

DOWNTON
PARISH COUNCIL



**Protocol for the Formation and
Operation of Working Groups**

Adopted October 2020 Minute 168:20

1. The Parish Council and any of its standing Committees can set up working groups to carry out tasks as defined by the Council or the Committee. The opportunity for residents to join such groups will be made through the InDowntown Newsletter, social media or on the Council's noticeboard and website.
2. The purpose of Working Groups formed from both councillors and members of the public is to meet to discuss issues, explore options and develop plans and then report back to the Council or Committee with recommendations. Subsequently, Working Groups may be tasked to deliver their plans. They have no decision making powers but simply present the Council or Committee with their findings. However, their ability to give particular topics that much more time outside agenda-driven meetings has proved to be invaluable.
3. When setting up a Working Group, the Council or Committee must set clear terms of reference for it regarding objectives, scope and outcome(s). These will be approved by the Council before the Working Group is formed. Once their work has been completed, the Working Group will be disbanded.
4. The Terms of Reference will include this protocol, the name of the Committee to which the Working Group reports and all members of the Working Group will sign it to confirm acceptance.
5. The Terms of Reference and membership will be published on the Council's website.
6. The number of Councillors able to join a Working Group will be decided at the time of its formation but it must consist of no fewer than two councillors.
7. The Working Group will notify the Council or Committee of the name of the Chair once they are appointed after the first meeting.
8. A quorum for any meeting of a Working Group will be three members, at least one of whom must be a councillor.
9. The role of the Council or sponsoring Committee is to consider and question the recommendations put to it by the Working Group before a decision is taken and, in the case of a Committee, to be satisfied with them before making any recommendations to the full Council.
10. A Working Group will be accountable to its sponsoring Committee unless agreement is made, due to expediency and subject to agreement via email of a majority of members of that sponsoring Committee, for recommendations to be made directly to the Parish Council;
11. The Working Group must provide the Council or Committee with as much information as possible to ensure it can make an informed decision on its recommendation(s).

12. A Working Group will not have a budget. The budget will remain with the Council or sponsoring Committee.
13. Working Groups do not meet in public, therefore the Council's Standing Orders are not applicable. However, the Code of Conduct still applies and declarations of pecuniary and other interests will be required at each meeting.
14. All Working Groups will follow all relevant Council policies including but not limited to the:
 - Information and Data Protection Policy
 - Communications Policy & Procedure
 - Freedom of Information Act Procedure
 - Dignity at Work Policy
15. The Clerk will ensure that a shared email is set up for all Working Groups. The Chair of the Working Group will ensure that the importance of its use is communicated to all members. All documents and records produced and emails shared by working groups will be retained for 7 years in accordance with the Council's Freedom of Information Act Procedure.