

# **ALPRAHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

## **STANDING ORDERS**

**Taken from the Model Standing Orders for Smaller Parish Councils**

**Adopted 31 May 2016**

## Contents

1	Councillors.....	4
1.1.	Declaration of Acceptance of Office.....	4
1.2.	Code of Conduct.....	4
1.3.	Declaration of Interests .....	4
2	Annual Meetings.....	4
2.1.	Timing of Annual Meeting.....	4
2.2.	Election of New Chair.....	4
2.3	Retiring Chair.....	4
3.	Meetings.....	4
3.1.	Premises for Meetings.....	4
3.2.	Frequency of Meetings.....	4
3.3	Dates of Meetings.....	4
3.4	Advertising Meetings .....	4
3.5	Public/Press Access to the Meeting .....	5
3.6	Public Taking Part in the Meeting.....	5
3.7	Agenda Content.....	5
3.8	Order of Agenda Items .....	5
3.9	Chair of the Meeting .....	5
3.10	Quorum.....	5
3.11	If a Councillor Leaves Early .....	5
3.12	Voting.....	5
3.13	Casting Vote.....	5
3.14	Minutes.....	5
3.15	Planning Applications: Personal Interests.....	6
4	Finance .....	6
4.1	Responsible Finance Office (Responsible Financial Officer).....	6
4.2	Budget and Precept.....	6
4.3	Income and Expenditure.....	6
4.4	Completion of Annual Accounts.....	6
4.5	Internal Audit .....	6
4.6	Annual Financial Statements.....	6
4.7	Internal Auditor .....	6
4.8	Annual Audited Accounts .....	6
4.9	Bank Mandate .....	6
4.10	Cheque Signatories.....	7
4.11	Expenditure .....	7
4.12.	Utility Bills : Direct Debits .....	7
4.13	Loans and Investments .....	7
4.14.	Borrowings .....	7
4.15	Investments.....	7
4.16	Contracts and Purchase Orders .....	7
4.17	Quotations .....	7
4.18	Estimates .....	7
4.19	VAT.....	7

5	Assets .....	7
5.1	Register of Assets .....	7
6	Risk Assessment .....	8
6.1	Risk Assessment Review .....	8
6.2	Risk Assessment of New Activities .....	8
7	Insurance .....	8
6.	Freedom of Information.....	8
7.	Clerk to the Council .....	8
7.1.	Employees of Parish Council .....	8
7.2.	Responsibilities of the Clerk .....	8
7.3	Management of Employees of the Council .....	8
7.4.	Clerk’s Contract of Employment .....	8
8	Committees and Task and Finish and Working Groups.....	8
9.	Emergency Business .....	9
10.	Alteration or Reversal of previous decisions .....	9
11.	Standing Orders .....	9
11.1	Review of Standing Orders .....	9
11.2.	Interpretation of Standing Orders.....	9
11.3	Suspension of Standing Order.....	9
12.	Vacancies .....	9
12.1	Call for Election for Retired Councillor.....	9
12.2	Co-option of Parish Councillor .....	9
12.3	Vacancy for Clerk .....	9

## **1. Councillors**

### **1.1. Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

Following election or co-option to the Council, each Councillor will sign the form of Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of the Clerk of the Council, or of a Councillor who has been specifically designated by the Council for this purpose.

### **1.2. Code of Conduct**

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.

### **1.3. Declaration of Interests**

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.

## **2. Annual Meetings**

### **2.1. Timing of Annual Meeting**

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.

### **2.2. Election of New Chair**

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

### **2.3. Retiring Chair**

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

## **3. Meetings**

### **3.1. Premises for Meetings**

Meetings will be held in appropriate, accessible accommodation. Unless no other accommodation is available the meetings will not be held in premises used for the supply of alcohol.

### **3.2. Frequency of Meetings**

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 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.

### **3.3. Dates of Meetings**

During the last meeting of the year the meeting dates for the following year will be discussed and confirmed by the Parish Councillors.

### **3.4. Advertising Meetings**

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.

### **3.5 Public/Press Access to the Meeting**

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.

