

# STRETTON-ON-DUNSMORE PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS

## 1. Ordinary Council Meetings

- a. In an election year, the annual meeting of Stretton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council (Hereafter to be identified as SODPC) shall be held on or within fourteen days following the day on which councillors were elected to take office.
- b. In an election year, following the election of a Chairman and Vice Chairman, the business of the annual meeting shall include delivery by the Chairman of SODPC and councillors of their acceptance of office forms to the Parish Clerk unless the council agrees for this to be done at a later date.
- c. In a year which is not an election year, the *annual* meeting of SODPC shall be held on such a day in April or May as PPC may elect at a time agreed by councillors. The first business of the annual meeting shall be to receive the Financial and Chairman's report of the previous year followed by the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the council.
- d. The Chairman, unless he/she resigns or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at all meetings until his/her successor is elected at the next annual meeting of SODPC. The Vice-Chairman, unless he/she resigns or becomes disqualified shall remain in office until his/her successor is elected at the next annual meeting of SODPC. In an election year, if the current Chairman of SODPC has not been re-elected as a member of the council, he/she shall preside at the meeting until a successor has been elected. If the current Chairman is absent from the meeting, the current Vice-Chairman, if present, shall take his place. If the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are both absent from the meeting, a councillor as chosen by councillors present at the meeting shall preside.
- e. The current Chairman of SODPC shall have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of SODPC and has a casting vote in the case of equality of votes
- f. In addition to the annual meeting of SODPC, it shall be the policy of SODPC to hold meetings on a monthly basis unless otherwise agreed by the Chairman and SODPC councillors; however, meetings **must** be held on no less than three occasions during the financial year. The duration of the meeting shall not exceed *120 minutes*.
- g. No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least **five** councillors are present. If a meeting becomes inquorate no further business shall be transacted.
- h. Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.
- i. A minimum of three working days for notice of a meeting shall be given and be posted in a prominent public place and uploaded to the parish website.
- j. All ordinary and annual meetings shall be preceded by a Public Democratic Forum at which residents are invited to give their views and ask questions to the Parish Council about matter they have agreed at previous meetings, or

raise new issues for future consideration, which may be added to the agenda of a subsequent meeting.

- k. Members of SODPC cannot offer the opinion of the council either during or outside of the meeting unless the subject has been discussed and agreed by a majority at a public meeting within that financial year.
- l. The Public Democratic Forum shall not exceed more than thirty minutes and participation by an individual member of the public shall not exceed *three minutes*. A person speaking at the meeting shall direct his/her comments through the Chairman of the meeting.
- m. All ordinary and annual 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 (i.e. personnel or legal issues.) The public's exclusion from part or all of the meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.
- n. Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting is permitted without the consent of SODPC.
- o. The Chairman, if present shall preside at a meeting. If the Chairman is absent from the meeting, the Vice-Chairman, if present, shall take his place. If the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are both absent from the meeting, a councillor as chosen by councillors present at the meeting shall preside.
- p. Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors with voting rights present and voting. The Chairman of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his casting vote whether or not he/she gave an original vote. Voting on a question shall be by a show of hands.
- q. A councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on his/her right to participate and vote on that matter.
- r. In the event of a vacancy for a councillor occurring during a current term of office of SODPC, the clerk shall give notice to the general public that there is a casual vacancy. A by-election may be called in order to fill that vacancy if the requisite number of those on the electoral roll make request for an election to the returning officer. Otherwise, SODPC may co-opt a member to the council from members of the public who are agreeable to such procedure. Should more than one member of the public be willing to be co-opted, co-option of the successful candidate shall be made by councillors in office at that time, all voting rights being observed.

## **2. Agenda and Minutes**

- a. The agenda shall be posted in a publicly accessible place three working days in advance of the corresponding meeting.
- b. The agenda format for an ordinary meeting is set to include as minimum:-
  - The date, time and location of the meeting
  - The names of the Parish Councillors who are under summons to attend.

