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Report Title: General Power of Competence

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Agenda Item: 5

Meeting Date: 18th May 2026

Introduction

The 'General Power of Competence' (GPC) was introduced as part of the Localism Act 2011, and the Parish Council can decide whether to exercise this power.

Criteria

The Parish Council meets the criteria to use this additional power.

The criteria are that two-thirds of the total number of Councillors must be elected (in the recent election 10 out of 15 seats were uncontested) and the Clerk be qualified and have completed any relevant training in the previous municipal year. The Clerk is CiLCA qualified and currently studying in Year 2 of Level 4, Certificate of Higher Education in Community Governance with De Montfort University (led by Society of Local Council Clerks).

A resolution to this effect must be written clearly in the minutes of the Annual Council Meeting. The Parish Council is then required to revisit that decision and make a new resolution at every 'relevant' annual meeting of the Parish Council to confirm that it still meets the criteria (if it does). This means that eligibility remains in place until the first Annual Meeting of the council after the ordinary election even if the condition of the eligibility criteria has changed.

What is the 'General Power of Competence'

The GPC allows a Parish Council to do anything that an individual can do (*if they don't break other laws*) where there is not an existing act.

For example, the Parish Council could decide to run a shop, a café or pub or give their funds to their favourite charity. However, it does not give the Council the power to carry work on the highways as an individual would not be able to do this – plus this is a statutory power of the higher local authority (Swindon Borough Council) and hasn't been devolved to the Parish Council.

It is a 'power of first resort'; this means that when searching for a power to act, the first question you ask is whether you can use GPC.

More information about the GPC can be found here - www.slcc.co.uk/qualifications/gpc/

Recommendation

That the Parish Council confirms that it meets the criteria to adopt the 'General Power of Competence' for the term 2026 – 2030.