

# **Aldbury Parish Council**

## **Standing Orders May 2022**

### **1. Councillors**

- 1.1. Following election or co-option to the Council, each Councillor will be issued with a copy of the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other relevant briefing material for the Council. They 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 for this purpose. Any change of address by a Councillor, any court conviction or any other event that might call into question the Councillor's continued eligibility to serve as a Councillor should be reported promptly to the Clerk. The Clerk will seek advice from Dacorum Borough Council as necessary.
- 1.2. 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. The Code of Conduct adopted by the Council will define when a Councillor will declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and Other Interests 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.
- 1.4. If the majority of Councillors agree, the Council may grant a dispensation to an individual Councillor to speak and (if agreed by the Council) to vote on a matter in which he or she has an interest. The Council will record in the minutes the details of the dispensation which is granted, for public inspection.

### **2. Annual Meetings**

- 2.1. If the Annual Meeting is in an election year it must be held within 14 days after that election. If it is not in an election year then the annual meeting will take place on an appropriate day in May.
- 2.2. If the outgoing Chairman is available then he/she will preside until a new Chairman has been elected. If the outgoing Chairman is not available, the vice-chair or a member chosen by the meeting will preside. The first business of the Annual Meeting will be the election of the Chairman (and Vice Chairman, if appropriate) and to receive their acceptance of office.
- 2.3. In addition to the business in 2.2 above, the business of and requirements for an annual meeting will be subject to the same provisions as are specified for Council meetings in section 3 below.

### **3. Meetings**

- 3.1. Meetings will be held in appropriate, accessible accommodation.
- 3.2. An agreed frequency of meetings will be decided at the Annual Meeting and Councillors will be advised of the meetings by the issue of an agenda (which has the effect of being a summons to the meeting) delivered by post, by hand or by email as agreed by Councillors. The agenda must be issued at least three clear working days before the meeting. The requirement for the issue of summons and agenda also applies to additional ordinary meetings or extraordinary meetings should they be required.

- 3.3. Public notices will be displayed in conspicuous and consistent 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.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. Subject to having advised Councillors present and the Clerk if present, a member of the public may record and transmit electronically the proceedings of a meeting of the Council and of any of its committees. No recording may be made of the public who are in attendance at the meeting, or of matters that occur in the meeting-place immediately prior to or following the meeting, without the Council's prior consent.
- 3.6. Members of the public may speak at Council meetings at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting.
- 3.7. The agenda for the meeting will be agreed by the Clerk and the Chairman, and the anticipated Chairman of the meeting if appropriate. The agenda will always include an item to enable Councillors to declare interests. An opportunity for public questions will be made available during meeting.
- 3.8. 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.
- 3.9. The Chairman of the Council will preside at the meeting and will be responsible for the conduct of the meeting. If the Chairman is not present then the Vice Chairman will preside. If neither of them is 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.
- 3.10. 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.
- 3.11. If at any time during the meeting it ceases to be quorate then the meeting will be adjourned and any remaining business carried forward to the meeting when next convened.
- 3.12. Voting at the meeting shall be by a show of hands unless a majority of Councillors wants a ballot. Only the proposer and Secunder 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 onto the next business.
- 3.13. In the case of equal votes the Chairman (or other person presiding) will have a second or casting vote.
- 3.14. A minute of the meeting will be kept by the Clerk or other nominated person in the Clerk's absence. The minutes will record any decisions made by the Council. Draft minutes will be circulated to Councillors as soon as practicable, at the latest within three weeks after the meeting. Councillors will supply any suggested amendments after which the amended unapproved draft minutes will be made available to the public. The minutes will then be approved at the following meeting and signed by the person presiding at that meeting.

#### **4. Finance**

4.1. The Council shall consider and approve Financial Regulations drawn up by the RFO which include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:

- Approving and making payments including online banking
- The budgeting process
- The keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls
- The assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council
- The work of the internal auditor
- Procurement policies

#### **5. Emergency Business**

5.1. Should it not be practical because of time constraints or for other reasons to convene an extraordinary meeting, then any emergency business should be handled by the Clerk (as the Council's Proper Officer) in consultations with (at least two) available councillors. Actions will be reported promptly to the full Council.

