



# STANDING ORDERS

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## INTRODUCTION

A Town Council is generally not required by law to make Standing Orders which regulate how they conduct their business, except with respect to the making of contracts for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works. However, the basic provisions in the 1972 Local Government Act (and other legislation) are insufficient for the majority of Town Councils and Standing Orders are therefore necessary for regulating the practical arrangements to give effect to statutory requirements.

Standing Orders are the written rules of a local Council and are essential to regulate the proceedings of a meeting. A Council may also use Standing Orders to confirm or refer to various internal organisational and administrative arrangements. The Standing Orders of a Council are not the same as the policies of a Council but Standing Orders may refer to them.

Local councils operate within a wide statutory framework. These Standing Orders incorporate and reference many statutory requirements to which councils are subject. It is not possible however for the Standing Orders to contain or reference all the statutory or legal requirements which apply to local councils. The statutory requirements to which a council is subject apply whether or not they are incorporated in a council's standing orders.

These Standing Orders have been drafted using the model document published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in April 2022 as a basis, but tailored to the specific needs of Neston Town Council.

Standing orders that are in **bold type** contain legal and statutory requirements which cannot be suspended or their meaning altered. Standing orders not in bold are designed to help the Council operate effectively but they do not contain statutory requirements so they may be adopted as drafted or amended to suit a council's needs.

For convenience, the word "councillor" is used in standing orders and, unless the context suggests otherwise, includes a non-councillor with or without voting rights.

In sections 3 and 12 the following key is used:

- fc full council meetings
- c committee meetings
- sc sub-committee meetings

### 1. RULES OF DEBATE AT MEETINGS

- 1.1 Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the chairman of the meeting for reasons of expedience.
- 1.2 A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded save that a motion proposed from the Chair shall not be required to be seconded.
- 1.3 A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the chairman of the meeting as withdrawn.
- 1.4 If a motion (including an amendment) has been seconded, it may be withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- 1.5 An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.
- 1.6 If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion (as amended) becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.
- 1.7 An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the chairman of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the chairman.

- 1.8 A councillor may move an amendment to his own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- 1.9 If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the chairman of the meeting. No further amendments to a motion shall be moved until the previous amendment has been disposed of.
- 1.10 Subject to standing order 1.11, only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- 1.11 One or more amendments may be discussed together if the chairman of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- 1.12 A councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- 1.13 The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.
- 1.14 Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply either at the end of debate on the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- 1.15 Unless permitted by the chairman of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:
  - 1.15.1 to speak on an amendment moved by another councillor;
  - 1.15.2 to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since he last spoke;
  - 1.15.3 to make a point of order;
  - 1.15.4 to give a personal explanation; or
  - 1.15.5 to exercise a right of reply.
- 1.16 During the debate on a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A councillor raising a point of order shall identify the standing order which he considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting he is concerned by.
- 1.17 A point of order shall be decided by the chairman of the meeting and his decision shall be final.
- 1.18 When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:
  - 1.18.1 to amend the motion;
  - 1.18.2 to proceed to the next business;
  - 1.18.3 to adjourn the debate;
  - 1.18.4 to put the motion to a vote;
  - 1.18.5 to ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;
  - 1.18.6 to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
  - 1.18.7 to exclude the public and press;
  - 1.18.8 to adjourn the meeting; or
  - 1.18.9 to suspend particular standing order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory or legal requirements.
- 1.19 Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the chairman of the meeting shall be

satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived his right of reply.

- 1.20 Excluding motions moved under Standing Order 1.18, the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the chairman of the meeting.

## **2. DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT MEETINGS**

- 2.1 No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the chairman of the meeting shall request the person to moderate or improve their conduct.
- 2.2 If a person disregards the request of the chairman of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chairman of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.
- 2.3 If a resolution made under standing order 2.2 is ignored, the chairman of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

## **3. MEETINGS GENERALLY**

- 3.1 **Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.** (fc)
- 3.2 **The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.** (fc)
- 3.3 **The minimum three clear days' public notice for a meeting does not include the day on which the notice was issued or the day of the meeting unless the meeting is convened at shorter notice.** (c)
- 3.4 **Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.** (fc, c, sc)
- 3.5 Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. With the permission of the Chairman, they may make requests, ask questions to seek information from the Council (but not individual members of it) in relation to any matter of particular significance to the people of Neston. A note of a public participation session at a meeting shall be included in the minutes.
- 3.6 The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3.5 shall not exceed 30 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- 3.7 Subject to standing order 3.6, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.

