



# STANDING ORDERS

Broadwindsor Group Parish Council

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# **BROADWINDSOR GROUP PARISH COUNCIL**

## **STANDING ORDERS**

**These Standing Orders were adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 12 October 2015, approved revisions have been adopted thereafter.**

### **1. GENERAL**

1.1 Standing Orders are the written rules of the Parish Council. They are used to confirm the Council's internal organisational, administrative and procedural matters for meetings. The Standing Orders are intended to facilitate the efficient and expeditious conduct and management of the Council's business. Nothing contained in or omitted from these Standing Orders supersedes, removes, replaces or reduces any powers, duties, responsibilities and obligations laid down in the Acts of Parliament and/or Government Orders and Regulations concerning Local Councils.

1.2 A copy of these Standing Orders shall be given to each Member of the Council by the Clerk.

### **2. ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

2.1 Meetings of the Council shall normally be held monthly on the second Monday of the month commencing at 7.30 pm in Comrades Hall, Broadwindsor, Drimpton Village Hall, Blackdown Village Hall or other appropriate venues as agreed by the Council.

2.2 The Proper Officer shall give public notice of the time, place and agenda at least three clear days before a meeting of the Council.

2.3 The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which the 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.

2.4 Meetings shall not normally exceed a period of two hours.

### **3. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

3.1 The Statutory Annual Meeting of the Council shall be held in the month of May but in an election year shall be held within fourteen days of the date that the new Council takes office.

3.2 Following the election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council at the Annual Meeting of the Council, the business shall include:

- i. In an election year, delivery by the Chairman of the Council and Councillors of their Declaration of 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/her Declaration of 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. Consideration of the recommendations made by a committee;
- v. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;

- vi. Review of the terms of reference for committees;
- vii. Appointment of Members to existing committees;
- viii. Appointment of any new committees in accordance with the Standing Order;
- ix. Review and adoption of appropriate Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
- x. 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;
- xi. Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back;
- xii. 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;
- xiii. Review of inventory of land and assets including buildings and office equipment;
- xiv. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks;
- xv. Review of the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies;
- xvi. Review of the Council's complaints procedure;
- xvii. Review of the Council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998;
- xviii. Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media; and
- xix. Determining the time and place of Ordinary Meetings of the Full Council up to and including the next Annual Meeting of Full Council.

#### **4. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

4.1 The Annual Parish Meeting shall be held between 1 March and 1 June inclusive on a day and at a time (but not earlier than 6pm) determined by the Council.

#### **5. EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS**

5.1 The Chairman may call an extraordinary meeting of the Council or a Parish Meeting at any time.

5.2 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.

5.3 The Chairman of a committee or a sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or the sub-committee at any time.

5.4 If the Chairman of a committee or a sub-committee does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting within seven days of having been requested 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.

#### **6. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

6.1 The Council may at the Annual Meeting and at any other time and subject to any statutory provision appoint such committees and advisory panels as are necessary and;

- i. Shall determine their terms of reference;
- ii. Shall 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;
- iii. Shall permit a committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;
- iv. Shall appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee;
- v. May, subject to standing orders, 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 five days before the meeting that they are unable to attend;
- vi. Shall, after it has appointed the members of a standing committee, appoint the chairman of the standing committee;
- vii. Shall permit a committee other than a standing committee, to appoint its own chairman at the first meeting of the committee;
- viii. Shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee which shall be no less than two;
- ix. Shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee;
- x. Shall 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;
- xi. Shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and
- xii. May dissolve a committee.

6.2 The Chairman and Vice Chairman shall be ex-officio members of every committee and advisory panel.

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

6.4 The members of a committee and sub-committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Council.

## **7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

7.1 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.

7.2 The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall be at the discretion of the Chairman.

7.3 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.

7.4 A member of the public shall not speak for more than five minutes.

7.5 Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.

7.6 A person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if he/she is present at the meeting of the Parish Council or its Committees but otherwise may film, photograph or make an audio recording of the meeting.

7.7 A question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.

7.8 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.

