

Stocksfield Parish Council

Advisory Groups Policy

1. Background

1.1 Parish Council Advisory Groups support the Parish Council by considering in detail a range of matters relating to their remit and making recommendations as to the course of action which the Parish Council should take. The Advisory Groups are as follows:

General Governance Advisory Group

Planning Advisory Group

Communications Advisory Group

Rights of Way and Environment Advisory Group

1.2 Membership of the General Governance, Planning and Communications Advisory Groups is entirely drawn from members of the Parish Council. Meetings of the Sports Facilities User Group also incorporate meetings of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) Committee, so membership is drawn from a wider field, but always includes three Parish Councillors. Membership of the Rights of Way and Environment Group is drawn from the local community and representatives of County-wide organisations, along with two Parish Councillors, one of whom acts as Chairman and Convenor of the Group. The Chairman is responsible for bringing relevant issues discussed by the Group to the attention of the Parish Council, including any recommendations for action by the Council.

1.3 The Convenor of each Advisory Group is responsible for producing a report of each meeting and presenting it to the Parish Council at the next available Parish Council meeting. In consultation with other Councillors, Convenors also prepare responses to consultations on matters covered by the Advisory Group's remit, and present them to the Parish Council for approval so that the Parish Council Clerk can submit them to the consulting body in time to meet the deadline. In addition, Convenors are responsible for reviewing the Parish Plan as it relates to the remit of the Advisory Group, reporting on progress, and making recommendations about future action.

1.4 Parish Council representatives on outside bodies are responsible for ensuring that the Parish Council is fully informed of relevant issues discussed at meetings of these bodies.

1.5 Written reports for inclusion in the agenda of a Parish Council meeting should reach the Clerk ten days prior to the monthly meeting in order to ensure that they can be circulated in advance with the papers for the meeting.

1.6 The Parish Council may be required to appoint a Staffing Committee or an Appeal Panel to undertake roles in connection with the Council's Disciplinary and/or Grievance Policies. Appointments to both are described in a separate policy document.

1.7 Where any councillor attends a meeting of any advisory group and the councillor is not appointed to that group by the Council, the councillor is able only to contribute to discussions and may have no other role in determining the group's recommendation to the Council.

2. Remit of the General Governance Advisory Group (GGAG)

2.1 Membership of the Group consists of:

The Chair of the Parish Council and no more than three other Parish Councillors.

All Parish Councillors are welcome to attend meetings of the GGAG.

2.2 The Group meets once a month, usually on the Monday two weeks after a Parish Council meeting.

2.3 The Group has overall responsibility for:

Finance, including:

- Monitoring of the Parish Council's financial affairs, insurance cover and annual audit procedures
- Considering criteria for granting funds to other organisations
- Considering budget and precept setting proposals at appropriate times, in conjunction with the Parish Clerk

Parish Council administration, including:

- Employment of the Parish Clerk
- Review of Standing Orders
- Review of Parish Council policies
- Drawing up new policies as appropriate
- Monitoring and review of Parish Plan

Sports and Play Facilities:

- Management of sports fields and play areas
- Receiving accounts from the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) Committee
- Liaising with sports field users through the Sports Fields Users Group

Transport & Highways matters

Working Groups in relation to:

- Responding to consultations – membership of these Groups will be restricted to Parish Councillors
- Considering and making recommendations on the development of specific projects
- Other issues as considered appropriate

The membership of Working Groups will always include Parish Councillors and the Groups will be led by a Parish Councillor. Membership of the Groups may also be drawn from interested residents. Working Groups will exist for short periods only and their remit will be strictly defined by the GGAG.

2.4 In the event that insufficient members of the GGAG are present at any meeting, the convenor of the Group may, given the nature of matters listed on the agenda, directly refer all matters so listed for consideration by the next full meeting of the Parish Council. In such circumstances, the convenor would cancel that meeting of the GGAG

3. Remit of the Planning Advisory Group (PAG)

3.1 Membership of the Group consists of not less than three and no more than four Parish Councillors.

3.2 The Group meets as necessary.

3.3 The Group has overall responsibility for:

Consultations and Policies on Planning Matters

The PAG will draw up responses to consultations and other policies relating to planning matters, for approval by the Parish Council.