5.2. In cases where requests to film in the Parish are received, the Council has a Filming Policy which should be followed. In cases where the filming policy is relevant, the Clerk should be contacted.

#### **6. Communication**

6.1. The Council will ensure information is easily accessible, relevant and timely

6.2. The Council have a website which will be regularly updated and provides a source of information about the Council's key activities and processes.

6.3. All communication from the Council will be courteous, timely, professional and appropriate and will reflect the decisions and policies of the Council.

6.4. Councillors and employees take into account that they are representatives of the Council in all communications on its behalf.

#### **7. Media Relations**

7.1. The term media refers to broadcast media, printed media and the internet.

7.2. Any contact with the media should be directed through the Clerk as the Proper Officer of the Council. If a Councillor or other employee is contacted by the media then the enquiry should be passed onto the Clerk.

7.3. Press releases and statements will be prepared by the Clerk and Chairman, in conjunction with other Councillors as appropriate and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Council.

7.4. When approached by the media for a comment or statement a decision will be made by the Clerk and Chairman, in conjunction with other Councillors as appropriate, about the format and content of any response.

7.5. In the absence of the Clerk and Chairman, at least two other Councillors will make together make a decision about the format and content of any response to an approach by the media.

7.6. Councillors aren't prevented from expressing a personal opinion through the media but will make it clear that any views expressed, where different from Council policy, are their own personal views.

#### **8. Insurance**

8.1. 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.

#### **9. Risk Assessment**

- 9.1. A Financial and Management Risk Assessment will be undertaken annually of all the activities of the Council and will be approved by the Council. This assessment will also cover the appropriateness of the internal audit arrangements. The Risk Assessment will be reviewed annually, and recorded in the minutes of the Council meeting.
- 9.2. A physical Risk Assessment will also be undertaken annually of all the property and equipment owned by the Council. This will be reviewed by the Council and recorded in the minutes of the Council meeting.
- 9.3. If the Council undertakes a new activity not covered by the existing Risk Assessment an assessment will be undertaken before the activity commences.

## **10. Freedom of Information**

- 10.1. The Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and has adopted the 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. The Council should periodically review the procedure and scheme.
- 10.2. The Council is working towards becoming compliant with the Transparency Code.

## **11. Planning**

- 11.1. The Council will aim to conform to the timings of planning applications as set out by the Borough Council. The Clerk will forward details of planning applications received from Dacorum Borough Council to the Cllr responsible for that area. Cllrs will inform the Clerk of their opinion on the application. If the Cllr feels there would be no objection to the application, the Clerk has delegated authority to inform DBC of this decision. If the Cllr feels that the application needs to be discussed at the full Council Meeting, the Clerk will request an extension from DBC if required.

## **12. Clerk to the Council**

- 12.1. 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.
- 12.2. 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 summons agendas and notices of meetings, take and issue minutes of meetings; receive and distribute planning applications and documents on behalf of the Council; and also advise the bank of changes to mandates with the bank. The Clerk will act as the communications coordinator for the Council.
- 12.3. The Clerk will act as Responsible Financial Officer or be responsible for managing a Finance Officer or other employees of the Council.
- 12.4. As an employee of the Council the Clerk is covered by employment legislation that deals 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.

## **13. (Committees and) Working Parties**

- 13.1. The Council from time to time may set up (committees and) working parties to undertake work on behalf of the Council. The Council will set their Terms of Reference, and they will report periodically to the Council.

## **14. Alteration or Reversal of previous decisions**

- 14.1. Decisions of the Council will not be reversed 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.

## **15. Standing Orders**

- 15.1. These and any other Standing Orders will be reviewed annually by the Clerk and the Chairman, and any amendments will be decided by the Council.
- 15.2. During the course of meetings of the Council, the Chairman'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 Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils.
- 15.3. The Council may resolve to suspend a Standing Order in order to progress the business of the Council, and such a decision will be included in the minutes. The suspension will be time limited

**Reviewed and adopted by the Council May 2022**