

A Guide To Turvey Parish Council

General

All Parish Councils are constituted in the same way; councillors are elected by the parish electorate every four years and each council has a Chair, who must be one of the elected councillors.

A parish council is a corporate body with perpetual succession and a name. The number of councillors is fixed by the unitary council (i.e., Bedford Borough Council).

As the lowest tier of democratically elected representatives in the country, parish councils have the mandate to speak on behalf of the people they represent.

Legal Obligations

There are certain obligations which by law a parish council must fulfil. For example:

- It must hold an annual meeting;
- It must hold at least three other meetings a year – Turvey (“the PC”) holds meetings every two months;
- It must appoint such officers as it believes necessary for the proper discharge of its functions. This must include an officer responsible for the proper administration of financial affairs.

A parish council must act within the law. It can only spend, raise or use money if it has a statutory power to do so, otherwise it acts ultra vires (i.e., beyond its powers).

Land Ownership

The PC owns the following:-

- Turvey Cemetery, Carlton Road
- The Play Area, Priory Close
- Open land next to Ye Three Fyshes public house

In addition, the Recreation Ground and Lancelot’s Piece are rented on a long term basis.

Finance

As with all parish councils, Turvey has the right to raise money by precept (a mandatory demand) on Bedford Borough Council. The precept is collected by the Borough as part of the council tax levied on tax payers in the parish. The PC’s only other income is fees for interment in the cemetery. The PC actively seeks grant funding for specific projects from a number of organisations including the Borough.

The main areas of expenditure are:-

- grass cutting
- maintenance to the Recreation Ground, cemetery, Lancelot’s Piece and the Priory Close play area
- litter picking,

- projects such as developing the Recreation Ground
- donations e.g., to the Royal British Legion

Role in the community

The PC does not operate in isolation. It acts as a sounding board for local opinion. Parishioners and other members of the public are free to ask questions at PC meetings. Outside of these meetings, Parish Councillors respond to issues raised by parishioners either in person or by referral to the most appropriate organisation. Further, the PC is committed to work constructively with other bodies within the village. These include the Village Hall Committee which is a separately constituted registered charity.

Structure

Parish Councillors undertake activities via a number of sub-committees. Currently, these are:

- **Planning** – the PC is consulted on planning applications and looks to maintain and develop a close relationship and understanding with the Borough's planning office
- **Recreation Ground** – maintaining and developing the facility as well as organising fund raising events
- **Open Spaces** – including the cemetery and the Priory Close play area
- **Highways, Parking & Maintenance** – liaison with the Borough to ensure maintenance, repairs, etc., are carried out
- **Community Safety** –liaising with the police and neighbouring villages to discuss matters of concern
- **Finance** – ensuring that the PC's expenditure does not exceed the agreed budget
- **Village Hall** – liaison with the Village Hall Committee
- **Footpaths & Bridleways** – liaison with the Borough, reporting obstructions, broken/missing markers, etc.,