### **3.6 Public Taking Part in the Meeting**

Members of the public may speak at Council meetings at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting. If no permission to speak is given, members of the public may contact the Clerk to arrange a time slot at the next meeting stating what they wish to speak about and the Clerk will arrange for this to be added to the Agenda for the next meeting. The length of the time slot will be agreed between the Clerk, Chair and member of the public who wishes to speak, according to the subject to be discussed.

### **3.7 Agenda Content**

The agenda for the meeting will be agreed by the Clerk, Chair and Vice Chair as appropriate. The agenda will always include an item to enable Councillors to declare interests. An opportunity for public questions which will have been arranged, will be made available immediately before the commencement of each meeting.

### **3.8 Order of Agenda Items**

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

### **3.9 Chair of the Meeting**

The Chair of the Council will preside at the meeting and will be responsible for the conduct of that meeting. If the Chair is not present then the Vice Chair 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 Chair for the meeting.

### **3.10 Quorum**

The quorum for the Council will be one third of the total Councillor places but in any case not fewer than three. 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.

### **3.11 If a Councillor Leaves Early**

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.

### **3.12 Voting**

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.

### **3.13 Casting Vote**

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

### **3.14 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting will be kept by the Clerk or other nominated person in the Clerk's absence. The minutes will be sent to the Chair in draft form for his approval after which they will be displayed on notice board and the website in draft form. The minutes 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, after which they will be displayed on the notice board and website as Approved Minutes.

### **3.15 Planning Applications: Personal Interests**

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**

### **4.1 Responsible Finance Office (Responsible Financial Officer)**

The Responsible Finance Officer 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 Proper Practices.

### **4.2 Budget and Precept**

The Responsible Financial Officer will compile estimates of income and expenditure annually for the Council's consideration. The Council will review the budget not later than the end of December in preparation for the precept being agreed, and submitted to the Collection Authority in January.

### **4.3 Income and Expenditure**

The Responsible Financial Officer will supply regular updates of income and expenditure throughout the year and detail actual figures against estimate. Significant overspends will be brought to the attention of the Council and action taken to address any discrepancies.

### **4.4 Completion of Annual Accounts**

The Responsible Financial Officer will determine all accounting procedures and financial records of the Council in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

### **4.5 Internal Audit**

The Council will review an up-to-date financial statement at each meeting and ensure that there is an adequate, effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting, financial and other procedures in line with Proper Practice.

### **4.6 Annual Financial Statements**

The Responsible Financial Officer will complete the annual financial statements of the Council including the annual return as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and will submit and report on them to the Council.

### **4.7 Internal Auditor**

An Internal Auditor will be appointed by the Council to carry out the work required to comply with the Proper Practice. The person appointed will be competent and independent of the operation of the Council.

### **4.8 Annual Audited Accounts**

The Responsible Financial Officer will submit the Annual Return to the External Auditor by the due date, ensuring the return is approved by the Parish Council and complete.

### **4.9 Bank Mandate**

The Council's banking arrangements, including the Bank Mandate, will be made by the Responsible Financial Officer and approved by the Council. They will be regularly reviewed for efficiency.

#### **4.10 Cheque Signatories**

A resolution of the Council will nominate at least three members to be authorised by the Council to sign cheques.

#### **4.11 Expenditure**

All items of expenditure will be authorised by the Council and the payments approved. The Responsible Financial Officer will examine invoices and verify and certify the expenditure. Cheques will be completed for all transactions and signed by two authorised Councillors.

#### **4.12. Utility Bills : Direct Debits**

Any utility bill may be paid by Direct Debit provided that the instructions are signed by two authorised Councillors.

#### **4.13 Loans and Investments**

All loans and investments will be negotiated in the name of the Council and will be set for a period approved by the Council.

#### **4.14. Borrowings**

All borrowings will be in the name of the Council and will not be entered into until necessary approvals have been given. Any application will be approved by Council, especially the terms and purpose. These terms must be reviewed annually.

#### **4.15 Investments**

All investments of money under the control of the Council will be in the name of the Council and all certificates or other documents will be retained by the Responsible Financial Officer.

