

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

Introduction

The purpose of these standing orders is to lay down procedures for the governance of Bere Ferrers Parish Council.

The Parish Council (known in this document as the Council) has ultimate responsibility for all decisions made.

Council will consist of 13 Councillors with the Proper Officer (the Parish Clerk) in attendance unless otherwise specified.

Standing orders for the organisation and transaction of Council's business are decided by Council. A committee or sub-committee may decide its own standing orders if its appointing body (which is the Council in the case of a committee or a committee in the case of a sub-committee) has not made standing orders which apply to them.

These Standing Orders are based upon the Model Standing Orders 2018 for England (version two April 2022), published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Anything highlighted in **Bold Text** is a statutory requirement.

Signed by the Chair of Council Cllr. Peter. Crozier

Cllr. Peter Crozier

Approved and adopted at a Council meeting held on 27th February 2024, Minute No: 580

Bere Ferrers Parish Council Standing Orders 2024

1. Rules of debate at meetings	3
2. Disorderly conduct at meetings	5
3. Meetings generally and Guidelines for the public.....	5
4. Committees and sub-committees	8
5. Ordinary council meetings	9
6. Extraordinary meetings of the council, committees and sub-committees	11
7. Previous resolutions	11
8. Voting on appointments.....	11
9. Motions for a meeting that require written notice to be given to the proper officer	12
10. Motions at a meeting that do not require written notice	12
11. Handling confidential or sensitive information	12
12. Draft minutes	13
13. Code of conduct and dispensations.....	14
14. Code of conduct complaints	15
15. Proper officer.....	16
16. Responsible financial officer	17
17. Accounts and accounting statements	17
18. Financial controls and procurement.....	18
19. Handling staff matters.....	19
20. Responsibilities to provide information	20
21. Responsibilities under data protection legislation	20
22. Relations with the press/media.....	21
23. Execution and sealing of legal deeds	21
24. Communicating with district and county or unitary councillors	21
25. Restrictions on councillor activities	21
26. Standing orders generally.....	22

Appendix – West Devon Borough Council Code of Conduct

1. Rules of debate at meetings

- a Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting.
- b A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.
- c A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the Chair of the meeting as withdrawn.
- d 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.
- e An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.
- f If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion (as amended) becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.
- g An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the Chair of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the Chair.
- h 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.
- i If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the Chair of the meeting.
- j Subject to standing order 1(k), only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the Chair of the meeting.
- k One or more amendments may be discussed together if the Chair of the meeting considers this expedient, but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- l A Councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- m The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.
- n 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 on the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- o Unless permitted by the Chair of the meeting, a Councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:

Bere Ferrers Parish Council Standing Orders 2024

- 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. to exercise a right of reply.

- p During the debate on 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.

- q A point of order shall be decided by the Chair of the meeting, with advice from the Clerk, and his/her decision shall be final.

- r 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 or legal requirements.

- s Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the Chair 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.

- t Excluding motions moved under standing order 1(r), the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed (3) minutes without the consent of the Chair of the meeting.

- u A member wishing to speak shall raise their hand to draw the Chair's attention.

- v Members shall address the Chair.

2. Disorderly conduct at meetings

- a No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the Chair of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- b If person(s) disregards the request of the Chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any Councillor or the Chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.
- c If a resolution made under standing order 2(b) is ignored, the Chair 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.

3. Meetings generally

Council meetings	C
Committee meetings	c
Sub-committee meetings	sc
Task & Finish groups	tf

- a **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 (Cc)**
- b **The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting (the agenda) does not include the day on which 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. The minimum three clear days' public notice for a meeting does not include the day on which the notice was issued or the day of the meeting unless the meeting is convened at shorter notice. (Cc)**
- c A Councillor may request that an item be placed on the agenda for a Council or Committee meeting, upon giving details to the Clerk, at least four days before the date of the meeting. (Usually by 10 am Wednesday morning). Cc
- d The Chair of the Council or of the Committee in consultation with the Clerk, shall determine the dates of their meetings and the agenda. Cc
- e **Subject to standing order 3(f), a person who attends a meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To "report" means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting proceedings, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later or to report or to provide oral or written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present. Cc**

- f A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission. Cc**
- g 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. Cc**
- h Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chair of the Council may in his absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chair of the Council. Cc**
- i The Chair of the Council, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chair of the Council, if present, shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, a Councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.**
- j Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors and non-councillors with voting rights present and voting. CcSC**
- k The Chair 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 gave an original vote.**
- l Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a Councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.**
- m The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:**
 - i. the time and place of the meeting.
 - ii. the names of councillors who are present and the names of councillors who are absent.
 - iii. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights.
 - iv. the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors and non-councillors with voting rights.
 - v. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered.
 - vi. if there was a public participation session; and the resolutions made.