Each member of the public is entitled to speak only once unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

- 3.8 In accordance with standing order 3.5, a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- 3.9 A person should raise their hand when requesting to speak.
- 3.10 A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the chairman of the meeting.
- 3.11 An officer or Member of the Principal Authority, having first sought leave to attend a meeting of the Council or Committee, or having been invited to attend such a meeting by the Proper Officer, may, at the invitation of the Chairman, make comments on any item of business included in the agenda.
- 3.12 Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- 3.13 **Subject to standing order 3.14, a person who attends a meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To “report” means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting proceedings, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later or to report or to provide oral or written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.** The Council will also take steps to ensure that children, the vulnerable and Members of the public who object to being filmed are protected without undermining the broader purpose of the meeting. (fc, c, sc with decision making powers).
- 3.14 **A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.** (fc, c, sc with decision making powers).
- 3.15 **The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.** (fc, c, sc with decision making powers).
- 3.16 **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chairman of the Council (Mayor) may in his/her absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chairman of the Council (Deputy Mayor).** (fc)
- 3.17 **The Chairman of the meeting, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chairman is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chairman of the Council if present, shall preside. If both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman are absent from a meeting, a councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.** (fc, c, sc).

In the event of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, as the case may be, arriving after the commencement of the meeting, the Vice-Chairman or other Councillor appointed pro tem, shall vacate the chair and the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, as the case may be, shall thereupon preside.

- 3.18 **Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors and non-councillors with voting rights present and voting.** (fc, c, sc).
- 3.19 **The chairman of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his casting vote whether or not he gave an original vote.**

(fc, c, sc)

*See standing orders 5.8 and 5.9 for the different rules that apply in the election of the Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting of the Council.*

- 3.20 **Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question.** Such a request shall be made before the vote is taken and moving on to the next item of business on the agenda. (fc, c, sc).
- 3.21 The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:
- 3.21.1 the time and place of the meeting;
  - 3.21.2 the names of councillors who are present and the names of councillors who are absent;
  - 3.21.3 interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
  - 3.21.4 the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
  - 3.21.5 whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
  - 3.21.6 if there was a public participation session; and
  - 3.21.7 the resolutions made.
- 3.22 **A councillor or a non-councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on his right to participate and vote on that matter.** (fc, c, sc)
- 3.23 **No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Council are present. The quorum is therefore 6.** If prior to the meeting, a councillor has submitted a reason for his absence at the meeting which is then approved by resolution, such resolution shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the approval was given. (fc)
- See standing order 4d(viii) for the quorum of a committee or sub-committee meeting.*
- 3.24 **If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted** and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting. (fc, c, sc)
- 3.25 A meeting shall not exceed a period of 2 hours, unless a vote is taken to extend the time by a specified duration.

#### **4. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

- 4.1 **Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee, or task and finish working group whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.**
- 4.2 **The members of a committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Council.**
- 4.3 **Unless the Council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-**

**committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.**

Where a task and finish working group is established, it shall appoint one of its members as rapporteur and the establishment of such groups, and the name of its rapporteur, shall be reported by the Chief Officer to Committee or Council as appropriate.

- 4.4 The Council may appoint standing committees or other committees as may be necessary, and:
- 4.4.1. shall determine their terms of reference;
  - 4.4.2. shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a Standing Committee, to fit in with the cycle of Council meetings, up until the date of the next Annual Town Council Meeting;
  - 4.4.3. shall permit a committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;
  - 4.4.4. shall, subject to standing orders 4.2 and 4.3, appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee including its Chairman and Vice Chairman;
  - 4.4.5. An ordinary member of a standing committee may, having confirmed to the Proper Officer 1 day before the meeting of the committee that they are unable to attend, appoint another eligible councillor to act as a substitute;
    - (i) A nominated substitute member will have the same voting rights as the member that has been substituted;
    - (ii) An ordinary member of a committee who has been replaced by a substitute member shall not be permitted to participate in debate or vote at the meeting and may only speak during any public participation session during the meeting;
    - (iii) All members of the Council not appointed to a particular standing committee, and not acting as a substitute, shall have the right to attend meetings of that committee only if members of the public are able to attend and speak only at the invitation of its Chairman, but shall not have the right to vote;
  - 4.4.6. shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee which, in both cases, shall be no less than three;
  - 4.4.7. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee committee;
  - 4.4.8. shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meetings of a sub-committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, required for the meetings of a sub-committee [NB. the public and press are legally entitled to attend if the Sub-Committee has decision making powers.];
  - 4.4.9. shall determine a suitable budget for the sub-committee if required;
  - 4.4.10. may dissolve a committee or a sub-committee;
  - 4.4.11. A Member who has proposed a motion that has been referred to any Committee, of which he/she is not a Member, may explain her/his motion to the Committee but shall not vote.

