

Alnwick Town Council

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Standing Orders

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Alnwick Town Council agreed a new constitution at a meeting held on 14th April 2011. This sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

2. Council Structure

- 2.1 The following shall be the Standing Committees of the Council, and they shall have the scope and delegated powers to act, as set out below;
- a) Delegated powers of Standing Committees which are of an urgent nature can be referred to Full Council with the agreement of the R.F.O. and the Chair of the appropriate committee

Committee	Membership	Quorum	Scope
Governance & Community Engagement Committee	14 Councillors	5	Planning applications Planning policy and consultations Street naming Local transport priorities Governance and Council policies Budget oversight Treasury management Insurance Staffing Risk management and health & safety External audit Event grants Community partnerships Inter-authority relationships External communications
Operations & Assets Committee	12 Councillors	4	Play areas Allotments Playzone Memorials Street furniture Thomas Percy Site Bike Track Alnwick Cemetery Mechanics Institute Green spaces Civic events Operational partnerships (e.g. Alnwick in Bloom, Christmas Lights)

			NCC service agreements (toilets, grass cutting, hanging baskets, winter services)
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3. Decisions to be made by the Council

3.1 Only the Full Council will exercise the following functions:

- a) The budget, including the allocation of financial resources to committees, reserves policy, setting of the precept and all matters concerning the Annual Return.
- b) Adopting and changing the constitution
- c) Appointing the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees
- d) Appointing Representatives to outside bodies unless delegated to committees
- e) Agreeing the terms of reference for committees and deciding their composition and making appointments to them
- f) Dissolving a committee
- g) Agreeing the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan
- h) Agreeing the Council's response to Local Plan issues, Local Transport Plan priorities and any proposals affecting boundary of the town Council area.
- i) Confirming the appointment or dismissal of the Town Clerk/RFO of the Council
- j) Approving and adopting the minutes of Full Council meetings
- k) Arrangements for filling vacancies to the Town Council
- l) Agreeing the Risk Management Action plan
- m) To respond to consultations on matters not delegated to committees
- n) Endorse external funding bids made on behalf of the Council
- o) All other matters in law reserved to the Council or not delegated to committees
- p) Agreeing all matters relating to the Alnwick Forum
- q) Decisions on the Council Priorities budget

4. Governance & Community Engagement Committee

4.1 The Governance & Community Engagement Committee is authorised to make binding decisions on behalf of the Town Council with regard to all aspects listed below:

- a) Representations on planning applications
- b) Representations on planning appeals, street naming, development naming, TPOs, planning policy consultations
- c) Transport priorities (Local Transport Plan submissions)
- d) Awarding event and community grants
- e) Recommendations on budgets, financial monitoring and governance processes
- f) Governance, controls, audit and compliance
- g) Council policy development and approval
- h) Treasury management and investments
- i) All insurance matters
- j) Staffing, risk and health & safety (committee-related)

- k) External partnerships and relationships
- l) Committee budgets
- m) Responses to consultations on governance, planning, community matters
- n) External communications and engagement

5. Operations & Assets Committee

5.1 The Operations & Assets Committee is authorised to make binding decisions on behalf of the Town Council with regard to all aspects listed below:

- a) Provision, maintenance and management of play areas, allotments, green spaces, Playzone
- b) Management of street furniture (seats, shelters, bins, dog bins, noticeboards, planters etc.)
- c) Maintenance and preservation of memorials, civic assets and heritage features
- d) Provision and management of Alnwick Cemetery and Cemetery Lodge
- e) Oversight of the Mechanics Institute
- f) Management and improvement of Thomas Percy Wood and other green spaces
- g) Civic and ceremonial events
- h) All operational partnerships and service agreements
- i) Committee budgets and fee levels
- j) Responses to consultations on operational/asset matters
- k) Approval of committee minutes
- l) Committee staffing, health & safety and risk management

6. Advisory Groups

6.1 The Council may appoint advisory committees comprised of a number of Councillors and non-Councillors. Advisory Groups can recommend actions and/or expenditure to Council and its committees but cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council.

7. Working Groups

7.1 The Council and the Committees may appoint working groups; these generally will be time limited and focus on a specific issue. Working Groups can recommend actions and/or expenditure to Council and its committees but cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council.

