

# COMBE RALEIGH PARISH MEETING STANDING ORDERS 2024

Approved by Combe Raleigh Parish Meeting: on 7 November 2024 by Minute 53/2025

## 1. Introduction

- a. Standing Orders are the written rules of a Parish Meeting to regulate the proceedings of a meeting. A Parish Meeting may also use Standing Orders to refer to various internal administrative arrangements.
- b. Parish Meetings operate within a nationwide Local Government statutory framework. These Standing Orders, which are based on NALC Model Standing Orders and legal advice, will be reviewed and updated as necessary by the Parish Meeting. The statutory requirements to which a Parish Meeting is subject apply whether or not they are incorporated in a Parish Meeting's Standing Orders.

## 2. The role of the Parish Meeting

- a. The Parish Meeting consists of the local government electors of the parish and the purpose of the meeting is to discuss parish affairs. This includes an issue, activity, or subject which specifically affects a particular parish and which the parish meeting may wish to discuss, debate and potentially influence.

## 3. Ordinary Parish Meetings

- a. In addition to the Annual meeting of the Parish Meeting held in May, at least three other (usually quarterly) ordinary meetings shall be held in each year. Other meetings may be required to discuss specific items raised by electors, planning applications and other urgent matters.
- b. If the Chair does not call a meeting within seven days of having been requested in writing to do so by two electors, any two electors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Meeting. The public notice giving the time, place and agenda for such a meeting shall be signed by the two electors.
- c. The Parish Meeting shall usually take place at 7pm.
- d. Notice of the meeting and agenda shall be published at least three clear<sup>1</sup> days in advance.
- e. An invitation to attend a meeting of the Parish Meeting shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the District and County Councils.
- f. Two weeks before the meeting an email will be sent to electors asking for items for the agenda. Electors can request items to be on the agenda at any time; however, 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 Clerk at least seven clear days before the meeting. If necessary, additional meetings may be called by the Chair or two electors – see paras 3a and 3b.
- g. If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Clerk shall consult with the Chair, or the electors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected. The decision of the Clerk as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.
- h. The Chair, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chair shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, a elector as chosen by the electors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.
- i. No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least ten parishioners who are on the current EDDC Register of Electors for Combe Raleigh are present. 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.
- j. A meeting shall not exceed a period of 2 hours.
- k. Meetings shall be open to the public (ie those not on the current EDDC Register of Electors for Combe Raleigh) 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.
- l. 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. The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the Chair of the meeting. A member of the public shall not speak for more than 5 minutes.
- m. A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and shall remain seated unless requested to stand by the Chair (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort).
- n. A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the Chair of the meeting. Only one

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<sup>1</sup> Clear days do not include the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, or a bank holiday.

- person is permitted to speak at a time.
- o. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
  - p. There is a commitment to being open and transparent in the way the meeting conducts its decision making. Recording, including filming, audio recording, taking photographs, blogging, tweeting and using other social media websites is permitted at meetings which are open to the public subject to the following:
    - (i) Anyone wishing to record must let the Chair know prior to, or at the start of, the meeting and the recording must be overt (i.e. clearly visible to anyone at the meeting), but non-disruptive.
    - (ii) All those visually recording a meeting are requested to only focus on officers and the public who are directly involved in the conduct of the meeting. Any children present at the meeting are not to be filmed unless their parents/guardians have given their consent.
    - (iii) At the beginning of a meeting, if required, the Chairman will make an announcement that the meeting may be filmed or recorded. Meeting agendas will also carry this message.
    - (iv) Any member of the public has the right not to be recorded. If anyone speaking at the meeting does not wish to be recorded they must let the Chairman of the meeting know.
    - (v) A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.
  - q. Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the electors present and voting.
  - r. 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 their casting vote whether or not they gave an original vote.
  - s. Voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of an elector, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each elector present and voting gave their vote for or against that question.
  - t. 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 electors who are present and the names of electors who have given apologies;
    - iii. interests that have been declared by electors;
    - iv. the grant of dispensations (if any) to electors;
    - v. whether a elector left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
    - vi. if there was a public participation session;
    - vii. the resolutions made.

#### **4. Annual Parish Meeting**

- a. The first business of the Annual Parish Meeting must be the election of the Chair.
- b. The Vice Chair will sit as Chair during the election of Chair.
- c. There is no statutory process or requirement for nominations. Any elector can stand for election as Chair at the Annual Parish Meeting without notice or nomination by another.
- d. There is no statutory requirement for an elector to be present at the Annual Parish Meeting in order to be elected as Chair.
- e. Where more than two persons have been nominated, proposed and seconded for the role of Chair 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.
- f. The current Chair must by law use their casting vote in the case of a tie in the election of Chair.
- g. Following election of the Chair, a similar process will be followed for election of a Vice-Chair.
- h. Following the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
  - i. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Parish Meeting;
  - ii. Review and adoption of the Standing Orders;
  - iii. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover;
  - iv. Review of the Parish Meeting's expenditure incurred under s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **5. Conduct of Parish Meetings**

- a. A motion shall not be progressed unless it has been proposed and seconded.
- b. During the debate on a motion, a elector may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the elector who was interrupted shall stop speaking.
- c. A point of order shall be decided by the Chair and their decision shall be final.
- d. No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this Standing Order is ignored, the Chair shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- e. If person(s) disregard the request of the Chair to moderate or improve their conduct, any elector or the Chair 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. If a resolution is ignored, the Chair may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

## **6. Dispensations**

- a. Unless they has been granted a dispensation, a elector 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 have the interest.
- b. 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 for which the dispensation is sought; and
  - iv. an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- c. A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by the Clerk.
- d. A dispensation may be granted 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 Parish Meeting's area; or
  - iii. it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

## **7. Committees**

- a. A committee may be appointed whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the Parish Meeting. The members of a committee may include non-electors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Parish Meeting.

## **8. Management of Information**

- a. The Parish Meeting shall have in place, and keep under review, measures to keep secure information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form.

## **9. Draft Minutes**

- a. If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been circulated to electors prior to the meeting where they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read. There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy.
- b. 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.
- c. If the Chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, they 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 Parish Meeting 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."
- d. If the Parish Meeting'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.

## **10. Accounts and Accounting Statements**

- a. All payments by the Parish Meeting shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law and proper practices.
- b. The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer shall supply at each Parish Meeting a statement to summarise:
  - i. the Parish Meeting's receipts and payments for each quarter;
  - ii. the Parish Meeting's aggregate receipts and payments for the year to date;
  - iii. the balances held at the end of the quarter being reported and which includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends.
- c. As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:
  - i. a statement summarising the Parish Meeting's receipts and payments for the last quarter and the year to date for information; and
  - ii. 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.
- d. The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and apply the form of accounts determined by the Parish Meeting (receipts and payments) for the year to 31 March. A completed draft annual governance and accountability return shall be presented to all electors at least 14 days prior to anticipated approval by the Parish Meeting. The annual governance and accountability return of the Parish Meeting, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to the Parish Meeting for consideration and formal approval before 30 June.