

EAST PECKHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS HANDBOOK

Index:

- 1 The role of the Parish Council
- 2 Becoming a Parish Councillor
- 3 Role of the Parish Councillor
- 4 Role of the Parish Clerk
- 5 The Council's place in Government
- 6 Planning
- 7 Representing the Council
- 8 Media Relations
- 9 Training
- 10 Localism

Introduction:

Welcome to the Parish Councillors Handbook. This handbook has been prepared to provide some simple background information to parish councillors outlining their role and duties as well as providing information that can be given to the public to help them better understand the role of the council.

This is not a definitive document and should be read in conjunction with the other official documents referred to in this handbook.

Karen Bell
Parish Clerk
June 2018

1. The role of the Parish Council: EPPC is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of people in East Peckham. EPPC is the level of local government closest to the community, with TMBC and KCC above it in the hierarchy. As it is the authority closest to the people - and the common perception of bigger government is that it's painfully slow moving and choked with red tape – EPPC is invariably the first place people go with concerns or ideas. For this reason it is a vital part of the community.

1.1 What decisions does EPPC make? We make all kinds of decisions on issues that affect the local community, and you can see a full list of the powers available to the parish council below. Probably the most common topics that we get involved with are planning matters (we are a statutory consultee), crime prevention and highways. It is true to say that on our own, we have limited powers to make decisions (other than those listed below as Powers & Duties). But we do have the ability to negotiate with and the power to influence, those organisations that *do* make the final decisions. In this respect EPPC is extremely powerful as the organisations that make the final decisions know that EPPC gives the best reflection of how a community feels about something, and its views will be taken seriously.

1.2 Powers and Duties of EPPC: We function within a legal framework. We have one Duty which is to provide allotments but only when the criteria to invoke this duty has been met. Borough Councils have duties such as collecting household waste and County Councils have a duty to maintain highways. Our Powers allow us to do a wide variety of activities at our own expense and where applicable with the consent of the authority who normally would have that duty.

Function	Powers & Duties
Allotments	Duty to provide allotments; power to improve & adapt land for allotments, and to let grazing rights
Burial grounds, cemeteries and crematoria	Power to acquire & maintain; Power to provide, Power to agree to maintain monuments & memorials; Power to contribute towards expenses of cemeteries.
Bus Shelters	Power to provide and maintain shelters.
Bye-laws	Power to make bye-laws in regard to pleasure grounds; cycle parks; baths & washhouses; Open spaces & burial grounds; Mortuaries and post-mortem rooms.
Closed churchyards	Powers to maintain.
Common pastures	Powers to provide common pasture land.
Community centres	Power to provide and equip buildings for use of athletic, social or recreational clubs.
Crime prevention	Powers to install & maintain equipment & establish & maintain a scheme for detection or prevention of crime.
Drainage	Power to deal with ponds and ditches.

Entertainment and the arts	Provision of entertainment & support of the arts.
Highways	Power to maintain footpaths & bridle-ways; Power to light roads & public places; provision of litter bins; powers to provide parking places for bicycles, motor-cycles & other vehicles; power to enter into agreement as to dedication & widening of highways; powers to provide roadside seats & shelters; Consent of council required for ending maintenance of highway at public expense, or for stopping up or diversion of highway; Power to complain to highway authority as to unlawful stopping up or obstruction of highway, or unlawful encroachment on roadside wastes; Power to provide traffic signs & other objects or devices warning of danger; power to plant trees & lay out grass verges etc., and to maintain them.
Land	Power to acquire land by agreement; Power to appropriate land; Power to dispose of land.
Litter	Provision of bins.
Lotteries	Powers to promote lotteries.
Open spaces	Power to acquire land and maintain open spaces.
Public buildings and village hall	Power to provide buildings for public meetings and assemblies.
Public conveniences	Power to provide public conveniences.
Town and Country Planning	Right to be notified of planning applications.
Tourism	Power to encourage visitors and provide conference and other facilities.
Traffic calming	Power to contribute financially to traffic calming schemes.
Transport	Powers in relation to car-sharing schemes, taxi fare concessions and information about transport; Powers to make grants for bus services.
War memorials	Power to maintain, repair, protect and alter war memorials.
Water supply	Power to utilise wells, springs or streams and to provide facilities for getting water from them.

EPPC is a Statutory Body, having powers under a number of Acts (the Local Government Act 1972, the Public Health Act 1936, etc.). Few Councils use all their available powers. It is up to each Council to choose what is appropriate for the community they serve.

