

BLACK NOTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AT MEETINGS POLICY

Definitions

‘Council’, ‘Parish Council’ and ‘Authority’ refers to Black Notley Parish Council.

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the procedure for parish councillors to notify the Parish Council of their inability to attend meetings. It ensures that elected councillors fulfil their responsibilities while complying with legal requirements regarding attendance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all elected and co-opted members of the Parish Council, who have been officially served notice of their election or appointment.

3. Legal Context

Parish councillors are elected members and must adhere to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 85, which requires that councillors attend council meetings regularly. If a councillor does not attend any meeting for six consecutive months, without the Council formally approving their reason for absence, they will automatically lose their seat.

4. Procedure for Offering Apologies

a) Advance Notice:

- Councillors who cannot attend a meeting must notify the Clerk of the Council as soon as possible and no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the meeting.
- Apologies can be offered in person, by email, or by telephone.

b) Contents of Apology:

- The councillor must provide a valid reason for their absence, such as illness, family emergencies, work commitments, or other pre-approved personal matters.

c) Recording of Apologies:

- The Clerk of the Council will record apologies in the minutes of the meeting. However, the specific reason offered and approved will not be recorded.
- The Parish Council will vote at the start of the meeting to determine whether the reason for the apology will be accepted and, as such, the member excused.
- If the reason is not deemed acceptable, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

d) Non-Attendance Without Apology:

- Councillors who fail to provide an apology before the meeting and do not attend will have their absence recorded as 'not present'.

The wording 'not present' is accepted to mean 'not authorised'.

- Persistent unauthorised absences will prompt a review by the Council, and under the Local Government Act 1972, councillors may face disqualification if they fail to attend for a continuous six-month period without valid reason.

e) Exceptional Circumstances:

- In cases of emergency or other unavoidable circumstances only (i.e. broken-down vehicle or medical emergency), councillors may submit apologies after the meeting. The Parish Council will consider these late apologies on a case-by-case basis and vote on whether to accept them.
- The minutes of the meeting not attended will reflect the position known at the time of the meeting. Should the Council vote to accept late apologies, it will be reflected in the minutes of the meeting at which the apologies are heard.
- When the Council is considering late apologies the member, who submitted the apologies, will be asked to leave the room. The Council's decision on whether or not to accept the late apologies will be final.

5. Responsibilities

Councillors: Councillors must ensure they notify the Clerk of the Council if they are unable to attend meetings and provide valid reasons for their absence. As elected members, councillors have a duty to serve their community and fulfil the responsibilities of their office.

Clerk: The Clerk of the Council is responsible for recording apologies, ensuring the meeting minutes reflect accurate attendance, and presenting councillor absences for the council's consideration.

6. Notice of Election and Responsibilities

All councillors, upon election or co-option, are served notice of their appointment, which outlines their duties, including the requirement to attend council meetings.

By accepting this notice, councillors agree to comply with the Council's Apologies for Absence at Meetings Policy and to provide reasons for any non-attendance as outlined in this Policy.

7. Consequences of Non-Compliance

Councillors who fail to attend any meeting for a continuous six-month period, without the Council's approval of their reason for absence, may be disqualified and removed from their seat.

POLICY AGREED AT A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 28th January 2026

REVIEW DATE January 2027