

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Governance

Author Clerk
Meeting date 13 November 2019

Review of policies and registers

1. Asset Register

The Parish Council's Asset Register, last reviewed in April 2019, is attached at Appendix 1. Revisions, shown by text scored through, and the addition of a 'removals' column, have been suggested in the light of external auditor's advice in relation to similar items in another parish council's asset register.

2. Complaints Policy and Procedures

The Parish Council's Complaints Policy and Procedures, as adopted in May 2018, is attached at Appendix 2. The Clerk suggests that no revisions are necessary to the policy.

3. Grant Awarding Policy and application form

The Parish Council's Grant Awarding Policy and application form, as adopted in September 2018, is attached at Appendix 3. Minor revisions are indicated at paragraph 29 and to the Clerk's email address.

Recommendation

To review and approve any necessary revisions to the Parish Council's Asset Register, its Complaints Policy and Procedures and its Grant Awarding Policy and application form.

Appendix 1: Asset Register

Ref	Asset category	Description	Location	Owner/ custodian	Acquisition Date	Disposal date	Useful life estimate	Acquisition Price / Proxy value	Removal	Present use	Image	Condition / Note	Recommendation November 2019	
1	Land	East Green (DU322215)	East Green, Cotherstone	Owner				£30,000.00		open space				
2	Land	West Green (DU322215)	West Green, Cotherstone	Owner						open space				
3	Cemetery	Cemetery, Cotherstone DU322215)	Cemetery, Cotherstone	Owner						Cemetery				
4	Land	The Hagg (DU322215)	The Hagg, Cotherstone	Owner						open space				
5	Building	Hearse House (used for storage)	Opposite Village Hall, Cotherstone	Owner						Storage (rented out)				
6	Administration	Laptop HP 14-bs058sa 14" laptop - smoke grey	Clerk, DL12 0RP	Owner	29/01/2018			£337.99		Administration		Excellent		
7	Administration	Printer - Canon PIXMA MG5750	Clerk, DL12 0RP	Owner	29/01/2018			£61.23		Administration		Excellent		
8	Property	Restored water hand pump	Village Green	Owner				£1.00		Ornamental		Restored in approx. 2015		
9	Land	Klondike allotments	Klondike	Owner				£1.00		Tenanted garden allotments				
10	Land	The Close allotments	The Close	Owner				£1.00		Tenanted garden allotments				
11	Administration	Acrylic poster holders	PC Noticeboard	Owner	13/09/2018		5 years	£38.58		Noticeboard		Good		
12	Administration	Good Councillor Guide books	With parish councillors	Owner	11/10/2018		2 years	£22.75	£22.75	Councillors		Good	Remove from asset register following Mazars's guidance that a book is not 'property, plant or equipment'	
13	Administration	Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration	Clerk, DL12 0RP	Joint owner (Middleton and Startforth)	12/10/2018		2 years	£36.26	£36.26			Good	Remove from asset register following Mazars's guidance that a book is not 'property, plant or equipment'	
14	Land	Parking sign	The Hagg, Cotherstone	Owner	22/02/2019		5 years	£54.30		Signage		Good		
15	Building	Bus shelter	East end of village, near The Close	Owner	unknown		20 years	£1.00		Bus shelter		Reasonable		
16	Noticeboard	Parish Council noticeboard	inside boundary of Methodist Chapel	Owner	unknown		10 years	£1.00		Noticeboard		Reasonable/poor		
17	Noticeboard	Parish Council noticeboard	Inside boundary of Cemetery	Owner	Unknown		10 years	£1.00		Noticeboard		Reasonable		
18	Sports equipment	Football posts	The Hagg, Cotherstone	Owner	Unknown		10 years	£1.00		Sports		Reasonable		
TOTAL								£30,558.11	£59.01					
TOTAL ASSET VALUE AT 13 NOVEMBER 2019								£30,499.10						

Appendix 2: Complaints Policy and Procedures

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Complaints Policy and Procedures

1. Introduction

Cotherstone Parish Council tries to get its service delivery right every time, but there are occasions when parishioners may be dissatisfied with our performance. This policy sets out how to raise a complaint with the Parish Council.

