

FLAUNDEN COUNCIL - STANDING ORDERS

JULY 2017

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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.

2 Disorderly conduct at meetings

- a 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 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.
- 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, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.
- f Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's prior written consent.
- g 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.

- h 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).
- i 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.
- j 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.
- k 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.
- l 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.
- m 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
 - vi the resolutions made.
- n 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.
- o 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.
- p If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted.

4 Committees and sub-committees

- a Unless the council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.

- 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 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 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 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 meeting until his successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the council.
- 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 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;

- iii Receipt of the minutes of the last meeting of a committee;
- iv Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
- v 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;
- vi Review of the council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies;
- vii Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the full council up to and including the next annual meeting of full 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.
- 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 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.

8 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 without the necessity of giving prior notice.
- 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.

9 Code of conduct and dispensations

See also standing order 3(n) above.

- 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, 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 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:
 - i The description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;
 - ii whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;
 - iii the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and
 - iv an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.

Subject to standing orders 9 (d) and (f) above, dispensations requests shall be considered by the Proper Officer before the meeting or, if this is not possible, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required

- g A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 9(e) above if having regard to all relevant circumstances the following applies:
 - i 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

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

10 Code of conduct complaints

- a Upon notification by the District or 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.

11 Proper 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, 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.
 - ii give public notice of the time, place and agenda at least three clear days before a meeting of the council.
 - 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;

See also standing order 16 below.

- xii 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;
- xiii record every planning application notified to the council and the council's response to the local planning authority;
- xiv refer a planning application received by the council to the Chairman and the responsible councillor within two working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of the council;
- xv manage access to information about the council via the publication scheme.
- xvi retain custody of the seal of the council (if any) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.

See also standing order 16 below.

12 Responsible Financial Officer

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

13 Accounts and accounting statements

- a "Proper practices" in standing orders refer to the most recent version of Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners' Guide (England).
- b All payments by the council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the council's financial regulations.
- c The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each councillor as soon as practicable at each meeting a statement to summarise:
 - i the council's receipts and payments since the previous meeting;
 - ii the council's reserves detailing earmarked and unallocated expenditure
 - iii the balances held at the end of the quarter being reported
 - iv the council's aggregate receipts and payments for the year to date;
 and which includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends.
- d As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:
 - i each councillor with a statement summarising the council's income and expenditure for the year to date for information; and

- ii to the full council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 2 of the annual return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- e The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and applying the form of accounts determined by the council (receipts and payments, or income and expenditure) for a year to 31 March.
- f 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.

14 Financial controls and procurement

- a 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:
 - i the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;
 - ii the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the council;
 - iii 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;
 - iv the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and
 - v procurement policies (subject to standing order 14(c) below) including the setting of values for different procedures where a contract has an estimated value of less than £50,000.
- b Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually for fitness of purpose.
- c 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 £50,000 shall be procured on the basis of a formal, competitive tender. Where a contract exceeds £800 but is less than £50,000 all reasonable efforts to obtain three quotes will be made. Where a contract is less than £800 all reasonable efforts to obtain a competitive quote will be made. Where appropriate, the local authorities' database should be consulted.

15 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 policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

16 Execution and sealing of legal deeds

See also standing orders 11(b)(x) and (xv) above.

- a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the council unless authorised by a resolution.
- b Subject to standing order 16(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.

17 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 representing the area of the council.
- b Unless the council determines otherwise, a copy of each letter sent to the District and County Council shall be sent to the ward councillor(s) representing the area of the council.

18 Restrictions on councillor activities

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

19 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 2 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer.
- c The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible after he has delivered his acceptance of office form and following formal adoption of any changes.
- d The decision of the chairman of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

20 Charitable donations

No financial support, or regular donation, to charity will be made except where that charity has a specific purpose or beneficial interest within the Parish boundary.

21 Co-option of members

Where a vacancy occurs on the council, if there are not at least 10 signatures of electors requesting a poll, then the Council may co-opt new members. The vacancy must be advertised on local notice boards for a minimum of 14 days.

Candidates shall provide a short account in writing for the Council to consider. Candidates may be invited to attend a meeting at which current Councillors may ask them questions.

If there are more candidates than vacancies, then a vote of the Council will take place by show of hands, or by written ballot if the majority of members of the council have so requested.

If the result of the vote is that there is not an overall majority in favour of one person, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh ballot taken, and so on until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person.

If there is more than one candidate having the least number of votes the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote to determine which candidate shall be struck off the list, and a fresh ballot taken, and so on until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person.

Approved at meeting: 10 July 2017

Signed Chair: Vivienne Adams