

ABOUT THE TOWN COUNCIL

This document contains some general information about Paddock Wood Town Council. Further information about the town council can be found on its website

www.paddockwood-tc.gov.uk

1. Paddock Wood Town Council is divided into two wards. The East Ward has seven members and the West Ward has six members. Although elected to a specific ward, members can speak on any issue not just those related to their ward.
2. Full Council meets on the 3rd Monday of every month, at the Day Centre, Commercial Road. Meetings commence at 7.45, unless otherwise stated. When face-to-face meetings are not permitted, these meetings will be held on Zoom.
3. The Council has five full Committees: Planning and Environment, Estates, Finance, Policy & Procedures and Personnel. The P & E committee meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday of every month, except August. The Estates Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of every month, except January & August. The Finance Committee meets in June, November and January to review & set the budget for the following financial year, and the Personnel Committee meets as required. The Policy & Procedures Committee meets January, April, August & October. Other meetings are arranged as and when required.
4. The Council employs a full time Clerk, a part time Deputy Clerk and a part time administrative assistant. They are based at the Town Council offices in The Podmore Building, St Andrews Recreation Ground.
5. Also employed is a full time Estates Manager, and two full time ground staff who work 8 – 4 pm and are based at the Memorial Recreation Ground. New workshops were built in 2007.
6. Two casual members of staff are also employed, one to clean and look after the Day Centre and the other locks the gates at the Memorial Recreation Ground and Foal Hurst Wood each week day.
7. The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and the Responsible Financial Officer. The Deputy Clerk is the Cemetery Clerk and, also administers the Planning Committee. She will take over in the Clerk's absence.
8. The Council has set a precept of £460,593 for the year 2021/22.
9. The Town Council is responsible for the following areas in Paddock Wood:

Foal Hurst Wood

Allotments (Ringden Avenue, Kent Close, Badsell Road)

Cemetery and Closed Church Yard

Putlands Playing Fields

Memorial Recreation Ground & Tennis Courts including pavilion and play area

Elm Tree Playing Fields and pavilion

St Andrews Recreation Ground (Play area, Hall and Podmore Building)

Green Lane Recreation Ground and play area

Green Lane spinney

Clover Way Play Area

The Ridings Play area

Whites Corner

Land at the junction of Mount Pleasant and Maidstone Road

War Memorial

Town Centre Planters

Hanging Baskets

Christmas Lights
 Day Centre
 Open Space at Cobbs Close
 The Batters
 Open Space at Fuggles Close
 Various bins & benches around the town
 Defibrillators

10. The council is responsible for limited footway lighting in Paddock Wood, and is a statutory consultee for all planning applications. The Council can also lobby the Borough and County Council when necessary.
11. A new skateboard park was built in 2007 following a campaign by the Town's teenagers. The Athletics Club have built a training track at Putlands
 In recent years new children's play equipment has been installed in St Andrews Recreation Ground and Memorial Recreation Ground. Fundraising and management of these projects was carried out by Play Paddock Wood.
12. Work has started on the three new housing developments in Paddock Wood
13. The Town Council is also supporting the Neighbourhood Plan Group.
14. The Town Council is working on a new community centre project, at the Memorial Field. This will be partially funded by developer contributions.

Attached is a list of powers, which have been vested in Parish, Town and Community Councils. The Council can only act within these powers, you should be aware that these are powers and NOT duties.

The Role of the Chairman

The Town Council is not properly constituted until it has appointed a Chairman; therefore the appointment of the Chairman must be the first item on the Agenda of the Annual meeting of the Town Council in May. The Chairman is the proper person to represent the Town on ceremonial occasions elsewhere.

The Chairman must preside at council meetings, unless absent, and is responsible for seeing that meetings are conducted properly. When voting at a meeting is equal the Chairman has a second or casting vote.

The Role of A Councillor

In brief the role of a councillor is as follows:

Fixing a budget – there is a statutory duty to prepare an annual budget. The responsibility for preparing the budget lies primarily with the Financial Officer, but the Council must approve the final version.

Making Management policy decisions – some decision-making is delegated to the committees.