**5. ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- 5.1 **In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the councillors elected take office.**

- 5.2 **In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council decides.**
- 5.3 **If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6pm.**
- 5.4 **In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council decides.** The Council will normally hold an ordinary meeting of Council every second month following the annual Council meeting.
- 5.5 **The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the Council shall be the election of the Chairman (Mayor) and Vice-Chairman (Deputy Mayor) of the Council.**
- 5.6 **The Chairman of the Council, unless he/she has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until his/her successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.**
- 5.7 **The Vice-Chairman of the Council, unless he/she resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chairman of the Council at the next annual meeting of the Council.**
- 5.8 **In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the annual meeting until a successor Chairman of the Council has been elected. The current Chairman of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of the Council but shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- 5.9 **In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the annual meeting until a new Chairman of the Council has been elected. He may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of the Council and shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- 5.10 Should at least one nomination as Chairman (and same for Vice-Chair) of the Council of an eligible Member of the Council, proposed and seconded by eligible members of the council and consented to by the nominated Member, be received by the Proper Officer 5 clear days before the Annual Meeting of the Council, that nomination and any other received in like manner shall be recorded on the agenda for that meeting.
- 5.11 Following the election of the Chairman of the Council and Vice-Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
- 5.11.1 **in an election year, delivery by the Chairman of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Chairman of the Council of his acceptance of office form unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date;**
  - 5.11.2 confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council;
  - 5.11.3 receipt of the minutes of the last meeting of a committee;
  - 5.11.4 consideration of the recommendations made by a committee;
  - 5.11.5 review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;
  - 5.11.6 review of the terms of reference for committees;
  - 5.11.7 appointment of members to existing committees

- 5.11.8 appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing order 4;
- 5.11.9 review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
- 5.11.10 review of arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies and businesses;
- 5.11.11 review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back;
- 5.11.12 in an election year, to make arrangements with a view to the Council becoming eligible to exercise the General Power of Competence in the future;
- 5.11.13 review of inventory of land and other assets including buildings and office equipment;
- 5.11.14 confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks;
- 5.11.15 review of the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies;
- 5.11.16 determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council and committees up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

## **6. EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEES, AND SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

- 6.1 **The Chairman of the Council (Mayor) may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.**
- 6.2 **If the Chairman of the Council does not call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within seven days of having been requested in writing to do so by two councillors, any two councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council. The public notice giving the time, place and agenda for such a meeting shall be signed by the two councillors.**
- 6.3 The chairman of a committee (or a sub-committee) may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee (or the sub-committee) at any time.
- 6.4 If the chairman of a committee (or a sub-committee) does not call an extraordinary meeting within 7 days of having been requested to do so by 3 members of the committee (or the sub-committee), any 3 members of the committee (or the sub-committee) may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee (or a sub-committee).

## **7. PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS**

- 7.1 A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 5 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee, or following a report by the Chief Officer identifying new information since the matter was previously considered.
- 7.2 When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 7.1 has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further six months.

## **8. VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS**

8.1 Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting.

**9. MOTIONS FOR A MEETING THAT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE TO BE GIVEN TO THE PROPER OFFICER**

9.1 A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting for which it is tabled and, in any event, shall relate to the performance of the Council's statutory functions, powers and obligations or an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.

9.2 No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least 6 clear working days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.

9.3 The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 9.2, correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.

9.4 If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 9.2 is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it, so that it can be understood, in writing, to the Proper Officer at least 5 clear days before the meeting.

9.5 If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the chairman of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.

