

Street Lights

Some of the street lights are owned by the Parish Council with work on them being contracted out.

Bins

The Parish Council owns all the dog bins in the parish and contracts out the emptying of them.

Some litter bins are owned by the Parish Council and some by North Somerset Council, with the emptying of them being shared by the Village Orderly and outside contractors.

Other equipment and facilities

The Parish Council owns several notice boards, seats and bus shelters, together with the Glyn Duck Memorial Clock and the Millennium Sundial at Victoria Park. The Council is also responsible for maintaining the Village Spout below Baltic Place and the Mural on the wall behind.

Morgan's Charity

The Parish Council administers, through two locally appointed Trustees, this small, historically established Parish charity which annually distributes small sums of money to needy parishioners.

PARISH ARCHIVES

A large amount of archive material is available for public inspection and research. Some likely to be of immediate interest is maintained in the Parish Council office, including old maps and plans, documents, photographs, press cuttings. Other material has been transferred to the Bristol Record Office. Information about births, marriages and deaths relating back as far as the C16th is at the Somerset Record Office in Taunton. A detailed list of what is available and its location can be obtained from the Parish Council Office or from the website.

PILL & EASTON-IN-GORDANO PARISH COUNCIL

The work and activities of the Council and information available under Freedom of Information.

March 2010

INTRODUCTION

A Parish Council is the lowest tier of Local Government. Parish Councillors are elected every four years to serve their community.

Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council (to be renamed Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council from 2011) is committed to freedom of information, not only in fulfilling statutory requirements but also within the spirit of openness in its activities and in its relationship with members of the community and the community as a whole.

This commitment manifests itself in the following ways, all of which are referred to elsewhere in this document:-

- The public posting of agendas for meetings.
- The availability of minutes of meetings as soon as practical after they have taken place.
- The availability of all documents pertaining to the work of the Council.
- The availability of the Parish Clerk in the Parish Council office at publicly advertised times.
- Regular reporting on its activities in the Pill Paper (the community newsletter).
- An active website.
- A Public Participation session at the beginning of every meeting of the full Council, in addition to every meeting of the Council or one of its committees being open to the public.

Any request for appropriate and non-confidential information outside of the freely available material referred to in this document will be met within twenty days of the request being received.

This document sets out to provide an overview of the Council's role, responsibilities and the documents immediately available on request.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Council conforms to all national and local procedures relating to equality, diversity, health and safety, complaints, data protection and freedom of information.

The Council has its own standing orders, committee terms of reference and code of conduct. Copies of these can be viewed at the Parish Council office, or purchased at a small charge.

LISTS AND REGISTERS

The Parish Clerk holds copies of the electoral register, a register of the Council's assets and the register of members' interests. These are available to view at the Parish Council office.

THE SERVICES WE OFFER

The Parish Council owns the allotment field, although this is leased to, and managed by, the Allotments Association.

The Parish Burial Ground comes under the auspices of St. George's Church. The Parish Council makes an annual grant towards maintenance.

The Parish Council owns the Community Centre, although this is leased to the Community Centre Management Committee.

Playing Fields

Ham Green Playing Field and changing rooms are owned and managed by the Parish Council.

Hardwick Road Playing Field and Brookside Playing Field are leased from North Somerset Council and managed by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council continues to involve itself in much more than its statutory duties. It is committed to improving community life and facilities as far as financial constraints allow, and has given financial support to the Community Centre, the Resource Centre, the Youth Club and the Christmas Lights, as well as making small donations on request to other community organisations. Recently it has been instrumental in the provision of additional facilities for young people, and has future plans for similar improvements for other sections of the community e.g. improved play facilities for younger children.

Regular information concerning the work and activities of the Parish Council is published as “Parish Council News” in the Pill Paper and on the website. Each April the Annual Parish Meeting takes place when the Council reports on its activities for the past year, outlines some of its plans for the future and invites discussion and questions.

HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS AND THE ACCESS THE PUBLIC HAVE TO THEM

Decisions are made as a result of proposals made at the monthly Council meeting. However, committees have delegated responsibility to make decisions relating to their area and report them to the next Council meeting. This is particularly the case with responses to planning applications. More often, with other committees, recommendations are made for the full Council to ratify. The Clerk has delegated responsibility to make decisions relating to maintenance and repairs etc. within a designated budget.

The agendas for both full Council and Committee meetings are published on the Parish notice boards and the website a few days before the meetings. Full Council meetings begin with a Public Participation session when any parishioner can raise an issue with the Council.