## **8. THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

8.1 The Chairman if present shall preside at the meeting or in his/her absence the Vice Chairman shall preside.

8.2 In the absence of both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman from the meeting the first business shall be to appoint a Chairman for the meeting and the person so presiding may exercise all the powers and duties of the Chairman in relation to the conduct of the meeting.

8.3 The Chairman of the Council, unless he/she has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office until his/her successor is elected at the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

8.4 The Vice Chairman of the Council, unless he/she 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.

8.5 In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has not been re-elected as a Member of the Council, he/she 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.

8.6 In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has been re-elected as a Member of the Council, he/she 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.

8.7 If a Member has served as Chairman for three consecutive years, they cannot be elected again for a period of twelve months unless there is no other candidate.

## **9. QUORUM**

9.1 Three Members of the Council shall form a quorum.

9.2 If a quorum of Members of the Council is not present when the meeting convenes or if during a meeting the number of Members present falls below the quorum all business not transacted at that meeting shall be carried forward to the next meeting of the Council to such a day as the Chairman may designate.

## **10. AGENDA**

10.1 Any Member who wishes to request that an item of business be included in the agenda for a meeting of the Council shall do so to the Clerk not later than ten days before the date of the meeting.

## **11. CONDUCT AT A MEETING**

11.1 All business and discussion at meetings shall be conducted through the Chairman.

## **12. DECISIONS**

12.1 Every matter requiring a decision shall be decided by a majority of those present and voting.

## **13. VOTING**

13.1 Voting shall be by a show of hands unless, and exceptionally, a majority of Members request a ballot.

13.2 If any Member so requests the Clerk shall record the name of the Member so as to show whether the Member voted for or against the question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.

13.3 The Chairman or person presiding at the meeting may give a first vote and in the case of an equality of votes may give a second or casting vote even though he/she gave no first vote.

13.4 Where more than two persons have been nominated for any position to be filled by the Council and of the votes given there is not an absolute 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 vote taken and so on until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person.

## **14. RULES OF DEBATE AT A MEETING**

14.1 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.

14.2 A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.

14.3 A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the Chairman of the meeting as withdrawn.

14.4 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.

14.5 An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.

14.6 If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.

14.7 An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the Chairman of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the Chairman.

14.8 A Councillor may move an amendment to his own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.

14.9 If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the Chairman.

14.10 Only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the Chairman of the meeting.

14.11 One or more amendments may be discussed together if the Chairman of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.

14.12 A Councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.

14.13 The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.

14.14 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.

14.15 Unless permitted by the Chairman of the meeting, a Councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:

- i. To speak on an amendment moved by another Councillor;
- ii. To move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since he last spoke;
- iii. To make a point of order;
- iv. To give a personal explanation; or
- v. In exercise of a right of reply.

14.16 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 he considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting he is concerned by.

14.17 A point of order shall be decided by the Chairman of the meeting and his decision shall be final.

14.18 When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:

- i. To amend the motion;
- ii. To proceed to the next business;



- iii. To adjourn the debate;
- iv. To put the motion to a vote;
- v. To ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;
- vi. To refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
- vii. To exclude the public and press;
- viii. To adjourn the meeting; or
- ix. To suspend particular standing order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory requirements.

14.19 Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the Chairman 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 his right of reply.

14.20 The contributions or speeches by a Councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed five minutes without the consent of the Chairman of the meeting.

## **15. MOTIONS FOR A MEETING THAT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE TO BE GIVEN TO THE PROPER OFFICER**

15.1 A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting which it is tabled for 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.

15.2 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 ten clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.

15.3 The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.

15.4 If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion 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 seven clear days before the meeting.

15.5 If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the Chairman of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the Councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.

15.6 The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.

15.7 Motions received shall be recorded for that purpose and numbered in the order that they are received.

15.8 Motions rejected shall be recorded for that purpose with an explanation by the Proper Officer for their rejection.

## **16. MOTIONS AT A MEETING THAT DO NOT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE**

16.1 The following motions may be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer;

- i. To correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;
- ii. To move to a vote;
- iii. To defer consideration of a motion;
- iv. To refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;
- v. To appoint a person to preside at a meeting;
- vi. To change the order of business on the agenda;
- vii. To proceed to the next business on the agenda;
- viii. To require a written report;
- ix. To appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members;
- x. To extend the time limits for speaking;
- xi. To exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest;
- xii. To not hear further from a Councillor or a member of the public;
- xiii. To exclude a Councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
- xiv. To temporarily suspend the meeting;
- xv. To suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory requirements);
- xvi. To adjourn the meeting; or
- xvii. To close a meeting.

