The Parish Council of Berkswell

Policy on site visits and other meetings with 3rd parties

Introduction

Councillors (and Clerk) need to exercise care when meeting any 3rd parties. For this purpose 3rd Parties include members of the public, councillors and officials of other authorities, developers and contractors.

Councillors will meet and communicate with residents and perhaps official bodies in their role as an individual councillor on many occasions. Input from the public is important to ensuring that councillors understand public views when taking decisions. Nothing in these guidelines should be seen to restrict the openness of councillors to public input. Parish Councillors can also perform a valuable role passing on residents concerns to Solihull Council and other statutory authorities but any such communication should make it clear that the councillor is speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the Council.

Speaking on behalf of or representing the Council

Only the Clerk can commit the council contractually.

Councillors cannot speak for the council unless this has been agreed at a preceding council meeting.

The Chairman, or in her/his absence the vice Chair can on his/her own authority explain the Council's position to official bodies without prior approval subject to that view having been specifically agreed and minuted.

Wherever possible at least 2 councillors (or a councillor and the Clerk or a councillor and a local ward councillor) should be present at any council related meeting. This will reduce the risk of accusations of improper conduct and reduce personal risk.

Site visits (Planning related)

During site visits any contact with applicants or members of the public should be treated with caution so as to avoid lobbying (or the perception of lobbying). It is appropriate that questions of a factual nature can be asked of applicants or neighbours but councillors should not put forward arguments for or against the proposals.

Wherever possible at least 2 councillors (or a councillor and the Clerk or a councillor and a local ward councillor) should be present at any site visit.

All site visits should be advised in writing to the Clerk and other councillors and recorded in the minutes.

Other meetings

Wherever possible at least 2 councillors (or a councillor and the Clerk or a councillor and a local ward councillor) should be present at any meeting with 3rd parties on council related matters.

It is good practice to report on all such meeting at the earliest opportunity to fellow councillors and where appropriate at the next council meeting.

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