9.6 The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.

9.7 Motions received shall be recorded and numbered in the order that they are received.

9.8 Motions rejected shall be recorded with an explanation by the Proper Officer of the reason for rejection.

**10. MOTIONS AT A MEETING THAT DO NOT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE**

10.1 The following motions may be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer:

10.1.1 to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;

10.1.2 to move to a vote;

10.1.3 to defer consideration of a motion;

10.1.4 to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;

10.1.5 to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;

10.1.6 to change the order of business on the agenda;

10.1.7 to proceed to the next business on the agenda;

10.1.8 to require a written report;

- 10.1.9 to appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members;
- 10.1.10 to extend the time limits for speaking;
- 10.1.11 to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest;
- 10.1.12 to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public;
- 10.1.13 to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
- 10.1.14 to temporarily suspend the meeting;
- 10.1.15 to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory or legal requirements);
- 10.1.16 to adjourn the meeting;
- 10.1.17 to close the meeting;
- 10.1.18 to accept the reason for absence of councillors.

## **11. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION**

*See also standing order 20.*

- 11.1 **The Council shall have in place and keep under review, technical and organisational measures to keep secure information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. Such arrangements shall include deciding who has access to personal data and encryption of personal data.**
- 11.2 **The Council shall have in place, and keep under review, policies for the retention and safe destruction of all information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. The Council's retention policy shall confirm the period for which information (including personal data) shall be retained or if this is not possible the criteria used to determine that period (e.g., the Limitation Act 1980).**
- 11.3 **The agenda, papers that support the agenda and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential information or personal data without legal justification.**
- 11.4 **Councillors, staff, the Council's contractors and agents shall not disclose confidential information or personal data without legal justification.**
- 11.5 A Member of the Council may for purposes of his/her duty as such Member, but not otherwise, inspect any document which has been considered by a Committee or Sub-Committee or by the Council. Provided that a Member shall not knowingly inspect and shall not call for a copy of any document relating to a matter in which he/she is professionally interested or in which he/she has any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest. This Standing Order shall not preclude the Chief Officer from declining to allow inspection of any document which is or in the event of legal proceedings would be protected by privilege arising from the relationship of solicitor and client.

## **12. DRAFT MINUTES**

- 12.1 If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on councillors with the agenda to attend the meeting at which they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read.
- 12.2 There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes shall be moved in accordance

with standing order 10.1.1.

12.3 The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the chairman of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.

12.4 If the chairman of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:

“The chairman of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of the () held on [date] in respect of () were a correct record but his view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.”

12.5 **If the Council’s gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is higher) does not exceed £25,000, it shall publish draft minutes on a website which is publicly accessible and free of charge not later than one month after the meeting has taken place. (fc, c, sc).** The Council has resolved to do this.

12.6 Subject to the publication of draft minutes in accordance with standing order 12.5 and standing order 20.1 and following a resolution which confirms the accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, the draft minutes or recordings of the meeting for which approved minutes exist shall be destroyed.

### 13. CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS

*See also standing order 3.21.*

13.1 All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council. (The Council consider it is desirable that all councillors shall undertake training in the code of conduct and associated protocols.)

13.2 Unless he has been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he has a dis-closable pecuniary interest. He may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he had the interest.

13.3 Unless he has been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he has another interest if so required by the Council’s code of conduct. He may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he had the interest.

13.4 **Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer** as soon as possible before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.

13.5 A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by a meeting of the Council, or by the Proper Officer in accordance with the Council’s Scheme of Delegation and that decision is final.

13.6 A dispensation request shall confirm:

13.6.1 the description and the nature of the dis-closable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;

13.6.2 whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;

13.6.3 the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and

- 13.6.4 an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- 13.7 Subject to standing orders 13.4 and 13.6, a dispensation request shall be considered at the beginning of the meeting of the Council, or prior to a committee or sub-committee meeting for which it is requested, by the Proper Officer.
- 13.8 **A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 13.5 if having regard to all relevant circumstances any of the following apply:**
- 13.8.1 **without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the meeting transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business;**
- 13.8.2 **granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area; or**
- 13.8.3 **it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.**

#### **14. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS**

- 14.1 Upon notification by the Unitary Council that it is dealing with a complaint that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the Proper Officer shall, subject to standing order 11, report this to the Council.
- 14.2 Where the notification in standing order 14.1 relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chairman of Council (Mayor) of this fact, and the Chairman shall nominate another staff member to assume the duties of the Proper Officer in relation to the complaint until it has been determined and the Council has agreed what action, if any, to take in accordance with standing order 14.4.
- 14.3 The Council may:
- 14.3.1 provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to investigate the complaint or is a legal requirement;
- 14.3.2 seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter;
- 14.4 Upon notification by the Unitary Council that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.

