# Wantage Town Council – Standing Orders, Procedures and Practices

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# 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 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c A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the chairman of the meeting as withdrawn.

d If a motion (including an amendment) has been seconded, it may be withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.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 becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.

g A councillor may move an amendment to their 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 standing order 1(j) below, 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 a motion or the mover of an amendment shall have a right of reply not exceeding 2 minutes 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:

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. 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 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 their decision shall be final.

q When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except through the Chairman to:

i. amend the motion;
ii. proceed to the next business;
iii. adjourn the debate;
iv. put the motion to a vote;
v. ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;
vi. refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
vii. exclude the public and press;
viii. adjourn the meeting; or
ix. 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 their right of reply.

s Excluding motions moved under Standing Order 1(q) above, the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed 2 minutes without the consent of the chairman of the meeting.

# 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 chairman of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.

b If such person(s) disregards 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.

c If a resolution made under standing order 2(b) 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.

# 3. Meetings generally

| | |
|---|---|
| *FCM* | Full Council meetings |
| *CM* | Committee meetings |
| *SCM* | Sub-committee meetings |

*FCM* a Meetings of the Council shall be held at The Beacon on a Monday at 7.30pm unless the Council otherwise decides at a previous meeting.

b Meetings will normally not exceed two and a half hours long, at the discretion of the Chairman.

c **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.**

*FCM* d **The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting 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.**

*CM* e **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** under exceptional circumstances.

FCM CM f **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.** The business conducted during the public's exclusion shall not be recorded using any form of electronic equipment.

g Subject to paragraph 3 f) above, members of the public may (with prior notice to the proper officer) make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are permitted to attend and participate in relation to a matter relevant to the business of that meeting.

h If a member of the public wishes to make representations at a meeting, notice to the proper officer will normally be required by midday on the Friday in advance of the meeting on the following Monday.

i The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(g) above shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

j Subject to standing order 3(i) above, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 2 minutes, unless directed by the Chairman.

k In accordance with standing order 3(g) above, a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.

l A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak. There is no requirement to stand when speaking.

m A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the chairman of the meeting.

n 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.

o Points made by others shall not be repeated or the same representations made more than once, although an indication of support may be given.

*FCM CM SCM*

p Following the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, which took effect 6th August 2014, members of the public may not orally report or comment about a meeting as it takes place if they are present at the meeting but otherwise may:

i) Film, photograph or make an audio recording of proceedings at a meeting (eg using a mobile phone, tablet, filming for a TV broadcast, recording for radio)
ii) Use any other means for enabling people not present at a meeting to see or hear proceedings as it takes place or later (eg live streaming), but no commentary may be audible so as to disrupt the meeting
iii) Write a report or a commentary on the proceedings during or after a meeting or oral reports or commentary after a meeting. Examples of written reporting or commentary include blogging, posting comments on Facebook or tweeting.

q If there are children or vulnerable adults in attendance, any such recording may

only be made with the consent of a responsible adult in charge of such a person.

*FCM CM* r **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**.

*FCM* s **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chairman of the Council (Town Mayor) may in their absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chairman of the Council (Deputy Town Mayor).**

*FCM* t **The Chairman, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chairman is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chairman, if present, shall preside. If both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman are absent from a meeting, a councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.**

*FCM CM SCM* u **Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors or members with voting rights present and voting.**

*FCM CM SCM* v **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 their casting vote whether or not he gave an original vote.**
*See standing orders 5(i) and (j) below for the different rules that apply in the election of the Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting of the council.*

w **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 their vote for or against that question.** Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.

x 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 present** or recording their apologies;
   iii. interests that have been declared by councillors and members with voting rights, present at the meeting;
   iv. whether a councillor or members with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
   v. if there was a public participation session; and
   vi. the resolutions made.

