

IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Submitted by Andrew Wilson

Firstly, I feel a bit presumptuous to be writing this at all, having only just come on to the Parish Council, but hopefully other members will forgive my apparent impertinence....

I think that the move towards subcommittees/steering groups (call them what you will) is a very good one. It will speed decision making up considerably if a considered and well-researched and evidenced report on a given topic (whether poo bins or otherwise...) can be circulated prior to a meeting, with recommendations from the group involved as to its conclusions and validity, so that it simply needs PC approval thereafter, rather than deferred decisions pending further discussion.

Secondly, and leading on from the previously made point, the existence of smaller, more manageable decision-recommending groups would give far more ability to access and harness public opinion. I have read through the draft Community Engagement policy document and it definitely points the way forward, and I hope that it is adopted in its entirety. However, if I might make a couple of very specific recommendations (perhaps to be added to the draft document):

- I think it might improve our efficiency were we to be confident that we were working in the interests of the community, which means getting more engaged **with** the community, and securing more engagement **from** the community. To this end, I would like to request that we investigate the possibility of running monthly 'surgeries' where members of our community can bring ideas, problems or inevitably complaints directly to our attention, These surgeries could be run for a couple of hours in the evening (perhaps to coincide with the opening of the Holy Rood Office which I understand is going to be open one evening a month...) or if that is deemed impractical or insufficient, then perhaps once a month on a Thursday morning before the main monthly PC meeting each month to coincide with the Farmers' Market.
- As an aid to making Parish Councillors more visible and approachable (thereby making the PC itself more 'visible') perhaps we could wear badges when around the village saying something like "I'm a Wool Parish Councillor... Talk to me". Cllr Anderson knows how to get badges printed at a very reasonable cost. I'm thinking that if we wore such badges when going to the Spar, or at occasions like the excellent Carol singing at the D'Urberville on Christmas Eve, it would make us far more approachable and identifiable, and with the community more engaged it would improve our own engagement.
- Sue Bartlett does a great job sending out a monthly 'What's on in Wool' – mainly by e-mail but also with a quantity of printed copies being distributed to places like the Spar and the Murco Garage. There is no reason why a monthly newsletter – a couple of A4 sides - could not be put out by the Parish Council by similar means. I know that there are GDPR issues, but if members of our community could be asked (via the Wool Community FB page, and also of course the PC web presence and even via Sue Bartlett's news-sheet of dates) if they wished to receive updates from the Parish Council via e-mail, by placing the onus on them to ask us, we would get round the GDPR problem. Having a monthly e-mailing would also be hugely cost-saving in terms of printing costs.

- Public Participation at the beginning of meetings is – as I understand it – a ‘constitutional’ or legal entitlement. I think that it could be improved if it could somehow (without taking up too much time) involve some kind of immediate response. As it is, it might often be the case that members of the public who raise issues might not be aware that the subject of their complaint/issue/suggestion is already being debated or discussed. In addition, and having frequently raised matters at Public Participation myself, it would be beneficial in terms of the public’s perception of what the PC does, if there could be some kind of immediate response.
- Lastly, I noted in the recent Swanage Advertiser that there was an advertisement from Swanage Town Council inviting members of the public to come and see what the Council did and talk to Councillors about their role in the community with the specific objective of raising awareness and engagement proper to the elections in a few months time, with members of the community being urged to consider what they might have to offer. Perhaps we should be doing the same....



Andrew Wilson
3rd January 2019

Rod Webb

to me

I suggest the following structure for meetings

Full council

Policy resources and finance committee 7 members
Planning and transport committee 9 members
Amenities and green space committee 7 members

Our population is very close to Wareham Town Council.

I suggest we need to look at our increasing council business with increasing population and increase our staff accordingly.

