

Full Council Meeting – 26 July 2018

Agenda Item CC1891/18

What makes a “good Parish Councillor”?

Introduction

Under Agenda Item 1879/18 (Election Planning for 2019) a new working group has been set up led by Cllr Emily Benner. It occurred to Cllr Andrew Gallagher that the Council should consider what makes a “good parish councillor” as a basis for inviting people to put their names forward. He wrote to all councillors individually to invite their contributions and has summarised them below, with further details in an annex.

Discussion

It was clear from the replies that people were thinking about what makes a “good” (i.e. an effective) Parish Council as well as what characteristics individuals might bring to the Council.

In summary the aspects that would make a good Parish Council were that it should be:

- Representative (of the residents of Croxley Green)
- Diverse (including a range of points of view, ages, gender, and backgrounds)
- Working well together (constructive, harmonious, effective)

When thinking about the characteristics that would make a “good parish councillor” people raised a very wide range of attributes which can (broadly) be grouped under three main headings:

- Attitudes and behaviours
- Abilities and skills
- Knowledge and experience

The majority of the attributes mentioned were about attitudes and behaviours, rather than abilities, skills, knowledge or experience. It might be interesting to investigate further the make-up of the present council with a “skills and experience” matrix to identify our strengths and any particular gaps in what we currently offer.

Under attributes and behaviours the key features mentioned could be summarised as:

- Community minded
- Public spirited
- Participates & Contributes (collaborative, not disruptive)

Recommendation

- That the Council notes the views of Councillors and develops a skills and experience matrix of the current Parish Councillors and employees.

Cllrs Emily Benner and Andrew Gallagher
10 July 2018

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What makes a “good” Parish Councillor?

Annex (Analysis of responses)

Introduction

There are currently sixteen Councillors and four staff employees. Fourteen of the Councillors can be contacted by e-mail. They, and the office staff, were invited to contribute their personal thoughts and/or contributions on “what makes a good Parish Councillor” (to be reported anonymously). The office was asked to forward the invitation to the two councillors currently not receiving e-mails.

Only seven Councillors responded in detail within the time frame. The responses from Cllrs Nigel Cole, Dudley Edmunds, Andrew Gallagher, Jussie Kaur, David Montague, Mark Saxon and Derek Wallington are analysed below.

Summary

There was a good deal of overlap between the suggestions of different Councillors, as well as some interesting differences between the ideas presented. Many different headings could be used to sort the responses and there are obvious overlaps between the headings used below.

The main thrust of the responses to the question “what makes a good councillor”? was about working together, rather than individually, for the collective good of the wider community. There were relatively few comments about specific abilities and skills or about specific knowledge and experience.

COUNCIL

Representative

A resident of Croxley Green

Want to preserve and improve the way of life we have in Croxley Green

Diverse

An age range that would represent the whole of Croxley Green
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With many different views

Working Well Together

The PC is not a Think Tank but a vehicle to achieve (something CGPC appears to have overlooked)

The PC does not exist just to hold meetings and consultations

The PC is not an entry route to Party and national politics and should not be used as such
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The PC is not based on "Yes Minister" or the 'real' Civil Service.
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Has to actually achieve something in a manner that shows proper due diligence and progress through the most appropriate channel to achieve the desired end result

Councillors who can leave party politics outside the council chamber
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COUNCILLOR
Public Spirited

Ability and willingness to engage with residents
Can support items based on their own feelings of what would be best for the community
Altruistic
Believes in social justice/fairness
Lacking in any kind of prejudice

Community Minded

Passionate about the area they live in and want to make a difference
Want to preserve and improve the way of life we have in Croxley Green
A passion for ensuring the community we live in is managed with sensitivity
Involved in the community, give something back, and do something
Want to cherish the place you live and or work and want to make it an even better place for others to live, work or visit
Interested in your neighbours and community, not just yourself
With sensitivity to the values that make it a desirable place to live
With ideas on how our community can be improved for the benefit of all
Takes parish business seriously

Participates

Cllrs need to participate
They should become part of the parish team
Ability and willingness to engage with other Cllrs
Prepared to have a respectful argument
Takes other peoples' views on board and is a good listener
Prepared to stick their head above the parapet occasionally and have an opinion about things
Inquiring
Innovative
Challenging
Willing to get involved to see things through
Purposeful
Respectful of other peoples' time
Approachable
Don't take themselves too seriously

Contributes

Can provide a constructive and supportive approach to the business of the council
Willing to contribute actively to discussions and decision making
Able to listen to other opinions
Ability and willingness to listen
Collegiate and consensual

Constructive
Recognises that Cllrs are not there to only write 'papers' and the notes of the Consultations
Cllrs and the Council actually have/has to achieve something
Bring ideas of their own and of those in their Ward
Prepared to work on these ideas
Able to set personal opinion aside and to make decisions in the best interests of the parish
Positive
Proactive and dedicated
Collaborative
Supportive (mentioned twice)
Good sense of humour
Representative
Responsive
Thoughtful

Abilities & Skills

Uses email
Understands use of social media as well as its risks
Understands strategy
Able to make an eloquent case
Can think things through carefully
Has the internal drive to get things done

Knowledge & experience

Complies with Nolan principles
Offers views based on experience
Willing to talk to and get advice from fellow councillors