

The Role of the Parish Clerk

The Parish Clerk is employed by the Parish Council (under section 112 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972) to provide administrative support for the council's activities.

The Clerk to the Parish 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.

'Proper officer' is a title used in statute. It refers to the appropriate officer for the relevant function. In town, parish and community councils, the proper officer is normally the clerk. In financial matters, the proper officer is known as the Responsible Financial Officer.

The Parish Clerk's primary responsibility is to advise the parish council on whether its decisions are lawful and to recommend ways in which decisions can be implemented. To help with this, the Clerk may be asked to research topics of concern to the council and provide unbiased information to help the council to make appropriate choices.

The Clerk must recognise that the Parish Council is responsible for all decisions and that he / she takes instructions from the Parish Council as a body. The Clerk is not answerable to any individual councillor - not even the Chairman. The Council must be confident that the Clerk is, at all times, independent, objective and professional.

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 is accountable to the Council for the effective management of all its resources and will report to them as and when required.

The Clerk is 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, in consultation with appropriate members, agendas for meetings of the Council and Committees. To attend such meetings and prepare minutes for approval.
5. To attend all meetings of the Council and where specifically requested meetings of its committees and sub-committees.
6. To receive correspondence and documents on behalf of the Council and to deal with the correspondence or documents or bring such items to the attention of the Council. To issue correspondence as a result of instructions of, or the known policy of the Council.
7. To receive and report on invoices for goods and services to be paid for by the Council and to ensure such accounts are met. To issue invoices on behalf of the Council for goods and services and to ensure payment is received.
8. 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.
9. 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.

10. To monitor the implemented policies of the Council to ensure they are achieving the desired result and where appropriate suggest modifications.
11. To act as the representative of the Council as required.
12. To issue notices and prepare agendas and minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting. To give a financial report to the APM.
14. To prepare, in consultation with the Chairman, press releases about the activities of, or decisions of, the Council.
15. To attend training courses or seminars on the work and role of the Clerk as required by the Council.