## **17. REVERSAL OF PREVIOUS DECISION**

17.1 A decision (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special resolution, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least four Members of the Council or by a resolution moved in pursuance of a report or recommendation of a committee or advisory panel.

17.2 When a special resolution has been disposed of no similar resolution may be moved within a further six months.

17.3 When additional information has been received after a decision has been made and both the Chairman and Vice Chairman feel that the additional information, now available, would have been vital to the discussions, the Council will be permitted to discuss the agenda item again within the six month period and possibly reverse the original resolution, if the majority of Councillors are in agreement.

## **18. DRAFT MINUTES**

18.1 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.

18.2 There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy.

18.3 The accuracy of the draft minutes, including any amendments 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.

18.4 If the Chairman of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he/she shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph stating so.

18.5 Draft minutes will be published and posted on the Council's website.

## **19. DISORDERLY CONDUCT**

19.1 No person shall at a meeting persistently disregard the ruling of the Chairman of the meeting, wilfully obstruct business, or behave irregularly, offensively, improperly or in such a manner as to breach the adopted Code of Conduct. If this Standing Order is ignored, the Chairman of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.

19.2 If a person(s) disregards 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.

19.3 If a resolution 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.

## **20. MATTERS AFFECTING EMPLOYEES OF THE COUNCIL**

20.1 If at a meeting there arises any matter relating to the appointment, conduct, promotion, dismissal, salary or conditions of service of any person employed by the Council it shall not be considered until the Council or Committee as the case may be has decided whether or not the public should be excluded.

## **21. HANDLING CONFIDENTIAL OR SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

21.1 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.

21.2 Councillors and staff shall not disclose confidential or sensitive information which for special reasons would not be in the public interest.

## **22. HANDLING STAFF MATTERS**

22.1 A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of Council is subject to Standing Order 21 above.

22.2 Subject to the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Chairman or, if he/she is not available, the Vice Chairman shall be notified of absence occasioned by illness or other reason and that person shall report such absence to the Council at its next meeting.

22.3 The Chairman or in his/her absence, the Vice Chairman of the Council shall upon a resolution conduct a review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. The reviews and appraisal shall be reported in writing and is subject to approval by

resolution by the Council.

22.4 Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Chairman of the Council or in his/her absence, the Vice Chairman of the Council shall be notified in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Council.

22.5 Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by the Clerk relates to the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council, this shall be communicated to another Member of the Council, which shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Council.

22.6 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.

22.7 The Council shall keep all written records relating to employees secure.

22.8 Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records.

22.9 Access and means of access by keys and/or computer passwords to records of employment shall be provided only to the Chairman of the Council.

### **23. CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS**

23.1 All Councillors shall observe the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council and conduct themselves according to the Code.

23.2 Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a Councillor shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he has a disclosable pecuniary interest. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he/she had the interest.

23.3 Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a Councillor shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he/she has another interest if so required by the Council's Code of Conduct. He/she may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he/she had the interest.

23.4 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.

23.5 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.

23.6 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.

23.7 A dispensation may be granted 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.

## **24. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS**

24.1 Upon notification by the Authority which has received a complaint that a Councillor has breached the Council's Code of Conduct, the Proper Officer shall report this to the Council.

24.2 Where the notification relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chairman of the Council of this fact, and the Chairman shall nominate a Council Member as a temporary officer (without remuneration) 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.

24.3 The Council may:

- i. Provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to progress an investigation of the complaint or is required by law;
- ii. Seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter.

24.4 Upon notification by the Authority that a Councillor has breached the Council's Code of Conduct, the Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him/her. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.

## **25. UNAUTHORISED ACTIVITIES**

25.1 No member of the Council shall in the name of the Council or on behalf of the Council:

- i. Inspect any lands or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect
- ii. Issue orders or
- iii. Undertake any other activity unless authorised to do so by the Council.

