



Ringshall Parish Council

Apologies Policy

V1.0

Version Control

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Background

Best Practice

Councillors should attend all meetings, or give apologies in advance for non attendance.

Law

If a Councillor does not attend meetings for six consecutive months and does not submit acceptable apologies he will cease to be a member of the Council¹.

It is not in any law or regulation that a Councillor must give apologies.

Current RPC Practice (as of AM 2021)

The current practice at RPC is for Councillors to send apologies, with reasons, to the Clerk. These apologies are noted and minuted at the appropriate meeting. The apologies item then allows for Council to approve (or not) these apologies based on the reasons as given to the Clerk.

To be accepted these apologies must contain enough information that Council can make an informed decision as to whether to accept the apology or not.

As acceptance is a decision of Council, the reason must be minuted.

The issue

At the AM in 2021 a Councillor requested that the draft minutes of the previous meeting be altered to state a more generalised reason given with an apology, as the recorded reason was deemed too intrusive.

This led to an *ultra vires* decision by council to state that apology reasons should be recorded in a generalised form.

This of course is counter to proper recording of the decision being made. The apology reason itself should be presented in an appropriate form to Council.

A mitigation strategy

Do away with accepting apologies at meetings, and merely note they have been received. Record the reasons in a separate ledger, so if the 6 month rule is about to be enacted, the effected Councillor can ask for their apologies to be accepted.

¹ Local Government Act 1972 s.85 (1) and (2)

The Policy

- Councillors should provide apologies to the Clerk ahead of the meeting, preferably by email.
- The apology should contain a reason, that could, if needed, be put before Council (at some point) to consider its acceptance.
- The Clerk will record the apology reason in a book for that purpose.
- The Clerk will only provide the information that an apology has been received to Council at the appropriate meeting, and will not disclose the reason. This equates to merely noting the presence of an apology in the minutes.
- The Clerk will not routinely add to the agenda the option for Council to accept apologies, and therefore there is no need for reasons to be heard or minuted.
- If a Councillor is coming up to the six month limit on non-attendance, then they can request that their apologies be accepted by Council. This will require that the appropriate recorded apologies are presented to Council.
- Reasons given to the Clerk should have enough detail for Council to make an informed decision on whether they should accept or not.
- The Clerk will record the reason as given and without alteration in the apologies reasons book.
- The apologies reasons book will be an FOI'able document.