



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

Re-Adopted 9th May 2022

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 working group may have different titles eg steering group, task force etc however they all fall within this policy. The opportunity for residents to be aware of and join such groups will be made through the InDownton 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. The lead councillor will ensure these are retained and held.
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, one of whom will be the lead councillor.
7. The Working Group will notify the Council or Committee, via the Clerk, 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 lead councillor shall provide regular updates to its sponsoring Committee on progress made against the items as detailed in its Terms of Reference. Before the Working Group is closed or disbanded the lead councillor shall provide a report to the Parish Council including key events, issues encountered, achievements and outcomes against the items as detailed in its Terms of Reference.
12. 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).
13. A Working Group will not have a budget. The budget will remain with the Council or sponsoring Committee.
14. 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.
15. 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
16. The Clerk will ensure that a shared email and Dropbox folder are set up for all Working Groups. The Chair of the Working Group will ensure that the importance of their use is communicated to all members. All emails are to be cc'ed or forwarded to working group email account, all documents are to be stored onto the Working Group's Dropbox folder and papers filed into the Working Group's lever arch file.
17. The lead councillor, being more familiar with the Parish Council's preferred IT systems, will be able to support the members of the Working Group.
18. 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.
19. As part of the closing down of a Working Group the lead Councillor will contact the members of the working group asking them to:
 - a. Ensure all emails they have received and/or sent related to the Working Group have been copied to the Working Group email. Once a working group member has confirmed they have copied all emails, then they must DELETE them from their personal email account.
 - b. Ensure all documents are copied into the named working group folder on Dropbox. Once a working group member has confirmed they have copied all documents, then they must DELETE them from their personal computer.

- c. Do not worry about storing duplicate copies – it is better to have multiple copies of some emails/files than no copies of other emails/files.
 - d. Provide paper copies of documents to the lead Councillor who will file them in the Working Group's file.
 - e. Once all members have copied over their emails, files and paper documents the lead councillor shall inform the Clerk. The lead councillor shall provide the document file to the Clerk.
20. An Officer shall remove access of working group members to the Dropbox folder and also change the password on the Working Group email account. The records are now archived.
21. If a similar working group is set up in the future, they will be provided with a new dedicated email/Dropbox folder and may be provided with READ-ONLY access to the email/document archive(s) of any previous Working Group. This is to ensure the integrity of the records of the previous Working Group.