8. Chaining the Council Meetings

8.1 The Mayor, and in his or her absence the Deputy Mayor will have the following roles and functions:

- a) A civic ceremonial role; the Mayor shall be regarded as the first citizen of the town, and be the main spokesperson for the Council and,

- b) Chairing the full Council meeting. The Mayor will be elected annually and will preside at Council meetings. The Deputy Mayor will act as Vice-Chair.

8.2 Neither the Mayor nor the Deputy Mayor are able to take a committee Chair or vice Chair position.

9 Meetings

- 9.1 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. Under no circumstances can alcohol be consumed during a meeting.
- 9.2 When calculating the 3 clear days for notice of a meeting to Councillors and the public, the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, or a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning, shall not count.
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 The Council will have an open public session at the beginning of each Council meeting. This will enable people to put questions or draw relevant matters to the attention of the Council. This is for a period of 15 minutes overall, and is limited to no more than 5 minutes per person although the Chair will have discretion to allow an individual person longer. Any question which cannot be dealt with during public question time will be dealt with by a written response. Unless the Chair decides otherwise, no discussion will take place on any question, but any Member may move that a matter raised by a question be referred to the appropriate Committee.
- 9.5 Subject to standing order 9.3 above, members of the public are permitted to make representations, answer questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda. (This is in addition to the open public session at the beginning of the meeting which is outlined in 9.4 above).
- 9.6 The period of time which is designated for public participation on agenda business in accordance with standing order 9.5 above shall not exceed 15 minutes.
- 9.7 Subject to standing order 9.6, each member of the public is entitled to speak once only in respect of business itemised on the agenda and shall not speak for more than 5 minutes.
- 9.8 In accordance with standing order 9.5 above, a question asked by a member of the public on an agenda item at a meeting shall not require a response or debate.
- 9.9 In accordance with standing order 9.8 above, the Chair may direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an oral response or to the clerk for an oral response.
- 9.10 A record of the open public session and public participation at a meeting shall be included in the minutes of that meeting.
- 9.11 Any person speaking at a meeting shall address his comments to the Chair.
- 9.12 Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wishes to speak, the Chair shall direct the order of speaking.
- 9.13 The Openness of Local Bodies Regulation 2014 allows any person attending a public local government meeting to report proceedings by taking photographs, filming or audio-recording.

- 9.14 In accordance with standing order 9.3 above, the press shall be provided reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.
- 9.15 Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chair may in his/her absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chair (if any).
- 9.16 The Chair, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chair, if present, shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, a Councillor as chosen by the Councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.
- 9.17 Subject to standing order 9.24 below, all decisions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the Councillors present and voting thereon.
- 9.18 Any Chair may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his or her casting vote whether or not he or she gave an original vote.
- 9.19 Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on any issue shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a Councillor, the voting on any issue shall be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave his/her vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.
- 9.20 The minutes of a meeting shall record the names of Councillors present and absent.
- 9.21 If prior to a meeting, a Councillor has submitted reasons for his/her absence at the meeting which is then approved by a resolution, such resolution shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the approval was given.
- 9.22 The Code of Conduct adopted by the Council shall apply to Councillors in respect of the entire meeting.
- 9.23 An interest arising from the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council, the existence and nature of which is required to be disclosed by a Councillor at a meeting shall be recorded in the minutes.
- 9.24 No business may take place at a meeting unless at least one third of the whole number of members of the Committee are present. The quorum for a Council meeting is at least six Councillors.
- 9.25 If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall take place and the meeting shall be adjourned. Any outstanding business of an adjourned meeting shall be considered at a following meeting.
- 9.26 Meetings shall not exceed a period of two and a half hours unless a vote is taken to suspend standing orders.

10 Annual Meeting of the Council

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of a Council shall be held on such a day in May as the Council may direct.
- 10.3 The annual meeting will commence at 7pm unless another time is fixed.
- 10.4 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.