#### **15. PROPER OFFICER**

- 15.1 The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the Chief Officer or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the Council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.
- 15.2 The Proper Officer shall:
- 15.2.1 **at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee or a sub-committee,**
- (i) **serve on councillors by delivery or post at their residences or by email authenticated in such manner as the Proper Officer thinks fit, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda (provided the councillor has consented to service by email), and**
- (ii) **provide, in a conspicuous place, public notice of the time, place and agenda**

**(provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council convened by councillors is signed by them).**

*(See standing order 3.2 for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 3.3 for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a committee.)*

- 15.2.2 subject to standing order 9, include on the agenda all motions in the order received unless a councillor has given written notice at least 5 days before the meeting confirming his withdrawal of it;
- 15.2.3 **convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Chairman of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in his office;**
- 15.2.4 **facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors** by publishing the minutes on the Council's website clearly indicating their status as either draft or confirmed and signed versions;
- 15.2.5 **receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities;**
- 15.2.6 hold acceptance of office forms from councillors;
- 15.2.7 hold a copy of every councillor's register of interests;
- 15.2.8 assist with responding to requests made under freedom of information legislation and rights exercisable under data protection legislation, in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures;
- 15.2.9 liaise, as appropriate, with the Council's Data Protection Officer;
- 15.2.10 receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;
- 15.2.11 assist in the organisation of, storage of, access to, security of and destruction of information held by the Council in paper and electronic form subject to the requirements of data protection and freedom of information legislation and other legitimate requirements (e.g., the Limitation Act 1980);
- 15.2.12 arrange for legal deeds to be executed *(see also standing order 23)*;
- 15.2.13 arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with its financial regulations;
- 15.2.14 record every planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response to the local planning authority;
- 15.2.15 refer a planning application received by the Council to the Community and Environment committee Chairman or in his absence the committee's Vice-Chairman (if there is one), weekly each Monday in order to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of Community and Environment committee;
- 15.2.16 manage access to information about the Council via the publication scheme;
- 15.2.17 retain custody of the seal of the Council (if there is one) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect (see also standing order 23).
- 15.2.18 Undertake activity or responsibilities instructed by resolution or contained in standing orders. Respond to any complaints from members of the public in relation to council policy.

## **16. RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

- 16.1 The Council shall appoint appropriate staff member(s) to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Officer is absent.
- 16.2 The duties of the Responsible Financial Officer are set out in the Financial Regulations.

## **17. ACCOUNTS AND ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

- 17.1 “Proper practices” in standing orders refer to the most recent version of “Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners’ Guide”.
- 17.2 All payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the Council’s financial regulations.
- 17.3 The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each committee as soon as practicable after 30 September in each year a statement to summarise:
- 17.3.1 the Council’s income and expenditure);
  - 17.3.2 the Council’s aggregate income and expenditure for the year to date;
  - 17.3.3 the balances held at the end of the quarter being reported and which includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends.
- 17.4 As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:
- 17.4.1 each councillor with a statement summarising the Council’s income and expenditure for the last quarter and the year to date for information; and
  - 17.4.2 to the Council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 1 of the annual governance and accountability return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- 17.5 The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and apply the form of accounts determined by the Council (receipts and payments, or income and expenditure) for the year to 31 March. A completed draft annual governance and accountability return shall be presented to all councillors at least 14 days prior to anticipated approval by the Council. The annual governance and accountability return of the Council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to the Council for consideration and formal approval before 30 June.
- 17.6 In determining its estimates and precept requests, the Council shall follow an annual budget cycle.
- 17.7 The Responsible Financial Officer shall, within the context of the Council’s overall financial position, report to the subsequent meeting of the Committee authorised by the Council to have oversight and general control of financial matters variances in excess of £3,000, progress and exceptions towards agreed strategic objectives, expenditure to September of earmarked reserves and cases made by Committees for the retention of unspent balances.
- 17.8 Individual committees shall differentiate between temporary (one-off) and permanent (recurring) spending plans in reporting.
- 17.9 The Committee authorised by the Council to have oversight and general control of financial matters shall make recommendations for in year changes to committee budgets and/or reserves to Council

at its meeting following the review process.