2. Complaints policy

- a) **Complaints about administration or procedures:** These will be dealt with using either the informal procedure or formal procedure detailed below.
- b) **Complaints about policy decisions:** These will be referred to full Council, or relevant Committee, as appropriate, for consideration.
- c) **Complaints against Councillors:** This policy does not cover Code of Conduct complaints against an individual Councillor. These have to be made directly to the Durham County Council Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer can only deal with Code of Conduct complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor and failure to follow the Code. He will not deal with complaints about matters that are not covered by the Councillors Code of Conduct. The complaint should be addressed to The Monitoring Officer, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham DH1 5UQ.
- d) **Freedom of Information Complaints:** A complaint that the Parish Council has not released information under the Freedom of Information Act, in the manner that a person requesting believes it should have done, can be referred to the Information Commissioner but should first be dealt with as a request for Internal Review in accordance with the agreed Internal Review Terms of Reference and Procedure.
- e) **Recording Complaints:** All complaints will be noted by the Cotherstone Parish Council Clerk in a complaints file. This will detail the complainant, date, nature and detail of the complaint, the route followed as well as the date and details of its resolution.
- f) **Anonymous Complaints:** The Parish Council will not acknowledge or consider, under any circumstances, informal or formal complaints that are submitted anonymously.

3. Making a complaint

- a) Complaints should be made by letter or email to the Parish Clerk and not through individual councillors. Individual councillors (including the Chairman) are not in a position to resolve complaints if they are in any way involved in the issue or issues raised by the complainant. The Clerk will acknowledge the complaint and inform the Chairman of the complaint (unless the Chair is involved, when the matter will be referred to the Vice-Chairman through the resolution process set out below).
- b) A formal complaint should be addressed to the Clerk, marked 'Confidential — formal complaint'. The complaint should cover as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant supporting documentation.
- c) It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through the informal route. However, where the complaint is deemed to be serious enough a formal approach will be initiated from the outset. The Chairman will determine whether the informal approach is appropriate or not.

- d) The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within three working days, together with a copy of this procedure, and inform the complainant as to whether the complaint will be handled through the informal or formal complaints procedure.

4. Information complaints procedures

The information complaints procedure will progress through the following stages with the Clerk kept informed of the handling of the complaint and its resolution throughout.

- a) Stage 1: The complaint will be handled by the most appropriate Council member, depending on the nature of the complaint. The Chairman will determine who this is and appoint that person to lead the process. Any person complained about will be notified of the complaint.
- b) Stage 2: The appointed councillor will contact the complainant within three days of being appointed, to inform them that they have been appointed to deal with the complaint and where appropriate seek clarification on the complaint.
- c) Stage 3: The appointed councillor will contact any person complained about and give them an opportunity to comment.
- d) Stage 4: The appointed councillor will try to reach an agreed resolution with the complainant.
- e) Stage 5: The appointed councillor will report back to the Chairman that he has either achieved an agreed resolution or cannot.
- f) Stage 6: Where it is not possible to achieve a satisfactory conclusion to the complaint the Chairman will initiate the formal procedure.

5. Formal complaints procedures

This stage will either be entered into due to the informal complaints procedure having failed to achieve a satisfactory conclusion, or due to the seriousness of the complaint requiring the matter to be determined following the formal complaints procedure (as determined in section 3c above).