EPPC raises funds by the annual Precept (which is collected on our behalf by TMBC) which is set in January. The amount required is guided by the setting of our annual budget. We also raise funds through grants from other organisations and revenue from facility hire charges.

We pay for footway lighting, village grass cutting, churchyard maintenance, CCTV, playing fields, Jubilee Hall, administration etc. We are consulted on Planning Applications that will be decided by TMBC but do not have the right to speak at the planning meetings. We are also consulted by KCC's Highways department on works within the parish and nominate tasks to be undertaken. We monitor the public footpaths & bridleways for the Rights of Way team at KCC. The Councillors and Clerk attend various workshops and consultation meetings with other authorities in order to be aware of proposals and legislation that may affect the community. We host the Annual Parish Meeting and encourage residents to make their views known.

- 2. Becoming a Parish Councillor - Why become a Parish Councillor?** If you've never been to a parish council meeting, you may be forgiven for thinking that parish councillors are a group of (probably older) people who meet now and then in a draughty hall to discuss budgets and parish precepts, making decisions that have little impact on the community they serve. If, however, you live in a community where something 'big' has happened – such as a contentious planning application – you'll know that when people in the community need support and guidance, it is that same group of people they will turn to.

By becoming a Parish Councillor you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support - a community leader with the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve. Seeing your community change for the better, as a result of decisions you have helped make, is something that can give you a sense of achievement and pride. As a new Councillor you will bring fresh enthusiasm and new ideas, a care for your community and a willingness to learn. A candidate for a Parish or Town Council is qualified if, when nominated -

- (a) He or she is a British subject or citizen of the European Community,
- (b) is 18 years of age, and
- (c) Is either in the list of electors for that Parish or Town or has during the whole of the preceding twelve months
 - (i) Occupied land as owner or tenant in it, or
 - (ii) Had a principal place of work there, or
 - (iii) Resided in or within three miles of it.

2.1 Process: Before you can be accepted as a candidate you must have a proposer and a seconder who appear on the Electoral Register for the Parish.

2.2 Elections: Ordinary elections are held every 4 years and therefore your term of office would normally be 4 years. These elections usually coincide with elections for the district or county councils.

2.3 Casual vacancy (Bye-election, Co-option): In the event of a casual vacancy, EPPC must give public notice (Section 87(2) of the Local Government Act 1972). The notice must be displayed in a conspicuous place within the Parish. An election, to fill the vacancy, will be held if ten electors of the Parish write to the Chief Executive at TMBC asking for one to be held. The notice must be displayed for 14 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays). If no request for an election is made, then EPPC must fill the vacancy by co-option as soon as practicable after the expiry of the 14 days

referred to above. Once an election has been requested, the vacancy must be filled by election, and EPPC cannot fill it by co-option, even if there are insufficient candidates. Where the casual vacancy occurs within 6 months before the day on which the councillor whose office is vacant would have retired, an election to fill the vacancy shall not be held. There are no rules regarding co-option of members. EPPC may choose who they like but the person must be qualified to have been a candidate. There are several methods of co-opting used but the most popular is one whereby EPPC puts a notice in various places, within the Parish, inviting anyone interested to write giving reasons why he or she would like to be co-opted. The letters are then reported to the Council, who then either co-opt direct or invite applicants to an interview. Voting for the new councillor is by show of hands unless EPPC has adopted Standing Orders which allow another form of voting. If there is only one vacancy, a Councillor may only nominate or second one candidate. Where there are more than one candidate the names will be placed into alphabetical order and a vote taken. Councillors have only one vote each. The first candidate to receive an absolute majority of those present and voting is declared elected. Should no single candidate receive a majority on the first vote, the person with the lowest number of votes is eliminated, voting takes place on the remainder, one vote per councillor until one person receives an absolute majority.

3. The role of the Parish Councillor:

3.1 To be a parish councillor requires time and commitment. A councillor will usually spend a couple of hours a week on parish business and this will increase if they are a member of a permanent or short-term committee. All councillors serve on at least one committee.

Main purpose: Representing the views of all residents within your parish.

Secondary purposes: As part of EPPC you will have responsibility for running local services and potentially much more. You will decide on how much to raise through the council tax (the Precept) in order to deliver your council's services. You will help influence and shape the long term development policy for the parish. As part of the planning process, you will comment on planning applications. You will improve the quality of life and the environment in the local area. You will work to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent and will work to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies.