Issuing guidance to staff

Checking that decisions made by the Council and its committees are implemented. The responsibility for policy implementation rests with the Clerk: the Council makes the decisions and the Clerk carries them out.

To suggest new initiatives or developments of existing policies.

To ensure that the views of the community are put to the relevant persons or bodies and that the special interests of the community are protected or promoted. This will involve attending meetings of outside bodies from time to time. Members may also be asked to represent the Council at additional meetings arranged by KCC, TWBC or other groups as and when required.

Councillors must sign a declaration of acceptance of office before or at the next meeting after his/her election. This must be signed in the presence of the Proper Officer of the Council (Clerk). Members must also complete the Declarations of Pecuniary Interest Form and undertake to observe the Code of Conduct (Copy attached)

Attend training courses as appropriate.

The Role of the Clerk

The Clerk is the Chief Executive officer of the Council, and along with all other staff, is employed by the Council. All staff are employed under the terms of the employment contract negotiated between National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

The Clerk's overall position is to carry out policy decisions of the Council. The Clerk will also advise the Council on aspects of Law and Procedure. The Clerk is not however, expected to be an expert on all matters and may seek advice as required. Neither is the Clerk legally qualified. The Clerk is answerable to the council as a whole and not to individual councillors.

The Clerk is responsible for:

- Issuing agendas and taking the minutes at meetings
- Administering the council
- Supervision of Staff
- Management of property
- Health and Safety
- Risk assessments
- Ensuring the Council acts within its powers
- Ensuring that the Council complies with all current legislation

The Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) whose duty it is to determine the form and content of the accounts and supporting records subject to direction from the council and in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations. The RFO is also responsible for payroll, VAT and payments to the Inland Revenue.

Council Meetings

The Clerk will issue the agendas three working days before the meeting. The Council or Committee cannot make a decision unless the item is on the published agenda. However, an exchange of information may take place. Members are asked to notify the Clerk before the agenda is issued if there is an item requiring a decision they wish to have included. Members should also contact the Clerk prior to the meeting if they require any further information about an agenda item

Members must declare any interests they may have at the beginning of the meeting, and state whether it is personal or prejudicial. If they have a prejudicial interest they

must leave the room whilst the item is being discussed. If during the course of a meeting a member realises that they do have an interest they must declare it at that point. Anyone who is unsure as to whether or not they have an interest should, in the first instance, contact the Clerk. If necessary, advice from the Monitoring Officer at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should be sought. It is however, the member's responsibility to declare an interest. It is not the Clerk's role to remind members to do so. Failure to declare an interest could result in a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

"A prejudicial interest is one in which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest." Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councils. A copy of the code of conduct is in the members handbook.

Role of the Borough & County Councillors

Paddock Wood is represented by 4 borough councillors on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, 2 for each ward, and 1 county councillor. It should be remembered that all three tiers of government are independent of each other. The higher tiers do not have "authority" over the lower tiers.

In reality all three try to work together for the good of the local community. The borough and county councillors are invited to attend town council meetings and have a slot where they can brief the town council on relevant issues, and when the town councillors can ask questions.

County councils are responsible for services across the whole of a county, for example:

- education
- transport
- fire and public safety
- social care
- libraries
- waste management
- trading standards

The borough council is responsible for a more local area and for services such as:

- rubbish collection
- recycling
- Council Tax collections
- housing
- planning applications

The town council may seek the borough or county councillors help or support on issues which fall under that authorities remit.

Dual or Triple Hatted members

Some councillors serve on one or more authority. Currently, Cllrs Atkins, Hamilton & Thomas also serve on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Cllr Hamilton also serves as the local member for Kent County Council. It is important to ensure that these roles are clearly defined. The Town Council cannot instruct or expect Borough or County Councillors to vote in a particular manner. There may be times when a councillor may vote one way at a Town Council meeting, but when looking at the same issue in the wider context of the borough and county vote another way.

The above information is designed to give members of brief overview of the workings of the Council. It is by no means an exhaustive report and further details and information can be obtained from the Clerk.