- a) An internal review committee (IRC) is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. If a formal complaint is being raised against a member of the IRC, then the Chairman will appoint a substitute for that member.
- b) The Clerk (or the Chairman, or the Chairman of the Internal Review Committee if the Clerk or Council Chairman is implicated in the complaint) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days and inform the complainant of who will be leading the formal complaints procedure.
- c) The Council Chairman will pass all detail provided by the complainant to the lead member of the IRC and the IRC will initiate an investigation into the complaint.
- d) The IRC will keep the complainant updated on progress with an indication of when they will complete or a suggested resolution. The first update will be provided within ten working days of the matter being referred to the IRC and then every 5 days until the investigation is complete. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed and the IRC will provide a report to the full council at the next meeting. This report will provide summary details of the complaint and of its resolution. This summary report will not identify the complainant or other personal information.
- e) If the IRC is unable to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution then the matter will be referred to a full meeting of the Council. The Clerk or Chairman will report any complaint that has not been resolved to the next meeting of the Council.

6. Referral to full council

This stage will only be entered if the complaint has not been resolved through the formal complaints procedure

- a) As far as possible Cotherstone Parish Council carries out its business in public but matters that involve individual identified members may require the exclusion of the press and public. The IRC shall consider whether the circumstances of the full council meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. If the Clerk or any council members are implicated in the complaint, they shall be excluded.
- b) The Chairman shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure to be used in order to consider the complaint made.
 - i. The meeting shall be as informal and friendly as possible, without prejudicing the need to consider properly the matter under discussion.
 - ii. The complainant (or representative) shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and council members given the opportunity to ask any question of the complainant.
 - iii. The Chairman of the Internal Review Committee shall explain the Committee's position and council members shall ask any questions of him or her.
 - iv. The complainant is to be offered the opportunity of summing up their position.
 - v. The Chairman of the Internal Review Committee shall be offered the opportunity of summing up their position.
 - vi. The Internal Review Committee and complainant shall be asked to leave the room while the remaining council members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, the complainant and Chairman of the Internal Review Committee shall be invited back.
 - vii. Once a decision has been arrived at, all shall return to hear the decision.
 - viii. The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary.
 - ix. The advice will be considered, and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received in the same manner as outlined above.
 - x. As soon as possible after the decision has been made, and in any event not later than 10 days after the meeting, the complainant shall be notified in writing of the decision and any action to be taken. The announcement of any decision will be made in public, at the next council meeting
- c) The council will try to adhere to the timings outlined in this document, but in the case of a complex complaint, or the absence of a member who is involved in the complaint, or the Clerk, timings may have to vary. Should this occur then the complainant will be kept advised of the revised timescales.
- d) A formal complaint is a serious matter. The Council will not under any circumstances enter into any correspondence, or discussion, with any complainant about any action taken, formally or informally against an employee. This is expressly to protect the employment rights to which employees of the Parish Council are entitled.
- e) Matters relating to grievance or disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or are likely to take place, should be dealt with in accordance with the Parish Council's grievance and disciplinary procedures as set out in employee's contracts of employment.
- f) The council may consider in the circumstances of any particular complaint whether to make any without liability payment or provide other reasonable benefit to any person who has suffered loss as a result of the Parish Council's maladministration. Any payment may only be authorised by the Parish Council's auditor after their approval as to the propriety of such a payment.

Appendix 3: Grants Awarding Policy

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Grant Awarding Policy

Introduction

1. A grant is any payment by the Council to be used by an organisation for a specific purpose that will benefit the parish, or residents of the parish, and which is not directly controlled or administered by the Council.
2. The Council awards grants, at its discretion, to organisations which can demonstrate a clear need for financial support to benefit the parish by:
 - Providing a service
 - Enhancing the quality of life
 - Improving recreation and/or sports
 - Improving the environment or
 - Promoting the parish in a positive way.
3. Funds available are limited and guidance can be given to applicants as to how much money is likely to be available in a specific financial year.

