



**To All Members of the Working Practices Committee,**

You are summoned to a meeting of the **Working Practices Committee** on **Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 7pm** at the Billingshurst Centre.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting and speak for a maximum of three minutes about an item on the agenda for this meeting during the Public Session at the discretion of the Chairman.

  
**G.C. Burt**  
**Clerk to the Council**

**11 April 2024**

## **A G E N D A**

1. Chairman's Announcements
2. Apologies for Absence.
3. Receive Declarations of Interest and Notification of Changes to Members' Interests.
4. Public Session.
5. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2023, previously sent.
6. Clerk's Report
7. To review wording of *public session item* on agendas - Appendix A.
8. To consider *Approved Reasons* in accepting apologies - Appendix B.
9. To consider how agendas/other paperwork is sent to Cllrs - Appendix C.
10. Exclusion of Press and Public
11. To consider various staffing matters – Appendix D.

Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 10 July 2024

**Members of the public should be aware that being present at a meeting of the Council or one of its Committees or Sub-Committees will be deemed as the person having given consent to being recorded (photograph, film or audio recording) at the meeting, by any person present.**

**MEMBERS: CG, DW, SW, ST, KP**

APPENDIX A

BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

WORKING PRACTICES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024

**WORDING OF PUBLIC SESSION ITEM ON AGENDAS**

**REPORT BY CLERK**

**FOR DECISION**

Whilst council meetings are not public meetings, they have to be open to the public (except for exempt items) and the council grants a discretionary period for the public to speak at all meetings.

This is currently worded as follows on agendas:

*Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting and speak for a maximum of three minutes about an item on the agenda for this meeting during the Public Session at the discretion of the Chairman.*

A recent incident when a member of the public disrupted a meeting, prompted some Members to ask that this wording be reviewed.

Cllr P Berry has noted the following on other councils' agendas:

Pulborough

*Adjournment for public speaking: -*

*The Chairman will invite those residents who have given formal notice to speak once only in respect of:*

*a) business itemised on the agenda and residents shall not speak for more than 5 minutes or 10 minutes if he/she is speaking on behalf of others such as a residents' group.*

*b) if time permits, any other business not itemised on the agenda for which no discussion/decision is permitted, and residents shall not speak for more than 2 minutes.*

Southwater

*Public Forum – Maximum 3 minutes per person with an overall limit of 15 minutes combined. All persons wishing to speak must make their name known to the Executive Officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting start time. Those wishing to speak will be given priority in terms of total number of members of public in attendance.*

Steyning

*QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR – {Up to 15 minutes} (2 minutes per person) will be available for the public to make representations or ask questions. Please note that under*

*Data Protection regulations we ask members of the public to only state their name if they agree to their name being recorded in the minutes.*

I sought advice from WSALC and Andy Beams (who led Chairmanship Training here last Autumn) responded as follows:

*As you say, there are various iterations of this statement out there on agendas of different councils, and I'm not sure I've ever seen a definitive 'best' version.*

*The emphasis has to be on 'relevant to the agenda' and it's then really down to having a strong chair to make sure the time limits are kept to and that anything not relevant is quickly dismissed.*

Officers concur that with the best wording in the world, there is little substitute for strong chairing.

To this end I have identified some training videos on awkward meeting scenarios which I will share with Councillors.

In the meantime, the Committee is invited to consider if the wording of our public session item requires amending.

**APPENDIX B**

**BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL**

**WORKING PRACTICES COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024**

**APPROVED REASONS FOR ABSENCE FROM MEETINGS**

**REPORT BY CLERK**

**FOR DECISION**

Councillors must give reasons for their absence from meetings. The meeting then in accepting the apology, approves the reason. Traditionally these reasons are recorded as stated or generalised as *prior engagement*.

At the Chairmans' training held here last Autumn, the trainer suggested having an approved list of reasons set out by the Council so that the meeting clerk can just report to the meeting that the apology is for an approved reason.

This would enable personal reasons to not be placed in the public domain for potential personal safety reasons.

I have looked at what some other councils deem to be approved reasons and I append some below:

Holidays  
Convalescing  
Work commitments  
Official School Governor or Trustee business  
Official PC business  
Family commitments  
Unwell  
Training  
Hospitalised  
Jury Service

Such a policy would ensure a uniform approach across all meetings, and help protect Councillors' personal business being placed in the public domain. It would also help the council manage future incidents of members continued non-attendance.