- 10.5 The election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Council shall be the first business completed at the annual meeting of the Council.
- 10.6 The Mayor, unless he/she has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until his or her successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.
- 10.7 The Deputy Mayor of the Council, if any, unless he/she resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Mayor at the next annual meeting of the Council.
- 10.8 In an election year, if the current Mayor has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, he/she shall preside at the meeting until a successor Mayor has been elected. The current Mayor shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Mayor but must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
- 10.9 In an election year, if the current Mayor has been re-elected as a member of the Council, he/she shall preside at the meeting until a new Mayor has been elected. He/she may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Mayor and must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
- 10.10 Following the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at the annual meeting of the Council, the order of business shall be as follows:
 - a) In an election year, delivery by Councillors of their declarations of acceptance of office.
 - b) Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council and to receive and note minutes of and/or to determine recommendations made by committees.
 - c) Review of the terms of references for committees.
 - d) Receipt of nominations to existing committees.
 - e) Appointment of any new committees, confirmation of the terms of reference, the number of members and receipt of nominations to them, and the appointment of the Chairs and Vice Chairs.
 - f) Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations.
 - g) Review of the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.
 - h) Setting the dates, times and place of ordinary meetings of the full Council and standing committees for the year ahead. Considering any business set out in the notice convening the meeting.

11 Responsible Financial Officer

11.1 The Town Clerk shall be the Responsible Financial Officer of the Council

11.2 The Council's Town Clerk / RFO shall do the following:

- a) Sign and serve on Councillors by delivery or post at their residences a summons confirming the time, date, venue and the agenda of a meeting of the Council and a meeting of a committee and sub-committee at least 3 clear days before the meeting (excluding Sundays and public Bank Holidays). Email can be used if Councillors have agreed.
- b) Give public notice of the time, date, venue and agenda at least 3 clear days (excluding Sundays and public Bank Holidays) 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).

- c) Include in the agenda all motions in the order received unless a Councillor has given written notice at least 5 clear days (excluding, Sundays and public Bank Holidays) before the meeting confirming their withdrawal of it.
- d) Convene a meeting of full Council for the election of a new Mayor, occasioned by a casual vacancy in his or her office, in accordance with standing orders.
- e) Make available for inspection the minutes of meetings.
- f) Receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities.
- g) Receive and retain declarations of acceptance of office from Councillors.
- h) Retain a copy of every Councillor's register of interests and any changes to it and keep copies of the same available for inspection.
- i) Keep proper records required before and after meetings;
- j) Process all requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and the Data Protection Act 2018, in accordance with and subject to the Council's procedures relating to the same.
- k) Receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary.
- l) Manage the organisation, storage of and access to information held by the Council in paper and electronic form.
- m) Arrange for legal deeds to be signed by 2 Councillors and witnessed.
- n) Arrange for the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.
- o) Record every planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response to the local planning authority.
- p) Action or undertake activity or responsibilities instructed by resolution or contained in standing orders.

12 Motions Requiring Written Notice

- 12.1 In accordance with standing order 11.2(a) above, no motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is included in the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Council's Town Clerk/RFO at least 5 clear days (excluding, Sundays and public Bank Holidays) before the next meeting.
- 12.2 With the agreement of the mover, the Town Clerk/RFO may, before including a motion in the agenda received in accordance with standing order 11.2(c) above, correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.
- 12.3 Every motion and resolution shall relate to the Council's statutory functions, powers and lawful obligations or shall relate to an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.

13 Motions Not Requiring Written Notice

- 13.1 Motions in respect of the following matters may be moved without written notice.
 - a) To appoint a person to preside at a meeting.

- b) To approve the absences of Councillors.
 - c) To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting.
 - d) To correct an inaccuracy in the minutes of the previous meeting.
 - e) To dispose of business, if any, remaining from the last meeting.
 - f) To alter the order of business on the agenda for reasons of urgency or expedience.
 - g) To proceed to the next business on the agenda.
 - h) To close or adjourn debate.
 - i) To refer by formal delegation a matter to a committee or to a sub-committee or an employee.
 - j) To appoint a committee or sub-committee or any Councillors (including substitutes) thereto.
 - k) To receive nominations to a committee or sub-committee.
 - l) To dissolve a committee or sub-committee.
 - m) To note the minutes of a meeting of a committee or sub-committee.
 - n) To consider a report and/or recommendations made by a committee or a sub-committee or an employee.
 - o) To consider a report and/or recommendations made by an employee, professional advisor, expert or consultant.
 - p) To authorise legal deeds signed by two Councillors and witnessed.
 - q) To authorise the payment of monies.
 - r) To amend a motion relevant to the original or substantive motion under consideration which shall not have the effect of nullifying it.
 - s) To extend the time limit for speeches.
 - t) To exclude the press and public for all or part of a meeting.
 - u) To silence or exclude from the meeting a Councillor or a member of the public for disorderly conduct.
 - v) To give the consent of the Council if such consent is required by standing orders.
 - w) To suspend any standing order except those which are mandatory by law.
 - x) To adjourn the meeting.
 - y) To appoint representatives to outside bodies and to make arrangements for those representatives to report back the activities of outside bodies.
 - z) To answer questions from Councillors.
- 13.2 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 it may be made to such committee or sub-committee or employee, unless the Chair decides it should be dealt with at the present meeting for reasons of urgency or expedience.

