



Heslington Parish Council Induction Pack

1. Who is this pack for?

For newly elected or co-opted councillors or for people thinking of becoming a parish councillor

2. What is a Parish Council?

This is the most local tier of local government. It provides a link from individuals and groups in the community direct to City of York Council. It is the first point of contact for anyone concerned with a community issue.

3. What does a Parish Council do?

Parish and town councils' powers are generally equivalent to those of district councils. In practice, most lack the capacity to undertake the provision of public services, and concern themselves with local environmental, community and amenity issues.

The only power that is available only to parish councils, and not to other tiers of government, is the power to obtain and supply land for allotments if local demand cannot be met.

4. How are Parish Councils funded?

The funding for parish councils is allocated by the local council (CYC for Heslington) from the area's council tax; this is called an annual precept.

The income and expenditure for the next financial year are calculated in the form of estimates and this amount is added to the local council tax and then returned to the parishes in two yearly instalments.

They may raise money from other sources if they so wish. They may

- apply to the ward for funds for specific purposes
- accept gifts from parishioners
- raise money from grant-making bodies or Government initiatives.
- set up lotteries to raise funds locally, though they must hold a licence from the Gambling Commission under section 98 of the Gambling Act 2005.
- set up a public subscription for a specific purpose, to be subscribed to by electors in the parish.

5. Who are the Parish Council?

They are democratically elected but can be co-opted. Heslington Parish Council (HPC) has a quota of 9 councillors.

5.1 Criteria for being a Parish Councillor:

- A citizen of Britain, the Commonwealth or the European Union
- At least 18 on the day that he or she is nominated
- A registered to vote within the parish
- A resident in the parish, or within three miles of the parish, or working full time in the parish for at least 12 months prior to the nomination or election day

A person is disqualified from holding office as a parish councillor if:

- They hold a paid office, or other place of profit in the council
- They are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
- They have been convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to more than 3 months imprisonment within the last five years
- They incur illegal expenditure (when acting as a councillor) of over £2,000, or are found guilty of using corrupt or illegal practices

5.2 There is a professional clerk to the parish council who is accountable to the parish council via the chair. The Clerk to Heslington Parish Council holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification. This provides a broad knowledge of all the aspects of a clerk's work - roles and responsibilities, the law, procedures, finance planning and community involvement.

The Clerk to the Council will be the Proper Officer of the Council and as such is under a statutory duty to carry out all the functions, and in particular to serve or issue all the notifications required by law of a local authority's Proper Officer.

A job description will always list the duties in detail but here's a useful summary:

- ensures that the council conducts its business lawfully
- administers the council's paperwork/post meeting work
- ensures that meeting papers are properly prepared and the public is aware of meeting times
- implements the council's decision

- keeps property registers and other legal documents
- keeps up to date by training /qualification
- responsible Financial Officer responsible for all financial records of the Council and the careful administration of its finances.

6. What comprises Heslington Parish?

Heslington Parish is partly in the Fulford and Heslington Ward and partly in the Hull Road Ward of City of York Council. The map below shows the parish boundaries. It comprises the church of St Paul's , the village of Heslington and surrounding farmland interspersed with a number of farmsteads and individual houses and also includes most of the University of York (East and West campuses), and the Science Park.

Heslington parish has a population of 4792 (2011 census). As well as individual dwellings there are houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), student halls of residence, residential care facilities and alms houses within the parish. There are also amenities including shops, a post office, 2 public houses, a bank, a village meeting room, a scout hut, a sports field and a children's playground.

Within the parish, there are a number of designated Green Spaces, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Heslington Tilmire a site of importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) on Elvington airfield and an allotment site.

7. What does the HPC enact, influence or comment on?

HPC works alongside City of York Council on many matters including

- road and footpath maintenance
- street furniture e.g. lighting
- Planning applications as a statutory consultee
- the Neighbourhood Plan (NP).
- Promoting the Village Design Statement (VDS) and the Conservation area which covers a substantial part of the centre of the village
- The Village Meeting Room which is owned by HPC and managed via the Meeting Room Committee

The HPC is represented in local community committees for

- Yorkshire Local Councils Association
- Heslington East Community Forum
- Good Neighbourhood Forum
- Ouse and Derwent Drainage Board
- Heslington Sportsfield
- York Environment Forum
- Alms House

It works closely with the local police team on law enforcement.
It gives support to numerous village groups and organisations

8. What happens at HPC meetings?

It meets monthly on the third Tuesday of the month in The Village Meeting Room.

8.1 Before the meeting:

- the agenda is sent out to councillors a week or so beforehand by the Parish Clerk and posted on the village notice board by a councillor
- Minutes of the previous meeting are circulated and amendments requested
- there is dissemination of correspondence, planning applications within the parish and any other HPC related information sent out in between meetings. Some of these will be discussed at the following meeting.