*FCM CM* y Apologies shall be communicated to the Proper Officer in writing prior to the meeting.

z **A councillor or a member with voting rights, present at a meeting, 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 their right to participate and vote on that matter.**

*FCM* aa **No business may be transacted at a Full Council 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.**
*See standing order 4d(viii) below for the quorum of a committee or sub-committee meeting.*

*FCM CM SCM* bb **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.

# 4. Committees and 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 may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the council.**

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

d The council may appoint standing committees or other committees as may be necessary, and:

i. shall determine their terms of reference;
ii. shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee up until the date of the next annual meeting of full council;
iii. shall permit a committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;
iv. shall, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c) above, appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee;
v. may, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c) above, appoint and determine the terms of office of the substitute members to a committee whose role is to replace the ordinary members at a meeting of a committee if the ordinary members of the committee confirm to the Proper Officer (3) days before the meeting that they

are unable to attend;

vi. shall, after it has appointed the members of a standing committee, appoint the chairman and vice-chairman of the standing committee;

vii. shall permit, if it so chooses, a committee other than a standing committee, to appoint its own chairman at the first meeting of the committee;

viii. shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee which shall be no less than a third of the members and no less than three;

ix. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee;

x. shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meetings of a sub-committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, required for the meetings of a sub-committee;

xi. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and

xii. may dissolve a committee.

# 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 new councillors elected take office.**

**b In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of a council shall be held on such day in May as the council may direct.**

c **If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the council shall take place at 7.30 pm.**

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 directs.**

**e In an election year, councillors should execute Declarations of Acceptance of Office in each other's presence, or in the presence of a proper officer previously authorised by the Council to make such declaration before the annual meeting commences.**

**f The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the council shall then be the election of the Chairman (Town Mayor) and Vice-Chairman (Deputy Town Mayor) of the Council.**

**g The Chairman of the Council, unless he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until their successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the council.**

**h The Vice-Chairman of the Council, if any, unless he resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chairman**

**of the Council at the next annual meeting of the council.**

**i In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the council, he shall preside at the meeting until a successor Chairman of the Council has been elected. The current Chairman of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of the Council but must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**

**j In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the council, he shall preside at the meeting until a new Chairman of the Council has been elected. He may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of the Council and must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**

k Following the Declarations of Acceptance of Office and the election of the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor at the annual meeting of the council, the business of the annual meeting shall include:

i. To receive apologies for absence and any declarations of interest;
ii. To decide when any declarations of acceptance of office which have not been received as provided by law shall be received;
iii. To appoint standing committees, sub-committees and election of committee chairmen and vice-chairmen;
iv. To appoint the internal auditor;
v. To appoint members on joint committees;
vi. To appoint members on other bodies;
vii. To approve the Accounts, the Statement of Accounts, and the Annual Governance Statement;
viii. To approve signatories for bank mandate;
ix. To confirm accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the council.

# 6. Extraordinary meetings of the council and committees and sub-committees

**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 one third of the councillors within that Council or Committee, any three 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 three 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 one third of the members of the committee [or the sub-committee], any three members of the committee [or the sub-committee] may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee [or the 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 half of the councillors within that Committee to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9 below, 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) above has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved within a further six months.

# 8. Voting on appointments

a 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. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting.

# 9. Motions for a meeting that require written notice to be given to the Proper Officer (Full Council Meeting)

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 Except as provided by these Standing Orders, no motion may be moved, unless the business to which it relates has been put on the Agenda by the Proper Officer, or the mover has given notice in writing of its terms and has delivered the notice to the Proper Officer, at least five clear days excluding Saturdays and Sundays before the next meeting of the Council.

c The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 9(b) above, 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) above 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 3 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 chairman 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 Subject to standing order 9(e) above, the decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.

g At a full Council meeting, minutes of committees, inclusive of motions, are adopted with or without amendment. Motions can be referred back to the relevant committee for consideration where necessary.

h Motions can be referred directly to Full Council or to the relevant committee. Motions which are referred to Full Council, but which fall within the remit of a committee are normally referred to that committee unless there is a good reason for not doing so.