- n A Councillor or a non-Councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on his right to participate and vote on that matter. CcSC**
- o No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three. C**
- p If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting. ScSC**

Guidelines for the public

- a 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. Cc**
- b Members of the public may make representations, ask r questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda at a time relevant to the matter being discussed as determined by the Chair, but at meetings of the Plans & Highways Committee this must be before it makes any recommendations.
- c The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with Standing Order 3 shall not exceed three minutes unless directed by the Chair of the meeting.
- d In accordance with standing order 3, a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- e Members of the public raise their hands when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort)]. The Chair of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.
- f A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the Chair of the meeting.
- g Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.

4. Committees and sub-committees

- a **The Council may appoint standing committees or another committee as may be necessary, and:**
 - i) **shall determine their terms of reference**
 - ii) **a copy of the minutes of an advisory or sub-committee shall be forwarded to the Clerk.**

- b The Council will have four standing committees:
 - 1. Finance & General Purposes
 - 2. Footpaths & Environment
 - 3. Open Spaces
 - 4. Plans & Highways

- c Each committee will consist of a maximum of six Councillors and the Chair of the Council. The Chair of Open Spaces, the Chair of Planning & Highways and the Chair of Footpaths & Environment will be members of Finance & General Purposes Committee. Seven days before the Annual Meeting, members will indicate to the Clerk, which committees they wish to serve on. If numbers exceed posts the Clerk will organise an election at the AGM.

- d Each Committee shall appoint its own Chair and Vice-Chair by secret ballot.

- e All elections will be organised, and results announced by the Clerk.

- f **Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee** of no more than three members, whose terms of reference shall be determined by the Committee. Each committee and sub-committee shall appoint its own Chair and Vice-Chair.

- g No members of Council is expected to be chair or Vice-Chair of more than two Committees.

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

- i **Unless the Council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.**

- j A Task & Finish Group may be formed by Council or a Committee (subject to confirmation by Council,) to carry out a defined task. Its terms of reference and delegated powers will be approved at that time. The Task & Finish Group will normally consist of a minimum of two and a maximum of four members including the Chair or Vice Chair of the Council. The Group will make a monthly report on progress to either Council or its forming Committee.

- k Any resolution, passed unanimously, by those present, which is the responsibility of that committee, may be put into effect immediately, under delegated powers, provided that there is no financial cost to the Council, or the costs have been previously approved by the Council.
- l In order to share the work of the Council it is hoped that no Councillor should be a member of more than two committees, but every Councillor is expected to serve on at least one (with the exception of Chair of Open Spaces being on F&GP and the Chair of Council) unless, after the annual internal Council elections, there are still vacancies.
- m All Councillors are welcome to be in attendance at all meetings, but they cannot propose, second or vote nor can they be counted as part of the quorum. They must declare any interests. They may speak on all agenda matters at the discretion of the Chair.
- n It is permissible for a Chair of Council who has served for two years, to be excused from any Committee for the following year.

5 Ordinary Council meetings

- a **In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the councillors elected take office.**
- b **In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council decides.**
- c **If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 7pm.**
- d **In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council decides. At least one of the meetings will be held in the village of Bere Ferrers**
- e **The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the Council shall be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council.**
- f Nominations for both posts must be made in writing to the Clerk, at least seven days before the meeting and the agenda will show a list of nominations received. A Secret ballot will take place if more than one person is nominated for the posts.
- g **The Chair of the Council, unless he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until his successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.**

- h **The Vice-Chair of the Council, if there is one, unless he resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chair of the Council at the next annual meeting of the Council.**
- i **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the annual meeting until a successor Chair of the Council has been elected. The current Chair of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council but shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- j **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the annual meeting until a new Chair of the Council has been elected. He may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council and shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- k The period of office for both Chair and Vice-Chair of Council should normally be no more than two consecutive years.
- l Following the election of the Chair of the Council and Vice-Chair of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
 - i. **In an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council and councillors of their 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 Chair of the Council of his 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. Planning matters are permanently delegated to the Plans & Highways Committee.
 - vii. Review of the terms of reference for committees.
 - viii. Appointment of members to existing committees.
 - ix. Appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing order 4.
 - x. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations.(as appropriate.)
 - xi. Review of arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies and businesses.
 - xii. Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back.
 - xiii. 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.

