

Brixton Parish Council

How Brixton Parish Council manages the performance of staff and the council as a corporate body to achieve its business plan

Introduction

The Council's role and performance is to ensure the overall responsibility for the wellbeing of the local community and covers:

- Representing and acting on behalf of the community taking into account diversity and different interests.
- Delivering services to meet local needs.

Council Performance

The aims of the Council are:

- To provide effective, efficient and accountable local government for Brixton parish, engaging and involving residents in the life of the community and its future.
- To be a voice for residents and local businesses
- To work towards improving the quality of life for parishioners
- To protect the history and heritage of the parish.

The Council reviews its performance in achieving its aims by:

- Reviewing and updating the Business Plan and Action Plan annually (January)
- Reviewing and updating the Business Continuity Plan and Scheme of Delegation
- Monitoring the Action Plan through the quarterly agenda (March, June & Sept)
- Monitoring the budget quarterly (March, June, Sept & December)
- Completing an Annual Performance Review (January)
- Responding to and adapting to the changing social and political environment

The Performance Review covers areas of:

- Strategy: the Council as a clear vision of purpose in managing its performance
- Engagement: how the Council properly engages with its community, wider community and other bodies
- Effectiveness: how effective the Council is in managing its performance
- Finances: how the Council manages and makes use of public funding
- Councillors and Staff: how Council make best use of its human resources
- Continuous Improvement: Actions and improvements resulting from formal monitoring and informal feedback are fed into the Action Plan annually

Councillors' performance

New councillors undertake an induction when joining the Council within a month. 'New Councillors' training, provided by DALC, is completed within 6 months of joining the parish council by all new councillors. The Chairman has undertaken training in chairing skills and understanding the role and function of the Chairman and the Parish Council. Additional bespoke training in 'managing planning applications', 'Code of Conduct', 'Civility & Respect', 'Being a Good Employer', 'Becoming a Dementia Friend' and 'Devon County Council Highways Safety Awareness' has also been provided. New learning is applied to the Council's governance through policy and procedural changes. Councillors training needs are identified and met to improve the performance of individual councillors and the Council as a corporate body. The cost of identified training is met through the annual budget setting. Regular skills audits are completed, and each councillor has a personal development plan.

Staff performance

The Council employs one member of staff as Clerk and RFO. The clerk is CilCA qualified and holds other relevant qualifications. An annual appraisal of the Clerk is carried out by the Chairman and Vice Chairman and in consultation with members of the Council. Performance, linked to the Council's Action Plan and the Job Description for the clerk, is reviewed and as part of the clerk's continuous professional development. New objectives are set and additional training identified where appropriate. A record of each annual appraisal is maintained.

To deliver against these responsibilities, the Council needs to be able to identify the critical issues, e.g. its purposes and plans, financial resilience and quality of governance, and review these at regular intervals.

The following questions should assist the Council in the review and decide what to focus on. It is based on the RAG (red, amber, green) matrix to identify areas that need improvement and record them in an easy format.

1. Strategy: Does the Council have a clear vision?

Has the Council developed long term aims with clear priorities in a plan which is regularly reviewed and monitored?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>3-year Business Plan</p> <p>Annual Action plan monitored and reviewed quarterly through the Parish Council agenda</p> <p>Agendas and Minutes of meetings</p> <p>Project Plans monitored and updated</p>	<p>Annual review and update of Business Plan</p> <p>Build on completed objectives Amend objectives to meet new information and include other changes based on experience</p> <p>The Council is able to adapt to issues as they arise i.e. COVID-19, holding council meeting in different parts of the parish to ensure the engagement of residents</p> <p>Continue to monitor all plans and amend when necessary</p>