- 17.10 The process of establishing budgets for the subsequent financial year shall be based on mid-year review at the meetings of Committees following the availability of October accounting figures:
- 17.10.1 committees shall assess where budget increases and decreases are required for the following year. Proposed increases must link to the Council's strategic objectives and their justification recorded. All changes must be categorised one off or recurring;
  - 17.10.2 the Responsible Financial Officer shall advise of any 'technical' budget changes such as pensions increases and pay awards which must be taken into account;
  - 17.10.3 the Responsible Financial Officer shall recommend for the following year a budget based on current year budget review to the Committee authorised by the Council to have oversight and general control of financial matters;
  - 17.10.4 the Committee authorised by the Council to have oversight and general control of financial matters shall make a recommendation to the Council;
  - 17.10.5 the Council shall approve written estimates for the coming financial year at a meeting before the end of January;
  - 17.10.6 the Council shall set a budget for the following financial year with a clear understanding of the relationship between temporary and permanent (one off and recurring) spending plans and the available methods of funding such as grants, income, precept and one-off reserves.
- 17.11 There shall be an annual review of out-turn figures. The Responsible Financial Officer shall summarise the Council committees their financial and operational performance against budgets, earmarked reserves and strategic objectives and final accounts.
- 17.12 The Committee authorised by the Council to have oversight and general control of financial matters, will view the overall outturn position of all committees against budgets, earmarked reserves and strategic objectives and final accounts and shall make a report for consideration by the Council.
- 17.13 At every ordinary meeting Committees shall review their spend against budgets with a view to making recommendations at mid-year review and budget setting stages, taking the necessary advice from the Responsible Financial Officer. This process shall be in addition to regular monitoring by those responsible for the Council's accounts.

## **18. FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND PROCUREMENT**

- 18.1 The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:
- 18.1.1 the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;
  - 18.1.2 the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council;
  - 18.1.3 the work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually;
  - 18.1.4 the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the Council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and
  - 18.1.5 whether contracts with an estimated value below **£30,000** due to special circumstances

are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.

- 18.2 Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually for fitness of purpose.
- 18.3 **A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £30,000 but less than the relevant thresholds in standing order 18.6 is subject to the “light touch arrangements under Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 unless it proposes to use an existing list of approved suppliers (framework agreement).**
- 18.4 Subject to additional requirements in the financial regulations of the Council, the tender process for contracts for the supply of goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall include, as a minimum, the following steps:
- 18.4.1 a specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall be drawn up;
- 18.4.2 an invitation to tender shall be drawn up to confirm (i) the Council’s specification, (ii) the time, date and address for the submission of tenders, (iii) the date of the Council’s written response to the tender, and (iv) the prohibition on prospective contractors contacting councillors or staff to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process;
- 18.4.3 the invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper and in any other manner that is appropriate;
- 18.4.4 tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
- 18.4.5 tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least one councillor after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed;
- 18.4.6 tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
- 18.5 Neither the Council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.
- 18.6 **Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time, the Council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016 apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the Council must comply with procurement rules.**

## **19. HANDLING STAFF MATTERS**

- 19.1 A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of Council or Council’s Human Resources Committee is subject to standing order 11.
- 19.2 Subject to the Council’s policy regarding absences from work, the Council’s most senior member of staff shall be notified. In their absence, the member of staff shall notify the Chairman of Council or the HR Committee chairman who shall inform attending members of staff.
- 19.3 A review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Chief Officer shall be undertaken by Members in accordance with the Council’s Employment Policies. The performance review of all other employees shall be conducted by their line manager in accordance with the Council’s policies. All reviews and appraisal shall be reported to the HR Committee.
- 19.4 Grievances by any member of staff will be dealt with in accordance with the Council’s Grievance Procedure.

- 19.5 Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat as confidential the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters.
- 19.6 In accordance with standing order 11.1, persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing order 19.5.
- 19.7 The Council will set out its employment policies in its Employee Handbook and will bring them to the attention of staff. Delegation in respect of administering these will be included in Terms of Reference and Delegation.

