

# BRERETON & RAVENHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Hall, Ravenhill Park, Main Road, Brereton, Rugeley, WS15 1DU

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# WORKING GROUPS POLICY

Review Month	Month Reviewed	Date Revised	Changes Made	Date Adopted
				JUNE 2024
APRIL 2025				

## 1. Purpose

1.1. Some of the Parish Council's business is discussed by Working Groups, to ensure the most effective management of Parish Council business. These Groups consider a wide range of issues and make recommendations to their parent committee, (if not the council itself) and if supported, are then reported to the Full Council. The Working Groups do not have any delegated powers of authority. They work together, sometimes with members of the community, to gather knowledge and information before reporting back firstly to the parent committee (if not the council) who make a judgement as to whether to place before the Full council for consideration.

## 2. Protocol for the Formation of Working Groups

2.1. 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 BRPC Facebook page or on the Council's noticeboard and website.

2.2. 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.

2.3. Subsequently, Working Groups may be tasked to deliver its findings and recommendations to either the Council or parent Committee for approval and action. 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 may well prove to be invaluable.

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

2.6. A Working Group will be accountable to its parent Committee unless agreement is made, due to expediency and subject to agreement via email of a majority of members of that parent Committee, for recommendations to be made directly to the Full Council;

2.7. 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).

2.8. Some working groups may 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.

2.9. All Working Groups will follow all relevant Council policies.

2.10. A substitute member maybe nominated and appointed to a working group or sub-working group if an ordinary member cannot attend and the meeting maybe inquorate without that substitute.

2.11. Councillor's / Members can be members of one or more working groups and the Council's Chair and Vice Chair are ex-offico members with voting rights.

### **3. Membership**

3.1. 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 agree to confirm acceptance which is minuted in their parent committee or council.

3.2. The Terms of Reference and membership will be published on the Council's website.

3.3. 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 three councillors.

3.4. After agreement the Working Group will notify the Council/Committee (including the Clerk/RFO) of the name of the 'Point of Contact' for each separate issue under consideration.

3.5. No non-council members may make up the entirety of the Working Party. Members may be drawn from volunteers or specialist areas i.e. HR specialist, technical specialist (for example to advise on IT upgrade).

3.6. A quorum for any meeting of a Working Group will be three members, at least two of whom must be a councillor.

#### **4. Expectation of Group Members**

4.1. It is expected that Parish Councillors will assist the Working Groups and make every effort to support their recommendations where possible.

4.2. Councillors are expected to take responsibility for their actions and act upon them in the agreed timescale.

4.3. Councillors attending the meetings are asked to respect confidentiality rules where these apply.

4.4. The group will operate in an environment where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

#### **5. Operation of Working Groups**

5.1. Every Working Group holds no power of authority and ALL decisions must be made by their parent committee /council.

5.2. Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council (BRPC) will review these Terms of Reference at its Annual Council meeting each year (in the month of May).

5.3. The working groups will operate within Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Local Government Law.

5.4. Meetings can be held in person or virtually.

5.5. Working groups will have an agreed rationale and focus for their work and should not move away from this focus without the agreement of the Full Council.

5.6. Working groups may be time limited, depending on the nature of the issues being addressed, or may be an ongoing group.

5.7. Working groups will operate with collective responsibility. Once a recommendation has been agreed for consideration by the Parish Council, individual members will not seek to reopen the discussion at a Full Council meeting. They can ask the 'Point of Contact' for each separate issue under consideration, to report that the recommendation was not supported by all members of the working group.

#### **6. Meetings**

6.1. All Councillors will be informed of any Working Group meeting held, with a minimum of three days' notice.

6.2. Meetings shall be held in any location deemed appropriate for the purpose of the Working Group.

6.3. Apologies and reasons should be sent to the 'Point of Contact' for each separate issue under consideration of the working group at least two days in advance of the meeting date.

#### **7. Conduct of Meetings**

7.1. Meetings will produce notes by a designated member of the working group. These will always be presented, in the form of a short written report/summary to their parent committee or council at the next meeting. (It would be helpful if this was emailed to the clerk) In doing so, these will be included in the minutes and made available to the public.

7.2. Any Parish Councillors are welcome to attend the Working Group meetings but only formal Parish Council members of each working group can vote in favour/objection to recommendations.

7.3. Co-option of members of the general public is welcomed, where individuals can add key skills or qualifications, relevant to the Working Group to which they wish to join. This will be by a written request to the Clerk who will then add it to the full council agenda for full council resolution.

7.4. The only exceptions to this are the Staffing and Policy, Practices & Procedures working groups who because of either confidentiality or their method of working within an online flexible working environment and flexible schedule, face-to-face public participation would not be possible.

7.5. The Council has established the following Working Groups for 2024-2025

- Drop-In Sessions
- Heritage
- Speed Calming
- Christmas Events
- Policy, Practices & Procedures
- Parish Hall Management
- Community Engagement
- Neighbourhood

7.6. As in all aspects of work undertaken as councillors, councillors who are members of working groups should adhere to the standards expected of all in public life as set out in the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders

7.7. The Working Group shall not issue instructions to any staff member if, in the opinion of the individual, it is likely to incur expenses or use excessive time without prior authority of the parent committee or council.

7.8. The 'Point of Contact' for each separate issue under consideration of the Working Group will ensure that the importance of its work 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.

## **8. Reports/Recommendations**

8.1. Notes will be very clear in what recommendations has been made by the working group and what decisions are required to be made at committee or Full Council meetings.

8.2. Reports from working groups will be a Standing Order on the agenda for each parent committee or Full Council meeting. The Lead of the working group or nominee is responsible for providing a verbal or written report (preferred).

8.3. Normally there will be no officer support for working groups but guidance on policies, procedures and other matters can be obtained from the Clerk.

8.4. Working groups will not have delegated powers to make major policy decisions unless exceptionally and explicitly granted by the full Parish Council. They will be able to make operational decisions to support their work.

8.5. Any updates which the working group wish to publish on the Parish Council's Facebook /website must be supported by the parent committee and approved by the Full Council.

## **9. Finance**

9.1. A Working Group will not have a budget. The budget will remain with the Council or parent Committee.

9.2. Working groups can decide to undertake a scoping exercise as part of their consideration of an issue prior to bringing a proposal to a full council meeting for a decision but any costs involved must be approved in advance by the Full Council.

With thanks to Holybrook, Downton, Alrewas and Huntington Parish Councils