6 Extraordinary meetings of the council, committees and sub-committees

- a **The Chair of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.**
- b **If the Chair of the Council does not 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 shall be signed by the two councillors.**
- c The chair of a committee or a sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee, or the sub-committee at any time.
- d If the chair of a committee or a sub-committee does not 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 or the sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee, or a sub-committee.

7 Previous resolutions

- a A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least five Councillors to be given to the Proper Officer (the Clerk) in accordance with standing order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.
- b When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 7(a) has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further six months.

8. Voting on appointments

- a Canvassing Councillors or members of a Committee, or sub-committee, directly or indirectly, for appointment to or by the Council shall disqualify the candidate from appointment. The Proper Officer (the Clerk) shall disclose the requirements of this standing order to every candidate.
- b Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. Tied votes will be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the Chair of the meeting.
- c Co-option of new Councillors. Each candidate will be invited to make a short presentation to Council and then answer questions. At this point, the Council will go into Part 2 for discussion and the vote will be by secret ballot and will be taken in accordance with 8(a).

9 Motions for a meeting that require written notice to be given to the Proper Officer (the Clerk)

- a A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting for which it is tabled 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.
- b 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 (the Clerk) at least three clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.
- c The Proper Officer (the Clerk) may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 9(b), correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.
- d If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 9(b) is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it, so that it can be understood, in writing, to the Proper Officer at least three clear days before the meeting.
- e If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the Chair 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.
- f The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.
- g Motions received shall be recorded and numbered in the order that they are received.
- h Motions rejected shall be recorded with an explanation by the Proper Officer of the reason for rejection.

10. Motions at a meeting that do not require written notice

- a 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 other 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 or legal requirements).
- xvi. to adjourn the meeting; or
- xvii. to close the meeting.

11. Handling confidential or sensitive information

- a. 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.**
- b. If a subject is to be discussed at Council or at a Committee meeting of a confidential or sensitive nature, including staff matters, it should be taken in accordance with clause 11(b), where the public may be excluded by a resolution known as Part 2.
- c. During discussions under Part 2, notes will be taken and then kept in a secure confidential file, which shall be available to any Councillor, under the constraints of clause 11(b).
- e. The Council shall have in place and keep under review, technical and organisational measures to keep secure information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. Such arrangements shall include deciding who has access to personal data and encryption of personal data.**
- f. The Council shall have in place, and keep under review, policies for the retention and safe destruction of all information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. The Council's retention policy shall confirm the period for which information (including personal data) shall be retained or if this is not possible the criteria used to determine that period (e.g., the Limitation Act 1980). This is held within its GDPR policies.**
- g. Councillors, staff, the Council's contractors and agents shall not disclose confidential information or personal data without legal justification.**

12. Draft minutes

- a) 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. A copy of all draft minutes, except F & G. P., should be distributed no later than 10 days after the meeting.

- b) There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes shall be moved in accordance with standing order 10(a)(i) above.
- c) The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the Chair of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- d) If the Chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:
“The Chair of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of the () held on [date] in respect of () were a correct record but his view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.”
- e) If the Council’s gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is higher) does not exceed £25,000, it shall publish draft minutes on a website which is publicly accessible and free of charge not later than one month after the meeting has taken place.**
- f) Subject to the publication of draft minutes in accordance with standing order 12(e) and standing order 20(a) and following a resolution which confirms the accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, the draft minutes or recordings of the meeting for which approved minutes exist shall be destroyed.

13. Code of conduct and dispensations

See also standing order 3.

- a) All Councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council.
- b) Unless he has been granted a dispensation, a Councillor or non-Councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he has a disclosable pecuniary interest. He may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he had the interest.
- c) **Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer** (the Clerk) as soon as possible before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.
- d) A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by a sub-committee of the Council, consisting of Chair, Vice-Chair and the Proper Officer (the Clerk) for which the dispensation is required and that decision is final.

- e 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.
- f Subject to standing orders 13(d) and (e), a dispensation request shall be considered by the Proper Officer (the Clerk) before the meeting or, if this is not possible, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required. If the interest does not become apparent until a meeting is underway, The chair of the meeting should suspend the proceedings while a decision is made. The discussions of the subcommittee should remain confidential.
- g A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 13(e) if having regard to all relevant circumstances any of the following apply:
 - 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.
 - 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.
- h All Councillor shall undertake training in the code of conduct within six months of the delivery of their declaration of office.
- i On receipt of a notification that there has been an alleged breach of Code of Conduct, the Proper Officer (the Clerk) shall refer it to the appropriate officer at West Devon Borough Council.

