# STANDING ORDERS

# CHELSHAM AND FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

**Chelsham and Farleigh Parish Council Standing Orders were approved and adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 11th May 2026**

These standing orders establish the rules for council meetings and the council's organisational, administrative and financial procedures. Separate policy documents exist which contain guidance on rules, procedures, roles and responsibilities in specific areas of the council's operations.

The Parish Council has developed these standing orders which observe all statutory requirements but also reflect a more practical approach.

## 1. Parish Councillors

a. Following election or co-option to the Parish Council, each Councillor will be issued with an induction folder which will include a copy of the Code of Conduct and the Standing Orders of the Council. They will also sign the form of Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of the Clerk.
b. The Parish council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is reviewed annually. A full copy of this code is available on the Parish website. All Councillors will observe the Code of Conduct at all times when on Council business and no member will act in such a way that will bring the Council into disrepute, behave offensively in meetings or obstruct the Council's business.
c. The Code of Conduct outlines when a Councillor will declare a pecuniary, or other registrable interest. The Councillor will declare that interest at the earliest opportunity. A pecuniary interest means that a Councillor or one of their relatives, close friends or a partner would be affected financially, either to their benefit or loss, by a decision the Council is considering. In these cases, the Councillor must declare that interest and take no part in the decision-making process.

## 2. Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

The Parish Council's year runs from 1st May to 30th April. The first meeting of the year is the annual meeting. The Parish Council is required to hold an annual meeting to transact business that only needs to be addressed once a year. This includes electing a Chair and Vice-Chair, appointing committees, reviewing policy documents, etc. Certain statutory rules apply to this meeting.

a. If the Annual Meeting is in an election year, it must be held within 14 days of the election.

b. If the outgoing Chair attends, then they will preside until the new Chair is elected. The first business of the Annual Meeting will be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair and to receive their acceptance of office.

Other items for inclusion on the agenda are listed at the end of this document.

## 3. Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is not a meeting of the Parish Council (although the Parish Council organises the meeting). The Annual Parish Meeting is a public meeting and all electors of the parish have the right to contribute to the agenda and speak on a matter of local interest. (This is different to a Council Meeting where electors have no right to speak, other than during Public Participation). Any votes taken at the Annual Parish Meeting are not binding on the Parish Council although they will consider them at future meetings. If any votes are taken, only those on the electoral roll can vote on an issue (other members of the public can attend and express their opinion but not vote).

a. The Annual Parish Meeting must be held each year between 1st March and 1st June.

## 4. Meetings in General

The following standing orders apply to all Parish Councils meetings, including the Annual Parish Meeting.

a. Meetings will be held in appropriate, accessible accommodation. Unless no other accommodation is available, the meetings will not be held in premises used for the supply of alcohol.
b. Meetings will last for a maximum of two and half hours. If significant business remains uncompleted at the end of time, at the discretion of the Chair, the meeting may continue, or the Council will decide if the business should be deferred to the next meeting or if an additional meeting should be arranged.
c. Councillors will be advised of the meetings by the issue of a summons and agenda delivered by email.
d. Councillors have a duty to attend and, if they are unable to do so, must contact the Clerk, by email, with an apology or explanation. If a Councillor fails to attend any meetings for six months, they will automatically cease to be a councillor unless the Council approved the reason for absence before the end of the six-month period.
e. There will be at least 11 Parish Council meetings a year, as well as the Annual Parish Meeting. The dates and times for the meeting will be published at the start of the year. Should it be required, extraordinary meetings can be called.
f. Public notices will be posted on the parish noticeboards (on Chelsham and Farleigh commons) and on the parish website, informing members of the public of the venue, time, date and business to be transacted. The notice will be posted at least three clear working days before the meeting.
g. Meetings will be open to the public and the press, but they may be temporarily excluded from the meeting if the business is regarded as confidential. The public's exclusion from part or all of the meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.
h. Preparing the agenda for the meeting is the Clerk's responsibility. Every item on the agenda must be clear, concise and lawful. The process will usually be undertaken in consultation with the Chair or Vice-Chair, if the Chair is not available. Any Councillor may ask the Clerk to add items to the agenda if they feel a relevant subject should be discussed. The request must be received at least one week before the meeting. It is their responsibility to fully support the Clerk in ensuring the above guidance is followed. This responsibility includes providing an explanation for the inclusion of the topic / item

and any background information needed. The Clerk will issue the agenda to councillors to summon them to the meeting.

