

## **BLACKBIRD\_LEYS PARISH COUNCIL**

### **REPRESENTATIVE PROTOCOL**

Guidelines for Councillors representing the council on another body and/or around the estate.

#### **Scope**

It is of paramount importance that Councillors represent both the Council and themselves in the correct manner to ensure that both are not mis-quoted or misrepresented and views belonging to one or the other are not confused in conversations or meetings.

#### **Situations**

Councillors may be requested, or volunteer to be, a Council representative on another body. This could include attending a group as the Council's representative or, attending a meeting of another authority as the Council's representative to pass on information or ask a question.

Also, as most Councillors live and/or work on the estate, they may often be stopped by residents who have information, ideas, or problems which they wish to be resolved or assisted with.

#### **A Councillor as a Representative**

Blackbird Leys Parish Council presently has a number of groups which Councillor representatives attend on its behalf.

Whilst attending these groups, Councillors attending as the Blackbird Leys Parish Council representative, should only put forward the views agreed by the Council, and not their own personal views. In principle, all Councillors should abide by the democratic decisions of the Council once made.

If you are attending a meeting as the Blackbird Leys Parish Council representative but feel you have a view, question or objection which you would like to express as an individual or is a view held by another group or committee then this must be clearly communicated to the meeting you are attending (see some examples below).

No member of the Council should misrepresent or do something 'in the name of the Council', which they have not been authorised to do so by the Council.

#### **Examples**

1. The Parish Council decided it supported a particular planning application. You have decided to attend a meeting at Oxford City Council because you, personally, don't like the planning application in question and have a strong objection towards its design and position.

If you are allowed to speak, and you introduce yourself as 'Parish Councillor for Blackbird Leys Parish Council' then you may only offer its' views - which was that the Parish Council supported the application.

If you wished to express your personal views at this meeting about the application, then you should not introduce yourself as a Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor and make it very clear to the meeting that you are expressing your 'Personal View'.

If you do not make yourself clear about whose views you were expressing to the meeting then the Parish Council could be mis-quoted as not liking or objecting to the application when this was not the case.

2. You have been asked to attend a community meeting as the Council's representative, for no particular purpose but to gather information of what is happening in Blackbird Leys and to see if any items will affect the estate. You are only attending the meeting because you are the representative of Blackbird Leys Parish Council and otherwise you would not be invited to this meeting.

The meeting goes off track and begins discussing an item which is not at all relevant 'to Blackbird Leys' but that you are interested in and have knowledge about. If you engage in conversation regarding issues, opinions or objections you should make the meeting clearly aware that this is your own personal view and not the views of the Parish Council - remembering that you are only there because of the Parish Council.

3. A community meeting - you attend the meeting because you live on the estate and have an issue to raise at the meeting with the Police. You are not the Council's representative for this meeting. You should raise your points as a resident and try to avoid mixing in any Parish Council opinions or decision, otherwise this would get confusing to other members at the meeting.

## **A Councillor as a Resident**

Councillors may sometimes be stopped by residents, when they are out and about, who have information or ideas for them to listen to or problems which they wish to be resolved or passed on. It is important that these queries are noted for either, passing on, handing over or raising with the Council.

No member of the Council should promise or agree to do anything, which they have not been authorised to do by the Council or do something 'in the name of the Council', which they have not been authorised to do by the Council.

## **Example**

1. A resident has noticed a pot hole in their road and does not know who or how to report it, so, knowing you are a Parish Councillor, has asked for your help.  
If you know who the problem belongs to ie; City Council, County Council or another, tell the resident. If not, tell them you will report to the Clerk to investigate.  
In the case of a pot hole, and you know it is a County issue, you could take a look, even take a photo and note of the exact position and severity of the hole and then report straight on to the correct authority (ie OCC) using their reporting systems; or pass information on to any of the local City or County Councillors to take forward; or pass information to the Clerk to report on; or pass on to the resident the information so they could report the fault themselves.
2. A resident approaches you because they know you are a Parish Councillor. They ask if you might consider their idea which they feel would make things better for their age group.
3. You go to inspect an area of land where they are suggesting changes and meet with the land owner and discuss the project. You agree with the resident that the Council thinks this is a good idea and promise that the Council will carry out this project.

These actions described above are wrong in a number of ways.

- You should never be seen to be acting on behalf of the Council, by getting involved in discussions which the Council is not aware you are doing ie, with a landowner.
- You as an individual should not be giving the Council's 'endorsement' or 'agreement' to anything without its express permission or knowledge.
- You should not be agreeing to carry out any works, however small, on behalf of the Council.

A recommended course of action for you, to an approach of this kind from a resident, would be to listen to the idea and logic of the suggestion, note down any particulars or positions and then raise this at a Parish Council meeting for the Council to consider.