14 Rules of Debate

- 14.1 Motions included in an agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear on the agenda unless the order is changed at the Chair's direction for reasons of expedience.
- 14.2 A motion shall not be considered unless it has been proposed and seconded.
- 14.3 A motion included in an agenda not moved by the Councillor who tabled it, may be treated as withdrawn.

- 14.4 A motion to amend an original or substantive motion shall not be considered unless proper notice has been given after the original or substantive motion has been seconded and notice of such amendment, shall, if required by the Chair, be reduced to writing and handed to the Chair who shall determine the order in which they are considered.
- 14.5 A Councillor may move amendments to his own motion. If a motion has already been seconded, an amendment to it shall be with the consent of the seconder.
- 14.6 Any amendment to a motion shall be either:
- a) to leave out words;
 - b) to add words;
 - c) to leave out words and add other words.
- 14.7 A proposed or carried amendment to a motion shall not have the effect of rescinding the original or substantive motion under consideration.
- 14.8 Only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the Chair. No further amendment to a motion shall be moved until the previous amendment has been disposed of.
- 14.9 One or more amendments may be discussed together if the Chair considers this expedient but shall be voted upon separately.
- 14.10 The number of amendments to an original or substantive motion, which may be moved by a Councillor, is limited to one.
- 14.11 If an amendment is not carried, other amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the Chair.
- 14.12 If an amendment is carried, the original motion, as amended, shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved.
- 14.13 The mover of a motion or the mover of an amendment shall have a right of reply at the end of the debate and immediately before it is put to the vote, not exceeding 3 minutes.
- 14.14 Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply in respect of the substantive motion at the very end of debate and immediately before it is put to the vote.
- 14.15 A Councillor may not speak further in respect of any one motion except to speak once on an amendment moved by another Councillor or to make a point of order or to give a personal explanation.
- 14.16 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 or she considers has been breached or specify the irregularity in the meeting he or she is concerned by.
- 14.17 A point of order shall be decided by the Chair, and his/her decision shall be final.
- 14.18 With the consent of the seconder and/or of the meeting, a motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer. A Councillor shall not speak upon the said motion or amendment unless permission for the withdrawal of the motion or amendment has been refused.
- 14.19 When a Councillor's motion is under debate no other motion shall be moved except:
- a) to amend the motion;
 - b) to proceed to the next business;

- c) to adjourn the debate;
- d) to put the motion to a vote;
- e) to ask a person to be silent or for him to leave the meeting;
- f) to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
- g) to exclude the public and press;
- h) to adjourn the meeting;
- i) to suspend any standing order, except those which are mandatory.

14.20 The Chair shall first be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated before it is seconded and put to the vote. The Chair shall call upon the mover of the motion under debate to exercise or waive his or her right of reply and shall put the motion to the vote after that right has been exercised or waived. The adjournment of a debate or of the meeting shall not prejudice the mover's right of reply at the resumption.

15 Code of Conduct

- 15.1 All Councillors shall observe the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.
- 15.2 Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a Councillor 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.
- 15.3 Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a Councillor 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.
- 15.4 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.
- 15.5 A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by a meeting of the Council, or committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required and that decision is final.
- 15.6 Dispensation request shall confirm:
 - a) the description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;
 - b) whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;
 - c) the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and
 - d) an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- 15.7 Dispensations requests shall be considered at the beginning of the meeting of the Council, or committee or a sub-committee for which the dispensation is required.
- 15.8 A dispensation may be granted if having regard to all relevant circumstances the following applies:
 - a) 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
 - b) granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area or

- c) it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

16 Questions

- 16.1 A Councillor may seek an answer to a question concerning any business of the Council provided 5 clear days' notice of the question (excluding Sundays and public Bank Holidays) has been given to the Town Clerk/RFO. The Chair has the discretion to allow urgent questions provided the request has been received by 5.30pm on the day of the meeting.
- 16.2 Questions not related to items of business on the agenda for a meeting shall only be asked during the part of the meeting set aside for such questions. No decisions can be taken on an item not included on the agenda.