i. The agenda will always include an item to enable Councillors to declare interests on specific agenda items.
j. The agenda will be issued three clear business days before the meeting. The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which the 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.
k. If agreed by the Chair, any **urgent** items which are not on the agenda, may be discussed, but **no** decision may be made at that meeting.
l. The Chair of the Council will preside at the meeting and will be responsible for the conduct of that meeting. If the Chair is not present, then the Vice-Chair will preside. If they are not present, then the first matter on the agenda will be the election of an appropriate Councillor who will chair the meeting. Whoever chairs the meeting will assume the duties of the Chair for the meeting.
m. The quorum for the Council will be three Councillors. If at least three councillors are not present, then no business will be transacted and a fresh notice will be issued to reconvene the meeting at a later date.
n. If, at any time during the meeting, it ceases to be quorate then the meeting will be adjourned and any further business carried forward to the next meeting when it is convened.
o. Voting at the meeting shall be by show of hands. Subject to the meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors with voting rights present and voting. A Councillor may request that the Clerk records how each Councillor has voted, including abstentions. Any request of this nature will be made before moving on to the next item of business.
p. In cases of equal votes, the Chair (or other person presiding) will have a casting vote, whether or not they gave an original vote.
q. A minute of the meeting will be taken by the Clerk or other nominated person in the Clerk's absence. The minutes which are circulated will be draft minutes until they are approved by the Parish Council at their next meeting and signed by the person presiding at that meeting.
r. The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following: i) the time and place of the meeting, ii) if there was a public participation session, iii) the names of councillors who are present and the names of councillors who are absent, iv) interests that have been declared by councillors, v) the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors, vi) whether councillors left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered, vii) the resolutions made.
s. If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on Councillors by email, they shall be taken as read.
t. 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 can be moved without written notice.
u. The Council shall publish its minutes on the website which is publicly accessible not later than one month after the meeting has taken place.

## 5. Extraordinary Meetings

a. If unforeseen, urgent council business arises, it may be necessary to call an extraordinary meeting at short notice.

b. The Chair of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.
c. 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.

## 6. Setting the Agenda for Meetings and the Decision-Making Process

a. Each item on the agenda should clearly indicate the topic or motion to be debated.
b. An explanation of the purpose for the inclusion of the topic and the nature of the decision or decisions required should be stated.
c. Any background information that councillors need to have digested before the meeting should be provided in electronic form no later that the Friday before the meeting.
d. It is an expectation that councillors will be fully acquainted with the agenda and background information in advance of the meeting.
e. If a councillor feels they need more background information before the meeting, it is their responsibility to obtain this information with the support of the Clerk or other councillors.
f. The Chair of the meeting will allow a suitable time for discussion of the topic with all councillors, observing the agreed policy for conduct in meetings.
g. If a resolution is proposed, the exact wording will be agreed and noted in full by the Clerk.
h. A vote will be taken, if required.
i. Agreed actions to be taken by the Clerk or an individual councillor should be clearly recorded in the minutes and provided to the councillors as soon as possible after the meeting.

## 7. Public Participation Time

a. Meetings will include a Public Participation time when parishioners and others can make representations, answer questions or give evidence.
b. A person who wishes to speak during public participation time should raise their hand and then wait until acknowledged by the Chair of the meeting and asked to speak. A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the Chair of the meeting. Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wishes to speak, the Chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
c. Members of the public raising issues or questions should be aware that only items on the meeting agenda, which is published three days prior to the meeting, can be debated or decided at the meeting. The Chair may decide to answer a question by a member of the public or call on a fellow Councillor to do so, or direct that a written response be given.
d. Members of the public should also be aware that a previous resolution will not be reversed within six months unless there are exceptional circumstances.
e. After the Public Participation time has ended, members of the public are observers and cannot play any further active part in the meeting, unless at the discretion of the Chair.
f. Should the public not adhere to this guidance, or are in any way disruptive in the meeting, they may be asked to leave.
g. Members of the public are advised that they may be filmed, or audio recorded, by other members of the public at the meeting.

