



Standing Orders
incorporating Financial Regulations

Standing orders

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 and Standing Orders of the Council. They will sign the form of <i>'Declaration of Acceptance of Office'</i> in the presence of the Parish Clerk of the Council, or in the presence of a Councillor who has been specifically designated by the Council for this purpose. An individual cannot act as a Councillor until this form is signed.
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 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.
1.4	If a casual vacancy arises during the term of a Council then this vacancy must be advertised. An election must be held if 10 or more parishioners call for one. In the event that no election is called for then a vacancy can be filled by co-option.
1.5	If a Councillor resigns, then this is with immediate effect from the time the Chair accepts the resignation.
1.6	When an agenda is issued by the Parish Clerk this is a legal summons to attend a Parish Council meeting. A Councillor could lose their place by failure to attend meetings. A Councillor ceases to be a member of the Council if they fail throughout a period of six consecutive months to attend a meeting, unless the Council approves this absence.
1.7	All Councillors must complete a registration of interest for both themselves and for their partner/spouse. This must be done by the end of May in an election year (or upon co-option). Councillors are encouraged to attend an induction training course as soon as practicable after their election.
2	Annual General Meeting
2.1	The Parish Council must hold an Annual Parish Council Meeting in May each year. If the Annual Meeting is in an election year, it must be held within 14 days after that election on which day the new Councillors will take office. If it is not an election year then the Annual Meeting will take place on an appropriate day in May.
2.2	The retiring Chair presides at the start of the Annual General Meeting (even if they are not a member of the new Council). The retiring Chair will report on the activities of the Council for the preceding year. The first business of the Annual General Meeting will be the election of the Chair and Vice Chair, and to receive their acceptance of office. As soon as the new Chair is elected and accepts office, they preside over the remainder of the meeting. At this point, if the retiring Chair is retiring from the Council or was not re-elected, they cease to be a Councillor. The retiring Chair may be re-elected as Chair. The following business will be included on the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of terms of reference for committees 2. Appointment of Councillors for committees 3. Review of all policies and statutory terms of reference that are due for review

3	Meetings
3.1	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 or in a private dwelling.
3.2	<p>The Parish Council must hold at least 4 meetings each calendar year, one of which is the Annual Parish Assembly and one is the Annual General Meeting.</p> <p>An agreed frequency of meetings will be decided at the Annual General Meeting and Councillors will be advised of the meetings by the issue of a summons and agenda delivered by email, post or by hand. East Meon Parish Council has agreed that the agenda may be delivered by email. In any case the agenda must be published at least 3 clear working days before the meeting (3 clear days do not include Sundays, Bank Holidays or Official Days of Mourning but can include a Saturday).</p> <p>The Annual Parish Assembly should not be confused with the Annual General Meeting. The Annual Parish Meeting must be held between 1st March and 1st June. The Chair of the Parish Council chairs this meeting with the Parish Clerk recording the minutes. This meeting is usually held in East Meon Village Hall. This is a more informal meeting and gives parishioners the opportunity to tell the Council what they want to see happen in the coming year. Members of local village groups will be encouraged to give a report to the village. The Parish Council will organise and pay for refreshments. This part of the event is designed to be a social gathering. The Annual Parish Assembly is held before the Annual General Meeting so that any ideas and issues raised can be fed into the agenda of the Annual General Meeting. The Councillors will sit among the parishioners and do not act as a Council.</p> <p>Extraordinary meetings of the Council</p> <p>The Chair of the Council or committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time. If the Chair of the Council does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within 7 days of having been requested in writing to do so by two or more 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.</p>
3.3	Public notices will be posted on the village notice board and the Parish Council website 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 unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest due to 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 by the Council which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion. The confidential nature of the business to be transacted shall itself be sufficient reason. Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is permitted with the prior written express consent of the Council.