14. Code of conduct complaints

- a Upon notification by the District or Unitary Council that it is dealing with a complaint that a Councillor or non-Councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the Proper Officer (the Clerk) shall, subject to standing order 11, report this to the Council.
- b Where the notification in standing order 14(a) relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chair of Council of this fact, and the Chair shall nominate another staff member 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 in accordance with standing order 14(d).

- c The Council may:
 - i. provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to investigate the complaint or is a legal requirement.
 - ii. seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter.
- d **Upon notification by the District or Unitary Council that a Councillor or non-Councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.**

15. Proper Officer

- a The Proper Officer will be the Clerk.
- b The Proper Officer shall:
 - i. **at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee or a sub-committee, serve on Councillors a summons, by email, confirming the time, place and the agenda provided any such email contains the electronic signature and title of the Proper Officer or by delivery or post at their residences, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda.**
 - ii. **give the public notice of the time, place and agenda at least three clear days before a meeting of the Council or meeting of a Committee, or sub-Committee (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council convened by councillors is signed by them).**
See standing order 3(b) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a council and standing order 3(b) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a committee
 - iii. (a) subject to standing order 9, include on the agenda all motions in the order received unless a councillor has given written notice at least five days before the meeting confirming his withdrawal of it.
 - iv. (b) The Clerk may also send out electronically with the agenda all accompanying papers and accounts to those Members who have accepted electronic transmission. Otherwise, such papers will be available for collection at the Council Offices during normal working hours. (sched. 12, para 10 (2) of Local Govt. Act 1972, (Electronic Communications order,) as amended by S.I. 2001/1630 of 2001.
 - v. **convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Chair of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in his office.**
 - vi. **facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors.**
 - vii. **receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities.**
 - viii. hold acceptance of office forms from councillors.
 - ix. hold a copy of every councillor's register of interests.

- x. assist with responding to requests made under freedom of information legislation and rights exercisable under data protection legislation, in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures.
- xi. liaise, as appropriate, with the Council's Data Protection Officer (if there is one).
- xii. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary.
- xiii. assist in the organisation of, storage of, access to, security of and destruction of information held by the Council in paper and electronic form subject to the requirements of data protection and freedom of information legislation and other legitimate requirements (e.g., the Limitation Act 1980).
- xiv. arrange for legal deeds to be executed.
(see also standing order 23).
- xv. arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with its financial regulations.
- xvi. record every planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response to the local planning authority in the Plans & Highways minutes.
- xvii. refer a planning application received by the Council to the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the Plans & Highways Committee, within two working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary or site meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of Plans & Highways Committee. The Chair of the Council will also be informed.
- xviii. manage access to information about the Council via the publication scheme; and
- xix. retain custody of the seal of the Council (if there is one) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.
(see also standing order 23).

16 Responsible Financial Officer

When the Responsible Financial Officer (the Clerk) is absent, the Council will appoint the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Council to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer

17. Accounts and accounting statements

- a "Proper practices" in standing orders refer to the most recent version of "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners' Guide".
- b All payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the Council's financial regulations.
- c The Responsible Financial Officer (the Clerk) shall supply to each member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, at its monthly meeting a statement to summarise.

- i) The Council's receipts and payments for the month to date.
 - ii) Bank reconciliation
 - iii) Accounts for approval and payment.
- d As soon as possible after the financial year end on 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide to the Council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 2 of the annual governance and accountability return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- e The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and apply the form of accounts determined by the Council (receipts and payments) for the year to 31 March. A completed draft annual governance and accountability return shall be presented to the F & G. P Committee and Council 7 days later for approval by the Council. The annual governance and accountability return of the Council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to the Council for consideration and formal approval by the deadline of 30 June.

18 Financial controls and procurement

- a. The F & G.P Committee shall consider and approve the Financial Regulations, which will then be subject to confirmation by Council,
- b. the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;
- c. The assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council;
- d. The work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually;
- e. The inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the Council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and
- f. whether contracts with an estimated value below **£25,000** due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.
- g. Financial regulations shall be reviewed bi-annually by F & G.P Committee and then approved by Council. For fitness for purpose.
- h. **A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £25,000 but less than the relevant thresholds referred to in standing order 18(f) is subject to the "light touch" arrangements under Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 unless it proposes to use an existing list of approved suppliers (framework agreement).**
- i. Subject to additional requirements in the financial regulations of the Council, the tender process for contracts for the supply of goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall include, as a minimum, the following steps:
- j. a specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall be drawn up;
- k. An invitation to tender shall be drawn up to confirm (i) the Council's specification (ii) the time, date and address for the submission of tenders (iii) the date of the Council's written response to the tender and (iv) the prohibition