# 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 at either Full Council or Committee meetings;

i. to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;
ii. to approve the accuracy of minutes;
iii. to move to a vote;
iv. to defer consideration of a motion;
v. to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;
vi. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;
vii. to change the order of business on the agenda;
viii. to proceed to the next business on the agenda;
ix. to require a written report;
x. to appoint a committee or sub-committee and its members;
xi. to extend the time limits for speaking;
xii. to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information disclosure of which is prejudicial to the public interest;
xiii. to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public;

xiv. to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
xv. to temporarily suspend the meeting;
xvi. to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory requirements);
xvii. to adjourn the meeting; or
xviii. to close a meeting;
xix. other business not requiring written notice being accepted at the chairman's discretion.

b If a motion falls within the terms of reference of a committee or sub-committee or within the delegated powers conferred on an employee, a referral of the same may be made to such committee or sub-committee or employee provided that the Chairman may direct for it to be dealt with at the present meeting for reasons of urgency or expedience.

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

# 12. Draft minutes

a If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on councillors with the summons to attend the meeting at which they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read.

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 chairman of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.

d If the chairman 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 chairman 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

their view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings."

# 13. Code of conduct and dispensations

*See also standing order 3(x) above.*

a All councillors and members with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the council.

b Unless the councillor has been granted a dispensation, a councillor or member 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 Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a councillor or member with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which they have another interest if so required by the council's code of conduct. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which they had the interest.

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 decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by a meeting of the council, committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required, and that decision is final.

f 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.

g Subject to standing orders 13(d) and (f) above, dispensations requests shall be considered at the beginning of the meeting of the council, committee or a sub-committee for which the dispensation is required.

**h A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 13(e) above if having regard to all relevant circumstances the following applies:**

   **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 or**

**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.**

# 14. Code of conduct complaints

a Upon notification by the District Council that it is dealing with a complaint that a councillor or member with voting rights has breached the council's code of conduct, the Proper Officer shall, subject to standing order 11 above, report this to the council.

b Where the notification in standing order 14(a) above relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chairman of Council of this fact, and the Chairman 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) below].

c The council may:

i. provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to progress an investigation of the complaint or is required by law;

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 Council that a councillor or member with voting rights has breached the council's code of conduct, the council shall consider what, if any, action to take against them. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.**

# 15. Proper Officer

a The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.

b The Proper Officer shall:

i. **at least three clear working days before a meeting of the council, a committee** or a sub-committee **serve on councillors, by delivery or post at their residences,** or by email, **a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda** (provided any such email contains the electronic signature and title of the Proper Officer).
*See standing order 3(d) above for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 3(e) above for a meeting of a committee.*

ii. **give public notice of the time, place and agenda at least three clear days**

**before a meeting of the council or a meeting of a committee** or a 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(d) above for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 3(e) above for a meeting of a committee.*

iii. subject to standing order 9 above, include on the agenda all motions in the order received unless a councillor has given written notice at least 3 days before the meeting confirming their withdrawal of it;

iv. **convene a meeting of full council for the election of a new Chairman of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in their office;**

v. facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors;

vi. **receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities;**

vii. retain acceptance of office forms from councillors;

viii. retain a copy of every councillor's register of interests;

ix. assist with responding to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998, in accordance with and subject to the council's policies and procedures relating to the same;

x. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;

xi. manage the organisation, storage of, access to and destruction of information held by the council in paper and electronic form;

xii. arrange for legal deeds to be executed;
*See also standing order 22 below.*

xiii. arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the council in accordance with the council's financial regulations;

xiv. allow for meetings of a Planning Sub-Committee every three weeks to ensure prompt responses. Alternatively, refer a planning application received by the council to the Chairman or in their absence the Vice-Chairman of the Council within two working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of the council or Planning committee;

xv. provide information on the planning applications to be considered within the Agenda for that meeting, including links to the relevant website;

xvi. retain custody of the seal of the council which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.
*See also standing order 22 below.*

# 16. Responsible Financial Officer

a The Responsible Financial Officer shall be either the clerk or other staff member(s) nominated by the council to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Officer is absent.