8.2 At the meeting

- There is a public session followed by a public meeting and a closed session.
- At least 3 councillors are required to attend for the meeting to be quorate
- Minutes are taken by the Parish Clerk

9. HPC Agenda

The agenda is made up of a public session, a public meeting and a close session. Members of the public may attend and may raise concerns at the start of the meeting in the public session. They may then observe the public meeting. All but councillors are excluded from the closed session.

There are standing items on the agenda month by month.

Some may be obscure e.g.

2. Declarations of Interest

As part of joining the parish council you will be asked to sign a declaration of interest form.

The interests are of two types, personal or pecuniary.

Type A: Personal – A personal interest is when a topic under consideration - where a Councillor or a member of their family or close associate might benefit, to a greater extent than the majority of those in the Parish from a Council decision but does not affect the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.

Type B: Pecuniary – A pecuniary interest is when a topic under consideration - where a Councillor would gain financially from any decision made by the

Council; this could relate to goods or services which might be required by the Parish Council and includes Councillor's partners, spouses or relatives; such interests must be declared or it will be considered as breaking the law and could incur a fine of up to £5000 and disqualification as a Councillor for up to 5 years for failure to disclose.

In addition, items may come up on the agenda in which you have a specific interest which was not relevant at the time of your enrolment. At the meeting the councillor only has to declare that they have an interest, not what it is, and only if it is not already entered in the member's register of interests or if they have not notified the Monitoring Officer of it.

Type A Personal: where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix A the member shall not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter. The member must withdraw from the meeting room entirely.

Type B Pecuniary: the member shall not vote on the matter. They may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting i.e. they are speaking as a member of the public

6.3.2 Article 4 (2) Direction

An Article 4 ⁽¹⁾ direction is made by the local planning authority (CYC). It restricts the scope of permitted development rights in relation to a particular area or site.

Where an Article 4 direction is in effect, a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Article 4 directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area of acknowledged importance, such as a conservation area.

¹*Directions restricting permitted development is Article 4 of the GDPO. Para 2 refers. Hence Article 4 (2).*

6.3.2 CYC Community Governance Review

Ward boundaries are modified according to changing population to make each ward roughly equal. As part of this process, Heslington was recently divided between two wards - Hull Road and Fulford. This has required a different procedure for nominations and elections to council which needs to be rationalised through the CYC Community Governance review.

13.5.2 Lengthsman role

The lengthsman is a paid employee of the parish council. The lengthsman's role is to keep the village tidy and litter free, to inform the HPC of repair jobs that need doing or issues that the HPC might need to act on.

10. How does the HPC communicate with its electorate?

There is a Parish website <https://www.heslington.org.uk/>

A Newsletter is delivered to all households 3 times a year, and posted on the website.

The village notice board, on the gable end between Keepers Cottage and Home Farm on Main Street, displays Parish Council agendas, minutes, names of councillors and contact details for the parish clerk as well as any other parish notices.

The public can attend meetings. All meetings have an open section and the public are welcome to attend.

Contact details for the parish clerk are available in the newsletter, on the notice board, and on the website.

Public can raise issues by post/email/phone to parish councillors, ward councillors or the parish clerk.

11. What are the responsibilities of HPC members?

- Attend meetings as far as possible
- Undertake roles in working groups as required
- Follow up agreed actions from meetings or from correspondence between meetings
- Respond to correspondence between meetings, largely by email
- Maintain a respectful professional attitude and encourage full and open participation
- Maintain confidentiality as required

Some parish business correspondence requires a brief response between meetings. If there are larger projects, such as the York Local Plan, this may require actions and communications between meetings. Working groups vary in the range of activity required at different times. HPC representatives to our link organisations will attend their scheduled meetings or arrange a deputy via the chair when possible.

12. Maintaining clarity between roles

As a councillor you will demonstrate an open mind for any issues that are discussed. If you have a personal interest in an issue, or you have already communicated about an issue to the authorities as an individual, e.g. a planning application that affects you, this must be declared at the HPC meeting when the issue is tabled. Being a councillor does not prevent you responding to an issue as an individual, but this must be shared with the HPC before they respond as a representative group, or should be acted on by individuals

after the matter has been discussed in HPC. This complies with “**the seven principles of public life**” which are available from the Parish Clerk.

13. What training and support is available for new councillors?

This induction pack is intended for all new councillors as a brief guideline.

There are courses given by Yorkshire Local Councils Associations on a range of topics. This are for councillors at all levels including parish councillors.

14. Where can I find out more?

Heslington parish website www.heslington.org.uk for information about parish council business, policies and finances

National Association of Local Councils

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/1864-parliamentary-briefing-paper-2/file>

General information about parish councils

<https://www.localgov.co.uk/What-are-parish-councils/35176>

Yorkshire Local Councils Associations, York House, Outgang Lane, Osbaldwick, YORK, YO19 5UP. Tel: 01904 436622. E-mail: admin@yorkshirelca.gov.uk

Map of Heslington Parish Boundaries

