

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL - TUESDAY 13th APRIL 2021

ITEM NO: 16 – Chairman’s and Councillors Reports

The report sets out the current agreed position on Section 3 Agenda Item: Chairman’s and Councillors Reports and Proposes a Small Extension to a Separate Agenda Item

Information

The Parish Council, at its 11th December 2018 meeting agreed a Protocol for Reports and Agenda items which included a policy relating to the use and presentation of the Councillors Reports agenda item. The protocol set out the use of Councillors Reports and identified the purpose to be for Councillors to report back on meetings they had attended on behalf of the Council and also any activities which they had participated in with ‘third party’ groups or organisations on behalf of or at the request of the Council.

The protocol identified that for all reports, including Councillors Reports, the only deviation from the agreed protocol for type and deadline for reports would be in the event that there was a need to do so:

a) where there is an urgent financial matter to address which if not addressed would cause an issue for the Parish Council;

b) where there is an urgent regulatory matter to address which if not addressed would cause an issue for the Parish Council, and

c) where not to address an item as a matter of urgency, could bring the Parish Council into disrepute.

A reminder regarding the protocol was planned as an agenda item for the 8th October 2019 meeting but was withdrawn and an emailed reminder sent on 14th October.

A further reminder regarding the protocol was sent on 5th October 2020.

Current Position

Over recent months and, to a certain extent, understandably due to our current restricted circumstances we have again collectively started to use the Councillors Reports agenda item as a broader ‘Any Other Business’ item. However, in line with best practice for meetings and all legal advice – especially for local government bodies - we do not have an ‘Any Other Business’ agenda heading. This is simply to avoid any items being raised which have not appeared on the agenda and for which members of the public may have had an interest were they to have been advised that such an item was being raised. This is fully in line with the Transparency Requirements and is the standard by which all Councils should operate – and the vast majority do.

There are already clearly established means for Councillors to raise issues regarding local matters such as the need for reports to Hampshire Highways for roadway problems or items requiring the attention of the County or District Councils. Councillors can contact the Clerk with the relevant information between meetings for him to investigate and / or advise appropriate action. The results are then, if relevant, summarised in the Clerks Report at the next meeting.

However, having said that, it is clear there are some instances where Councillors wish to record particular events or people with a successful story to tell and where the Parish Council may wish to record its thanks or appreciation of those people, but at the same time, it is not necessary to have a stand-alone report to do so.

Good examples would be the further advancing of a project milestone such as the benches or telephone box projects or the appreciation of the work of members of the local community undertaking an activity on behalf of the community, such as path clearing.

Proposal and Reaffirmation of Protocol

The current protocol secures the position for reports, including the nature of Councillors Reports and is centred in best practice.

Equally, we have very robust arrangements in place for dealing with ongoing matters identified by Councillors and others via the Clerk between meetings, enabling timely action.

Councillor Reports should continue to be used to report on external meetings attended by Parish Councillors at the request of the Parish Council or activities undertaken by Parish Councillors on behalf of the Parish Council. This will continue to establish that nothing is raised in this section which is not already notified on the published agenda. Items requiring 'attention' as indicated above should be notified to the Clerk as they arise between meetings for him to investigate and / or action.

However, it is proposed that we add to the list of items for potential inclusion in Councillors Reports the ability to report or feed-back on significant / major new events or people to celebrate, recording unique activities undertaken through voluntary efforts on behalf of the community for the Council to acknowledge, celebrate and record.

Therefore, the matters for inclusion in Councillors Reports would be:

- Reports on meetings attended at the request of the Parish Council
- Reports on activities undertaken with third party groups or organisations on behalf of the Parish Council, and
- Significant major new events or people to celebrate from voluntary efforts in the community.

If there is a really major event, which would warrant an exposition of the details of what has happened, then this might more appropriately be done via a full report with the relevant citation to the Parish Council in our 'section 2' agenda items and this would need to be planned into the agenda. The normal report preparation timings would apply to this report.

Recommendation

1. That Councillors note the continued use of the Reports Protocol notably in terms of Councillors Reports and the parameters within it.
2. That Councillors acknowledge the extension of the list of items for Councillors Reports to celebrate significant events and / or people in the Parish.

Cllr. Simon Lucas
March 2021