**Full Council meeting 18th Sept 2017 – Appendix 3a**

**Lytchett Matravers Parish Council - Proposals for meetings structure, timings and venue**

**Background & reasoning:** I have been reflecting on the content of the paper about meetings structure prepared by Cllr Alf Bush. Re-organising the meetings structure into one Full Council meetitng per month plus one meeting of a “Finance & General Purposes Committee” has a number of advantages, and fits well with good practices I have noted from other councils during my CiLCA seminars this year. Many Councils have a F&GP committee, and the main advantages for LMPC is primarily because it reduces the time between each meeting of the E&A and F&P cttees thereby speeding up work in progress, reduces the time spent by members and Clerk at meetings and thus frees up more time to do things, and reduces venue hire cost by one meeting per month. The restructuring also eliminates potential complexity for members and the public in determining what each committee is responsible for.

Adding to a point in Alf’s paper, it is possible for the Full Council to resolve to give the F&GP cttee delegated power to make decisions without referral back to Full Council. Setting budgets and precept, appointing council members and officers, and authorising expenditure are reserved roles which legislation dictates must be carried out by Full Council; but almost anything else a Parish Council does can be delegated, if you formally resolve to give the committee that power.

In the light of the points in Alf’s paper, and the above points, I have been exploring related practical aspects in order to prepare a set of linked proposals.

**Meeting timings and venue** Prompted by parking issues, Wifi availablility, seating capacity & flexibility of configuration, location & ease of access for the public, etc, I looked at whether it might befeasible to return to the Village Hall. The VH has a number of advantages for public meetings which address all of the above concerns:

1. More central location
2. Plenty of adjacent parking in the High St Car Park
3. Within range of the Parish Office Wifi
4. Larger capacity and more flexible seating configuration for members and the public
5. Options to expend into the main hall for occasions where more seating is needed, and for more interactive meetings.

The disadvantage when previously meeting at the Village Hall was the problem of noise interference from other activity happening in the VH at the same time (Zumba and other Dance classes). However, I have established with the VH Bookings Secretary that there are no other bookings at all on Wednesday evenings. It is a quiet venue all evening and thus suitable for Parish Council meetings.

**Proposals**

1. Restructure the Council’s meetings into 1 full Council and 1 General Purposes Committee per month. The GPC to replace Finance & Policy and Environment & Amenities committees.
2. The above meetings to commence at 7:30pm
3. Retain a separate Planning Committee meeting at 7pm for 30 minutes before either (or both when required) the Full Council or GPC meetings.
4. GPC to meet on the first Wednesday of the month, Full Council to meet on the third Wednesday of the Month.
5. Subject to approval of proposal 4 above, all meetings to be relocated to the Village Hall as soon as is reasonable to do so.

 Tim Watton, Parish Clerk, 18th September 2017

**Full Council meeting 18th Sept 2017 – Appendix 3b**

Proposed Parish Council Meeting Structure

**Current Schedule**:

Full Council monthly

Planning monthly (or occasionally as required)

Environment & Amenities bi-monthly

Finance & Policy bi-monthly

**Issues:**

* The schedule of meetings and the way we operate generally has changed little since before the introduction of email and smart phones. With Tim able to benchmark us against others and test our proposed changes while he’s enmeshed in the CiLKA world it’s a good time to update our processes. Discussion and resolution in open meeting will remain the way we come to decisions.
* With the business of the Parish Council becoming more intensive we need to become a more effective decision making body. Just looking at the number of working groups we have indicates the increased level of activity and load on all our time (clerk and councillors). We need to be able to manage that without adding unduly to the burden.
* Concentration of decision making at Full Council, except for Planning. Full Council should be able to delegate downwards for specific issues. In contrast, given the impact of planning issues in general on the future of the village, those more major developments should be reviewed by all.
* With regard to issues assigned to either E&A and/or F&P, we have moved towards assigning them to the next available meeting in order not to wait for up to 6 weeks before they’re reviewed.

**Proposal:**

* Combine the 3 sub-committees into a monthly ‘General Purpose Sub Committee’, which will have the 3 sub-elements as part of its agenda:
* Review and approve all planning issues, subject to a maximum of 2 new developments (say). The idea being that any planning issue that is to build 3 new units will be reviewed at Full Council.
* Review and approve all F&P issues, subject to the annual budget and new policies (there may be more).
* Review and approve all E&A issues, subject to similar constraints (tbd).
* This GPSC will be given financial approval powers up to £x and will report to Full Council on all approvals.
* All councillors are part of the GPSC, which would meet on the first Monday. This would maximise everyone’s exposure to all PC issues.

**For Tim, this would reduce to 2 meetings per month.**

For councillors, most of us are already on 2 meetings per month, some 3. This would not be an overhead provided we organise accordingly. Tim is already implementing the use of pre-reading on issues through reports. This is the effective way to run meetings. Councillors to be pre-briefed on the issue and to then bring their questions, points, opinions, etc. to the meeting.

Note that all councillors are also part of one or more working group, so effective organisation is the mantra.

Alf Bush – Aug. 2, 2017