



Way Ahead for Wendover Project Report 1

1. The contract

- a. Wendover Parish Council (WPC) contracted with me, as an independent facilitator, to assist with the Way Ahead for Wendover Project to refresh and modernise the council's procedures and practices. This exercise will be undertaken in an open and transparent way, and, to this end, all reports will be published and considered in public session.
 - b. Over 16th-17th July, I held face-to-face meetings with: the Monitoring Officer at AVDC; the County Secretary at the Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils; some individual members; and senior staff of WPC. In addition, I facilitated a briefing, attended by senior staff and most members, which resulted in a series of recommendations to council for ratification on 4th August. These recommendations, which were agreed by all present, informed an early action plan and press release.
 - c. Further, I carried out an exploration (audit) of internal procedures. This audit coupled with above consultations informed a medium term action plan which is currently in its draft stage.
 - d. In parallel, I provided guidance on a communications audit, which is to be member-led and which in turn will lead to a further action plan addressing the whole range of ways in which the council engages with its many stakeholders and partners.
 - e. I have been in close contact with the council throughout. The final contract fee for the above work, being £1,034.80 including expenses, is very close to the original estimate of £1,000. WPC has not been charged for my travelling time.
 - f. The second phase covers attendance at the council meeting on 4th August, delivery of 4 training sessions over two days, liaison and a briefing, estimated in total at £1,200 including expenses. Again WPC is not being charged for my travelling time.
2. I must stress that, with any such scrutiny of internal procedures of a parish council, rarely will there be a clean bill of health! It is usual for historic practices to be handed down from clerk to clerk, council to council, which would not pass muster today, especially as expectations have changed over time. Councillors are volunteers but their responsibilities are wide. In recent years, parish councils across the land have been endeavouring to catch up with the legal framework and to modernise their procedures. They are encouraged to take a risk-based approach, continuously asking the 'what if' question, which is novel to many of them. Hence, all agreed an early investment in team-working and intensive training
3. Your council has a majority of new councillors. Their task is far from easy at this time. In parallel, the role of clerk and proper officer requires a skilled professional who helps to ensure that council affairs are effectively managed and the council acts within the law. For a new clerk, it is an enormous challenge, requiring the support of the council.
4. The areas on which we need to focus are where consequences of poor internal procedures are potentially serious for the council or individuals ie staff and property. Not surprisingly, the early and medium term action plans contain many recommendations on good employment practice. With regard to property, a specific land issue is being addressed by the council's local solicitor, and recommendations in the medium term action plan will address internal decision making in all areas of council activity. Two of the early action recommendations, ie delegation for urgent business and adoption of a dignity in the workplace policy, relate to these two areas and require formal policy adoption by council.
5. **A project pack** has been published which will be updated as the project progresses. It currently contains:
- a. LCS contract with WPC;
 - b. the Ten Principles of Public Life;
 - c. notes of the briefing on 17th July;
 - d. press release of 22nd July;
 - e. early action plan matrix;
 - f. this report