4. Remit of the Communications Advisory Group (CAG)

4.1 Membership of the Group consists of the Parish Council Clerk and no more than four Parish Councillors.

4.2 The Group meets periodically, as required.

4.3 The Group has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring and reviewing as necessary all current methods of communication, both internal and external, and recommending, where appropriate, improvements to the content, structure and frequency of those communication methods
- Identifying new and/or alternative methods of communication and recommending how those methods can be used to improve all aspects of the Council's communications
- Considering and recommending new or revised policy and procedure where necessary in matters relating to the Council's communications.

5. Remit of the Rights of Way and Environment Advisory Group (RoWE)

5.1 General Remit

To promote and preserve the rights of way, footpaths and general environment within the Parish of Stocksfield.

5.2 Involvement with Stocksfield Parish Council

The Group is an Advisory Group to the Parish Council and governance is as follows:

The Chairman of the Group is always a member of the Parish Council. In addition to the Chairman at least one and no more than three other members of the Parish Council will be a member of the Group. The Group is therefore made up of two or more Parish Councillors, local volunteers and a number of officers from the County Council and other countywide organisations. The Group meets three or more times a year and its proceedings and recommendations are reported to the Parish Council. A meeting of the Group is classed as being a formal meeting of all members of the Group. The actions and decisions taken by Working Groups and individuals will be reported to the formal meetings of the Group, and, through the Chairman, to the Parish Council.

Projects requiring funding or other support from the Parish Council must be approved by the Parish Council prior to their commencement.

5.3 The Group will:

- monitor issues relating to the environment in general and raise matters of concern with the Parish Council
- in liaison with the County Countryside Officer, monitor the condition of the footpaths, bridleways and rights of way within the parish, and agree any action required for their maintenance with the Countryside Officer
- in liaison with the County Footpaths officer and Allendale Estates, monitor the condition of the footpaths, bridleways and rights of way within the Community Woodland, and agree any action required for their maintenance with the Countryside officer and Allendale Estates
- in liaison with the Tyne Rivers Trust, monitor the health of the Stocksfield burn, including electro-fishing
- in liaison with the Tyne Rivers Trust, monitor and attempt to eradicate Himalayan Balsam and other alien invasive plant species where they occur in the Parish
- develop and monitor the planting in the agreed areas around the station car park, but not including any areas near to the railway line

The Parish Council will be kept informed at all times as to proposals for action and progress on such action.

In the longer term the Group will consider the following:

1. revision of the Habitat Survey (originally undertaken in 2003), with particular reference to sites identified under the Northumberland County Council Local Development Strategy (2013+) and the 2013 Stocksfield Housing Needs Survey as being potentially suitable for housing development.
2. revision of the Species Survey (first undertaken in 2005)
3. in conjunction with the County Council, Prudhoe Pathforce and Allendale Estates, extend the footpath along the south bank of the river
4. the development of a nature reserve in the Merryshields ponds area
5. production from time to time of new or revised footpaths leaflets

The Group will advise the Parish Council every six months on the proposals for and progress of these latter projects.

<i>Adoption and Review History</i>	
Adopted at Parish Council Meeting on	6 January 2014
Reviewed and amended on	7 December 2015, 4 January 2016
Reviewed on	9 May 2016
Reviewed and amended on	5 September 2016
Reviewed on	15 May 2017
Reviewed and amended on	14 May 2018
Amended on	4 November 2019, 6 January 2020
Reviewed on	4 May 2021
Amended on	14 July 2021, 1 March 2022
Reviewed on	10 May 2022
Amended on	7 June 2022
Reviewed on	12 January 2026
Next Review Due	12 January 2027