Minutes of all meetings are published on the website, and are also available at the Parish Council office and the Library.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Parish is divided into two wards; Pill – represented by ten councillors, and St. George’s – represented by five councillors.

The Parish has two employees, the Parish Clerk and the Village Orderly.

The Parish Council office is situated in Pill Resource Centre at 4 Baltic Place, Pill BS20 0EJ.

Tel. no. 01275 374442. Email eigparish.council@btinternet.com

Website. www.easton-in-gordano.org.uk

The full Parish Council meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Community Centre, except where this clashes with a public holiday, in which case it meets on the second Monday combining with committee meetings (see below). Other arrangements are covered by the Council’s Standing Orders.

Councillors’ and employees names and contact details

The names and contact details of all councillors and employees are available on all Parish Council notice boards, on the website or from the Parish Council office.

Committees and committee membership

The Council has a committee structure. There are three standing committees – Playing Fields and Open Spaces (PF), Environment, Highways and Transport (EHT) and Planning (P). These meet bi-monthly on the second Monday (PF, EHT) or third Monday (P) at the Resource Centre, except where this clashes with a public holiday. There is one ad hoc committee, Finance, which meets as necessary (see below). There are also two sub-committees, Pill in Bloom and Footpaths and Rights of Way, which meet as necessary and have co-opted non-council members.

The details of committee membership are available from the Parish Council office and on the website.

Parish Council representation

The Council has formal representation on two community groups, Easton, Pill and Ham Green Community Forum, which was established to take forward the proposals and targets identified in the Parish Plan, and the Friends of Watchhouse Hill, which liaises with North Somerset Council in the management of that open space.

WHAT WE SPEND AND HOW WE SPEND IT

The Council has an established Financial Management Policy which is reviewed as appropriate. A copy of this can be obtained from the Parish Council office at a small charge. The Clerk is responsible for keeping all accounts, with the Finance Committee monitoring on a regular basis.

With one or two very small exceptions, the only funds the Council has at its disposal comes from the local authority precept. This is requested by the Parish Council in January of each year, based on its known finances and its proposed spending for the following financial year. The precept comes out of the total amount of Council Tax collected by North Somerset Council, with the effect on each householder's Council Tax depending on the band of their property. The Parish Council publishes the figure for each band in the March or April Pill Paper each year.

The income and expenditure for the previous financial year is reported on at the Annual Parish Meeting in April, together with the budget plans for the following year. This information for both the current and previous year is also available from the Council office and on the website.

The Council's accounts are audited annually, first by someone appointed under a local arrangement then by an External Auditor appointed on a national basis. The annual form provided by the Clerk for the External Auditor and also the Auditor's report are both available for inspection at the Council office.

The Council's budgeting process starts in November and proceeds as follows:-

- November. Council identifies areas for future development with implications for the following year's budget. Finance Committee has budget monitoring meeting.

- January. Finance Committee prepares draft budget in order to determine precept request.
- January. Full Council ratifies precept request which is then submitted to North Somerset.
- February. Full Council discusses draft budget and suggests possible amendments. If no amendments, draft budget set as final budget.
- March. If any amendments, Finance Committee meets to set final budget.
- May. Finance Committee has budget monitoring meeting.
- July/August. Finance Committee has budget monitoring meeting.

Councillors are entitled to claim expenses for travel outside the Parish on Council business and for appropriate expenditure e.g. stationery etc. The Chair is also entitled to a Chair's Allowance. In practice the expenditure on expenses and the Chair's Allowance rarely exceeds £300 in any one year.

WHAT OUR PRIORITIES ARE AND HOW WE REPORT ON OUR ACTIVITIES

The Council has produced a Parish Plan, following a lengthy consultation process involving the whole community. The Plan identified over forty targets for development, based on responses from the community. The Council then established the Easton-in-Gordano, Pill and Ham Green Community Forum, now an autonomous organisation consisting of a large number of community representatives, to follow up these targets and other related matters arising from them. The Parish Council makes an annual grant to the Forum, and receives regular reports on progress.

In addition to the targets identified in the Parish Plan, the Council has a limited number of statutory duties, mainly relating to street lighting. It also has a statutory right to be consulted on planning matters and applications. In addition it acts as a lobbying body in order to ensure the interests, safety and well-being of our community are served by North Somerset Council, particularly in terms of commitments being met over highways and maintenance issues.