



## MEETINGS PROTOCOL

It is the duty of councillors to attend the meetings of Attleborough Town Council and, as well as stating their own views, to fairly represent the views and needs of the community.

Councillors should read agendas in advance and prepare any notes prior to the meeting. They should also arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the start of a meeting, dress appropriately, and ensure their mobile phone is placed on silent to avoid unnecessary interruptions.

### 1 Conduct at Meetings

- a) All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights must observe the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.
- b) Councillors shall treat each other with mutual respect, listen to the points of view of others, and address the Chairman when speaking. If two or more councillors wish to speak, the Chairman shall decide who to call upon.
- c) No-one shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly, or in such a manner as to bring the Council into disrepute. If this is ignored, the Chairman of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- d) If person(s) disregard the request of the Chairman of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the Chairman of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.
- e) If a resolution made under 1(d) above is ignored, the Chairman of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

### 2 Declarations of Interest & Dispensations

- a) All members of the Council shall be issued with a copy of the Code of Conduct on joining the council and all members shall conform to the Code of Conduct. 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. All members have to provide a record of their disclosable pecuniary interests in a public register of interest. Members must tell the Monitoring Officer at Breckland Council in writing within 28 days of taking office, or within 28 days of any change to the members register of interests of any interest which fall within the categories set out in the Code of Conduct.
- b) Unless granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which they had the interest.
- c) If a member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest, they shall declare such interest as soon as it becomes apparent, disclosing the existence and nature of the interest as required. The member may speak on the matter and also vote, but must bear in mind the public's perception of their impartiality.
- d) Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer as soon as possible

before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.

- e) A dispensation request shall confirm:
- the description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;
  - whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;
  - the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and
  - an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- f) Subject to 2(d) and 2(e) above, dispensation requests shall be considered by the Proper Officer before the meeting or, if this is not possible, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.
- g) A dispensation may be granted in accordance with 2(h) below if, having regard to all relevant circumstances the following applies:
- without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the meeting transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business; or
  - granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area; or
  - it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.
- h) A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by the Proper Officer and that decision is final, after consulting with the Chairman.

### 3 How Decisions are Made

- a) The Council and its Committees take decisions by means of voting on a motion at meetings. A motion is a proposal which is discussed and voted upon, and a simple majority decides. The outcome then forms a resolution upon which the Council acts.
- b) A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting which it is tabled for and in any event must 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.
- c) Except as provided by the Standing Orders, no motion may be moved at a meeting unless the business to which it relates it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least 5 clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.
- d) Significant proposals shall be supported by an explanation of the recommendations, which will be published with the agenda for the meeting.
- e) The Proper Officer may correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.
- f) If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it in writing to the Proper Officer so that it can be understood at least 5 clear days before the meeting.
- g) If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the Chairman of the forthcoming to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.

- h) Subject to 3(g) above, the decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final, after consulting with the Chairman.
- i) The following motions may be moved at a meeting without prior written notice to the Proper Officer;
- to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;
  - to move to a vote;
  - to defer consideration of a motion;
  - to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;
  - to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;
  - to change the order of business on the agenda;
  - to proceed to the next business on the agenda;
  - to require a written report;
  - to appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members;
  - to extend the time limits for speaking;
  - to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest;
  - to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public;
  - to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
  - to temporarily suspend the meeting;
  - to suspend a particular Standing Order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory requirements);
  - to adjourn the meeting; or
  - to close a meeting.
- j) A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least four councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with 3(c) above, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.
- k) When a motion moved pursuant to 3(j) above has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved within a further six months.

#### 4 Handling Motions & Amendments

- a) Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting.
- 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 Chairman 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) 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.
- h) If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the Chairman.
- i) Subject to 4(h) above, only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the Chairman of the meeting.
- j) One or more amendments may be discussed together if the Chairman of the meeting considers this expedient, but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- k) A councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- l) The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.
- m) Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply either at the end of debate of the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- n) Unless permitted by the Chairman of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:
- to speak on an amendment moved by another councillor;
  - to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since he last spoke;
  - to make a point of order;
  - to give a personal explanation; or
  - in exercise of a right of reply.
- o) During the debate of a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A councillor raising a point of order shall identify the Standing Order which he considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting he is concerned by.
- p) A point of order shall be decided by the Chairman of the meeting and his decision shall be final.
- q) When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:
- to amend the motion;
  - to proceed to the next business;
  - to adjourn the debate;
  - to put the motion to a vote;
  - to ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;
  - to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
  - to exclude the public and press;
  - to adjourn the meeting; or
  - to suspend particular Standing Order(s), excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory requirements.
- r) Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the Chairman of the meeting shall be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived his right of reply.
- s) Excluding motions moved to suspend particular Standing Order(s), excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory requirements, the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to

the motion under discussion and shall not exceed 5 minutes without the consent of the Chairman of the meeting.

## 5 Voting

- a) Voting shall be by a show of hands, with the exception of appointments, where a secret ballot is permitted. At the request of a councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor voted for or against that question or abstained, with the exception of appointments, where a secret ballot is permitted. Such a request must be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.
- b) **An appointment shall be filled by a simple majority vote and by secret ballot. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled. The Clerk will receive the ballot papers, and carry out the count. Only the candidate with the most votes shall be announced.**
- c) 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 gave an original vote.

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

## 7 Public Participation & Press at Meetings

- a) Members of the public may make representations, answer questions, and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.
- b) The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with 7(a) above shall not exceed 10 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- c) Subject to 7(b) above, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
- d) In accordance with 7(a) above, a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate. The chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- e) A person shall raise his hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort).
- f) A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the chairman of the meeting.
- g) Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- h) 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.
- i) The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 provides that a person may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if they are present but otherwise may:
  - film, photograph or make an audio recording of a meeting;
  - use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as

it takes place or later;

- report or comment on the proceedings in writing during or after a meeting or orally report or comment after the meeting.

## 8 Annual Meeting

- a) Following the election of the Chairman of the Council and Deputy Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting of the council, the business of the annual meeting shall include:
- In an election year, delivery by the Chairman 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 Chairman of the Council of his acceptance of office form unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date;
  - Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the council;
  - Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;
  - Review of the terms of reference for committees;
  - Appointment of members to existing committees;
  - Appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing orders;
  - Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
  - Review of arrangements, including any charters and agency agreements, with other local authorities and review of contributions made to expenditure incurred by other local authorities;
  - Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back;
  - Review of inventory of land and assets including buildings and office equipment;
  - Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks;
  - Review of the council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies;
  - Review of the council's policies review schedule
  - Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the full council up to and including the next Annual Meeting of full council.

## 9 Extraordinary Meetings

- a) The Chairman of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council at any time.
- b) If the Chairman of the Council does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting of the council within seven days of having been requested in writing to do so by two councillors, any two councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council. The public notice giving the time, place, and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the two councillors.
- c) The chairman 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 chairman of a committee or a sub-committee does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting within seven days of having been requested by to do so by two members of the committee or the sub-committee, any two members of the committee and the sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of a committee and a sub-committee.

## 10 Committees & Sub-Committees

- a) Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.
- b) The members of a committee or sub-committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Council.
- c) The Council may appoint standing committees or other committees as may be necessary, and:
  - shall determine their terms of reference;
  - shall permit a committee to determine the number and time of its meetings;
  - shall appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee;
  - shall permit a committee to appoint its own chairman at the first meeting of the committee;
  - shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee, which shall be no less than three;
  - shall determine if the press and public may attend a meeting of a committee;
  - shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee that they are permitted to attend;
  - may dissolve a committee.

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