

Dear Cowley village,

We are now coming up to two years since Cowley Parish Council was formed. It has become apparent in recent council meetings that there is some uncertainty around the role of the Council and how villagers can make their views known and have their issues discussed.

As a Council, we thought it would be helpful to set out when the council meets and how you can attend and have your say.

The Parish Council meets six times a year – in January, March, May, July, September and November. Extraordinary meetings may be called between those meetings if decisions need to be made with time constraints. The agenda for each meeting is confirmed around 10 days before the meeting and is published on the Parish Council website and put on the village noticeboard three days before the meeting. This is a legal requirement. The minutes from each meeting are also published on the website and posted on the village noticeboard.

Villagers are welcome to email the clerk (cowleycouncil@gmail.com) if they wish to raise matters for the agenda. The council can only discuss and make decisions on matters on the agenda. If opinions, requests and concerns are not expressed to the council, it cannot discuss them.

As well as the Parish Council meetings there is also an Annual Parish Assembly organised by the Parish Council, again publicised on the noticeboard and council website. This is an opportunity for any resident to come along and hear what the Parish Council and other organisations in the village have achieved in the last year, and to make suggestions on what you would like to see as priorities for the next year. It is an informal meeting and an opportunity for your voice and views to be heard. To date only one villager has attended the Parish Assembly.

Villagers are welcome to attend all council meetings and contribute to the meeting in the section open to the public and to raise matters to be put on the agenda. So far we have only had a small number of villagers attend each meeting, sometimes none at all.

Parish Councils are statutory consultees in the planning process and are sent all planning applications and amendments within the parish. Any comments they wish to make must be discussed at a Parish Council meeting and then submitted in writing by the Clerk. Prior to the meeting each councillor must undertake to study the plans, forms and reports associated with the application and can request additional views from statutory bodies e.g. environment agency, highways, heritage etc. Without contribution from villagers at the

Parish Council meeting the councillors are only able to give their own opinion. The PC's comments in response to a planning application can only be based on planning matters such the local plan, past planning history and decisions and highways issues. As a consultee the Parish Council decision to object, support or make no comment on an application counts as one opinion - it does not carry any more weight than any other member of the public.

Listening to everyone's concerns, needs and aspirations and having effective communication within and beyond the Parish goes to the heart of the Parish Council's work. If we achieve this then we shall be well placed to represent Cowley effectively in discussions and negotiations with other organisations, for example our MP, other service providers and neighbouring Parish Councils. The Parish Council, therefore, very much welcomes questions, opinions or concerns from parishioners and would value their presence at its Parish Council meetings.

Cowley Parish Council
Tim Knox (Chair)
Linda Dawson
Richard Hamilton
Beverly Ayling-Smith
Laura Li