

# HONINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Standing Orders

Agreed at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018  
Date for Review: February 2019

### Overview of the Standing Orders

Standing orders are the written rules of a local council. They are used to confirm a council's internal organisational, administrative and procurement procedures and procedural matters for meetings. They are not the same as the policies of a council but they may refer to them. A local council must have standing orders for the procurement of contracts.

Meetings of full council, councillors, the Responsible Financial Officer and Proper Officer are subject to many statutory requirements. A council should have standing orders to confirm those statutory requirements. A council should have standing orders to control the number, place, quorum, notices and other procedures for committee and sub-committee meetings because these are subject to fewer statutory requirements. If it does not, committees and sub-committees may adopt their own standing orders.

Model standing orders that are in bold type contain statutory requirements. It is recommended that councils adopt them without changing them. Other model standing orders not in bold are designed to help councils operate effectively but 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 model standing orders and includes a non-councillor with or without voting rights unless otherwise stated.

A model standing order that includes brackets like this '( )' requires information to be inserted by a council. A model standing order that includes the term 'OR' provides alternative options for a council to choose from when determining standing orders.

The model standing orders do not include model financial regulations. Financial regulations are standing orders to regulate and control the financial affairs and accounting procedures of a local council. The financial regulations, as opposed to the standing orders of a council, include most of the requirements relevant to the Responsible Financial Officer.

## 1. Rules of debate at meetings

- a 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. No motion will be a negative motion. Only one proposal can be accepted in any one motion.
- b A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.
- c A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the chairman of the meeting as withdrawn.
- d 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.
- e An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.
- f If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.
- g 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.

## 2. Disorderly conduct at meetings

- a No person (councillor or member of the public) 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 such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- b If person(s) disregard 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 excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.
- c If a resolution made under standing order 2(b) above 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**

- a. **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.**
- b. **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.**
- c. **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. (Mandatory for Committee Meetings only)**
- d. **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.**
- e. Members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. There is no obligation on the Chairman or the Clerk to reply to questions at that time. Public cannot request that letters are read out to the meeting. Correspondence of relevance to meetings is advertised on the website.
- f. The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(e) above shall not exceed 15 minutes (max 3 minutes per person) unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- g. In accordance with standing order 3(e) above, 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.
- h. A councillor or member of the public who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the chairman of the meeting.
- i. 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.

- j. **Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is permitted**, please advise the Chairman or Clerk prior to the commencement of the meeting. If disruptive to the meeting the Chairman may ask the member of the public to leave.
- k. **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.**
- l. **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chairman of the Council may in his absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chairman of the Council (if any).**
- m. **The Chairman, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chairman is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chairman, 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.**
- n. **Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors or councillors with voting rights present and voting.**
- o. **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.** (excepting in the election of a Chairman)
- p. **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 moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.
- q. The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:
  - i. the time and place of the meeting;
  - ii. the names of councillors present and absent;
  - iii. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
  - iv. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
  - v. if there was a public participation session and a very brief summary of that.
  - vi. the resolutions made.

- r. **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.**
- s. **No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three. See standing order 4d(viii) below for the quorum of a committee or sub-committee meeting.**
- t. **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.**
- u. A meeting shall not exceed a period of two hours.

#### **4. Committees and sub-committees**

- a The council determines the terms of reference for a committee.
- b **Unless the council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee. The members of a committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the council.**
- c **Unless the council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.**

#### **5. Ordinary council meetings**

- a **In an election year, the annual parish council meeting shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the new councillors elected take office.**
- b **In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of a council shall be held on such day in May as the council may direct.**
- c **If no other time is fixed, the annual parish council meeting shall take place at 6pm.**
- d **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 directs.**
- e **The first business conducted at the annual parish council meeting shall be the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (if any) of the Council.**

- f **The Chairman of the Council, unless he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual parish council meeting until his successor is elected at the next annual parish council meeting.**
- g **The Vice-Chairman of the Council, if any, unless he 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.**
- h **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 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 must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- i **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 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 must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- j Following the election of the Chairman of the Council and Vice-Chairman (if any) of the Council at the annual meeting of the council, the business of the annual parish council meeting shall include:
  - i. **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;**
  - ii. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the council.

## **6. Extraordinary meetings of the council and committees and sub-committees**

- a **The Chairman of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council at any time.** The public notice giving the time, place and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the Chairman.
- b **If the Chairman of the Council does not or refuses to 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 must be signed by the two councillors.**

## **7. Previous resolutions**

- a 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.

## **8. Voting on appointments**

- a 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**

- a 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 7 clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.
- b The Proper Officer will discuss the motion with the Chairman before it is included on the agenda. The final decision concerning its inclusion rests with the Proper Officer. The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 9(b) above, correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion. If the motion is unclear in its meaning then the Proper Officer can withhold it.

## **10. Motions at a meeting that do not require written notice**

- a The following motions may be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer:
  - i. to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;
  - ii. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;
  - iii. to change the order of business on the agenda;
  - iv. to extend the time limits for speaking;
  - v. to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest;
  - vi. to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
  - vii. to temporarily suspend the meeting;

- viii. to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory requirements).

## **11. Handling confidential or sensitive information**

- a The agenda, papers that support the agenda and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential or sensitive information which for special reasons would not be in the public interest.
- b Councillors and staff shall not disclose confidential or sensitive information which for special reasons would not be in the public interest.

## **12. Draft minutes**

- a 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.
- b 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(a)(i) above.
- c 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.
- d Upon 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. These include notes taken during the meeting.

## **13. Code of conduct and dispensations**

- a All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the council.
- b 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 disclosable pecuniary interest. He may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he had the interest.
- c 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.

- d **Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer** as soon as possible before the meeting, and taken as detailed in the Council's Code of Conduct Policy.
- e **A dispensation may be granted if having regard to all relevant circumstances the following applies:**

**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 or granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the council's area or it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.**

- f All councillors shall undertake training in the code of conduct within six months of the delivery of their acceptance form.

## **14. Code of conduct complaints**

- a Upon notification by the District 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, report this to the council.
- b Where the notification relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chairman of Council 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.
- c The council may:
  - i. provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to progress an investigation of the complaint or is required by law;
  - ii. seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter.
- d **Upon notification by the District 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 and Responsible Financial Officer

- a The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.
- b The Proper Officer shall:
- i. **at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee and a sub-committee serve on councillors, by email or hard copy to their residences, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda.**
  - ii. **give public notice of the time, place and agenda at least three clear days before a meeting of the council or a meeting of a committee or a sub-committee (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the council convened by councillors is signed by them);**
  - iii. **convene a meeting of full council for the election of a new Chairman of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in his office;**
  - iv. facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors;
  - v. **receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities;**
  - vi. retain acceptance of office forms from councillors;
  - vii. retain a copy of every councillor's register of interests;
  - viii. assist with responding to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998, in accordance with and subject to the council's policies and procedures relating to the same;
  - ix. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;
  - x. manage the organisation, storage of, access to and destruction of information held by the council in paper and electronic form;
  - xi. arrange for legal deeds to be executed;
  - x. The Proper Officer, as Responsible Financial Officer is also required to undertake all financial matters according to proper practices as detailed in "Governance and Accountability 2016". (Please refer Job Description of the Proper Officer for full details on this matter). The Clerk / RFO is able to spend (L G Act 1972 s101) up to £100 in an emergency, but must advise the Chairman or Vice-Chairman in his absence.

## 16 Financial Regulations

These are detailed in the Policy document "Financial Regulations"

- i. Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly.
- ii. **Financial regulations shall confirm that a proposed contract for the supply of goods, materials, services and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of [£60,000] shall be procured on the basis of a formal tender as summarised below.**
- iii. 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:

- iv. a specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall be drawn up;
- v. 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;
- vi. the invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper and in any other manner that is appropriate.
- vii. tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer. 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. Tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
- viii. The council is not obliged to take the lowest tender
- ix. **Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed £138,893 (or other threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time) the council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No. 5, as amended) and the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No. 6, as amended) apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the council must comply with EU procurement rules.**

## 16. Handling staff matters

- a A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of council is a confidential matter.
- b The council shall keep all written records relating to employees secure. All paper records shall be secured and locked and electronic records shall be password protected and encrypted.

## 17. Requests for information

- a Requests for information held by the council shall be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

## 18. Relations with the press/media

Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, should be undertaken by the Proper Officer in liaison with the Chairman.

## **19. Execution and sealing of legal deeds**

- a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the council unless authorised by a resolution. **Any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

## **20. Communicating with District and County councillors**

- a An invitation to attend a meeting of the council shall be sent, together with the agenda.

## **21. Restrictions on councillor activities**

Unless authorised by a resolution, no councillor shall inspect any land and/or premises which the council has a right or duty to inspect; or issue orders, instructions or directions.

## **22. Data Protection**

The Council is the Data Controller and the Parish Clerk is the Data Protection Officer. All councillors and staff must understand about Data Protection.

## **23. Standing orders generally**

- a All or part of a standing order, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory requirements, may be suspended by resolution in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda for a meeting.
- b The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the council's standing orders to councillors
- c The decision of the chairman of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.
- d Standing Orders should be regularly reviewed with recommendations for change being made to the Council by the Proper Officer and the reasons for those changes.