



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Policy and Procedures Committee meeting held at 7pm in the parish office at Helsby Community Sports Club on Monday 4th September 2023

Present:

Cllr. Sarah Temple – Chair

Cllr. Mike Branigan

Cllr. Graham Stothard

Also present:

Claire Jones Parish Clerk

1. Public Participation – no matters were brought to the committee’s attention.
2. Apologies were noted from Cllrs. Ellams and Nicklin.
3. Declarations of Members’ Interests. None were reported.
4. Confirmation of previous minutes. It was **RESOLVED that the minutes of the Standing Orders Committee meeting held on 21st November 2022 were accepted as accurate and were signed by the Chair – PP01/23.** Members noted that the Policy and Procedures Committee had now replaced the Standing Orders Committee and a new file would be opened for P&P minutes. The Clerk agreed to make a note on the closed Standing Orders file in this respect.
5. Clerk’s report from previous minutes - Under Item 7, it was noted that the Clerk had agreed to seek further clarity on any current councillor dispensations, particularly in relation to setting the precept. The Clerk outlined that the informal government view was that councillors did not require a dispensation to set the precept although NALC’s view was that as members had a beneficial interest in land in the parish, they should apply for a dispensation. It was noted that councillors had submitted dispensation requests for precept setting in the past and it was therefore agreed to recommend to Council that this process be continued, with forms signed by individual councillors up to the next elections in May 2027.
6. Review of Documents

It was suggested that the table of policies as prepared at the working group meeting held in April should form the basis for setting the agenda for future P&P meetings. It was agreed to update the table as follows - update Publication Scheme dates; and add Expenses Policy, Press and Media Policy, Sickness Absence Policy under ‘New Policies’.

Standing Orders

Based on the comments made at the last Standing Orders meeting, it was noted that the Clerk had prepared a revised draft of the document and Cllr. Temple had also submitted her comments on the latest draft version as circulated. Members discussed each comment in turn and agreed to the following amendments:

- Rename the title 'Powers and Duties of Committees' to 'Standing Committees';
- Amend section on 'Committees and Sub-Committees' to include: revised section numbers; clarification that there are four standing (permanent) committees; specification of expenditure limits in line with Section 3.1 of the Financial Regulations; and specification on how committees may be dissolved;
- Under 'Ordinary Council Meetings' delete 5 items of business for discussion at the annual meeting as these are dealt with elsewhere. Also delete references to employee pay (to be covered through the Appraisal Policy);
- Under 'Proper Officer' add that the Clerk will negotiate an extended deadline with the local planning authority for any relevant planning applications;
- Amend section 18(g) to bring it more in line with the wording on committee expenditure controls as set out in standing order 4;
- Include reference to the Clerk's workplan under 'Handling Staff Matters';
- Under 'Standing Orders Generally' outline that changes to the document can also be recommended by the P&P Committee following an annual review; and
- In Appendix 1, refer to 'delegated functions' of each committee rather than 'duties' and add an additional function to the P&P Committee – 'to maintain a list of all Council policies and procedures and to assign responsibility and review dates for all documents.'

The specific delegated functions of the Environment and PCA Committees were discussed. There was agreement that these sections could be revised to better reflect current practice. Cllr. Temple agreed to prepare a revised draft section for the PCA Committee in time for the next P&P meeting with Cllr. Nicklin's input. The Clerk agreed to request that the Environment Committee also carried out a similar exercise, particularly in relation to functions 1 and 2.

It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to formally adopt the revised Standing Orders subject to the amendments above. It was also agreed that the delegated functions of the PCA and Environment Committees in Appendix 1 would be updated for consideration at the next Policy and Procedures Committee meeting – PP02/23.**

It was **RESOLVED to recommend to the Finance Committee to amend Section 3.1 of the Financial Regulations to specify that committees should seek approval from Full Council for any expenditure beyond their overall approved budget in any given financial year – PP03/23.** In this respect, it was proposed to amend the sentence 'Where the spend may exceed the overall budget of that committee for that year, it is recorded in the committee minutes and highlighted on presentation to the Parish Council' to reflect that any overspend will need to be submitted to Full Council for approval.

It was agreed that a suggestion to include a table of amendments in every policy document would be considered at the next P&P meeting. It was also agreed that all documents should include dates, including review dates.

Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy

It was noted that this proposed new policy had been considered at the last Standing Orders Committee and a number of queries had been raised. Members discussed each comment in turn and agreed to the following:

- Clerk to confirm with Cheshire Record Office that they would store archived minutes and what documents they currently held;
- On the basis that the records office agreed to hold minutes, policy to state that 'original signed paper copies of Council and committee meeting minutes to be kept indefinitely in safe storage through the CW&C Cheshire Archives and Local Studies service. At regular intervals of not more than 5 years, the Clerk will archive and deposit them at the Cheshire Record Office in Chester';
- Page 6 – include specifications under quotations and tenders;
- Page 7 – under 'Timesheets' amend to 'Contractor timesheets where remuneration is determined in all or part by number of hours worked' and remove 'last completed audit year';
- Page 7 – delete section on 'members' allowances register';
- Page 8 – under 'Magazines and journals' reword to 'The Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 (the 2003 Act) requires a local council which after 1st February 2004 has published works in print to deliver a copy to the British Library Board. A link to the Helsby News will be sent to the British Library and any other relevant reports will be retained by the Council for as long as useful';
- Page 10 - delete reference to leases and contracts as this is referenced on page 7;
- Page 11 – under burial grounds, reword 'disposal certificates' to 'burial and cremation certificates and coroner's orders for burial'; and
- Include references to recycling, where appropriate.

It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to formally adopt the Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy subject to the amendments above and confirmation from Cheshire Record Office that they would continue to hold Council minutes - PP04/23.**

Appraisal Policy

It was agreed that a stand-alone Appraisal Policy would be recommended, and a separate Training and Development Policy would be drafted and considered at the next meeting. The following amendments were therefore proposed to the Council's existing Appraisal and Training Policy:

- Reword title to 'Appraisal Policy for Council Staff';
- Delete any references to the now disbanded HR Committee;
- Clarify that it is the Chair and/or Vice Chair of Council that will carry out the appraisal process;

- Delete ‘performance appraisal is intended to be kept apart from any salary review process’ in Section 2;
- Add to Section 2 - ‘As per Standing Orders 5 (j)xiii (Ordinary Council Meetings - Annual Meeting of the Council) and 19(h) (Handling Staff Matters) changes to the employees Terms and Conditions of Service will be considered at the Annual Meeting of the Council’;
- Under Paragraph 7.2 add that the Chair will ‘seek approval for pay progression as per the Clerk’s contract’; and
- Delete Section 9 on training and Appendix 4: Training Costs Agreement (both to be included in new Training Policy).

It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to replace the existing Appraisal and Training Policy with a new Appraisal Policy for Council Staff subject to the amendments above - PP05/23.**

Training and Development Policy

The following elements were discussed in relation to drafting the training and development policy:

- To include both staff and councillor training;
- Consideration of maintaining a (public) record of training courses attended along with a formal evaluation form;
- Linking any potential training to a skills audit; and
- To be mindful of putting any unrealistic expectations on councillors to undertake training, particularly when Council membership is low – preference may be for the Council to be ‘supportive’ of training rather than making it compulsory.

7. Urgent matters – none were raised.

8. Date of next meeting – Monday 20th November 2023. Matters for discussion to include revisions to new councillor documentation, the Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy and Health and Safety Policy and consideration of the following new policies: Press and Media Policy, Expenses Policy and Sickness Absence Policy.

The meeting closed at 9.09pm.

Chair’s signature Dated.....