3.5	Members of the public may speak at Council meetings at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting on matters in the section of the Agenda entitled "Open Forum". The Chair may halt discussion in the Open Forum after 15 minutes. To allow as many people as possible to speak, the Chair may choose to restrict individual speaking time to 3 minutes. However the purpose of the Open Forum is to listen to the views of the parishioners therefore the Chair may choose to keep a constructive conversation going for a reasonable period of time. A person should raise their hand when requesting to speak and identify themselves for the purposes of the minutes. They should direct their question through the Chair.
4	The Agenda and Conduct in Meetings
4.1	The agenda for the meeting will be agreed by the Parish Clerk and Chair (or Vice Chair) as appropriate. The Chair has responsibility for the proper conduct of the meeting and needs to be involved in the planning of the meeting. The agenda will always include an item to enable Councillors to declare interests. An opportunity for public questions under the Item "Open Forum" will be made available at each meeting. Any Councillor may request an item to appear on the agenda. This request should be made in writing to the Parish Clerk at least 7 days before the agenda must be published. The Parish Clerk and Chair can decide if this is a proper item to be included. The Parish Clerk has ultimate responsibility for the Agenda. Usual format will be: Record members Present, Record Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Public Participation, Agree minutes from previous meetings, Business on the Agenda.
4.2	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. In exceptional circumstances pressing legal or safety matters may be decided upon.
4.3	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, the Vice Chair will preside. If both 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 duration of the meeting.
4.4	The quorum for the Council will be one third of the total Councillor places (3). If there are insufficient members present after 30 minutes of the start of the meeting then no business will be transacted and a fresh notice will be issued to reconvene the meeting at a later date.
4.5	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.
4.6	Voting at the meeting shall be made by a show of hands unless a majority of Councillors wants to hold 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 Parish Clerk records how each Councillor has voted, including abstentions. Any request of this nature to be made before moving on to the next business.
4.7	In the cases of equal votes, the Chair (or other person presiding) will have a casting vote.
4.7	With regard to planning applications - if a Councillor has a personal interest in a planning application then a statement can be made to the Parish Council meeting but the person must leave the meeting while discussions are taking place.

5	The Minutes
5.1	<p>A minute of the meeting will be kept by the Parish Clerk (or other nominated person in the Parish Clerk's absence). The minutes, which are circulated, will be draft minutes until approved by the Parish Council and they are signed by the person presiding at the next meeting.</p> <p>Minutes can be produced in court and other judicial processes as evidence of decisions of the Council. They form part of the council archives and must be preserved.</p> <p>Minutes should be produced as quickly as possible. A draft should be sent to the Chair to allow for matters of accuracy. Minutes will normally be circulated as draft minutes within 10 days of the meeting. East Meon Parish Council has agreed to circulate minutes to Councillors by email and post them on the Parish Council Website. The minutes remain as DRAFT until signed and dated at next meeting.</p>
5.2	Declaration of Interests must be recorded.
6	Communication Methods:
6.1	<p>Email is an efficient means of communication and Councillors have agreed to receive all communication by email.</p> <p>The Notice Board and Parish Council website regarding Parish Council Matters are kept up to date by the Parish Clerk as the primary methods of communication with parishioners.</p>
7	Parish Clerk to the Council
7.1	The Council may appoint a Parish Clerk to the Council under terms it sees appropriate.
7.2	The Parish Clerk receives the Declarations of Acceptance of Office and notices disclosing interests; signs documents on behalf of the Council and issues agendas and notices of meetings; receives and distributes plans and documents on behalf of the Council; and also advises the bank of changes to mandates with the bank. The Parish Clerk will be required to retain all records and statutory notices and policies appropriately and advise on protocols as required.
7.3	If the Parish Clerk is an employee of the Council they will have a contract of employment and be covered by employment legislation dealing with employment rights, discrimination in employment, unfair dismissal, redundancy and similar matters. If the Parish Clerk is providing the service on contract under their own business banner they are responsible for dealing with their own tax liabilities.
8	Finance:
8.1.1	The Parish Clerk acting as Responsible Finance Officer is a statutory office and appointed by the Council and is responsible for managing the Council's financial affairs in accordance with "Proper Practice" according to the most recent version of "A Practitioners Guide to Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England"
8.2	Estimates and Precept