No member of the Council should promise to do something, or agree to do anything, which they have not been delegated to do by the Council.

3.2 The success of EPPC depends on the Councillors and Clerk playing complimentary roles to ensure that EPPC devises the appropriate policies and the clerk carries them out. This is particularly so where the clerk is the only employee of the council and is, in effect, it's Chief Executive. It is therefore important that the Clerk and Councillors understand each other's role and that they work closely and harmoniously together. This is especially relevant in relation to the respective roles of the clerk and the chairman. Without each party fully understanding their own role and the role of the other, disagreements and misunderstandings may arise.

4. The role of the Parish Clerk:

4.1 The Clerk's responsibility is to carry out the policy decisions of EPPC within a framework of procedures framed by legislation and good practice. The Local Government Act 1972 (LGA72) section 112(1) empowers EPPC to appoint

such officers as they see fit to carry out the work of the council, typically small Council's use this power to appoint a Clerk. Many duties are conferred by legislation on an unspecified Proper Officer and it is typical for this role to be bestowed upon the Clerk.

- 4.2 The Clerk will organise council business and ensure that EPPC only acts in accordance with the powers it has been given through legislation. The Clerk may offer guidance to council; however it is the lawful decisions of council that the Clerk must enact.
- 4.3 The Council will delegate under LGA72 s111 certain powers and duties to the Clerk to help with the smooth running of a council's affairs. These will form part of the Clerk's job specification.
- 4.4 The Parish Clerk is the Council's Proper Officer: this means that the clerk is not similar to a secretary simply taking the minutes at meetings, dealing with correspondence and archiving documents. The clerk is a qualified officer providing professional advice concerning the laws of governance and administrative support to the Council. Answerable only to the Parish Council as a whole, the Clerk takes action to implement council decisions and acts as its finance administrator.
- 4.5 The role of the Parish Clerk comprises three different functions. They are:
- a) *The Clerk has overall responsibility for the implementation of Council policy and administration as would a CEO in a larger organisation.*
 - b) *The Proper Officer is responsible for a range of specific duties as a departmental head would be in a larger authority.*
 - c) *The Responsible Financial Officer is responsible for the finances and accounts of the Council.*
- Where a statute, regulation or order confers function or duties on the proper officer of the Council in the following cases, it shall be the Clerk or nominated officer: -*
- To receive declarations of acceptance of office.*
 - To receive and record notices disclosing interests at meetings.*
 - To receive and retain plans and documents.*
 - To sign notices or other documents on behalf of the Council.*
 - To receive copies of bylaws made by another local authority.*
 - To certify copies of bylaws made by the Council.*
 - To sign and issue the summons to attend meetings of the Council.*
 - To keep proper records for all Council meetings.*

- 4.6 **East Peckham Parish Clerk Job Description and Specification:** This is more broadly expanded upon by the job specification which forms part of the Clerk's contract of employment. The specification is as follows:

Overall Responsibilities

The Clerk to the Council will be the Proper Officer of the Council and as such is under a statutory duty to carry out all the functions, and in particular to serve or issue all the notifications required by law of a local authority's Proper Officer. The Clerk is expected to advise the Council on, and assist in the formation of, overall policies to be followed in respect of the Authority's activities and in particular to produce all the information required for making effective decisions and to implement constructively all decisions. The Clerk will be the Responsible Financial Officer and responsible for all financial records of the Council and the careful administration of its finances.

