion to meet virtually, say by video conference, or by sharing information and opinions via e-mail.

The quorum for a Working Group meeting shall be no less than three of its membership.