

Earsham Parish Council – Standing Orders

1. Councillors

1.01 Following election or co-option to the Council, each Councillor will be issued with a copy of the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders of the Council. They will sign the form of Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Councillor in the presence of the Clerk of the Council, or of a Councillor who has been specifically designated by the Council for this purpose.

1.02 All Councillors will observe the Code of Conduct at all times when on Council business and no member will act in such a way that will bring the Council into disrepute, behave offensively in meetings or obstruct the Council's business.

1.03 The Code of Conduct adopted by the Council will define when a Councillor will declare a personal or prejudicial interest in an item for discussion at a Council meeting. The Councillor will declare that interest and the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity.

1.04 Provided that they continue to be returned in any elections that are held, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall serve in their respective capacities for a term of not more than four consecutive years. Thereafter, a period of at least two years must elapse before either can serve a further term in their previous capacities.

2. Annual Meetings

2.01 If the Annual Meeting is in an election year it must be held within 14 days after that election. If it is not an election year then the annual meeting will take place on an appropriate day in May.

2.02 If the outgoing Chairman is available then he/she will preside until a new Chairman has been elected. The first business of the Annual Meeting will be the election of the Chairman (and Vice Chairman, if appropriate).

2.03 The Chairman (even if he be the same one as previously), must complete a Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Chairman. The Vice Chairman does not have to do so.

2.04 The retiring Chairman will report on the activities of the Council for the preceding year.

3. Meetings

3.01 Meetings will be held in appropriate, accessible accommodation. Unless no other accommodation is available the meetings will not be held in rooms used for the supply of alcohol. No meeting should exceed two hours in duration, unless by agreement with fellow councilors, and will start promptly at 7.30pm

3.02 An agreed frequency of meetings will be decided at the Annual Meeting and Councillors will be advised of the meetings by the issue of a summons and agenda delivered by email, post, or by hand. The agenda may be delivered by email provided the Council has previously agreed to this. In any case the agenda must be issued at least three clear business days before the meeting. Members must notify the Clerk if they are unable to attend the meeting.

3.03 Public notices will be posted in conspicuous places informing members of the public of the venue, time, date and business to be transacted at the meeting. The notice will be posted at least three clear working days before the meeting.

3.04 Meetings will be open to the public and press but they may be temporarily excluded from the meeting if the business is regarded as confidential.

3.05 Members of the public may speak at Council meetings only at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting.

3.06 The agenda for the meeting will be agreed by the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman as appropriate. The agenda will always include an item to enable Councillors to declare interests. An opportunity for public questions will be made available twice during the meeting, once near the beginning of the meeting and again just before the conclusion of the meeting.

3.07 The Council may only take decisions on items clearly specified on the agenda; if agreed by the chairman, any urgent items which are not on the agenda may be discussed, but no decision may be made, at that meeting.

3.08 The Chairman of the Council will preside at the meeting and will be responsible for the conduct of that meeting. All reports and remarks must be made to the Chairman and Members will respect the right of other Members to speak without interruption. If the Chairman is not present then the Vice Chairman will preside. If they are not present then the first matter on the agenda will be the election of an appropriate Councillor who will chair the meeting. Whoever chairs the meeting will assume the duties of the Chairman for the meeting.

3.09 The quorum for the Council will be one third of the total Councillor places but in any case not fewer than 3. If there be insufficient members present then no business will be transacted and a fresh notice will be issued to reconvene the meeting at a later date.

3.10 If at any time during the meeting it ceases to be quorate then the meeting will be adjourned and any further business carried forward to the meeting when next convened.

3.11 Voting at the meeting shall be by a show of hands unless a majority of Councillors wants a ballot. Only the proposer and seconder will be recorded in the minutes unless a Councillor requests that their vote is noted. A Councillor may also request that the Clerk records how each Councillor has voted, including abstentions. Any request of this nature will be made before moving on to the next business.

3.12 In cases of equal votes the Chairman (or other person presiding) will have a second or casting vote.

3.13 A minute of the meeting will be kept by the Clerk or other nominated person in the Clerk's absence. The minutes which are circulated will be draft minutes until they are approved by the Parish Council at their next meeting and signed by the person presiding at that meeting.

3.14 With regard to planning applications - if there is a personal interest a statement can be made to the Parish Council meeting but then the person must leave the meeting while discussions take place

4. Finance

4.01 The Responsible Finance Officer (*RFO*) is a statutory office and appointed by the Council. The Clerk of the Council will take on this role of managing the Council's financial affairs in accordance with Earsham Parish Council Financial Regulations which form a part of the Governance paperwork of this Council.

4.02 In an emergency the Chairman will be able to authorize the spending of up to £250 without consulting the parish council. The amount spent will be reported and minuted at the following parish council meeting.

5. Risk Assessment

5.01 A risk assessment will be undertaken of all the activities of the Council and a report approved by the Council. This assessment will also cover the appropriateness of the internal audit arrangements. The Risk Assessment will be reviewed annually.

5.02 If the Council undertakes a new activity not covered by the existing risk assessment an assessment will be undertaken before the activity commences.

6. Freedom of Information

The Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and has adopted a Publication Scheme based on the ICO Model Publication Scheme for Parish Councils. The Clerk will ensure the Council conforms to the requirements of the Act allowing public access to the appropriate documents.

7. Clerk to the Council

7.01 The Council may appoint employees to assist it in the performance of its duties. The Council will appoint a Clerk to the Council which will be on an employed basis, unless the Clerk is a member of the Council, acting in an unpaid capacity.

7.02 The Clerk will act as the Proper Officer of the Council, and he/she will: receive the Declarations of Acceptance of Office and notices disclosing interests; sign documents on behalf of the Council and issue agendas and notices of meetings; receive and distribute plans and documents on behalf of the Council; and also advise the bank of changes to mandates with the bank.

7.03 The Clerk will act as Responsible Financial Officer.

7.04 As an employee of the Council the Clerk is covered by employment legislation dealing with employment rights, discrimination in employment, unfair dismissal, redundancy and similar matters. The Clerk will therefore have a Job Description and a Contract of Employment stating the terms and conditions under which he/she is employed. This will effectively be administered by the Chairman or designated Councillor acting with the authority of the Council.

8. Committees and task and finish groups

The Council from time to time may set up committees and task-and-finish groups to undertake work on behalf of the Council. The Council will set their Terms of Reference, and they will report periodically to the Council.

9. Emergency Business

Should it not be appropriate to convene a special meeting then any emergency business will be handled by the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and one other Councillor. Actions will be reported promptly to the Council.

10. Alteration or Reversal of previous decisions

Decisions of the Council will not be revised within 6 months, except in cases where four Councillors have asked to revisit the decision, or new information comes to light and is considered important enough to discuss the previous decision before the 6 months expires.

11. Standing Orders

11.01 These standing orders will be reviewed periodically and any amendments will be decided by the Council.

11.02 During meetings, the Chairman's decision as to the interpretation of the standing orders will be final.

11.03 The Council may resolve to suspend a Standing Order, in order to progress business of the Council, and such decision will be included in the minutes. The suspension will not be taken lightly and it will be time-limited.

Reviewed on - 6th October 2021

Signed by - Stephen Wood

(Chairman)