## 8. Disorderly Conduct at Meetings

a. No person shall disrupt a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the Chair of the meeting will request that person to moderate or improve their conduct.
b. If the person in question disregards the request of the Chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, the Chair may rule that the person be no longer heard or excluded from the meeting.
c. If the ruling is ignored, the Chair of the meeting may take further responsible steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include suspending or closing the meeting.

## 9. Code of Conduct and Dispensations

As indicated in point 1, the Parish Council has adopted a Code of Conduct. All Councillors are bound by the procedures for the declaration of an interest.

a. Unless the Councillor(s) have been granted a dispensation, they shall withdraw from 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.
b. Dispensation requests shall be made in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer.
c. A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by the Proper Officer and that decision is final.
d. A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 9c 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.

## 10. Code of Conduct Complaints

Upon notification by the Principal Council that a Councillor has breached the Parish Council's Code of Conduct, the Parish Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against the person. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.

## 11. Committees

a. The Council may need, from time to time, set up committees or short-term working groups to undertake work on behalf of the Council. Committee meetings will be subject to the same standing orders as full Council meetings.
b. The Council will set the terms of reference for the committee / working group and the committee / working group will report to the Council as determined by the terms of reference.
c. In the terms of reference, the Council will determine the venue, times and frequency of the committee / working group meetings.
d. Non-Councillors can be appointed to a committee or working group in an advisory capacity but only Councillors can be voting members of a committee.
e. The quorum of a committee will be determined in the terms of reference but will never be less than three Councillors.

## 12. Proper Officer

a. The Proper Officer shall be either the Parish Clerk or other Councillor nominated by the Parish Council to temporarily undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.
b. The Proper Officer is legally defined as an 'office holder' and shall:
i) work for the Parish Council as a corporate body as opposed to individual Councillors,
ii) have prime responsibility for the administration of the Parish Council, managing staff / contractors and carrying out Parish Council decisions,
iii) have responsibility to advise the Parish Council before it takes a decision and warning it against proceeding with any course of action that is unlawful or against standing orders,
iv) at least three clear days of the meeting of the council or a committee - serve on Councillors by email a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda (provided the Councillor has consented to service by email), and provide, on the parish noticeboards and website public notice for a Parish Council meeting of the time, place and agenda, and provide on the parish noticeboards and website public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council that is signed by them.
v) include on the agenda all motions received from Councillors unless a Councillor has given written notice at least 5 days before the meeting confirming withdrawal of it,
vi) convene a Parish Council meeting for the election of a new Chair of the Parish Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy of the office,
vii) facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors,
viii) receive and retain copies of by-laws made by other local authorities,
ix) hold acceptance of office forms from Councillors,
x) hold a copy of every Councillor's register of interests,
xi) assist with responding to requests made under freedom of information legislation and rights exercisable under data protection legislation, in accordance with the Parish Council's relevant policies and procedures,
xii) receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Parish Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary,
xiii) organise storage of, access to, security of and destruction of information held by the Parish 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,
xv) arrange or manage prompt authorisation, approval and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Parish Council in accordance with its financial regulations,
xvi) ensure every planning application notified to the Parish Council and the Parish Council's response to the local planning authority is recorded by the planning authority on their online portal,
xvii) refer a planning application by the Parish Council to the Planning Working Group and all Councillors in a timely fashion with a view to arranging an extension to the deadline for comment or an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of the Parish Council,
xviii) manage public access to information about the Parish Council,
xix) deal with unforeseen or urgent situations between meetings. In dealing with these situations, the Clerk should, in the first instance, take such actions as are immediately required. The Clerk should then make direct contact with the Chair or the Vice-Chair

if the Chair cannot be contacted. The situation should be discussed and any further actions necessary identified. The Clerk, in agreement with the Chair or Vice-Chair, will have the delegated authority to take whatever actions they feel necessary, including those which incur a cost (see the Parish Council's Financial Regulations). Any actions authorised will be reported to the full council, as soon as possible, by email and confirmed at the next Parish Council meeting.

