

Guidance for a Midlothian Community Council Secretary

1. Point of Contact

The Secretary is usually the first point of contact for anyone who wishes to get in touch with the Community Council.

The Secretary will receive all correspondence (letters / emails) for the Community Council, including access to the contact email account where applicable, and will be required to carry out correspondence on behalf of the Community Council

If any other member undertakes work on behalf of the Community Council, the Secretary should be informed about it and receives copies of any relevant paperwork; after all, it is the Secretary who people will contact for information on all aspects of the Community Council's work.

Other members of the Community Council can take minutes of the meeting if the Secretary is unable to attend. Taking minutes at a meeting could be shared/rotated if there is agreement within the Community Council.

2. Duties of the Community Council Secretary

The most common duties of the Community Council Secretary are:

- Act as a point of contact for the Community Council
- Creating the agenda (in consultation with the Chairperson) and circulating the agenda
- Recording and distributing the Minutes of the meeting
- Organising meetings - booking the venue, creating, and circulating 'Zoom' or 'Teams' links if an online meeting.
- Circulating information to Community Council members
- Receiving and answering all correspondence
- Writing any letters
- Looking after invited visitors and guest speakers.
- Arranging the venue for meetings
- Liaison with officials of Midlothian Council and other agencies

3. Taking and recording Minutes

All Community Council meetings must be minuted. The Secretary is the person who usually records the Minutes although some Community Councils appoint a separate 'Minute Secretary'. The Minute should record the following information:

- Status of the meeting (e.g. ordinary meeting, AGM, sub-committee meeting)
- List who was *Present (Members of the Community Council, In Attendance (at the meeting but not a Community Council member) or had submitted their Apologies.*
- Members of the public needn't be named individually but the number attending should be noted.
- Date, Venue and Time of meeting.
- Who chaired the meeting?
- Acceptance of the last Minute (Names of *Proposer* and *Seconder*) and any Matters Arising

When recording the main business of the meeting it's best to keep it brief. The important thing is to pay attention to decisions reached. Dissent to decisions can be added to the Minute in cases where members specifically request that their dissent is recorded.

A verbatim account of everything that was said isn't necessary e.g. there's no need to include statements that did not relate to the final decision.

These are the main items to record:

- The subject under discussion
- The main points of arguments, for and against
- Any major disagreements
- Details of voting, where applicable (remember, not *all* members have voting rights)
- Decisions reached (e.g. who will do what, and when)
- Actions agreed and who will take them.
- Date and Venue of next meeting

4. **Distribution of Agendas, Minutes, and other information**

Once you have taken the notes, where possible type up the minute *very* soon afterwards. (otherwise, you are likely to find that you cannot read your own notes and do not remember what went on 😊!).

As per the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Midlothian (2025), draft Minutes must be sent to the Midlothian Council Liaison Officer within **21 days** of the meeting being held to: MidlothianCCMinutes@midlothian.gov.uk.

After the meeting, the Secretary and Chairperson will usually liaise to decide the items to be included on the next Agenda.

Minutes should be distributed to everyone at the same time.

You can find an agenda template on the next page.

PLEASE NOTE - DATA PROTECTION

When an individual ceases to be a Community Council Secretary, they must ensure that all records they hold relating to the Community Council are appropriately reviewed and transferred to the incoming Secretary.

When leaving, Community Council Office Bearers **should not** retain any information relating to their work with the Community Council when they are no longer a part of it.

Agenda (Template)

- 1.** Time, Day, Date
- 2.** Venue Name
- 3.** Welcome and Introductions
- 4.** Present / In Attendance / Apologies
- 5.** Acceptance of Minutes of previous meeting
- 6.** Matters Arising
- 7.** Presentations / Reports
- 8.** Summary report of balance of accounts.
- 9.** Any Other Competent Business (A.O.C.B.)
- 10.** Date, Time & Venue of next meeting.