8.2.1	The Parish Clerk will compile estimates of income and expenditure annually for the Council's consideration. The Council will review the budget not later than the January meeting in preparation for the precept being agreed and submitted to East Hampshire District Council in February. During the year the budget will be reviewed against actual expenditure and income. Amendments to the budget will be discussed in Council and changes minuted.
8.3	Income and Expenditure
8.3.1	The Parish Clerk will supply regular updates of income and expenditure throughout the year and detail actual figures against estimates. Significant underspends and overspends will be brought to the attention of the Council and action taken to address any discrepancies. Underspent revenue will be identified and earmarked to reserves by a Council resolution.
8.4	Accounting and Audit
8.4.1	The Parish Clerk will determine all accounting procedures and financial records in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
8.4.2	The Parish Clerk will complete the annual financial statements of the Council including the annual return as soon as practical after the end of the financial year and will submit and report on them to the Council. The Council will review each year 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.
8.4.3	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.
8.4.4	The Parish Clerk will submit the Annual Return to the External Auditor by the due date, ensuring the return is complete.
8.5	Banking Arrangements and Cheques
8.5.6	The Council's banking arrangements, including the Bank Mandate, will be made by the Parish Clerk and approved by the Council. They will be regularly reviewed for efficiency.
8.5.7	A resolution of the Council will nominate at least 2 members to be authorised by the Council to sign cheques. The Parish Clerk will also be a signatory.
8.5.8	All items of expenditure will be authorised by the Council and the payments approved. The RFO will examine invoices and verify and certify the expenditure and ask the Chair to initial to approve for payment. This authorisation will enable the RFO to pay invoices on line.
8.6	Loans and Investments
8.6.1	All loans and investments will be negotiated in the name of the Council and will be set for a period approved by the Council.
8.6.2	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 full Council, especially the terms and purposes. These terms must be reviewed annually.
8.6.3	All investments of money under the control of the Council will be in the name of the Council and all certificates and other documents will be retained by the Parish Clerk.
8.7	Contracts and Purchase Orders

8.7.1	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. Two quotes are required for the supply of goods, materials or services and the execution of works in excess of £2,500. Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed £25,000 (or other threshold specified by the Office of Government Commence) the Council will consider the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
8.7.2	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. The Council will always consider good value and the Social Value Act 2013.
8.8	Assets:
8.8.1	The Parish Clerk will ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets is maintained by the Council. It will be reviewed at least annually.
8.9	VAT:
8.9.1	The Parish Clerk will promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment due in accordance with the VAT Act 1974 Section 33 will be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year.
8.10	Insurance:
8.10.1	The Council will review the level of insurance cover and ensure that it is adequate and appropriate for the activities of the Council. Minimum cover will include Public Liability, Employers Liability, Money and Fidelity Guarantee.
9	Freedom of Information and Transparency and Openness
9.1	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 (and their subsequent amendments) The Parish Clerk will ensure that the Council conforms to the requirements of the Act allowing public access to the appropriate documents. East Meon Parish Council has adopted the Local Government Transparency Code (2015)
10	Committees
10.1	A decision cannot be taken by a single Councillor. Under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council can delegate decisions to a committee or the Parish Clerk. The Council from time to time may set up committees to undertake work on behalf of the Council. They will report to the Council at each meeting. Good governance and practice should be applied where applicable. Where reports are to be submitted to the Parish Council, it is good practice to submit to the Parish Clerk all papers for distribution in advance of the meeting so that all Councillors have time to read the papers.
11	Planning
11.1	The Parish Council devolves the responsibility to the Planning Committee, for considering and responding appropriately to Planning Applications or respond on behalf of the Parish Council to consultations regarding planning issues or issues which may have effect on planning in the Parish. The Planning Committee will consist of 3 members from the Parish Council and a Chair will be elected from those 3 Councillors on the Planning Committee. East Meon Parish Council have adopted the "Rules of Guidance" which are published in respect of the process for dealing with 1. Non Contentious Applications and 2. Contentious Applications. These should be read in conjunction with the Standing Orders and any meetings called by the Planning Committee will follow the Standing Orders for the conduct and calling of meetings as set out in the Standing Orders.

11.2	The Parish Clerk will usually send all formal letters and handle all correspondence. Where appropriate the Chair can be copied. It is not necessary to copy all Councillors. Councillors should be mindful that all correspondence can be asked for under a Freedom of Information request.
12	Urgent Business
12.1	Should it not be appropriate to convene a special meeting, then any urgent business will be handled by the Parish Clerk in consultation with the Chair and one other Councillor. Actions will be reported promptly to the Council and minuted at the next meeting.
13	Alteration or Reversal of previous decisions
13.1	Decision of the Council will not usually 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.
14	Standing Orders
14.1	These and any other Standing Orders will be reviewed annually by the Parish Clerk and the Chair, and any amendments will be decided by the Council.
14.2	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 advice from appropriate legal or Local Council sources.
14.3	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.
15	Code of Conduct Complaints
	<p>Upon notification by East Hampshire District Council, that it is dealing with a complaint that a Councillor has breached the Council's Code of Conduct, the Parish Clerk shall, (subject to it not being considered sensitive information) report this to the Council.</p> <p>Where the complaint relates to the Parish Clerk, the Parish Clerk shall notify the Chair of the Council of this fact and the Chair shall nominate a Councillor to assume the duties of a Parish Clerk in relation to the complaint until it has been determined and the Council has agreed what action, if any, to take.</p>