Specific Responsibilities

1. To ensure that statutory and other provisions governing or affecting the running of the Council are observed.

2. To monitor and balance the Council's accounts and prepare records for audit purposes and VAT.
3. To ensure that the Council's obligations for Risk Assessment are properly met.
4. To prepare agendas for meetings of the Council and Committees.
5. To attend such meetings and prepare minutes for approval.
6. To attend all meetings of the Council and its committees
7. To receive correspondence and documents on behalf of the Council, to deal with the correspondence or documents or bring such items to the attention of the Council.
8. To issue correspondence as a result of instructions of, or the known council policy.
9. To receive and report on invoices for goods and services to be paid for by the Council and to ensure such accounts are met.
10. To issue invoices on behalf of the Council for goods and services and to ensure payment is received.
11. To study reports and other data on activities of the Council and on matters bearing on those activities. Where appropriate, to discuss such matters with administrators and specialists in particular fields and to produce reports for circulation and discussion by the Council.
12. To draw up both on his/her own initiative and as a result of suggestions by Councillors proposals for consideration by the Council and to advise on practicability and likely effects of specific courses of action.
13. To supervise any other members of staff as their line manager in keeping with the policies of the Council and to undertake all necessary activities in connection with the management of salaries, conditions of employment and work of other staff.
14. To monitor the implemented policies of the Council to ensure they are achieving the desired result and where appropriate suggest modifications.
15. To act as the representative of the Council as required.
16. To issue notices and prepare agendas and minutes for the Annual Meeting (AMP) of the Parish; to attend the AMP and implement decisions made at the AMP that are agreed by the Council.
17. To prepare, in consultation with the Chair, press releases about the activities of, or decisions of, the Council.
18. To attend training courses/seminars on the work and role of the Clerk as required by Council.
19. To be CILCA qualified
20. To continue to acquire the necessary professional knowledge required for the efficient management of the affairs of the Council: Suggested membership of SLCC
21. To attend Conferences of NALC, SLCC, KALC and other relevant bodies, as a representative of the Council as required.
22. To manage the Jubilee Hall including maintenance, invoicing and bookings
23. Any other duties falling within the management of the Jubilee Hall and council business
24. To ensure the council is GDPR compliant

Emergency powers: The Clerk can have powers (set out in standing orders) for emergency repairs and to raise cheques. These would be itemised on the next agenda as 'retrospective payments' and presented with the invoice/authorisation.

4.7. The Clerk's relationship with Councillors: The smooth running of EPPC depends upon a harmonious and positive relationship between the clerk and the councillors. It is essential that each party understands the role of the other and that, as far as possible, their respective roles do not overlap. A Councillor should not undertake tasks which are properly those of the Clerk except in an emergency and only then with the authority of the council. In the same way, it is incorrect for the Clerk to usurp the role of the Councillors by, for example, seeking to impose his/her views on policy issues on the council. The Clerk should not forget that he/she is the employee of the council and that the Councillors may sometimes make decisions with which he/she does not agree. Animosity can arise between a Councillor and the Clerk because of the failure of the Councillor in question to understand that the Clerk's loyalty and responsibility is to the Council as a whole and not to individual councillors. Such a situation can arise, where a Councillor wishes to be provided with information by the Clerk in order to further a personal matter in which the Council is not involved. A Clerk should resist any request of this nature and should, obtain the support of the Council.

5. East Peckham Parish Council: Many people are vague about what EPPC can and can't do. It boils down to three rules which are that EPPC must do what Parliament requires it to do, EPPC may do only what Parliament says it may do and that EPPC must not do anything unless it has a legal power to act, granted by parliament. Every action must be supported by the relevant power within the law. This is mainly, but not entirely, found within the Local Government Act 1972. EPPC is a statutory consultee for many other organisations on a wide range of subjects. These include planning, highways, healthcare and police. In this role EPPC can be regarded as being a stakeholder in the matter under consideration. EPPC also acts as a key information provider and help point on a wide range of topics to the residents it serves.

5.1 Code of conduct and register of interests: Parish Councillors are bound by the same Code of Conduct as all local Councillors. If a matter comes before EPPC in which a Councillor has a personal or prejudicial interest this must be declared before the item is discussed and if necessary the councillor will take no part in the discussion or even absent himself/herself from the meeting. Depending on the nature of the personal or prejudicial interest the councillor may not be permitted to vote on the item. A newly elected Councillor has to sign an undertaking, as part of their written declaration of acceptance of office, that they will observe EPPC's code of conduct. A signed declaration and undertaking must be received by the Clerk before a newly elected member can carry out any duties as a Councillor. In addition, all councillors have to complete a register of interests within 28 days of the election, which anyone can lawfully ask to see. The code of conduct sets out the rules governing the behaviour of councillors in local authorities across the country. Prospective candidates are advised to read the code before standing for election so that they are aware of what will apply to them, and be sure that they are willing to complete the requirements for the register of interests.

5.2 Standing Orders: EPPC operates in accordance with its Standing Orders (which deal with financial, legal and contractual requirements) and the other formal policies and procedures laid down from time to time. These enable the Council to take a consistent and properly regulated approach to regular or important activities and issues. The Standing Orders, policies and procedures are reviewed on an annual basis or as main legislation changes.