# 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 shall supply to each councillor at appropriate times a statement to summarise:
   i. the council's aggregate receipts and payments for the year to date;
   ii. the balances held at the end of the period being reported

   and which includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends.

d As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:
   i. each councillor with a statement summarising the council's receipts and payments for the year, for information; and
   ii. to the full council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 1 of the annual 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 applying the form of accounts determined by the council (receipts and payments, or income and expenditure) for a year to 31 March. A completed draft annual return shall be presented to each councillor before the end of the following month of May. The annual return of the council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to council for consideration and formal approval before 30 June.

# 18. Financial controls and procurement

a The council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:
   i. the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;
   ii. the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the council;
   iii. 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;
   iv. the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and
   v. procurement policies (subject to standing order 18(c) below) including the setting

of values for different procedures where a contract has an estimated value of less than £50,000.

b Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually for fitness of purpose.

c **Financial regulations shall confirm that a proposed contract for the supply of goods, materials, services, or the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of £50,000 shall be procured on the basis of a formal tender as summarised in standing order 18(d) below.**

d 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:

i. a specification for the goods, materials, services, or the execution of works shall be drawn up;
ii. 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;
iii. the invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper and in any other manner that is appropriate;
iv. tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
v. 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;
vi. tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.

e Neither the council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.

f **Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed £138,893 (or other threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time) the council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No. 5, as amended) and the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No. 6, as amended) apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the council must comply with EU procurement rules.**

# 19. Handling staff matters

a A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of council is subject to standing order 11 above.

b Procedures concerning absence, performance, grievances, and other staff matters will

be dealt with in accordance with those specified in the Council's Employee Handbook.

c Those persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance, or disciplinary matters as confidential and secure.

d The council shall keep all written records relating to employees secure. All paper records shall be secured and locked, and electronic records shall be password protected and encrypted.

e Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing orders 19(c) and (d) above if so justified.

f Access and means of access by keys and/or computer passwords to records of employment referred to in standing orders 19(c) and (d) above shall be provided only to the Proper Officer, the Chairman of the Council and any committee responsible for staffing matters.

# 20. Requests for information

a 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.

b Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the chairman of the Policy, Management and Finance committee. The said committee shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

# 21. 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.

# 22. Execution and sealing of legal deeds

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

a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the council unless authorised by a resolution.

b The use of the seal to effect closure of the whole or part of the Market Place car parking area under the Wantage Town Council (Market Place Wantage) (Off Street

Parking Places) Order 1989 will not require authorisation by a resolution.

c

# 23. Communicating with District and County 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 representing the area of the council.

b At appropriate stages in correspondence, all town, district, and county councillors will receive copies of the exchanges of communication whenever deemed appropriate and necessary by the Proper Officer.

# 24. Restrictions on councillor activities

a. Unless authorised by a resolution, no councillor shall in the name of or on behalf of the council or any committee or sub-committee:
   i. inspect any land and/or premises which the council has a right or duty to inspect; or
   ii. issue orders, instructions, or directions.

# 25. Standing orders generally

a All or part of a standing order, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory 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 requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice of which shall be signed by at least half of the councillors and given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9 above.

c The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible after the councillor has delivered their acceptance of office form.

d The decision of the chairman of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

# 26. Emergency Consultation Panel

In circumstances where the Town Council is unable to conduct its business through meetings due to a national emergency, a period of national mourning, or a similar situation, standing orders shall be suspended and the Clerk, as the Council's Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer shall be given delegated authority to make decisions on the Council's behalf, subject to the agreement of an Emergency Consultation Panel (ECP).

The members of the ECP shall be the Town Mayor and the chairmen of the standing committees. The Clerk will be guided by the views of a majority of the ECP. During the period in which these circumstances pertain, the Clerk will have the same authority level as the Council itself.

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