

PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL - WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Parish website: www.puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk

Clerk: clerk@puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk

This Parish is within the Congresbury & Puxton ward of North Somerset Council (a Unitary Authority).

The Council has up to seven members; it has no office but uses the Clerk's home address for postal purposes and files. The Council does not operate a committee system but meets in the Village Hall at 7.00 pm as a full Council on the first Thursday of every month but August. The May meeting will include the Council's Annual Meeting and will start at 7pm: the Annual Parish Meeting will follow it at 8 pm. The Clerk is an employee of the Council and is paid monthly.

The Council has no bye laws, and no property holdings or property care responsibilities beyond what is indicated in its **Asset Register**. The Village Hall is run by a charitable trust and the burial grounds by St Andrew's Parish Church, Congresbury and North Somerset Council.

Regular meeting **Agenda** items cover Crime and Traffic, Planning, Streets and Open Spaces and Finance with resultant discussion being recorded in minutes which are approved by the next meeting and entered into the **Minute Book**. Unresolved issues roll on from one meeting to the next. New issues are introduced by the Clerk, by **Individual Councillors** based on their own concerns or observations, or those that have been put to them by **Residents**, or via information from **North Somerset Council**, the **North Somerset Ward Councillor**, the **Emergency Services**, **Central Government**, or some other **Relevant Agency**.

Each May the Parish Council holds its **Annual Meeting** at 7.00 pm at which a Chair and Vice Chair and Representatives to Outside Bodies (e.g. The Village Hall) are elected. After this meeting - at 8.00 pm - the **Annual Parish Meeting** is held at which the Chair of the Parish Council presents an **Annual Chairman's Report**. Reports are also presented by other key local groups, or persons involved in a matter of significant local concern, before the meeting is opened to general discussion. The Parish does not have a **Parish Plan**, **Quality Status**, or **Local Charters**.

Contact details for Council members, the Parish Clerk and the Ward Councillor

Visit the Parish website (see above) to see who is looking after our community interests today.

Governance

The Parish Council can have up to seven Councillors; these are ideally elected every four years. If, at election time, no more than seven people are nominated for election, the nominees are deemed elected without an election actually taking place. If there are fewer than seven Councillors the Council will advertise vacancies on noticeboards and elsewhere via a North Somerset Council "Notice of Vacancy". If the advertisement does not elicit a response to North Somerset Council, the Parish Council is free to seek persons to act as additional Council Members: these persons are "co-opted" by submitting an application for consideration by the Council at one of its meetings. Co-opted members have the same rights privileges and responsibilities as elected members, serve until the next election falls due, and are then entitled to put themselves forward for election.

The Council operates under six pieces of Governance paperwork that each new member must comply with. Upon election/co-option they must sign a **Declaration of Acceptance of Office**, undertaking to conform to the demands and aspirations expected of a Councillor; they must also complete a **Declaration of Member's Interests** form which is designed to highlight any area where the interests of the Member may come into conflict with the activities and decision processes of the Council (if this happens, the Member must "declare an interest" in relation to such activity or decision process if such come before the Council). The responsibilities of the Council, that each member signs up to, are framed in **The Code of Conduct** - a detailed expectation of how Members will behave towards each other, to the Clerk, to other staff, if the Council has any, and in the conduct of Council affairs, **The Standing Orders** - stating how meetings will be conducted and **The Financial Regulations** - indicating how the accounting and financial responsibilities of the Council will be managed. The sixth item is the **Security Compliance Checklist**, which each Member must sign to confirm that their computer, or other information storage device that holds Council data, is securely protected: this is a requirement under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

What we spend and how we spend it

The Council does not borrow. Any grants it gives are as detailed in the budget as set in January. It does not issue contracts, but seeks quotations for such occasional work as erecting a notice board. There may be a small contingency in the budget for Councillors expenses - attendance at a course or other relevant event - but Member's do not receive allowances or expenses beyond this.

The Council operates within a framework of published "**Financial Regulations**".

Each January meeting of the Council sees a discussion of the current expenditure to date, the **Budget** for the forthcoming financial year April-March, the anticipated bank balance to be carried forward and the **Precept** to be formally sought from North Somerset Council to provide Parish Council funding. This discussion is minuted at each January meeting of the Council, with the **Minutes** being approved at the February meeting and subsequently posted to the notice boards and to the Council's website.

An **Accounting Spreadsheet**, containing budget, Precept and Actual Expenditure to date during the financial year is circulated to every Councillor prior to each meeting. The precept is received from North Somerset Council via BACS 50% in April and 50% in September. All expenditure is via cheque, BACS, direct debit or standing order - there is no petty cash. All payments are approved by all Councillors and minuted at the meeting prior to the relevant payment falling due. The Financial Regulations also make provision for Online Banking, which the Council uses.

After the end of each financial year all accounting paperwork is sent to to an **Internal Auditor** approved by the Council for scrutiny of data accuracy and the adoption of best-practice in management and presentation. The Clerk has then had, historically, to submit accounts details to a government appointed **External Auditor** in a prescribed format. Now, so long as the council's income and/or expenditure remain below £25,000 per financial year, there is no standard requirement for an external audit. Publicity has, by law, to appear via the Council's website; it is also posted to notice boards as appropriate.