

ECCLESHILL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Co-Option Interview

Minutes of the Co-Option Interview held on 21st August 2023

Welcome: Chair (Cllr HK) Welcomed all in attendance.

Present: Councillors H Kershaw (HK), & C Tyrie (CT), Cllr Wendy Dewhurst (WD) & L Taylor (LT) acting Clerk.

Officers:

Applicant: Mark Egan

Q1	Can you start by telling us what attracted you to the post?
A1	I had a chat with Carol Tyrie and she explained the type of work that you do for the local community and it sounded interesting. I would like to give back to the community as I have gained a lot from growing up around here and now I have more time on my hands, I thought it would be a good to contribute to the betterment of the Eccleshill.
Q2	What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of a Parish Councillor?
A2	<p>To represent the local parishioners and listen to their ideas, comments, suggestions and complaints and be a conduit for them to voice these to the local council.</p> <p>To try to make the area better, by arranging events, assisting in the upkeep or improvement of public areas such as parks and campaign for items such as play areas, traffic calming, defibrillators and the like which are deemed to improve things for the parishioners.</p> <p>Inform the parishioners of things which are occurring at a council level which they may otherwise be unaware of such as planning developments.</p> <p>Being a contact who local people can confide in anonymously if desired.</p> <p>To attend regular meetings to discuss the above matters and contribute to them constructively.</p>
Q3	What interpersonal skills do you possess that you feel you could bring to the team that would improve the running of the Parish Council?
A3	I am a good communicator and listener. I have had a varied employment background ranging from trainee Chemist, to Fire Officer to Business Owner, I currently work as a Commercial Director for the UK's leading Fire Safety consultancy. Over the years I have had to communicate with a wide range of people at all levels of society and from a range of backgrounds, daily I deal with contractual issues and disputes and am required to think on my feet to resolve commercial problems swiftly and efficiently. I would hope the skills I have developed would assist the Parish Council, particularly in discussions and negotiations with councillors and parishioners if required.
Q4	How would you handle conflict at meetings and when you are around the parish?
A4	I deal with conflict on a daily basis as part of my job in the world of construction. The key to resolving conflicts (in my opinion) is to firstly listen, reflect and then respond empathetically. I am seldom emotional in disputes and try to approach things from a rationale and logical angle and tend to offer a firm but fair approach. I don't mince my words and I am a straight talker, but I am tactful in the delivery, especially when I am not in agreement with the complainant, however, I will always endeavour to make them feel as though their point has been considered fully and that they

	have been treated reasonably in the circumstances. I try to approach disputes with an open mind and listen to all sides before forming an opinion.
Q5	Can you advise on any improvements / changes that could benefit the Parish Council for the future in terms of meetings / information/ communication?
A5	So far, I have only attended one meeting which and as such I do not have any immediate comments to make. I will however, raise any ideas I have once I have got a better understanding of how things work and what needs to be done.
Q6	What advice can you give on how to handle persistent resident abuse towards the Council and its employee?
A6	This is a very open question and the answer would depend on the circumstance upon which the resident is abusing the council or its employees. Usually, this type of behaviour would arise when a parishioner feels aggrieved and that they are not being listened to, this leads to pent up anger and frustration which is then directed at those in authority. My first step would be to actually listen to the person who is abusing the council and understand their reasons behind it. I would explain that their current method of addressing the problem is ineffective and is only serving to wind themselves up more and is causing distress to members of the council. I would advise them what I felt the correct channels would be to voice their concerns and also the correct medium and tone, I would offer to assist them to carry this out more effectively if I was able to. I would update them regularly on the progress of their complaint to ensure they felt it was being dealt with as I feel that good communication avoids many problems.
Q7	The Parish Council precept has fixed costs of approximately 82% which means that no major budget decisions on improvements can be made. What suggestions have you got to generate funds for the Council?
A7	<p>The obvious answer to this is to plan events for the community which make a profit and then direct these profits back into the business. I know this is already happening so this is not a unique answer but it is an effective medium to boost the coffers.</p> <p>One of the main areas I can see is pressing the council for a fairer distribution of the Section 106 money back to Eccleshill Parish. I know we have already started doing that and I would like to be involved in the discussions with the council in this regard as I think it is wrong that this money is taken out of the Parish leaving very little in the pot to carry out work that is needed. Depending on the councils repose it may be worth asking residents (via the parish council) to lobby the council for a fairer distribution of funds, perhaps with the backing of the local MP. Elections are coming and MP's will be keen to get behind public issues to raise their profile. So it may be an ideal time to address this.</p> <p>Finally, could we offer partnerships with local businesses who could sponsor or contribute to fund works that are needed? Again, businesses are often asked what community work they do in tenders and the like and many see giving back to the local community via the parish council to be a real benefit to their image. This is something which we could potentially explore further if it does not create any conflict of interest.</p>