## **26. PROPER OFFICER AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER**

26.1 The Clerk to the Council shall be the Council's Proper Officer and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and shall carry out any function or duty conferred on the Proper Officer by statute, regulation or order. The Clerk shall issue statutory notices and summonses of meetings in accordance with statutory provisions.

26.2 The Proper Officer shall at least three clear days before a meeting of the Council, a committee and a sub-committee serve on Councillors a summons, by email or by letter, confirming the time, place and the agenda.

26.3 The Proper Officer shall 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.

26.4 The Proper Officer shall convene a meeting of Full Council for the election of a new Chairman of the Council.

26.5 The Proper Officer shall facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors.

26.6 The Proper Officer shall receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities.

26.7 The Proper Officer shall retain Declaration of Acceptance of Office forms from Councillors.

26.8 The Proper Officer shall retain a copy of every Councillor's Register of Interests.

26.9 The Proper Officer shall 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.

26.10 The Proper Officer shall receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary.

26.11 The Proper Officer shall manage the organisation, storage of, access to and destruction of information held by the Council in paper and electronic form.

26.12 The Proper Officer shall arrange for legal deeds to be executed.

26.13 The Proper Officer shall 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.

26.14 The Proper Officer shall record every planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response to the local planning authority.

26.15 The Proper Officer shall refer a planning application received by the Council to the Chairman or in his absence the Vice Chairman of the Council 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.

## **27. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

27.1 The Council's Financial Regulations as approved and adopted in July 2015 govern the conduct of financial management by the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council. Financial Regulations must be observed in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders.

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

## **28. VARIATION, REVOCATION AND SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

28.1 Any or every part of these Standing Orders except those concerning matters laid down in Acts of Parliament and which are therefore compulsory may be suspended by resolution in relation to any specific items of business.

28.2 A resolution permanently to add, vary or revoke a Standing Order shall when proposed and seconded stand adjourned without discussion to the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

## **29. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION**

29.1 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.

29.2 Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the Chairman.

## **30. MEDIA RELATIONS**

30.1 The Council will openly and honestly provide the media with news and information about the Council, its Members, services and achievements.

30.2 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 Media Protocol.

30.3 The Clerk will be the first point of contact for the media; however, where it is appropriate for an elected Member to represent the Parish Council, the Chairman or Vice Chairman shall be authorised as the official spokesmen for the Council.

30.4 Individual Members are not permitted to issue media releases on behalf of the Parish Council.

## **31. COMMUNICATING WITH COUNCILLORS**

31.1 An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward Councillor of Dorset Council representing the area of the Council.

31.2 Unless the Council determines otherwise, a copy of each letter sent to Dorset Council shall be sent to the ward Councillor representing the area of the Council.

## **32. EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS**

32.1 A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.

32.2 Any two Councillors may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.

## **33. COMPLAINTS**

33.1 Any complaint received from a member of the public against a Parish Councillor/Clerk to the Council will be investigated by the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, or other Councillors following the Complaints Procedure. The Clerk will then report the matter to the West Dorset District Council Standards Committee if they should wish to do so.

## **34. SCHEME OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

34.1 The Parish Council recognises that urgent decisions may arise between scheduled meetings and during periods of restricted activity and therefore has agreed a Scheme of Delegated Authority to

ensure that in such circumstances, the Parish Council can continue to function and fulfil its responsibilities.

34.2 Recorded minutes of decisions taken under this Scheme shall not place the Parish Council at risk.

34.3 Decisions taken under this Scheme will be reported to the Parish Council at their next meeting and formally ratified.

34.4 Any decision taken under this Scheme will require at least four Members of the Council to be consulted, including the Chairman.

34.5 The Clerk will firstly discuss the matter with the Chairman. The Chairman will make contact with a minimum of three other Parish Councillors.

34.6 The Clerk will not seek to influence a decision from the Chairman or other Parish Councillors but shall present the issues clearly and succinctly so as not to prejudice any decision being made.

34.7 The Clerk shall only inform the Parish Council of the outcome once the Chairman has relayed the outcome of their deliberations to the Members, with a majority decision being acceptable of three Members.