

September photo calendar competition winner **Sammy Deere**

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## The MO's blog

### A new monthly feature in your Parish Council Newsletter

By Boston Borough Council Monitoring Officer Michelle Sacks

Most councillors – county, district and parish – have a fine line to tread when dealing with local matters in the communities in which they live or are well known.

They have to be acutely aware of any conflict of interest when expressing a personal opinion and making decisions as a councillor.

Planning applications can be a particularly difficult minefield to tread. You will be aware of the need to declare an interest if an application impacts your disclosable pecuniary interest.

But you must also consider what your relationship is with the applicant in case you need to declare an interest.

In small communities personal relationships easily develop, and the level of those relationships, in determining whether or not an interest should be declared, has to be carefully weighed.

I always think of it in terms of a scale – at one end you have, say, Bob, who you've been saying good morning to for 30 years on the way to fetch your daily paper. At the other end you have Bill and Joan who make up your regular Saturday night foursome when you go out for a meal and a drink and set the world to rights.

Bob, no problem; no need to declare as he's just a passing acquaintance with whom you do not have a close relationship. Bill and Joan? You definitely have to declare an interest and take no part in a formal council debate as a councillor and must not vote. Then run both ends of the scale back until they meet in the middle. Anywhere on the half leading to Bill and Joan will need careful consideration.

If you have a Bill and Joan situation, this does not mean you cannot speak at all – but you must



declare your interest and then only speak during the public session, if you wish to, making it clear that you are speaking as an individual and not a councillor and have it minuted as such for your own protection. Of course public forums are not part of the formal meeting and are not minuted but if the item is on the agenda, it is best to have it minuted that you declared an interest and left the table for that part of the discussion – so there can be no allegation of influence.

These same rules apply across the board and apply to any position of public office, such as a member of the parochial church council or a school governor. By way of an example, where the parish council is being asked for a grant from the church or the school. If you hold a position with one of these groups, it is very likely a conflict of interest will arise. A breach could lead to an investigation by the monitoring officer and result in the decision being flawed and damage the decision-making body's reputation.

If in doubt you can always contact the monitoring officer, or deputy monitoring officer at [michelle.sacks@boston.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.sacks@boston.gov.uk) or [lorraine.bush@boston.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.bush@boston.gov.uk) or phone 01205 314200.

● Do you have a topic you want the monitoring officer to explore? Email Michelle with your ideas.

### Borough council meetings – October 2018

- Tuesday 16 – 10am – Planning Committee in the Committee Room
- Wednesday 17 – 10am – Cabinet in Committee Room
- Wednesday 24 – 6.30pm – Boston Town Area Committee in Committee Room
- Tuesday 30 – 6.30pm – Overview and Scrutiny – Environment and Performance Committee in Committee Room

**DON'T FORGET TO CLICK THE LINKS TO READ MORE**

#### There's gold in them thar hills...

OK, it's not gold and they're not hills, but there is cash out there for the claiming. And the Lincolnshire Funding Portal can help you find it. Go to <https://bit.ly/2R08Bm8> to filter through hundreds of grant schemes and find funding suitable for your project or organisation. You can also download the latest guidance notes and application forms or get up-to-date contact details for funders. The site is for parish and town councils, charities, social enterprises, community groups, religious and faith organisations and community interest companies.

#### Balance between duties performed and privacy protected

Local authorities, and that includes parish councils, have a duty to provide a number of vital services. But while we do so we must also ensure that we don't exceed our authority and unduly affect people's privacy. [Read more at https://bit.ly/2Nxjhg7](https://bit.ly/2Nxjhg7)

#### Your chance to get involved

Have you ever... Wanted to get something done for your community? Thought that the council could spend money better? Wanted to improve public services? Thought that you could do a better job given the chance? Well now's your chance. All 30 seats on Boston Borough Council will be up for election on May 2, 2019. [Read more at https://bit.ly/2NzGNqF](https://bit.ly/2NzGNqF)

#### Universal Credit – Are you ready?

Universal Credit is rolling out and Boston Borough Council is working with its partners to ensure local residents are informed. [Read more at https://bit.ly/2LXjj98](https://bit.ly/2LXjj98)



#### Date for your diaries

Don't forget the parish liaison meeting taking place at 6pm on Thursday, November 29, in the committee room at Municipal Buildings on West Street. Guest speakers are attending to talk about HMO licensing, elections 2019 and community engagement.

#### Kirton is this month's winner

Kirton Parish Council is this month's winner for community engagement. The Kirton Parish Council Community Group Facebook page, which is now public, warned residents about a number of scams, a church lead theft alert, the "Be a councillor" open evening and Kirton Fire Station open day. The council also published its latest meeting minutes. What's happening at your council? Let us know your news – email [andrew.malkin@boston.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.malkin@boston.gov.uk) or call him on 01205 314308.

#### Employment advice for parish councils

Managing employees can be a real challenge for parish councils. Parishes are small organisations yet are expected to adhere to the same employment laws as larger employers. In some cases parishes may only employ 1 or 2 people. Getting the basics right is crucial. This can help you avoid complicated and problematic situations later on in an employment relationship. The following questions might help you check you have most of the basics in place. [Read more at https://bit.ly/2NizUDw](https://bit.ly/2NizUDw)