- A statement making people aware that recording of the meeting is permitted and may occur.
  - The Public Democratic Forum
  - Apologies
  - Declarations of interest
  - Approval of Minutes
  - Progress report
  - District and County Councillors Reports
  - Planning
  - Finance
  - Correspondence
  - Any Other Business (for discussion at the following meeting.)
  - Date of the Next Meeting
- c. The minutes of a meeting shall include:
- The date, time and place of the meeting
  - The name of councillors present and absent
  - Others in attendance
  - Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting
  - Declarations of interest declared by councillors with voting rights
  - All matters relevant to the meeting being held.
- d. Initial draft minutes shall be prepared by the clerk and emailed to the Chairman for comment. If appropriate the Clerk shall incorporate the Chairman's suggestions, then email the draft minutes to all Parish Councillors.
- e. The minutes remain in draft until they are accepted and signed the subsequent meeting; only then can be made public.
- f. The Clerk will ensure that a copy of approved minutes are available on the parish website.

### **3. Committees and sub committees.**

Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee. The members of a committee may be non-councillors unless it is a committee which controls and regulates the finances of the council. Unless the council determines otherwise, all members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.

- a. The Council will have a standing Human Resources sub committee comprising the Chairman and Vice Chairman plus any other members as thought appropriate from time to time. The purpose of the sub committee is to investigate personnel issues and grievances with a degree of confidentiality and recommend action to the full council. Any substantive decision (hiring, firing or remuneration) must be made by the full council.

### **4. Extraordinary Meetings of the Council and Committees**

The Chairman of SODPC may convene an extraordinary meeting at any time. If the Chairman 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. Proper Officer**

- a. The Proper Officer of SODPC shall be The Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to Stretton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council. He/she shall be appointed by councillors with voting rights, normal voting procedures being employed.
- b. At the discretion of SODPC, formal qualifications may not be a pre-requisite for the appointment. However, should the appointed clerk and SODPC agree that formal qualifications are desirable, the facility for provision of such qualification shall be provided (Subject to the financial circumstances of the council at that time).
- c. As an employee of SODPC the Clerk should have an agreed contract.

## **6. Duties of the Proper Officer (and Responsible Finance Officer.)**

The Proper Officer shall:-

- Be responsible for serving on councillors a summons, by delivery, post at their residences or email confirming the time, place and agenda of the next meeting.
- Give public notice of the time, place and agenda at least three clear days before the next public meeting.
- Inform relevant County and Borough councillors of the time and place of the next PPC meeting with an invitation to attend.
- Convene a meeting of full council for the election of a new Chairman of PPC occasioned by a casual vacancy in his/her office.
- Receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities.
- Retain acceptance of office forms and a copy of every councillors' register of interest.
- Be responsible for control of the finances of the Parish Council including organising internal and external auditing as required by law, payment of bills and control of a monetary float which shall not exceed £100. (Refer to Financial Regulations for full details)
- Be delegated the right to make decisions on urgent business that requires decision before the next public meeting of PPC; in making such decisions the PO is advised to consult with at least two councillors and such decision having a spending limit of £1000. (Refer to Financial Regulations for full details)
- Allow the public right of access to view minutes of previous meetings (which have been signed as true record) and where applicable demands related to "The Freedom of Information Act".

- The PO shall provide a copy of SODPC's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible after he/she has delivered his/her acceptance of office form.

## **7. Code of Conduct**

SODPC members are subject to the seven Nolan principles of Public Life. Namely:

- Selflessness: Councillors should act in the public interest
- Integrity: Councillors should not put themselves under any obligations to others, allow others improperly to influence or seek benefit for, family, friends or close associates
- Objectivity: Councillors should act impartially, fairly and on merit
- Accountability: Councillors should be prepared to submit to public scrutiny necessary to ensure accountability
- Openness: Councillors should be open and transparent in their actions and decisions unless there are clear and lawful reasons for non-disclosure
- Honesty: Councillors should always be truthful
- Leadership: as a councillor, you should promote, support and exhibit high standards of conduct and be willing to challenge poor behaviour.

SODPC has adopted the National Association of Local Councils template code of conduct as the basis for its expectations of Councillors and their obligations.

The above standing orders of Stretton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council are statutory. Non statutory procedures to aid the Parish Council in conducting its business may be obtained by referring to the NALC publication document "Local Councils Explained".