The Committee is invited to support this new approach to receiving and approving reasons for absence.

APPENDIX C

BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

WORKING PRACTICES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024

**HOW AGENDAS/OTHER PAPERWORK IS SENT TO CLLRS**

**REPORT BY CLERK**

**FOR DECISION**

Councillors are currently sent all agendas, supporting paperwork plus resulting minutes in hard copy. Envelopes are sent approximately once per week and about half are hand delivered. I am advised by office colleagues that the amount sent to CLLrs in hard copy is significantly less than it had been in the past. Most correspondence with Councillors at other times is nearly all by e-mail.

Recently, a weighty specification for CCTV in the village was circulated as part of meeting papers, but a Councillor (who has since resigned) took issue and suggested that all such papers should instead be sent via e-mail or downloaded by Councillors, to save post and paper.

I am conscious that Councillors views vary on this but in an effort to see what all Councillors thought, I sent out a short questionnaire to members. The responses are set out below:

1. How would you prefer to receive your agendas? Please tick.

Paper	2
Electronically	9
  
2. Do you already have a tablet-type device that you could bring to meetings?

Yes	7
No	4
  
3. If you don't have tablet-type advice that you could bring to meetings, would you be willing to receive and use a Council-provided device?

Yes	4
No	1

Any other comments:

1. Save the trees!
2. I have a laptop.
3. Agendas, minutes etc would all be better to receive electronically. Long consultation documents and planning applications are easier to read on paper.
4. Another distraction during meetings.
5. I don't think the Council should be funding tablets for Councillors.

6. As an alternative I could bring my computer which has a larger screen.
7. Sadly, I fear that you will never find a solution which fits everyone and that it might be inevitable that you may have to go for two systems, one for Cllrs who want hard copies of agendas etc and one for those who want items electronically. My preferred course of action is to do nothing and carry on with how you currently do things!
8. Be interesting to know how much postage we could save. I do understand when you cure one problem, it may cause another – how many will say they haven't received e-mails? I am happy to go with the flow – not passionate one way or another. Whatever is easier to manage for you.

Our IT provider has quoted as per the attached for the provision of tablet-type devices and annual accompanying software/IT support.

I would make the following comments:

- a) We do think that that the current hard copy helps remind Councillors about a meeting, otherwise Cllrs will need to remember to sign in to check for a meeting!
- b) Given the increased IT support required to go all-electronic, hardware aside, we doubt there will be any financial savings to be made.
- c) We would have concern that Councillors may be distracted at meetings trying to navigate their tablets rather than listening to the debate.
- d) Whilst it would be easier if all Cllrs received their agendas in the same way, we recognise that this might not suit all so we would work to provide either paper or electronic as per individual Councillor's wishes.
- e) We will still be printing agendas for noticeboards and the public who attend meetings.
- f) If any Cllr opts to receive their papers electronically, we do hope that they won't subsequently be asking the office to print them off the agenda etc!

The Committee is invited to consider the following options:

- i. Make no changes.
- ii. Offer Cllrs the option to go electronically and seek budgetary provision for the year 2025-26 accordingly, for tablet devices for those that require them, and ongoing software / IT support for all those using tablets for council business.

## Netcom IT Solutions

Netcom IT Solutions, Premier House  
 ro7 St Leonards Road  
 Horsham United Kingdom RH13 6EH  
 Phone:01403 252995  
 Website:<http://www.netcomit.co.uk>  
 VAT Number :920026278

Date	Expiry Date	Quotation #
05/02/2024	05/05/2024	Quot_3809

Quotation To:
Billingshurst Parish Council Billingshurst Centre Roman Way Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9QW UNITED KINGDOM

Attention:

Name	Item Type	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Total
Galaxy Tab A9 Tablet, Android, 4GB RAM, 64GB, Wi-Fi, 8.7", Graphite	Item		15.00	£207.90	£3,118.50
O365 Microsoft Intune NCE	Service Item	O365 Microsoft Intune device management NCE PER YEAR	15.00	£79.20	£1,188.00
Labour	Item	Setup Intune Policy's to block non approved apps use, Set devices up to use SharePoint and Email access as required	1.00	£1,600.00	£1,600.00

Total:	£5,906.50
Tax Value:	£1,181.30
Grand Total :	£7,087.80