17 Minutes

- 17.1 Draft minutes will be circulated to Councillors as soon as possible after meetings.
- 17.2 No discussion of the draft minutes of a preceding meeting shall take place except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the minutes shall be raised in accordance with standing order 14.19(a) above.
- 17.3 Minutes, including any amendment to correct their accuracy, 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.
- 17.4 If the Chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he or she 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 meeting of the () held on [date] in respect of () were a correct record but his view was not upheld by the majority of the () and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings."

18 Disorderly Conduct

- 18.1 No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly.
- 18.2 If, in the opinion of the Chair, there has been a breach of standing order 18.1 above, the Chair shall express that opinion and thereafter any Councillor (including the Chair) may move that the person be silenced or excluded from the meeting, and the motion, if seconded, shall be put and without discussion.
- 18.3 If a resolution made in accordance with standing order 18.2 above, is disobeyed, the Chair may take such further steps as may reasonably be necessary to enforce it and/or he or she may adjourn the meeting.

19 Rescission of Previous Resolutions

- 19.1 A resolution (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within 6 months except either by a special motion, the written notice of which bears the names of at least six Councillors of the Council, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a committee.

- 19.2 When a special motion or any other motion moved pursuant to standing order 18.1 above has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved within a further 6 months.

20 Voting on Appointments and Co-Option

- 20.1 The appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be by a secret ballot. At least 7 clear days (excluding Sundays and public Bank Holidays) before the annual meeting or meeting where such appointments are made, Councillors wishing to stand for one of the positions must complete and sign a nomination form which also must be signed by their proposer and seconder and submitted to the Town Clerk/RFO. A Councillor cannot elect to stand for both positions. In the event that 2 or more people wish to stand for a position, a secret ballot will be held. Where more than two persons have been nominated 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 must be settled by the casting vote of the Mayor. Other appointments at the annual meeting will be by a show of hands.
- 20.2 When a new Councillor(s) is to be co-opted, an application form will be used and if possible, the process will involve an opportunity for Councillors to have an informal discussion with applicants.
- 20.3 In the event that more Councillors wish to be co-opted than there are vacancies, Councillors will be asked to indicate their preferred candidates in a secret ballot. Councillors will have a number of votes equal to the number of vacancies on the Council.
- 20.4 After the first round of voting, the leading candidates are identified, equal in number to the number of vacancies. Where the leading candidates can be identified, and they have a majority of the votes, the leading candidates are duly co-opted.
- 20.5 Where the leading candidates cannot be identified due to a tie, or the leading candidates do not each have an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the person having the least number of votes shall be eliminated. Where there is a tie between two or more candidates for the lowest number of votes, the candidates with the lowest number of votes will draw lots to select which one will be eliminated, unless they have no votes, in which case all of the candidates with no votes shall be eliminated. Councillors will again be asked to indicate their preferred candidates. Again, Councillors will have a number of votes equal to the number of vacancies on the Council.
- 20.6 This process is repeated until either the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, or the leading candidates can be identified, and each have a majority of votes, whichever happens first.
- 20.7 In the event that after the elimination of all other candidates there is a tie for the leading candidates to be co-opted, any tie must be settled by the mayor's casting vote.

21 Expenditure

- 21.1 Any expenditure incurred by the Council shall be in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.
- 21.2 The Council's financial regulations shall be reviewed once a year.
- 21.3 The Council's financial regulations may make provision for the authorisation of the payment of money in exercise of any of the Council's functions to be delegated to a committee, sub-committee or to an employee.

22 Execution & Sealing of Legal Deeds

- 22.1 A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless it has been authorised by a resolution.
- 22.2 In accordance with a resolution made under standing order 22.1 above, any two members of the Council, may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.

23 Extraordinary meetings

- 23.1 The Mayor may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.
- 23.2 If the Mayor does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within 7 days (excluding Sundays and public Bank Holidays) of having been requested to do so by two Councillors, those two Councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council. The statutory public notice giving the time, venue and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the two Councillors.
- 23.3 The Chair of a committee (or a sub-committee) may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or sub-committee at any time.
- 23.4 If the Chair of a committee (or a sub-committee) does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting within 14 days (excluding Sundays and public Bank Holidays) of having been requested by to do so by 2 Councillors, those 2 Councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of a committee (or a sub-committee). The statutory public notice giving the time, venue and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the 2 Councillors.

24 Precept

- 24.1 The Council shall approve estimates for the coming financial year at its meeting before the end of January and fix the precept to be levied.
- 24.2 Each committee shall agree a budget recommended (capital and revenue including the use of reserves) for the coming financial year no later than December.

25 Canvassing of Councillors

- 25.1 When vacancies are to be filled by co-option, canvassing Councillors or the members of a committee or sub-committee, directly or indirectly, for appointment to or by the Council shall disqualify the candidate from such an appointment. The Town Clerk/RFO shall disclose the requirements of this standing order to every candidate.

- 25.2 This standing order shall apply to tenders as if the person making the tender were a candidate for an appointment.

26 Inspection of Documents

- 26.1 Subject to standing orders to the contrary or in respect of matters which are confidential, a Councillor may, for the purpose of his official duties (but not otherwise), inspect any document in the possession of the Council or a committee or a sub-committee, and request a copy for the same purpose.
- 26.2 The minutes of meetings of the Council, its committees or sub-committees shall be available for inspection by Councillors.

27 Unauthorised Activities

- 27.1 Unless authorised by a resolution, no individual Councillor shall in the name or on behalf of the Council, a committee or a sub-committee:
- a) inspect any land and/or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or
 - b) issue orders, instructions or directions.

28 Confidential Business

- 28.1 Councillors shall not disclose information given in confidence or which they believe, or ought to be aware is of a confidential nature.
- 28.2 A Councillor in breach of the provisions of standing order 28.1 above may be removed from a committee or a sub-committee by a resolution of the Council.

29 Matters Affecting Council Employees

- 29.1 If a meeting considers any matter personal to a Council employee, it shall not be considered until the Council OR the committee OR the sub-committee has decided whether or not the press and public shall be excluded.
- 29.2 The Council shall keep written records relating to employees secure. All paper records shall be secured under lock, and electronic records shall be password protected.
- 29.3 Records documenting reasons for an employee's absence due to ill health or details of a medical condition shall be made available only to those persons with the responsibility for them.
- 29.4 Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to employee records referred to in standing orders 29, if so justified.

30 Requests for Information

- 30.1 All requests for information held by the Council shall be processed in accordance with the Council's policy for handling requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

- 30.2 Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Town Clerk/RFO to the Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee. The said committee shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 including exercising the powers of the Town Clerk/RFO in respect of Freedom of Information requests set out under standing order 30.1 above.

31 Liaison with Unitary Councillors

- 31.1 An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the local Councillors of Northumberland County Council.

32 Code of Conduct Complaints

- 32.1 Upon notification by the County Council that it is dealing with a complaint that a Councillor has breached the Council's Code of Conduct, the Town Clerk/RFO shall, subject to Standing Order 13 above, report this to the Council.
- 32.2 Where the notification in standing order 32.1 above relates to a complaint made by the Proper officer, the Town Clerk/RFO shall notify the Mayor of this fact, and they 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 32.4 below.
- 32.3 The Council may:
- a) provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to progress an investigation of the complaint or is required by law;
 - b) seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter;
- 32.4 Upon notification by the County Council that a Councillor has breached the Council's Code of Conduct, the Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him or her. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.

33 Variation, Revocation & Suspension of Standing Orders

- 33.1 Any or every part of the standing orders, except those which are mandatory by law, may be suspended by resolution in relation to any specific item of business.
- 33.2 A motion to permanently add to or to vary or to revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders not mandatory by law shall not be carried unless two-thirds of the Councillors at a meeting of the Council vote in favour of the same.

34 Urgency

- 34.1 The Town Clerk/RFO has delegated authority to take any actions that he/she considers necessary in the interests of the Council in cases of urgency. He/she must only act after consultation with the Mayor and the Chair of the appropriate committee (or in their absence their deputies or another committee Chair) and available ward members. Any urgency decisions taken should be reported to the next Council meeting.

35 Standing Orders to be Given to Councillors

- 35.1 The Town Clerk/RFO shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a Councillor upon delivery of his declaration of acceptance of office.

36 Chair's Decision on Standing Orders

- 36.1 The Chair's decision as to the application of standing orders at meetings shall be final.