## 13. Responsible Financial Officer

a. The Proper Officer will take the role of Responsible Financial Officer.
b. The Parish Council shall appoint a Councillor to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Office is absent.

## 14. 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 Parish Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the Parish Council's Financial Regulations.
c. The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each Councillor as soon as practicable after 30 June, 30 September and 31 December in each year a statement summarising: i) the Council's income and expenditure for each quarter, ii) the balances held at the end of each quarter 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 income and expenditure for the last financial year, ii) 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, iii) the year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and apply the form of accounts determined by the Council for the year to 31 March.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 before 30 June.

## 15. Financial Controls and Procurement

a. The Parish Council shall consider and approve Financial Regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer which include detailed arrangements for the following:
   i) the keeping of accepting records and systems of internal controls,
   ii) the assessment and management of financial risks,
   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 Parish Council's accounts and / or orders of payments,
   v) whether contracts with an estimated value below £25,000 due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement,
b. Financial Regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually.
c. 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 (a) the Council's specification (b) the time, date and address for the submission of tenders (c) the date of the Council's written response to the tender and iv) the prohibition on prospective contractors contacting Councillors or the Clerk to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process, iii) the invitation to tender shall be advertised in local media, 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 at least one councillor after the deadline date for submission of tenders has passed, vi) tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Parish Council.

d. Neither the Council, not a committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.
e. Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Government from time to time, the Council must consider whether the contract is subject to the requirements of the current procurement legislation and, if so, the Council must comply with procurement rules. (NALC's procurement guidance contains further details).

## 16. Handling Staff Matters

a. A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered at a meeting of the Council is subject to standing orders 17, 18 and 19.
b. Subject to the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Clerk shall notify the Chair of the Council or, if they are not available, the Vice-Chair of the Chair of staff absences and report such absences to the Council at its next meeting.
c. The Council will appoint two Councillors to handle staffing issues, who will also conduct an annual appraisal of the work of the Clerk. The reviews and appraisal shall be reported in writing and are subject to approval by resolution by the Council.
d. Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the clerk will contact the Chair of the Council or, in their absence, the Vice-Chair regarding an informal or formal grievance matter. This matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Council.
e. Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised relates to the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Council, this shall be communicated to another Councillor. This matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Council.
f. Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat as confidential the records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters.
g. In accordance with standing order 17, 18 and 19, persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in 16f.

## 17. Responsibilities to Provide Information

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.

## 18. Management of Information

a. The Council shall have in place and keep under review technical and organisational measures to keep 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.
b. The Council shall have in place, and keep it 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).
c. The agenda, papers that support the agenda and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential information or personal data without legal justification.
d. Councillors, staff, the Council's contractors and agents shall not disclose confidential information or personal data without legal justification.

## 19. Responsibilities Under Data Protection Legislation

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

## 20. 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.

## 21. Execution and Sealing of Legal deeds

a. A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.
b. Subject to standing order 21a, any two Councillors may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.

## 22. Communicating with District and County Councillors

An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward Councillors of the District and County Councils representing the area of the Council.

## 23. Restrictions on Councillor Activities

Unless duly authorised by the Council, no Councillor shall inspect any land or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect or issue orders, instructions or directions relating to the land or premises.

## 24. 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 the 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 special motion, the written notice given by at least three Councillors to be given to the Proper Officer.

c. The decision of the Chair of the meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

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The Annual Meeting agenda will include the following:

- Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council.
- Receipt of the last minutes of a committee (if applicable).
- Consideration of recommendations of a committee (if applicable).
- Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, working groups, staff and other local authorities.
- Review of the terms of reference for committees (if applicable).
- Appointment of members to existing committees.
- Appointment of any new committees (if applicable).
- Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations.
- Review of arrangements (including legal arrangements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies and businesses (if applicable).
- Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back.
- 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 (if applicable).
- Review of inventory of land and other assets including building and office equipment.
- Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks.
- Review of the council's and / or staff subscriptions to other bodies.
- Review of the Council's complaints procedure.
- Review of the Council's policies, procedures and practices in respect of its obligations under freedom of information and data protection legislation.
- Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press /media.
- Review of the Council's employment policies and procedures.
- Review of the Council's expenditure incurred under s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the general power of competence.

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