

## Cover during the absence of the Clerk to Shipdham Parish Council

1. The current working arrangements for the Clerk at Shipdham Parish Council ("the Clerk") makes provision for holiday entitlement (and holiday pay) as stipulated in the Clerk's employment contract. On occasion this holiday may be at the same time as a Parish Council meeting. This may require the services of a Temporary Cover Clerk ("TCC") experienced in Council meetings, procedures, and etiquette, and skilled in the duties and responsibilities of a Clerk as a Responsible Official and Responsible Financial Officer. The purpose of this statement is to suggest a TCC policy that can be applied in such circumstances.
2. The principles of the TCC policy can also be applied should the Clerk be absent from a Parish meeting due to illness. In such unplanned circumstances, though, it may be more likely or appropriate to refer to 6a and 6b below.
3. It is anticipated that this policy should be as an exception to normal Parish operations and that it should only apply on the rare occasions when the Clerk's holiday absence and scheduled Council meetings conflict.
4. The intention of the policy is to create a reciprocal arrangement with the two nearby Parish Councils of Scarning and Cranworth. The Clerks of each of those Councils have been approached and are happy to take part in such a reciprocal arrangement.
5. It is envisaged that the reciprocal arrangement will work like this:
  - a. Should a planned holiday and Parish meeting conflict arise, the Clerk will liaise with the other two Clerks at Scarning and Cranworth to arrange appropriate cover as a TCC for the meeting(s) in question.
  - b. Payment for the TCC will be at time and a half for the respective Clerks' usual rate of pay plus travel expenses. Payment will take the form of an ex gratia contribution outside of the TCC's existing contract of employment, should one exist.
  - c. Typically, the hours worked would be restricted to physical attendance on the evening of the meeting(s) and the drafting of timely minutes shortly afterwards. This may be in the region of 4 – 6 hours, although the precise timings, duties and outputs can be determined by Shipdham Parish Council upon the guidance of the Clerk, perhaps with inputs from the Clerks at Scarning and Cranworth.
  - d. Agendas, pre-agenda documents, and other correspondence would ordinarily be sent to Councillors by the Clerk prior to their absence. Similarly, exceptional, one-off issues that may arise requiring the TCC to possibly do additional work would need to be agreed between the Clerk, the Chairman of Shipdham Parish Council and the TCC. It may be that such additional tasks would be deferred until the Clerk's return to duties after a holiday.
  - e. The above is not intended to be an exhaustive list of circumstances: essentially the reciprocal arrangement is meant to be an informal working arrangement that provides the required skills to manage parish meetings effectively.
  - f. Similar TCC arrangements are intended to be put into place at the Parish Councils for Scarning and Cranworth.
6. Although Shipdham, Scarning, and Cranworth have Parish Meetings on different dates each month, there may be rare occasions within this reciprocal arrangement where a TCC is not available. In these instances, the following is suggested:
  - a. An existing Councillor volunteers to cover the meeting in question, taking notes as a temporary Clerk. There should be no conflict of interest in such circumstances, and the Councillor will still be able to contribute on agenda items as necessary. This would be an unpaid, volunteer activity.
  - b. In the absence of a volunteer in 6a above, a temporary Clerk could be appointed at the Meeting. The nature of any services or activities would need to be determined in advance. Similarly, any payment for any services performed at that meeting would need to be determined in advance, using the amounts determined at 5b and 5c as a guide.

**Adopted by SPC: December 2016**