- 5.3 Financial Regulations:** Financial regulations govern the conduct of the financial transactions of EPPC and may only be amended or varied by a Council resolution. EPPC is responsible in law for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of financial control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk and for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. The financial regulations are designed to demonstrate how the Council meets these responsibilities.
- 5.4 The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act:** The FOI gives an individual or group the right to ask for all the information EPPC holds on any subject requested. Unless there's a good reason, information must be provided within 20 working days. An individual can also ask for all the personal information we hold on them. Everyone can make a written request for information – there are no restrictions on age, nationality, or where the person lives. EPPC has a Model Publication Scheme which outlines what information is available to the public and the costs of providing the information. Any information can be asked for - but some information might be withheld to protect various interests which are allowed for by the Act. If this is case, we will tell the applicant why we have withheld information. If the request is for information about the individual, then the request will be handled under the Data Protection Act.
- 5.5 Committees:** EPPC currently works with 2 main committees (Finance, Planning) and has special work groups which can include residents or specialists to work on specific projects. Each committee has its own terms of reference setting out its area of operation and functions. EPPC's financial regulations will also apply. A working group has no budget or power to spend and will have to report to council and seek approval for any expenditure.
- 5.6 Delegated authority:** ***No Council member should promise to do something, or agree to do anything, which they have not been authorised to do by Council. However, in certain special circumstances a member may be given delegated authority to act on the councils behalf.*** No member of the Council should misrepresent or do something 'in the name of the Council', which they have not been authorised to do so by the Council. The Clerk through his/her job specification has delegated authority for work such as writing on behalf of the council and representing the council in undertaking negotiation with other bodies. ***Members should be aware that their direct or indirect involvement can affect their position in Council when it comes to making a decision as his or her position could have become fettered by his or her involvement. Most importantly, if a Councillor acts without delegated authority, the member could be held financially responsible and surcharged in the event of the council incurring expenditure it had not previously budgeted for or agreed.***

6. Planning:

- 6.1 The Local Plan:** The local plan of TMBC sets planning policy for East Peckham. TMBC must prepare a local plan which includes Development Plan Documents (DPD's). These are very important when deciding planning applications. Within the Local Planning Authority's Local Plan, its DPDs must be 'sound' (section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) both in terms of their content and the process by which they are produced. They must also be founded on a robust and credible evidence base.

6.2 Planning consultation: EPPC is a statutory consultee on all planning applications within East Peckham. This means that we must be consulted by the planning authority before it makes a decision. The responsibility for making decisions on planning applications rests with TMBC. EPPC can only comment on whether it supports or disagrees with an application. Some decisions may be delegated to Planning Officers whilst TMBC's Planning Committee will determine other planning applications, particularly those where there may be public interest and a large number of representations are received. However, we can request that an application which would otherwise be determined as a delegated decision by a planning officer is brought before the Borough Council's Planning Committee.

6.3 Planning advice - What can individuals do if they wish to object or comment on a planning application? The following notes are issued as guidance.

- The purpose of planning is to control development in the public interest.
- TMBC as the local planning authority must take decisions on behalf of the whole community. They must make decisions openly, fairly and with sound judgement. Letters of objection can only be considered on 'material planning grounds' (*see list below*). Whilst views of local residents are always considered, local opposition or support on its own is not a reason for refusing or granting permission.
- Statements of Planning Policy (PPSs) are issued by Government and set out material planning considerations that the local planning authority must take into account when reaching planning decisions.
- The local planning authority must also consider other Government policies issued in technical documents and ministerial statements. Previous court decisions must also be considered and taken into account.
- Set out below are the 'material planning grounds' that TMBC as the Local Planning Authority, can consider when determining applications:
 - Parking and servicing in relation to traffic flow for deliveries.
 - Access and highway safety, including access for emergency vehicles.
 - Traffic generation – increased traffic movements arising from the proposed development.
 - Overlooking and loss of privacy.
 - Overshadowing.
 - Privacy/overbearing nature of the proposal.
 - Design and appearance.
 - Visual impact.
 - Daylight/sunlight.
 - Layout and density of buildings (over-development).
 - Noise, nuisance and disturbance from the scheme.
 - Loss of trees.
 - Loss of ecological habitat.
 - Flood risk.
 - Loss of public visual amenity – not the same as loss of private individuals view.
 - Risk of increased crime.
 - Economic impact.
 - Planning history/related decisions.

