

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| To: Parish Clerks |  | Our ref: | EJ / PC |
|  | Your ref: |  |
|  | Date: | 28 June 2016 |
|  |

Dear Parish Clerk

**REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARISH CONSULTATION MEETINGS**

I am writing to let you know about the new format for the Parish Consultation Meetings, which has come about following a review of the process undertaken following the most recent round of meetings.

This has been brought about by the need to address falling attendances, this year there were only about 20 representatives from parishes at each meeting. In addition the majority of the questions received were on very local issues and the responses would be of interest to only one or two parishes. Also many of the questions were on highways issues and not within the remit of the Borough Council. Comments from parishes suggested they did not feel it was worth attending a meeting where pre-prepared answers were read out to previously submitted questions, especially as the written responses were subsequently circulated to the parishes within the group. In light of this the Leader of the Council requested a review of the process be undertaken.

The new format for the meetings will allow opportunities for the Borough Council to provide updates on many of the significant issues which are currently affecting all tiers of local government, both structurally and in the way Councils will be delivering services in the future. Parish Councils will still have the opportunity to request items be added to an agenda, but such items requested must affect all, or a significant number of parish councils. There will also be the opportunity for an informal question and answer session at the end of the meeting, questions will not need to be submitted in advance, however they must be on items of interest to a significant number of parish councils. Please note, NYCC have been invited to hold their own meetings solely for highways issues that often dominate the agenda but are not the responsibility of Harrogate Borough Council. This will allow more time for consideration of Borough Council issues.

If Parish Councils have questions of local interest they will be referred on to the relevant officer at the Council for a response and Cabinet Members will be kept informed of the issue and response.

It is proposed that meetings take place six monthly, to allow more timely updates to take place. Also parishes will no longer be grouped, every Parish Council will be invited to every meeting. It is intended that the meetings will take place in a variety of locations throughout the district, rather than in Harrogate, though this will be subject to being able to find venues large enough.

It is hoped that these changes will make the meetings of more general interest to all Parish Councils and provide timely updates on matters of strategic district-wide interest, as well as allowing an opportunity for questions.

I am attaching a copy of the Terms of Reference, which set out the proposed format in more detail. We will review these arrangements after 12 months and any comments you may have on the new format would be welcome.

The first meeting of the new format will take place in the Autumn and I will write again once arrangements have been made.

Yours sincerely

**Elizabeth Jackson**

**Member Services Officer**

Legal and Governance

Tel: 01423 500600 ext 58593

Email: elizabeth.jackson@harrogate.gov.uk