- on prospective contractors contacting councillors or staff to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process;
- l. The invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper or Parish magazine and in any other manner that is appropriate;
 - m. Tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
 - n. Tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least one councillor after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed;
 - o. Tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
 - p. Neither the Council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.
 - q. **Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time, the Council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016 apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the Council must comply with procurement rules. NALC's procurement guidance contains further details.**

19 Handling staff matters

- a. A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of Council or the Finance & General Purposes Committee, or staff sub-committee is subject to Standing Order 11.
- b. Subject to the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Clerk shall notify the Chair or, if they are not available, the Vice-Chair of absence occasioned by illness or other reason and that person shall report such absence to Finance & General Purposes committee at its next meeting.
- c. The Chair or in his absence, the vice-Chair, shall upon a resolution conduct a review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Clerk and the Clerk will carry out a similar review of all other staff.
- d. Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Clerk shall contact the Chair of the Council, or in their absence, the Vice-Chair of the Council, in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and may be progressed by resolution of the Staff sub-committee of the Finance & General Purposes committee.
- e. Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Clerk shall contact the Chair in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and may be progressed by resolution of the Staff sub-committee of the Finance & General Purposes committee.
- f. Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat as confidential the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters.

- g In accordance with standing order 11(a), persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing order 19(f).
- h The Council will have a Disiplinary and Grievance Committee which will be chaired by the Vice Chair of the Council and include the Chair of F & G.P and one other Councillor.
- i The Council will have an Appeals Committee where any member of staff who has been the subject of a Disciplinary or Grievance Committee finding, may lodge an appeal. Such an appeal will be lodged within 14 days of the original finding. The Chair of Council, the Vice-Chair of F & G. P. and one other Councillor will form the Appeals Committee.
- j The Staff sub-committee will consist of three members of the F & G.P Committee and the Chair of the Council. It will formulate the policies and procedures for the above committee. In a case of conflict of interest with regard to any procedure or investigation, the Council may replace any position on any Committee mentioned in sections i to k with another suitable Councillor. The committee will consider paying conditions for all members of staff.
- k The Staff sub-committee will investigate any grievance or disciplinary investigation and will report its proposals to F & G P Committee for their deliberations and action.
- l A member of staff appearing in front of any of the above Committees may be accompanied by a union official or a friend.

20. Responsibilities to provide information

See also standing order 21.

- a **In accordance with freedom of information legislation, the Council shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme and respond to requests for information held by the Council.**
- b **The Council shall publish information in accordance with the requirements of the Smaller Authorities (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015.**
- c **The minutes of the Council or its Committee shall be open to inspection by any Local Government elector in the Parish without charge, by appointment with the clerk. They will be placed on the Council's website.**

21. Responsibilities under data protection legislation

Below is not an exclusive list. See also standing order 11.

- a The Council may appoint a Data Protection Officer.

- b **The Council shall have policies and procedures in place to respond to an individual exercising statutory rights concerning his personal data.**
- c **The Council shall have a written policy in place for responding to and managing a personal data breach.**
- d **The Council shall keep a record of all personal data breaches comprising the facts relating to the personal data breach, its effects and the remedial action taken.**
- e **The Council shall ensure that information communicated in its privacy notice(s) is in an easily accessible and available form and kept up to date.**
- f **The Council shall maintain a written record of its processing activities.**

22. Relations with the press/media

- a 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 policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

23. Execution and sealing of legal deeds

See also standing orders 15(b)(xii) and (xvii).

- a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.
- b **Subject to standing order 23(a), any two councillors may sign on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

24. Communicating with District and County or Unitary Councillors

- a An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the District and County Council
- b Unless the Council determines otherwise, a copy of each letter sent to the District and County Council shall be sent to the ward councillor(s) representing the area of the Council.

25. Restrictions on councillor activities

- a. Unless duly authorised no councillor shall:
 - i. inspect any land and/or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or
 - ii. issue orders, instructions or directions, to Council staff or contractors.

26. Standing orders generally

- a** All or part of a Standing Order, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, may be suspended by resolution in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda for a meeting.
- b** A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice by at least five Councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9.
- c** Standing Orders will be reviewed annually by Members of the F & G.P. and any recommendations for changes will be sent to Council for approval.
- d** The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible after they have delivered his acceptance of office form and when major revisions (changes to more than three clauses) of the orders have taken place.
- e** The decision of the Chair of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

APPENDIX

Council Members' Code of Conduct 2020

This Council has agreed that it will use the Code of Conduct in respect of West Devon Borough Council as amended from time to time. A copy of the current code is attached to these Standing Orders as schedule 1.

MEMBER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

PART 1 GENERAL PROVISIONS