The following is a list of issues that cannot normally be considered:

- Loss of view or value to private individual property.
- Private rights of way.
- Land ownership.

- Age, health, status, background and work patterns of those objecting or supporting.
- Disruption during the building phase.
- Time taken to carry out the work.
- Damage to property.
- Possible change in property value.
- Competition (Business).
- The applicant's personal conduct or history.
- The applicant's motives.
- Potential profit for the applicant arising from the application.
- Private covenants or agreements
- Boundary disputes
- Capacity of private drains/sewers.
- "Better" site or "better" use.

NB: The examples listed above are definitive but not comprehensive and are a guide to assist in the preparation of letters or statements of support or opposition.

- 7. Representing the Council:** It is of paramount importance that Councillors represent both the Council and themselves in the correct manner to ensure that both are not misquoted or misrepresented and views belonging to one or the other are not confused in conversations or meetings.

- 7.1 Situations:** Councillors may be requested, or volunteer, to be a Council representative on another body. This could include attending a group as the Council's representative or attending a meeting of another authority as the Council's representative to pass on information or ask a question.

As most Councillors live or work in the village they may be stopped by residents when they are out and about who have information, ideas, or problems which they wish to be resolved or passed on. It is important that these queries are noted for either passing on or raising with the Council. **No member of the Council should promise to do something, or agree to do anything, which they have not been authorised to do by the Council.**

- 7.2 Councillor as a Representative:** When attending meetings of groups and organisations, Councillors do so as representatives of EPPC and should only put forward views agreed by Council, and not their own personal views. Councillors should abide by the democratic decisions of the Council once made. If you are attending a meeting as an EPPC representative but feel you have a view, questions or objection which you would like to express as an individual or is a view held by another group or committee then this must be clearly communicated to the meeting you are attending. **No Council member should misrepresent or do something 'in the name of the Council', which they have not been authorised to do so by the Council.**

7.3 Examples

1. EPPC decides to support a planning application. You decide to attend the Planning Committee at TMBC because you, personally, don't like the planning application and have a strong objection towards its design and position. If you decide to write against the application, it must be as an individual. However, recent findings have concluded that even as an individual you are more widely known as a Councillor and thus open to criticism. Any such correspondence should make it clear that it is a 'personal viewpoint'.

2. You have been asked to attend a community meeting as EPPC's representative for no particular purpose other than to gather information of what is happening and to see if any items will affect East Peckham. You are only attending the meeting because you are the representative of EPPC and otherwise you would not be invited to this meeting. The meeting goes off track and begins discussing an item which is not at all relevant to East Peckham but that you are interested in and have knowledge about. If you engage in conversation regarding issues, opinions or objections you should make the meeting clearly aware that this is your own personal view and not the views of EPPC - remembering that you are only there because of the Parish Council.
3. Neighbourhood/Police Meeting - you attend the meeting because you live in the village and have an issue to raise at the meeting with the Police. You are not the Council's representative for this meeting. You should raise your points as a resident and try to avoid mixing in any EPPC opinions or decisions; otherwise this would get confusing to other members at the meeting.

8. Media Relations

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 EPPC's relationship with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying attitudes and measuring satisfaction.
- 8.1.2 Effective media relations are an important factor in establishing a good relationship between EPPC and the community. Since members of the public generally rely on the media for local information and news, it is important for EPPC to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent way.
- 8.1.3 The community in this sense includes all residents and elected representatives, businesses, schools, shops, places of worship, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, groups and associations.

8.2 Media Opportunities

- 8.2.1 The Media is more than the local newspaper. The phrase encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience, and includes broadcast media (radio and television), the internet, and a wide range of printed media (e.g. newspapers, free sheets, community newspapers, magazines, leaflets and posters)
- 8.2.2 Many of the categories in 8.2.1 have different facets, e.g. a newspaper has feature writers and specialist correspondents in addition to its "news" staff.
- 8.2.3 Different media respond more readily to certain factors. For example, newspapers are more likely to print a general interest story if supplied with a photograph, radio items tend to be quite brief with a short 'sound bite', and television producers will want moving pictures to illustrate a story.

8.3 Making Contact with the Media

- 8.3.1 The general principle is that the Parish Council office will act as the Press Office. Any official contact with the media concerning EPPC's policies, the decisions it takes and the services it provides, are to be initiated through the Press office.