## **20. RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION**

*See also standing order 21.*

- 20.1 **In accordance with freedom of information legislation, the Council shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme and respond to requests for information held by the Council.**
- 20.2 **The Council, shall publish information in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015.**
- 20.3 Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the Chairman of the Council. The appropriate committee shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) including exercising the powers of the Proper Officer in respect of FOI requests.

## **21. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION**

*Below is not an exclusive list. See also standing order 11.*

- 21.1 **The Council shall appoint a Data Protection Officer.**
- 21.2 **The Council shall have policies and procedures in place to respond to an individual exercising statutory rights concerning his personal data.**
- 21.3 **The Council shall have a written policy in place for responding to and managing a personal data breach.**
- 21.4 **The Council shall keep a record of all personal data breaches comprising the facts relating to the personal data breach, its effects and the remedial action taken.**
- 21.5 **The Council shall ensure that information communicated in its privacy notice(s) is in an easily accessible and available form and kept up to date.**
- 21.6 **The Council shall maintain a written record of its processing activities.**

## **22. RELATIONS WITH PRESS/MEDIA**

Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's Communications and Marketing Policy.

## **23. EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS**

*See also standing orders 15.2.12 and 15.2.17.*

23.1 A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.

23.2 **Subject to standing order 23.1, any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

#### **24. COMMUNICATING WITH UNITARY COUNCILLORS**

24.1 An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the Unitary Council representing the area of the Council.

24.2 Unless the Council determines otherwise, a copy of each letter sent to the Unitary Council shall be sent to the ward councillor(s) representing the area of the Council.

24.3 The Proper Officer shall make arrangements to invite all councillors of the Unitary Council who represent the electoral Ward entirely or partly within the boundary of the council to meet informally with the Council at intervals to be determined by the Council.

#### **25. RESTRICTIONS ON COUNCILLOR ACTIVITIES**

25.1 Unless duly authorised no councillor shall:

25.1.1 inspect any land and/or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or

25.1.2 issue orders, instructions or directions.

#### **26. STANDING ORDERS GENERALLY**

26.1 All or part of a standing order, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, may be suspended by resolution in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda for a meeting.

26.2 A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice by at least 5 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9.

26.3 Whenever the Standing Orders are reviewed by Council, they shall be the subject of an advance report by the Proper Officer, clearly indicating the proposed changes.

26.4 The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible.

26.5 The decision of the chairman of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

26.6 A councillor's failure to observe standing orders more than 3 times in one meeting may result in them being excluded from the meeting in accordance with standing orders.

26.7 Canvassing of and recommendations by councillors

26.7.1 Canvassing councillors or the members of a committee or sub-committee, directly or indirectly, for appointment to or by the Council shall disqualify the candidate from such an appointment. The Proper Officer shall disclose the requirements of this standing order to every candidate.

26.7.2 A councillor or a member of a committee or sub-committee shall not solicit a person for appointment by the Council or recommend a person for promotion; but, nevertheless,

any councillor or a member of a committee or sub-committee may give a written testimonial of a candidate's ability, experience or character for submission to the Council with an application for appointment, providing that councillor or member of a committee or sub-committee is not involved in the appointment process.

- 26.7.3 This standing order shall apply to tenders as if the person making the tender were a candidate for an appointment.

## **27. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

- 27.1 The Council shall deal with complaints made against it or against any Officer or Member in accordance with the Complaints Procedure adopted by the Council, except for those complaints which should be properly directed to the Monitoring Officer or to any other regulatory body listed in the Complaints Procedure for consideration.

## **28. MOBILE PHONES**

- 28.1 Mobile phones must be switched off or on to "silent" mode at all times during meetings of Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups. The only exception to this is where due to wholly exceptional circumstances the Chairman has agreed prior to the meeting that the mobile phone might be left on.

## **29. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS**

- 29.1 The Council will facilitate the Annual Town Meeting of Electors, to be held between the 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June (both inclusive), each year.
- 29.2 The Council will fix the day and time of the Annual Town Meeting of Electors but it must not commence earlier than 6pm.
- 29.3 At least 7 days public notice must be given of the meeting, specifying the time and place thereof and the business to be transacted.
- 29.4 The press and public have the same rights of admission as they have to a meeting of the Town Council.
- 29.5 The Council Chairman if present presides at the Annual Town Meeting of Electors or in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman. If neither are present, the meeting elects a Chairman from the local government electors for the Parish who are present.