

OVER WALLOP PARISH COUNCIL **CONSTITUTION**

This Document

Parish Councils in England are statutory bodies and are not required by law to have a written constitution. Over Wallop Parish Council has nevertheless prepared and approved this document to provide parishioners and other members of the public with a description of the structure, aims, duties and working of the Parish Council.

Background

The rural parish of Over Wallop in the county of Hampshire has a population estimated at 2,226 in 2015 and contains the village of Over Wallop, the communities at Palestine, Kentsboro, Middle Wallop and the Army Aviation Centre Middle Wallop and also several outlying farms. A quarter of the parish area is unpopulated and lies within the range area of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Porton Down.

Local civil administration and services for the parish are provided by three statutory bodies each of which has its powers and duties set out by Parliament:

- First tier - Hampshire County Council.
- Second tier - Test Valley Borough Council.
- Third tier - Over Wallop Parish Council.

All three levels of administration have different duties and responsibilities but work together to provide the best services that they can for the community.

The Army Aviation Centre Middle Wallop is part of the Defence Estate and parishioners who live and work there also receive direction and some administrative and service support from the Ministry of Defence. The range area of Porton Down is also part of the Defence Estate and is wholly administered by the Ministry of Defence.

Over Wallop Parish Council

The council was formed in 1884 and consists of eight councillors who are elected by ballot every four years. One of the councillors represents the parishioners living in the Palestine area.

Test Valley Borough Council maintains the Register of Electors and the Register of Parish Councillors. Where insufficient councillors have been elected by ballot the Parish Council may nominate at its discretion individuals for co-option to the Council.

All councillors are volunteers and the posts are unpaid. When appointed, councillors agree to follow a Code of Conduct which is overseen by the Standards Board for England. A person ceases to be a member of the Council having notified the Chairman in writing of their wish to resign.

Vision, Aim and Purpose

The vision of the Parish Council is to promote and protect the interests of the parishioners of Over Wallop to ensure that the parish continues to be a vibrant rural community with a strong community spirit. The overall aim is for the Parish to be a prosperous, safe and attractive place in which to live and work for the present generation and for generations to come.

The purpose of the Council is to work within its statutory powers to maintain and enhance the village's public amenities and to help the parishioners improve their quality of life in accordance with the Council's vision whilst working in partnership with Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council.

Powers and Duties of the Parish Council

The Council exercises all its powers and duties in accordance with the law and this Constitution and will utilise its limited budget to achieve the greatest good for the community.

An outline list of the functions, powers and duties of the Parish Council is at the Annex to this document. The exact details of the powers and duties are set out in the individual Acts of Parliament.

Council Officers

At the Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council, usually held on the first Thursday in May each year, the Councillors elect from their number a Chairman and Vice Chairman to serve for the ensuing twelve months.

Parish Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

The Council's administrative affairs are dealt with by the Parish Clerk who is a part time employee of the Parish Council who normally fulfils the role of Responsible Financial Officer. The appointment of a suitably qualified person to this post is made by the Council as and when required on terms in line with best practice.

Council Meetings

The Council meets on the first Thursday of each month in the Wallops Parish Hall at 7.30 pm. The agenda and notice of meetings is given to Councillors three days before in writing or by email. The notices of meetings are displayed on the parish notice boards in public places.

Meetings are conducted in accordance with Council Standing Orders and are open to the public and the press. Parishioners who have specific items that they wish the Parish Council to consider are asked to give details of the matter in writing to the Parish Clerk or a Councillor at least a week before a council meeting. There are few occasions when members of the public and the press are excluded from public meetings. These may involve disciplinary and legal issues and the discussion of confidential tenders.

The Parish Clerk keeps a record of meetings and circulates minutes to members of the Council after each meeting.

Council Sub Committees

The Council sets up Sub Committees to deal with matters that require more extensive consideration and management. These consist of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council and at least two other nominated Councillors who may co-opt, where appropriate, other members including non-elected representatives. The members of each Sub Committee may be nominated at the Parish Council Annual General Meeting each year or as soon as practicable thereafter.

Finance

The Responsible Financial Officer keeps records of receipts and payments supported by the necessary vouchers together with the Council's bank accounts and presents details to each monthly Council meeting. Parish Council accounts are audited by the District Auditor in accordance with laid down rules.

In the spring of each year the Finance Sub Committee draws up an annual budget of the Council's planned income and expenditure for the following financial year. From this the total annual precept is set and voted on by the full Parish Council. The precept is then collected from households by Test Valley Borough Council as part of local Council Tax and is transferred to the Parish Council

every six months. In 2018/2019 the precept totalled £32,000 which represents an average annual bill of £42.44 for each of the 754 households in the parish that are subject to Council Tax.

Parish Council Property

The Parish Council owns and maintains some property for the benefit of the community. The major items are:

- The Wallops Parish Hall (owned jointly with Nether Wallop Parish Council).
- The Allan Evans Memorial ground.
- The Evans Close playground and surrounding play area.
- The Brownjohn Allotment Gardens.
- The War Memorial.

The Wallops Parish Hall is run by a management committee comprising councillors from both Over Wallop and Nether Wallop Parish Councils for the benefit of the members of both parishes. The arrangement is the subject of a formal licence agreement between the two parish councils and the committee.

Freedom of Information

The Council operates a freedom of information policy and publishes its agendas and minutes on the parish notice boards (the minutes are also available for viewing on the parish website).

Any member of the public can inspect Council papers having given the Parish Clerk reasonable notice and may attend Council or sub committee meetings. The public may also inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.

Relationship with Neighbouring Parish Councils

The Council liaises with Nether Wallop Parish Council over items of common concern that benefit or affect all those living in the Wallop valley. Apart from the management of the Wallops Parish Hall, these tend to be environmental and traffic issues. A parish council is not permitted to discuss planning issues in neighbouring parishes.

To a lesser extent the Council also liaises with Grateley Parish Council and with the two neighbouring Ministry of Defence establishments.

Public Information and Participation in Major Issues

The Council encourages public participation in major issues such as proposed large scale planning developments, traffic problems, affordable housing and youth activities. To gauge opinions the Council will, if appropriate, host informal public meetings or send Council members to attend local meetings and presentations. Councillors are not allowed to give policy opinions on behalf of the Council at these meetings.

This Constitution

This Constitution may be altered by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the Council present.

This Constitution was adopted by Over Wallop Parish Council at their meeting on 5th September 2019.

Annex

Outline Powers and Duties

Annex - Outline Powers and Duties from NALC website

Over Wallop Parish Council has an overall responsibility for the well-being of the local community. Its work falls into three main categories:

Delivery of services including:

- allotments
- leisure facilities
- bus shelters
- litter bins
- car parks
- local illuminations
- community centres
- parks and open spaces
- street lighting
- festivals and celebrations

Improving quality of life through:

- Local housing and infrastructure through neighbourhood plans
- Promoting dementia friendly communities
- Tackling loneliness
- Acting as community hubs
- Funding community projects and vital services that have been cut

Giving communities a voice through representing:

- To the local police and health services
- On planning matters with principal authorities and developers
- To parliamentarians and government

Note:

This is an outline list of the powers and duties of Over Wallop Parish Council updated June 2019. The exact details of the powers and duties are set out in the individual Acts of Parliament.

For further information on the powers and duties of parish councils in England and their associated Acts of Parliament visit the National Association of Local Councils <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/elections-2/2814-all-about-local-councils-2018/file>

Copies of Over Wallop Parish Council meeting minutes are available at <http://overwallopparishcouncil.org.uk/minutes.html>