

Brixworth Parish Council

Councillor Absence Policy



Document Number	CORP01
Adopted	February 2024
Reviewed	N/A
Next Review	February 2025

1.0 Policy Statements and Aims

1.1 The aim of this policy is to give key guiding principles to ensure all Members are aware of the protocol surrounding absence from council meetings and the giving of apologies, thus providing accountability for Members. In addition, this policy also ensures the appropriate governance of council meetings is upheld by:

- Council meetings being administered efficiently and effectively.
- Council meetings not being inquorate.
- Permitting the rescheduling of meetings in a timely manner.

1.2 As holders of office, all Councillors have a duty to attend council meetings and in accordance with LGA 1972 sch.12 s10(a)(b), are summoned to do so. Every effort should be made to attend council meetings, but Brixworth Parish Council recognises that Council Members may, on occasion, be unable to attend meetings and require a leave of absence. Permitted leave includes, but is not limited to, serving in the military (i.e. serving the Crown), prior or work commitments, emergencies, paternity or maternity leave, compassionate leave, or ill health.

1.3 By Council holding a policy that entitles Members to take permitted leave, it will contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age, and background of local authority Councillors. It will also assist with retaining experienced Members and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.

1.4 There is at present no legal right to permit leave for Members but by adopting this policy, Brixworth Parish Council agrees that it supports its Members whilst ensuring best practice and governance.

2.0 Apologies for Absence

2.1 Should a Member need to be absent from a council meeting, apologies should be submitted to the Proper Officer (Clerk) in advance of the meeting taking place.

2.2 All apologies should be submitted in writing via email as soon as practicably possible, indicating the reason for absence.

- 2.3 Apologies should be submitted by no later than **4pm on the day of the meeting**, to ensure they are received in time to be presented to council for acceptance and approval, and to also allow sufficient time to cancel a meeting should it become inquorate.
- 2.4 Apologies will only be accepted and approved by council if a reason for the absence has been given.
- 2.5 Members are at liberty to provide apologies and a reason for absence from future council meetings in advance, should they already have a prior commitment which prohibits them attending a particular council meeting during the council year.
- 2.6 Apologies cannot be accepted from a third party.
- 2.7 In accordance with The Good Councillors Guide and outlined in section 1.2, an adequate reason for absence needs to be given. Apologies cannot be given due to a Member merely not wanting to attend a meeting.
- 2.8 In accordance with LGA 1972 s85(1), should a Member not attend a meeting for a period of six consecutive months, they will automatically cease to be a member of Brixworth Parish Council, unless the failure to attend was due to a 'statutory excuse' or reason approved by council.
- This ruling, covers apologies for all council meetings, including those of committees or sub-committees in which the Member may be a part of.
- 2.9 The period begins from the date of the last meeting attended.
- 2.10 Pursuant to LGA 1972 s85(3), the six-month rule is not activated should the Councillor be a member of His Majesty's armed forces or a person whose employment is in the service of His Majesty and in connection with war or an emergency.
- Time of war is a statutory excuse to be absent for more than 6 months, and so is such service under the Crown in connection with a war or emergency as the Secretary of State's opinion entitles the Member to relief of disqualification on account of absence and they shall not cease to be a member of council by reason only of failure to attend meetings.

3.0 Extended Periods of Absence

- 3.1 Should an extended leave of absence be required, Members are expected to submit a written application to the Proper Officer (Clerk) requesting such leave, detailing the reason and duration for the absence for council to consider.
- 3.2 With the exception of a Member serving the Crown, an extended leave of absence may only be granted in certain circumstances which are deemed to be outside of the Member's control, e.g. prolonged ill health. It cannot be granted due to a Member merely requiring a sabbatical from their duties.
- 3.3 Should an extended leave of absence be accepted and approved by council, it can be for no more than 5 months to ensure adherence to protocol and to prohibit the six-month rule from being activated. The Member will also be expected to confirm to what extent they intend to communicate with council whilst absent.
- 3.4 Before the end of the five months, contact should be made with the Proper Officer (Clerk) to discuss the Members' return to council, or to give further apologies and a reason for absence.
- 3.5 If an extended leave of absence covers an election period (which takes place in May every 4 years), the Member will still need to complete their election nomination pack and submit it to Electoral Services at West Northants Council (WNC), should they wish to remain a Member of Brixworth Parish Council.

The Member should also make themselves familiar with the elections process and deadline dates for submission, prior to submitting any papers to WNC.

4.0 Recording and Publishing of Member Attendance

- 4.1 To ensure adherence to protocol, all meeting agendas must contain a section for acceptance and approval of Member apologies/absence.
- 4.2 In accordance with LGA 1972 sch.12 para. 40, all Members present at the meeting must be recorded in the minute record for every meeting, which also prevents the six-month rule from being activated.
- 4.3 The minute record should be restricted to confirming the Member absence only, and

clearly stating that the reason for absence was accepted and approved by council.

- 4.4 A separate, unpublished register of members' meeting attendance is also held by the Clerk and updated monthly.
- 4.5 If no apologies are received, this will be recorded in the minutes as
'There were no apologies or reason for absence received for Cllr X'.
- 4.6 If apologies are received but do not give a reason for absence, this will be recorded in the minutes as 'Apologies were received for Cllr X but not accepted'.