#### **4.16 Contracts and Purchase Orders**

An official order or letter will be issued for all work or service paid for by the Council. All Councillors and officers are responsible for obtaining good value for money at all times. An officer placing an order on behalf of the Council will ensure that good value and appropriate terms are obtained for the transaction.

#### **4.17 Quotations**

Orders for values £500 to £2000 require a minimum of two quotations; for values above £2,000 three quotations are required. Contracts exceeding £50,000 require additional safeguards and will follow Proper Practice.

#### **4.18 Estimates**

All estimates will be approved by the Council; while the Council is not obliged to accept the lowest quotation the reasons for accepting the quotation will be recorded.

#### **4.19 VAT**

The Responsible Financial Officer will promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with the VAT Act 1974 section 33 will be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year.

### **5 Assets**

#### **5.1 Register of Assets**

The Responsible Financial Officer will ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets is maintained by the Council. It will be reviewed at least annually, in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets if appropriate.

## **6 Risk Assessment**

### **6.1 Risk Assessment Review**

The risk assessment will be reviewed annually and approved by the Council. This assessment will also cover the appropriateness of the internal audit arrangements and the playground and recreation ground cover.

### **6.2 Risk Assessment of New Activities**

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

## **7 Insurance**

Following the annual risk assessment the Council will review the level of insurance cover and ensure it is adequate and appropriate for the activities of the Council. Minimum cover will include Public Liability, Employers Liability, Money and Fidelity Guarantee.

## **6. Freedom of Information**

The Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and has adopted the Freedom of Information Act at a Parish Council Meeting. This document will be reviewed each year by the Parish Council to ensure it is up to date. 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**

### **7.1. Employees of Parish Council**

The Council may appoint a number of 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.

### **7.2. Responsibilities of the Clerk**

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.

### **7.3 Management of Employees of the Council**

The Clerk will act as Responsible Financial Officer or be responsible for managing a Finance Officer or other employees of the Council.

### **7.4. Clerk's Contract of Employment**

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 contract of employment stating the terms and conditions under which he/she is employed. This will effectively be administered by the Chair or designated Councillor acting with the authority of the Council.

## **8 Committees and Task and Finish and Working Groups**

The Council from time to time may set up committees, task-and-finish groups and working 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 Chair 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 4 months, except where a special item is placed on the agenda bearing the name of two Councillors, and is considered and approved by the Council.

## **11. Standing Orders**

### **11.1 Review of Standing Orders**

These and any other standing orders will be reviewed annually by the Clerk and the Chair, and any amendments will be decided by the Council.

### **11.2 Interpretation of Standing Orders**

During the course of meetings of the Council, the Chair's decision as to the interpretation of the standing orders will be final. In cases of doubt, the Council will seek the advice of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils.

### **11.3 Suspension of Standing Order**

The Council may resolve to suspend a Standing Order, in order to progress the 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.

## **12. Vacancies**

### **12.1 Call for Election for Retired Councillor**

When a Parish Councillor ceases to be a member of the Parish Council the vacancy will be advertised on notice boards and website where available informing residents that on receipt of a request in writing from any ten local government electors for the said Parish, an election to fill the vacancy will be held within sixty days. If no such request is made the vacancy will be filled by the Parish Council by co-option.

### **12.2 Co-option of Parish Councillor**

Residents will be informed that a vacancy exists and invited to apply to the Chair to join the Parish Council. Notice of election should be given in the agenda for the meeting of the Parish Council and the Chair should call for nominees to attend. When all nominees have been received and talked to the councillors at the meeting a vote should be taken after which the Chair should declare the candidate if appropriate who received the highest number of votes duly elected. Each candidate should be voted on for suitability with a majority outcome being necessary for appointment.

### **12.3 Vacancy for Clerk**

When a vacancy exists for a Clerk, this should be advertised in the local press and notification sent to the Cheshire Association of Local Councils who will advertise the vacancy through their database. When applications are received they should be discussed at a meeting and interviews arranged. When a new Clerk is appointed a contract of employment should be given to the successful candidate.