Does the strategic planning cycle drive the Council's activities and agenda setting?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>Business Plan gives a 3-year vision for the Parish</p> <p>Annual Budget review</p> <p>Action Plan feeds into agenda and council activities</p> <p>Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2034</p> <p>Sport & Recreation Plan</p> <p>Business Contingency Plan & Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>Community Emergency Plan</p>	<p>Maintaining NALC Gold Award encourages strategic planning.</p> <p>The Council is able to adapt to issues as they arise i.e. COVID-19, Cost of Living Crisis</p>

2. Engagement: Is the Council properly engaged with its community, wider community and other bodies

How does the Council listen and understand its community?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>Monthly Council meetings include a Public Open Forum for public participation providing the opportunity for parishioners to raise any issues of public interest</p> <p>Separate public consultation meetings are held on key strategic issues i.e. purchase of land, traffic calming, parking on the Green</p> <p>Councillors hold specific roles and responsibilities on community groups</p> <p>Personal engagement</p> <p>Implementation of Neighbourhood Plan, Sport and Recreation Plan and review of Parish Plan 2012</p> <p>Use of social media</p> <p>Regular planned meetings with Devon County Council (DCC) Highways</p> <p>Personal Contact</p>	<p>Meeting location is now rotated between Brixton and Sherford and advertised prior to the meeting</p> <p>Agreed and publicised annually</p> <p>Continue to work closely and proactively with neighbouring parish councils and the public</p> <p>Continue to liaise with the public regarding plans</p> <p>Cllr responsible for monitoring and linking with social media and posting on behalf of parish council. Proactively responding to issues raised on Facebook</p> <p>Continue to meet virtually with DCC Highways Officer and parishioners to discuss traffic issues within the parish</p> <p>Continue to listen to parishioners concerns and signpost / act accordingly</p>

How does the Council report to its community?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>Regular quarterly and annual newsletters and Website</p> <p>Social media - use of 2 local Facebook pages</p> <p>Notice Boards across the parish</p> <p>Parish meetings</p> <p>Email</p> <p>Publication of minutes on website, village magazine and notice boards</p> <p>Parish Magazine</p> <p>Personal contact</p> <p>Attendance at Sherford surgery meetings</p>	<p>Remain vigilant to the importance of increased communication particularly during a crisis, e.g. Cost of Living Crisis</p> <p>Website continually updated and relevant information added</p> <p>Continue with the high level of communication to the community across the parish</p> <p>Continue to listen to parishioners concerns and signpost/act accordingly</p>

Does the Council work in partnership with other Councils and other bodies locally and nationally?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>Ivybridge and District Local Councils (IDALC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - councillor meetings - clerk meetings <p>The Yealm Climate Emergency & Environment Alliance</p> <p>River Yealm Water Quality Group</p> <p>South Hams Networking Climate & Biodiversity - Sustainable South Hams</p> <p>River Yealm Estuary to Moor (YEM) Wildlife Corridor</p> <p>Yealm Harbour Authority</p> <p>Yealmpton Parish Council for Silverbridge Way</p>	<p>Continuous development of working closely with neighbouring parishes and local and national organisations</p>

	<p>Dementia Friendly Parishes around the Yealm</p> <p>Four Rivers Dementia Alliance</p> <p>South Hams Dementia Forum</p> <p>DALC / NALC</p> <p>South Hams District Ward Councillors (2)</p> <p>Devon County Council (DCC) Ward Member</p> <p>Devon County Council (DCC) Highways</p> <p>Brixton Composters (Community Composting Scheme)</p> <p>Sherford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaison meetings - Residents Association - Sherford Community Land Trust <p>Devon & Cornwall Police</p>	<p>Contributed to national guidance produced by NALC – Dementia Friendly Communities Guide</p> <p>BPC has a nominated Director on Sherford Community Land Trust</p> <p>New liaison set up following the decision by D&C Police not to attend parish council monthly meetings (January 2020)</p>
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What benefits does the Council gain from working in partnership with other Councils and other bodies locally and nationally?

