



Old Woughton Parish Council Working Group Terms of Reference

Reviewed and adopted March 2026

1) Purpose and Status

- a) The Parish Council may establish Working Groups for specific purposes to support the Council's work. Working Groups are advisory and/or task-focused bodies and do not have delegated decision-making powers.
- b) Working Groups may comprise elected members of the Council and, with the approval of the Full Council, co-opted members of the public who bring relevant skills, knowledge, or experience.
- c) The Full Council shall approve the purpose, scope, membership, and duration of each Working Group when it is established.
- d) Working Groups are not committees or sub-committees within the meaning of Standing Orders and have no authority to bind the Council or commit expenditure unless explicitly authorised by the Full Council.

2) Duration

- e) A Working Group shall normally be established for a fixed period (e.g. six months) or until the completion of its task.
- f) All Working Groups shall lapse at the Annual Meeting of the Council unless formally re-appointed by the Full Council.
- g) The Full Council may dissolve a Working Group at any time if it considers the Group's purpose has been fulfilled or is no longer required.

3) Membership

- h) Each Working Group shall consist of a minimum of three elected Councillors unless otherwise agreed by the Full Council.
- i) The Full Council may approve the co-option of non-councillor members ("lay members") for their expertise or local knowledge. Lay members may participate in discussions but have no voting rights.
- j) The Clerk to the Council may attend meetings to provide advice and administrative support but is not a member of the Working Group.
- k) Any Councillor may observe Working Group meetings unless the Group is dealing with confidential or sensitive matters.

4) Chair / Lead Councillor

- l) Each Working Group shall appoint a Lead Councillor (and may appoint a Deputy) from among the elected members of the Council.
- m) The Lead Councillor shall be the main point of contact with the Clerk, the Full Council, and external stakeholders.
- n) The Lead Councillor is responsible for:
 - i) convening meetings and ensuring meetings are conducted in an orderly manner;
 - ii) ensuring that notes of key actions and recommendations are kept;
 - iii) submitting written reports and clear recommendations to the Full Council;
 - iv) requesting agenda items through the Clerk for consideration by Full Council;
 - v) providing progress updates as required by the Full Council (normally monthly when active).
- o) The Full Council will not consider recommendations from a Working Group unless they are supported by a written report setting out the options considered and the reasons for any recommendation.

5) Powers and Decision-Making

- p) Working Groups have no authority to make decisions on behalf of the Council.
- q) All recommendations must be submitted to the Full Council for debate and formal resolution.
- r) Working Groups may not commit the Council to expenditure, contracts, or public statements without prior Full Council approval.

6) Responsibilities and Scope of Work

The Full Council may assign any or all of the following functions to a Working Group:

- a) investigate specific issues or projects as directed by the Council;
- b) undertake time-limited, task-focused work;
- c) review reports, evidence, policies, and relevant legislation;
- d) consider options and seek specialist advice where appropriate;
- e) consult with residents or stakeholders (with Council approval);
- f) develop proposals and recommendations for Full Council consideration;
- g) present findings and answer questions at Full Council meetings;
- h) ensure value for money and compliance with Council policies;
- i) refrain from committing any funds unless expressly authorised by Full Council.

7) Meetings and Conduct

- a) Working Groups shall arrange their own meetings and work programme.
- b) Working Groups are not subject to the Council's Standing Orders or public access rules; however, the Council's Code of Conduct applies to all Councillors participating.
- c) Working Groups do not meet in public and do not take formal minutes; however, a brief written record of actions and recommendations shall be maintained.
- d) Where the Lead Councillor cannot attend a Full Council meeting, another member of the Working Group shall present the report.
- e) Confidential or sensitive information shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policies and data protection requirements.

8) Review History

March 2026 New policy adopted