



West Malling Parish Council – Environmental Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 West Malling Parish Council recognises that a healthy environment is fundamental to the prosperity and wellbeing of our local community. The Council acknowledges that whilst our activities may have adverse effects on the environment, we can take steps to minimise those impacts.

1.2 The Council considers that the environment is important and will comply with and, where possible, exceed all environmental regulations, laws and codes of practice, as applicable. The Council recognises the 'duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity' established by the Environment Act 2021 and will comply with the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 which sets out plans to halt the decline in species abundance and protect 30% of UK land by 2030 and requires Public Authorities to set our policies to achieve this and to monitor their performance.

1.3 The Council will make a positive contribution towards environmental sustainability (1) by protecting and enhancing the local and global environment, including reducing carbon emissions, and taking steps to mitigate the impact of Climate Change.

(1) Environmental sustainability: according to the United Nations (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development, environmental sustainability is about acting in a way that ensures future generations have the natural resources available to live an equal, if not better, way of life as current generations.(7 Jul 2020)

2. AIMS OF POLICY

The aims of the West Malling Parish Council Environmental Policy are:

- To move towards achieving environmental sustainability across Parish responsibilities and assets for the benefit of the local community.
- To promote the importance and value of a quality environment, and to support local people in their enjoyment of it.
- To conserve and enhance biodiversity throughout the parish.
- To carry out our work in an efficient way that minimises or eliminates its adverse impact on our environment.
- To promote the development of a Circular Economy (2).

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The Parish Council own the Village Hall and Cricket Pitch and Pavilion, but both these assets are let to the Village Hall Committee and the Cricket Club, respectively. Furthermore, the Parish Council does not own the Parish Office but is a tenant of the Clout Institute. Therefore, the Parish Council will seek to encourage the Village Hall Committee and the Cricket Club to support our aims and objectives and to work in partnership with the Parish Council to contribute to a healthy and sustainable environment, locally and globally. We will also seek to engage positively with the Clout Institute to achieve the same ends.

- (2) The circular economy is an evolution of the way the world produces and consumes both goods and services. The circular model redefines the economy around principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible. It involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/topics/circular-economy> accessed 25.09.22

3. CLIMATE CHANGE

The Parish Council has declared a climate emergency and aspires to be fully carbon neutral by 2030. We will set out plans for immediate and long-term actions to reach this goal which include:

- Encourage staff to switch off electrical equipment and unnecessary lights when not in use
- Encourage staff to close windows and external doors when heating is on
- Encourage staff to minimise the use of electric heaters and fans
- Introduce phased replacement of LED bulbs in Council premises
- Introduce phased replacement of electrical equipment used on Council premises with products of maximum energy efficiency rating
- Switch to 100% renewable energy tariffs for electricity on Council premises
- Phased replacement of non-renewable heating sources (oil, gas fired systems) with renewables
- Invest in electric car charging points
- Retrofit buildings with energy saving measures (glazing, roof insulation)
- Introduce natural climate change solutions (such as tree planting and rewilding) on Council assets
- Undertake an annual audit of current Council emissions
- Agree measures to track the Council's carbon footprint over time.

4. NATURE & WILDLIFE

The Parish Council is committed to increasing opportunities for nature to thrive on the assets it owns or manages. We recognise the duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the parish. This will be achieved by:

- Protecting and enhancing the quality and extent of the natural environment in West Malling
- Supporting the conservation of trees, hedgerows, ponds, and streams
- Managing Council assets (including play areas, playing fields, and verges) in a manner that protects habitat and increases biodiversity
- Introducing enhanced opportunities for nature to flourish without constraint, and activities to support nature such as tree, i planting, as appropriate, on Council assets

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- Banning disposable BBQs and the release of balloon/sky lanterns from Council land and events.

5. PESTICIDE USE

The Parish Council is committed to phasing out the use of pesticides on assets we own or manage. The goal is to phase pesticides out entirely, with the exception of use for the control of Schedule 9 plants under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, such as Japanese Knotweed, or where it is used to reduce material risks to asset integrity.

6. SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

The Parish Council will:

- Support modern working practices, such as remote working, amongst staff and councillors
- Encourage members and officers to car-share, where possible, when a car journey must be made on Council business
- Promote and support the use of cycling, public footpaths and public transport
- Encourage contractors to move towards using electric powered vehicles.
- Support improved public transport at any opportunity

7. WATER MANAGEMENT

The Parish Council is committed to responsible water management and conservation throughout its operations, which include:

- Encouraging staff, allotment holders and hirers to use water efficiently on Council premises
- Where possible, utilising water butts as a non-drinking water source
- Ensuring staff and users are aware of which materials can be disposed of in waste water
- Promoting and supporting natural solutions to reduce/reuse surface water run-off in the Parish.

8. WASTE & RECYCLING

The Parish Council will seek to:

- Keep waste to a minimum by preventing, reusing, recycling or recovering waste
- Ensure waste is sorted, stored and disposed of appropriately
- Cease use of single-use plastics on Council premises and events (including the Village Hall and Cricket Pavilion and events held there). Recycle all recyclable waste generated at Council premises and events
- Promote and encourage recycling across the Parish
- Use recyclable, compostable and/or recycled products on Council premises
- Reduce the production of non-recyclable resources such as laminated or plastic based publicity material
- Minimise the amount of printing and minimise the amount of waste paper generated
- Observe our duty of care conscientiously within our waste contracts
- Utilise electronic communications; councillors to use an opt-in scheme for printing paper documents

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- Minimise pollution and prevent where possible (including light, noise, solids, liquids and chemicals)
- Encourage composting wherever possible, including the allotments.

9. DEVELOPMENT

Parish Council will:

- Encourage planning applications where the applicant can demonstrate 10% Bio-diversity net gain
- Encourage planning applications where the applicant demonstrates a reduction in carbon emissions during and after construction. This includes design to enhance insulation to above those required by building regulations, provision of EV charging points, non-gas based heating systems and use of non-gas based communal heating systems.
- Oppose the development of agricultural land
- Actively promote the extension of the Green Belt to encircle West Malling.

10. RESPONSIBLE & SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

The Parish Council will seek to:

- Source materials and services locally so long as the requirements for value for money, quality and suitability are met
- Ensure that catering produce, including tea/coffee in offices, is plant-based and sourced from local, organic, fair trade (or other recognised certification schemes)
- Ensure that timber, or similar products, used by the Council will be from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified sources
- Ensure that consumables used on Council premises including the Village Hall and the Cricket Pavilion (such as cleaning products and inks) are eco-friendly
- Ensure that procurement of goods and services are weighted appropriately to encourage local suppliers thereby promoting the Circular Economy.

11. AWARENESS, LOBBYING & PARTNERSHIPS

The Parish Council will:

- Promote awareness of, and information about, environmental issues within the community
- Support, and act as a voice for, local environmental concerns within the community
- Ensure that all individuals involved in the organisation (including contractors) are aware of their responsibilities in implementing this environmental policy
- Work with partners, where appropriate, to increase environmental growth within the Parish

12. ENERGY USE

The Parish Council will:

- Undertake an audit of its existing energy use and produce a plan on how the Council's energy use can be reduced

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- Procure energy from sustainable sources
- Explore possibilities for the use of wind and solar energy on its premises
- Promote use of renewable energy in the Parish

13. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The Parish Council will:

- Promote and encourage the use of local suppliers in procurement policies
- Undertake an audit of the materials and services used by the Council.
- Develop policies that encourage the development of a Circular Economy in the Parish.

REVIEW

This policy and its application will be subject to review after one year to ensure that it continues to reflect the aims and objectives of West Malling Parish Council and promotes continuous environmental improvement throughout the Council's operations.

Adopted at Full Council on: 8th January 2024

Minute Reference: 24/15

Policy Review Date: January 2025