Judgement	Evidence to be added	Improvement plans
*Green	<p>Being part of a wider community group and initiative</p> <p>Influencing local and national policies</p> <p>Contributing to new services e.g. Silverbridge Way & Dementia Friendly Parishes around the Yealm</p> <p>Leading on national guidance e.g. Dementia Friendly Communities Guide in association with NALC.</p> <p>Make greater impact e.g. Yealm Climate Emergency & Environment Alliance Group and River Yealm Water Quality Group</p>	<p>Continue to work in partnership for the benefit of the community.</p>

3. Effectiveness: Is the Council as effective as it could be?

Does the Council and Councillors individually understand their roles and responsibilities?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>Roles & responsibilities discussed and agreed annually</p> <p>Held Local Council Award Scheme Quality since 2018</p> <p>Minutes evidence decisions and actions made within the Councils powers and duties</p> <p>Adoption of recommended Standing Orders and other policies and compliance with employment law.</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Councillors feedback from meetings attended in relation to their roles</p>	<p>Additional training when/where required</p> <p>Annual review and any changes in circumstances</p> <p>Training and personal development plans for individual councillors / clerk and the council as a whole</p>

Does the Council have a qualified clerk?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>CILCA Qualified Clerk</p> <p>Annual Performance Appraisal completed by Chairman and Vice Chairman with the clerk</p>	<p>Continuous personal development / training</p> <p>Networking with other clerks</p>

Are meetings run effectively?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	<p>Structured agenda with time limits for Public Open Forum and Council meeting</p> <p>Public Open Forum includes reports from County and District Councillors. Sherford Residents Association & Sherford Community Land Trust</p> <p>Minutes</p> <p>Preparation in advance by Chairman and clerk and councillors</p>	<p>Constantly review the effectiveness of the meeting including the agenda order and content and responding to feedback.</p>

Is the decision-making process and committee structure conducive to effective working?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	Minutes reflect effective working of the Council through regular update from working groups. Extraordinary meetings are held if required	Constantly reviewed and updated BPC are a 'family friendly' parish council and avoid holding monthly parish council meetings during school holiday.

How does the Council know about good practice across the country?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	Clerk's subscription of SLCC & monthly magazine Reports from Devon Association of Local Councils DALC NALC website and newsletters	Constantly reviewed All relevant information on the bulletins is highlighted for councillors and placed on the next council agenda i.e. updating of model policies, LGR updates and relevant training.

4. Finances: How does the Council manage and make use of public money?

Are the Councils financial management systems robust and does the Council ensure best value for money

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	Adoption of recommend Financial Regulations & Internal Controls Monthly Financial Statement and Bank reconciliation approved at monthly parish council meeting Quarterly reconciliation verified independently by Cllr Internal Auditor compliments the clerk & council on the accuracy of the accounts External Auditor have stated 'no matters have come to our attention'	Processes constantly reviewed and updated as required.

What is the Councils policy on reserves?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	Budget planning and quarterly monitoring reviewed annually Funds are allocated to specific projects which are reviewed monthly	

Does the Council review its contracts with others to deliver public services?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Green	Insurance contract reviewed annually Grass cutting contract put out to tender Maintenance contract for Silverbridge Way reviewed every two years with Yealmpton Parish Council Other work/contracts put out to tender in line with Financial Regulations No 'public services' currently delivered	Constantly reviewing all contracts

5. Councillors and Staff: Does the Council make best use of its human resources?

Has the Council completed a skills audit?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Amber	Skills audit completed for all Councillors and Clerk	Analyse Cllr and Clerk skills audit and identify training through a personal development plan for each councillor and clerk. Identify gaps in skills for future vacancies when they occur.

On co-option/ appointment of roles does the Council consider skills?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Amber	Questions about skills are central to the candidate interview process	Look towards the future of the parish council and identify skills required

Does the Council have a training budget and is it used?

Judgement	Evidence	Improvement plans
Amber	Training budget is reviewed annually	Linked to the skills audit above