

NORTHLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS

Councillors

1. Following election or co-option to the Council, each Councillor will be issued with a copy of the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders of 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 by the Council for this purpose.
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.
3. The Code of Conduct adopted by the Council will define when a Councillor will declare a personal or prejudicial interest in a time for discussion at a Council meeting. The Councillor will declare that interest and the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity.

Annual Meetings

4. 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 date in May.
5. If the outgoing Chairman is available then he/she will reside until a new Chairman has been elected. 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.
6. The retiring Chairman will report on the activities of the Council for the preceding year.

Meetings

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allow local councils to hold remote meetings. The regulations give automatic authority to hold remote meetings and amend standing orders as required. These regulations remain in force until May 7th, 2021 or earlier if repealed, and require a number of temporary changes to Standing Orders.

7. Remote Access to Meetings

- a) The definition of meeting within the Council's standing orders is amended so that
 - i) 'place' includes where a meeting is held, or to be held in more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers
 - ii) 'open to the public' includes access to the meeting by remote means including video conferencing, live webcasting and interactive streaming
 - iii) where a meeting is accessible to the public through remote means, the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person.
- b) If the Council becomes aware that the technology has failed, and the meeting is no longer accessible to the public, the meeting shall be adjourned.
- c) If public access cannot be restored within a reasonable period, the remaining business shall be deferred to a future meeting.

8. Frequency of meetings

will be agreed at the Annual Meeting and Councillors will be advised of the meetings by the issue of a summons and agenda delivered by email or by hand. The agenda will be issued at least three clear business days before the meeting.

9. Public notices

will be posted on the Parish Council notice board 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.

10. 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.
11. Members of the public may join remotely and speak at Council meetings at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting.

12. 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 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 Chairman for the meeting.

Quorum

13. Three members of the Council will constitute a quorum. If at a meeting the number of Councillors present falls below the quorum then no business will be transacted and it will be transacted at the next meeting.

Voting

14. Voting at the meeting shall be by a show of hands or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. A Councillor may request that the Clerk records how each Councillor has voted, including abstentions.

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

Minutes

16. Minutes of the meeting will be kept by the Clerk or other nominated person in the Clerk's absence. The minutes which are circulated 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.

Planning Applications

17. If there is a personal interest in a planning application then the person must leave the meeting while discussion takes place.

Finance

18. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) 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.

Estimates and Precept

19. The RFO 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.

Income & Expenditure

20. The RFO will supply regular updates of income and expenditure throughout the year and detail actual figures against estimates. Significant under spends or overspends will be brought to the attention of the Council and action taken to address any discrepancies.

Accounting and Audit

21. The RFO will determine all accounting procedures and financial records of the Council in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

22. The RFO will complete the annual financial statements of the Council including the annual return as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year.

23. 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.

24. The RFO will submit the Annual Return to the External Auditor by the due date, ensuring the return is complete.

Banking Arrangements and Cheques

- 25. A resolution of the Council will nominate at least three members to be authorised by the Council to sign cheques.
- 26. All items of expenditure will be authorised by the Council and the payments approved. The RFO will examine invoices and verify and certify the expenditures. Cheques will be completed for all transaction and signed by two authorised members.
- 27. All loan and investments will be negotiated in the name of the Council and will be set for a period approved by the Council.
- 28. All borrowings will be in the name of the Council and will not be entered into until necessary approvals have been given. An application will be approved by the Council, especially the terms and purpose.
- 29. 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 RFO.

Placing of Orders

- 30. 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.

Freedom of Information

- 31. The Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act. The clerk will ensure the Council conforms to the requirements of the Act allowing public access to the appropriate documents.

Clerk to the Council

- 32. 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.
- 33. The Clerk will act as a Responsible Financial Officer.
- 34. As an employee of the Council the Clerk is covered by employment legislation. The Clerk will therefore have a Contract of Employment stating the terms and conditions under which he/she is employed.

Emergency Business

- 35. Should it not be appropriate to convene a special meeting then any emergency business will be handled by the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and one other Councillor. Actions will be reported promptly to the Council.

Standing Orders

- 36. These and any other standing orders will be reviewed annually by the Clerk and Chairman, and any amendments will be decided by the council.

These Standing Orders were adopted by the Northleigh Parish Council at a meeting of the

Council held on