Grant application process

4. Any applicant for a possible grant exceeding £100 must express their interest in writing to the Clerk of the Parish Council before 31 October of the financial year prior to the funds being required, in order that that Council budget provision can be considered.
5. Applicants are required to complete an application form, available from the Parish Council Clerk or from the website <http://cotherstoneparishcouncil.org.uk>
6. In addition to the application form, applicants are required to provide the following supporting information:
 - A copy of the organisation's written constitution or details of their aims and purpose
 - Full details of the project or activity
 - Demonstration that the grant will be of benefit to the local community within the parish
 - The proportion or number of beneficiaries living in the electoral area
 - Demonstration of a clear need for the funding
 - A copy of the previous year's accounts or, for new initiatives, a detailed budget and business plan
 - A copy of the organisation's latest bank statement
7. The Clerk to the Council will receive all applications in the first instance and will then collate all the necessary information for presentation and discussion at the appropriate Parish Council meeting.
8. If councillors require additional information before determining the application, they may ask the applicant to attend a meeting.
9. The full Council, normally at its meeting in March, will make the decision on which, if any, grants to award. All applicants will be contacted following the Council's decision.

Conditions of funding

10. The applicant organisation must be either non-profit or charitable. Applications will not be considered from private organisations operated as a business to make a profit or surplus.

11. Grants will not be made to organisations or projects that discriminate on any grounds.
12. Grants will not be made to individuals.
13. Grants will not be made retrospectively.
14. Grants will not be made to cover salary or route administration costs.
15. Grants will not be made for hospitality.
16. Grants will not be made to organisations with substantial unallocated reserves.
17. Applications will not normally be considered from national organisations or local groups with access to funds from national 'umbrella' or 'parent' organisations, unless funds are not available from their national bodies, or the funds available are inadequate for a specified project.
18. Organisations seeking a grant for buildings must demonstrate a reasonable security of tenure in the relevant property.
19. The applicant organisation will have a bank account in its own name with two authorised representatives required to sign each cheque.
20. The administration of, and accounting for, any grant shall be the responsibility of the recipient. All awards must be properly accounted for and evidence of expenditure should be supplied to the Council on request.
21. Ongoing commitments to award grants in future years will not be made; a fresh application will be required each year.
22. Each application will be assessed on its own merits and will be considered along with other applications submitted.
23. The Council may make the award of any grant subject to such additional conditions and requirements as it considers appropriate. The Council reserves the right to refuse any grant application which it considers to be inappropriate or against the objectives of the Council.
24. Any grant must be used only for the purpose for which it was awarded unless the written approval of the Council has been obtained for a change in use of the grant monies. The Parish Council reserves the right to reclaim the grant in the event of it not being used for the purpose specified on the application form.
25. Any unspent portion of the grant must be returned to the Council by the end of the financial year in which it was awarded.
26. The Council may make the award of any grant as it considers appropriate in the event of any unforeseen urgent need.
27. In the case of a Council grant forming part of 'match funding' where the organisation is seeking additional grant funding to enable the project to proceed, the funds approved will be available to the organisation only until the end of the financial year in which they were awarded, unless otherwise determined by the Council when approving the grant. Should the funds continue to be required for the project, a further Grant Renewal Application letter must be submitted, usually for consideration by the Council in March of the current financial year.
28. Nothing contained in this policy shall prevent the Council from exercising, at any time, its existing power in respect of providing financial assistance or grants to local or national organisations under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 137.

Policy review

29. This policy will be reviewed ~~at each annual meeting of~~ **bi-annually by** the Council.

COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Grant Application Form

Applicants are advised to read the Grant Awarding Policy of Cotherstone Parish Council which sets out the grant application process and conditions of funding.

Applications for grants exceeding £100 must be submitted to the Clerk of the Parish Council by 31 October in the year prior to the financial year in which funding is required.

1	Name of organisation	
2	Address of organisation	
3	Contact name, telephone number and email address	
4	Position in the organisation	
5	Is the organisation a registered charity? (If yes, please give the Charity Number)	
6	Please provide a brief summary of the project	
7	Please provide a brief statement on how the project will benefit the parish	
8	What is the total cost of the project?	
9	What is the amount of grant requested?	
10	Are you applying to other organisations for funding? (If so, please state which, and for how much)	