- 8.3.2 Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk and/or Chairman in association with other Members as required, and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Parish Council.
- 8.3.3 Other Members and employees of EPPC who identify a media opportunity should refer to the Press Office so as to ensure accuracy and consistency in any subsequent press release or contact with the media.
- 8.3.4 If a Member or employee receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Parish Council, it should be referred to the Press Office. A decision will then be made by the Clerk and/or Chairman, in consultation with other Members where necessary, about the format and content of any response.
- 8.3.5 Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as preventing, or attempting to prevent, a Member from expressing a personal opinion through the media, for example by writing to a newspaper or posting an item on an internet site. Members must make it clear that any views expressed, where different from EPPC Policy, are their own personal views. However, Members should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring EPPC into disrepute, and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct.
- 8.3.6 Employees (other than the Clerk) should not contact the media on any matter relating to EPPC unless specifically authorised by the Clerk and/or Chairman of the Council.
- 8.3.7 All press releases and other materials are to be kept for reference

8.4 Talking to the Media

- 8.4.1 In response to a Parish Council press release:
 - a) Any enquiry from the media is to be referred to the Press Office and the author of the press release.
 - b) No-one else should offer any comment without prior discussion, except to confirm basic matters of fact (dates of events, spelling of names, etc.)
- 8.4.2 In response to an unsolicited approach from a journalist or reporter (this includes enquiries about press releases issued by other organisations)
 - a) The views of EPPC may be expressed subject to the guidelines above.
 - b) The Press Office should be informed so that facts can be checked and appropriate action taken.

8.5 Monitoring:

- 8.5.1 It is important to monitor the media for items (reports, articles, and letters) about the Parish Council in order to know:
 - a) Whether press releases and statements issued by the Parish Council are picked up and used effectively.
 - b) What members of the community are saying about the Parish Council.
- 8.5.2 Members and employees are encouraged to look out for items referring to EPPC in the media – original press cuttings should be sent to the Press Office. It is not permissible to send photocopies.
- 8.5.3 Anyone taking part in a radio or television broadcast should try to arrange for it to be recorded and a copy sent to the Press Office. In the absence of a recording, a note of the broadcast's contents should be sent.

9. **Training:** The Parish Clerk and Parish Councillors are eligible to attend training on topics relevant to their work for EPPC. Attendance at such courses is vital in order to keep up to date with new legislation and other developments affecting the work and duties of EPPC. In-house training will be offered for participation by all Councillors.

10. **Localism:** The Localism Bill represents the most radical shift in power since town and country planning was first born in the aftermath of World War Two. The Bill is long and complex but at its heart are three powers that will change the role of parish councils. In short, EPPC now has the opportunity to play a core role in the planning system; not just as a consultee but as a plan maker and decision taker on planning matters.

Power 1: Neighbourhood Plans: Parish councils have the right to produce Neighbourhood Plans which will shape development at the parish level. Current local plans will take on the strategic role, e.g. housing numbers, strategic infrastructure, etc., and the Neighbourhood Plan will have to broadly follow this. But the detail of what is planned for the future of a community will now be determined by the parish council through the Plan. This includes where housing should be located, what local infrastructure (play areas, doctor's surgeries, etc.) is needed and what development is generally not permissible. A Neighbourhood Plan will have to be independently examined and then pass a local referendum amongst the population of the community it serves. If the majority of those voting are in favour, then a local authority is duty bound to take the plan into account when considering planning applications. The cost of producing Neighbourhood Plans is to be covered through the proceeds of development permitted in the local area and from specific Government funding. ***Questions to consider include; What should a Neighbourhood Plan contain? How can we ensure that it reflects what local people really want?***

Power 2: Neighbourhood Development Orders: As part of the neighbourhood planning process, any parish council which produces a Neighbourhood Plan will be able to make a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO). An NDO automatically grants planning permission for specific development or classes of development. The classes of development which can be granted an NDO will be controlled and must be in accordance with the Local Plan. But they will be decided by the parish council and voted on in a referendum of the local community. If the majority of those voting are in favour, then the NDO will be passed. Where a scheme is brought forward by the parish council itself, it may seek an NDO giving it a 'community right-to-build'. This will help to deliver a community-led site-specific development which may be homes, businesses or facilities. ***Question to consider include; What types of development should we be seeking an NDO for?***

Power 3: Duty to consult local communities on major planning applications: The Localism Bill requires prospective developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments.