



Geldeston Parish Council standing orders

September 2024

The purpose of standing orders is to allow the Parish Council to conduct its affairs in an orderly, open, and efficient manner. The Parish Council wishes to be inclusive in the conduct of its meetings, to draw on local knowledge and expertise and make decisions through consensus whenever possible. Council shall rely on the formal rules for the conduct of meetings set out below when required by legislation (**set out in bold type**) or circumstances at a meeting. (See also standing order 24).

1. Meetings generally

- a) Council meetings are normally held in the village hall. **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. No alcohol may be consumed during meetings.**
- b) **Council meetings may be held virtually under Government guidance.**
- c) **A minimum of three clear days' notice will be given for every meeting of the Council and its committees. The minimum three clear days 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.**
- d) **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.**
- e) **All 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.**
- f) 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.
- g) The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall be in accordance with the agenda and shall not exceed 10 minutes, unless directed by the chairperson of the meeting. At the discretion of the chairperson members of the

public may participate at other times in a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

- h) Subject to standing order 1 f) above, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
- i) In accordance with standing order 1 e) above, a question posed by a member of the public shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chairperson of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given or that the discussion be deferred to another meeting.
- j) A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and shall only speak at the invitation of the chairperson.
- k) A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the chairperson of the meeting.
- l) Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairperson of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- m) **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.**
- n) **Meetings may be recorded subject to the provisions in the Council's communication policy.**
- o) **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the chairperson of the Council may in her or his absence be done by, to or before the vice-chairperson of the Council (if any).**
- p) **The chairperson, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the chairperson is absent from a meeting, the vice-chairperson, if present, shall preside. If both the chairperson and the vice-chairperson are absent from a meeting, a councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.**
- q) **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.**
- r) **The chairperson 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 her or his casting vote whether or not s/he gave an original vote.**
See standing orders under 5 below for the different rules that apply in the election of the chairperson of the Council at the annual meeting of the council.
- s) **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 their vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.**
- t) **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 their right to participate and vote on that matter.

- u) **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 under 4 below for the quorum of committees or sub-committees.

- v) **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.**
- w) A meeting shall not usually exceed a period of 2 hours.
- x) Draft minutes of a meeting of full council or a committee shall be published as soon as possible and no later than three weeks after a meeting has taken place.
- y) The minutes of a meeting shall include, but not be limited to, an accurate record of the following:
 1. the time and place of the meeting.
 2. the names of councillors present and absent; and apologies for absence received.
 3. A record of the number of members of the public attending.
 4. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights.
 5. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered.
 6. if there was a public participation session; and
 7. the resolutions made.

2. Conduct at meetings

- a) Council requires its members, officers and members of the public to conduct themselves in such a way that Council can complete its business and discharge its responsibilities in an orderly, efficient way and within the resources available.
- b) Council members, officers and volunteers have a right to carry out their duties free from intimidation, bullying and harassment. No person shall be permitted to obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the chairperson of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- c) If person(s) disregards the request of the chairperson of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chairperson 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.
- d) If a resolution made under standing order 2 c) above is ignored, the chairperson 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. 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 chairperson of the meeting.
- 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 chairperson 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) An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the chairperson of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the chairperson.
- h) A councillor may move an amendment to her or his own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be considered only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- i) If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the chairperson.
- j) Subject to standing order 3 k) below, only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the chairperson of the meeting.
- k) One or more amendments may be discussed together if the chairperson of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- l) A councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- m) The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.
- n) 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 of the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- o) Unless permitted by the chairperson of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:
 - 1. to speak on an amendment moved by another councillor.
 - 2. to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since s/he last spoke.
 - 3. to make a point of order.
 - 4. to give a personal explanation; or

5. in exercise of a right of reply.
- p) During the debate of 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 s/he considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting s/he is concerned by.
 - q) A point of order shall be decided by the chairperson of the meeting whose decision shall be final.
 - r) When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:
 1. to amend the motion.
 2. to proceed to the next business.
 3. to adjourn the debate.
 4. to put the motion to a vote.
 5. to ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting.
 6. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration.
 7. to exclude the public and press
 8. to adjourn the meeting; or.
 9. to suspend particular standing order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory requirements.
 - s) Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the chairperson 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 her/his right of reply.
 - t) Excluding motions moved under, standing order 3 r) above, 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 chairperson of the meeting.

4. Committees

- a) The council may appoint standing committees, other committees and working groups as may be necessary.
- b) 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 a working group may be non-councillors.
- d) Council shall determine the terms of reference of all committees and working groups.
- e) In addition, Council shall:
 1. determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee up until the date of the next annual meeting of full council.
 2. after it has appointed the members of a standing committee, appoint the chairperson of the standing committee.

3. permit a committee or group, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings.
 4. subject to standing orders 4 b) and c) above, appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee.
 5. may, subject to standing orders 4 b) and c) above, appoint and determine the terms of office of the substitute members to a committee whose role is to replace the ordinary members at a meeting of a committee if the ordinary members of the committee confirm to the Proper Officer 7 days before the meeting that they are unable to attend;
 6. permit a committee other than a standing committee, to appoint its own chairperson at the first meeting of the committee.
 7. determine the notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee which shall be no less than three.
 8. determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee.
 9. 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.
 10. determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and
 11. may dissolve a committee.
- f) 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 chairperson of the meeting.

5. Annual council meetings

- a) **In an election year, the annual meeting of the council 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 meeting of the council 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 meeting of the council shall be the election of the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Council (see 4 f).**
- f) **The chairperson of the Council, unless s/he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until a successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the council.**

- g) The vice-chairperson of the Council, if any, unless s/he resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the chairperson of the Council at the next annual meeting of the council.**
- h) In an election year, if the current chairperson of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the council, s/he shall preside at the meeting until a successor chairperson of the Council has been elected. The current chairperson of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new chairperson 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 chairperson of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the council, s/he shall preside at the meeting until a new chairperson of the Council has been elected. S/he may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new chairperson of the Council and must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- j) Following the election of the chairperson of the Council and vice-chairperson (if any) of the Council at the annual meeting of the council, the business of the annual meeting shall include:**
 - 1. in an election year, delivery by the chairperson of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date.**
 - 2. in a year which is not an election year, delivery by the chairperson of the Council of her/his acceptance of office form unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date.**
 - 3. confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the council.
 - 4. determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the full council up to and including the next annual meeting of full council.
 - 5. review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities.
 - 6. review of the terms of reference for committees.
 - 7. appointment of members to existing committees.
 - 8. appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing orders under 4 above.
 - 9. confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.
 - 10. review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations.
 - 11. review of arrangements, including any charters and agency agreements, with other local authorities and review of contributions made to expenditure incurred by other local authorities.
 - 12. review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back.
 - 13. 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.

- k) Council will also review its inventory of land and assets including buildings and office equipment; council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies; all its policy documents, or it will set a date for the review of these matters at the earliest opportunity.

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

- a) **The chairperson of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.**
- b) **Two councillors may request an extraordinary meeting by writing to the chairperson of the Council. If the chairperson 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.**
- c) The chairperson of a committee or a sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or the sub-committee at any time.
- d) If the chairperson of a committee or a sub-committee does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting within seven days of having been requested by to do so by two members of the committee or the sub-committee, any two members of the committee and the sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of a committee and a sub-committee.

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 3 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 8 below, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.
- b) When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 7 a) above has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved within a further six months.

8. Motions that require written notice to be given to the Proper Officer

- a) A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting at which it is considered 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.
- b) 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 10 clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.
- c) The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 8 b) above, correct grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.

- d) If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 8 b) above is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it in writing to the Proper Officer so that it can be understood at least 7 clear days before the meeting.
- e) If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the chairperson of the forthcoming meeting or, if applicable, the councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.
- f) Subject to standing order 8 e) above, the decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.
- g) Motions received shall be recorded and numbered in the order that they are received.
- h) Motions rejected shall be recorded with an explanation by the Proper Officer for their rejection.

9. 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:
 - 1. to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting.
 - 2. to move to a vote.
 - 3. to defer consideration of a motion.
 - 4. to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee.
 - 5. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting.
 - 6. to change the order of business on the agenda.
 - 7. to proceed to the next business on the agenda.
 - 8. to require a written report.
 - 9. to appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members.
 - 10. to extend the time limits for speaking.
 - 11. to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest.
 - 12. to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public.
 - 13. to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct.
 - 14. to temporarily suspend the meeting.
 - 15. to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory requirements);
 - 16. to adjourn the meeting.
 - 17. to close a meeting.

10. 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.

11. 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 9 a) 1 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 chairperson of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- d) If the chairperson of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, s/he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect: "The chairperson of this meeting does not consider that the minutes of the meeting of Geldeston Parish Council held on [date] in respect of () were a correct record in respect ofbut her/his view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings."
- e) 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.
- f) Draft minutes of a meeting of full council or a committee shall be published as soon as possible and no later than three weeks after a meeting has taken place.

12. Code of conduct and dispensations

See also standing order 1 t) above.

- a) All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the council.
- b) Unless s/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 s/he has a disclosable pecuniary interest. S/he may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which s/he had the interest.
- c) Unless granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which s/he has another interest if so required by the council's code of conduct. S/he may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which s/he had the interest.

- d) **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.**
- e) A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by the Proper Officer or by a meeting of the council, or committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required and that decision is final.
- f) A dispensation request shall confirm:
 1. the description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;
 2. whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting, in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;
 3. the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and
 4. an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- g) Subject to standing orders 12 d) and f) above, dispensations requests shall be considered by the Proper Officer before the meeting or, if this is not possible, at the beginning of the meeting of the council, or committee or a sub-committee for which the dispensation is required.
- h) **A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 12 e) above if having regard to all relevant circumstances the following applies:**
 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; or**
 2. **granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the council's area;**
 3. **it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.**

13. Code of conduct complaints

- a) Upon notification by the District 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 10 above, report this to the council.
- b) Where the notification in standing order 13 a) above relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the chairperson of Council of this fact, and the chairperson 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 13 d) below.
- c) The council may:
 1. provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to progress an investigation of the complaint or is required by law;

2. 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. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.

14. Proper Officer

- a) The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or (ii) Council 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:
 1. at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee and a sub-committee serve on councillors a summons, by email, confirming the time, place and the agenda provided any such email contains the electronic signature and title of the Proper Officer.

See standing order 1 b) above for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 1 c) above for a meeting of a committee.

2. **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);**
3. subject to standing order 8 above, 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 her/his withdrawal of it;
4. convene a meeting of full council for the election of a new chairperson of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in her or his office;
5. facilitate inspection of the minutes by local government electors;
6. receive and retain copies of bye-laws made by other local authorities;
7. retain acceptance of office forms from councillors;
8. retain a copy of every councillor's register of interests;
9. 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;
10. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;
11. manage the organisation, storage of, access to and destruction of information held by the council in paper and electronic form;
12. arrange for legal deeds to be executed; (see also standing order 21 below).
13. arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the council in accordance with the council's financial regulations;

14. record every planning application notified to the council and the council's response to the local planning authority in a book for such purpose;
15. refer a planning application received by the council to the chairperson, or in her or his absence the Vice-chairperson of the Council, as soon as possible to facilitate arranging an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of the council;
16. manage access to information about the council in accordance with the Council's communications policy. See also standing order 20 below.

15. Responsible Financial Officer

- a) The council shall appoint appropriate member(s) to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Officer is absent.

16. Accounts and accounting statements

- a) "Proper practices" in standing orders refer to the most recent version of *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England*.
- a) All payments by the council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the council's financial regulations.
- a) The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each councillor at each meeting a statement to summarise:
 - a. the council's receipts and payments.
 - b. the council's aggregate receipts and payments for the year to date.
 - c. 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.
- a) As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:
 - a. each councillor with a statement summarising the council's receipts and payments for the last quarter and the year to date for information.
 - b. to the full council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 1 of the annual return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- a) The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and applying the form of accounts determined by the council for a year to 31 March. A completed draft annual return shall be presented to each councillor before the end of the following month of May. The annual return of the council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to council for consideration and formal approval before 30 June.

17. Accounts and Accounting Statements

The RFO will conduct all financial matters according to "proper practices" the detail of which is contained in the job description. These duties are detailed in the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 and in "Governance & Accountability for Local Councils".

18. Financial Controls and Procurement

- a) The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer according to proper practices, and reviewed at least every third year.
- b) whether contracts with an estimated value below £25,000 due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.
- c) A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £25,000 but less than the relevant thresholds in standing order 18(f) is subject to Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which include a requirement on the Council to advertise the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder website regardless of what other means it uses to advertise the opportunity.
- d) 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:
 - e) a specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall be drawn up;
 - f) 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;
 - g) the invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper and in any other manner that is appropriate;
 - h) tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
 - i) 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;
 - j) tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
- k) Neither the Council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.
- l) A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £181,302 for a public service or supply contract or in excess of £4,551,413 for a public works contract (or other thresholds determined by the European Commission every two years and published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)) shall comply with the relevant procurement procedures and other requirements in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which include advertising the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder website and in OJEU.

A public contract in connection with the supply of gas, heat, electricity, drinking water, transport services, or postal services to the public; or the provision of a port or airport; or the exploration for or extraction of gas, oil or solid fuel with an estimated value in excess of £363,424 for a supply, services or design contract; or in excess of £4,551,413 for a works contract; or £820,370 for a social and other specific services contract (or other thresholds determined by the European Commission every two years and published in OJEU) shall comply with the relevant procurement procedures and other requirements in the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016.

19. Handling staff matters

- a) A matter that is personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of council.
- b) Subject to the council's policy regarding absences from work, the council's most senior member of staff shall notify the chairperson.
- c) The chairperson, the vice-chairperson shall conduct a review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Clerk of the Council. The reviews and appraisal shall be reported in writing and is subject to approval by resolution by the Council.
- d) Subject to the council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the council's most senior employee shall contact the chairperson, or in his absence, the vice-chairperson of the Grievance committee in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Grievance committee.
- e) Subject to the council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by the Clerk to the Council relates to the chairperson or vice-chairperson of the Council. Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters as confidential and secure.
- f) The council shall keep all written records relating to employees secure.
- g) Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing orders 18 f) and g) above if so justified.
- h) Access and means of access by keys and/or computer passwords to records of employment referred to in standing orders 18 f) and g) above shall be provided only to the Clerk and the chairperson of the Council or a Councillor delegated as line manager.

20. Requests for information

- a) Requests for information held by the council shall be handled in accordance with the council's policy in respect of handling requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 as set out in its communications policy.
- b) Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the chairperson of the Council.

21. Relations with the press/media

- a) 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 policy.

22. Execution and sealing of legal deeds

See also standing orders 14 b) 12 above.

- a) A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the council unless authorised by a resolution.
- b) Subject to standing order 21 a) above, any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.

23. Communicating with District and County councillors

- a) An invitation to attend a meeting of the council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the District and County Council.
- b) Unless the council determines otherwise, a copy of each communication sent to the District and County Council shall be sent to the ward councillor(s) representing the area of the council.

24. Restrictions on councillor activities

- a) Unless authorised by a resolution, no councillor shall:
 - 1. inspect any land and/or premises which the council has a right or duty to inspect;
or
 - 2. issue orders, instructions or directions.
- b) Exceptionally, a councillor may undertake urgent tasks as may be deemed necessary to protect life and well-being and to ensure the integrity of council property. Such actions must be reported to Council without delay.
- c) Councillors must adhere to Council's communications policy when communicating with other organisations, the press, other media and the public.

25. 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) A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the council's standing orders, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice by at least two councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 8.
- c) The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible after s/he has delivered his acceptance of office form.
- d) The decision of the chairperson of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

26. Data Protection

- a) The Council is the Data Controller and the Parish Clerk is the Data Protection Officer.
- b) Councillors and staff must receive training about Data Protection.
- c) Data Protection is managed through a Policy.

Signed

Chairperson

Dated September 2024

Review Date October 2024