

STAVERTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES POLICY

Introduction

The minutes of a council or committee meeting are a public record of the decisions of the council and great care should be taken in their format and production. The minutes can be produced in court and other judicial processes as evidence of decisions of the council, and they form part of the Council archives which must be preserved.

It shall be the policy of the above Council that:

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1 Author

The clerk will normally draw up draft minutes of each meeting of the Council and their Committees.

2 Content

The Minutes will be:

- as brief as is consistent with accuracy;
- precise and concise;
- self-contained (i.e. complete in themselves and understandable without reference to other documents);
- decisive (so that there is no doubt about the decision made);

Each minute should contain a heading clearly indicating what the minute is about, a narrative or text, as appropriate, that briefly summarises what took place, and the decision. For routine items, for example, planning applications, a narrative will not be necessary.

3 Style

- (1) Minutes should be produced with clear headings containing the status of the meeting, the place and date along with the time the meeting starts and ends and any adjournments.
- (2) Minutes will start with an alphabetical list of the Councillors present at the meeting.
- (3) Minutes will be numbered consecutively for ease of reference.

- (4) The narrative should be in the past tense (known as ‘reported speech’) and should include reference to any written reports submitted.
- (5) The narrative should be in plain English using full sentences and appropriate grammar.
- (6) Abbreviations should be avoided and acronyms only used after having written the title in full at the first mention.
- (7) The decision should be separately highlighted for ease of identification and words used to show that it is a decision.
- (8) The wording of the decision should be included in full.
- (9) It is not normally necessary to note the name of the member moving and seconding a motion in the minutes or the fact that a vote was taken (unless a recorded vote is requested).
- (10) The order of the minutes will normally follow the order of the agenda.

4 Open Forum and Public Speaking at Council meetings.

It will not be normal for public comment to be minuted unless requested by the Parish Council

5 Declarations of interest

Declarations of interest must be carefully recorded in the minutes, naming the Councillor and clearly indicating which item the interest referred to, whether the interest is a personal interest or a personal and prejudicial interest, giving the nature of the interest and, in the case of a personal and prejudicial interest, recording that the member left the meeting during the discussion and decision on the item. For example;

DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

The following disclosures of interest were received:

Planning application for conservatory at 12 Smith Road, Firsttown

Cllr Green disclosed a personal and prejudicial interest as the owner of land adjoining the development site. Cllr Green left the room during the discussion and decision on this matter.”

6 Formal written motions

Where Standing Orders provide for the submission by notice of formal written motions to a council meeting, it is appropriate to record the names of the Councillors proposing and seconding the motion in the minutes.

7 Recorded Vote

Where Standing Orders make provision for a recorded vote to be taken, or when a Councillor asks for votes to be recorded in the minutes, the minutes should record the names of Councillors voting for and against the matter or the individual Councillor's vote accordingly.

8 Excluding press and public

Decisions to exclude the press and public should be fully recorded in the minutes, making it absolutely clear the reason for the exclusion and to which matter or part of it the exclusion applied.

9 Clerks Responsibilities

It is the Clerks responsibility to ensure that Councillors understand that decisions of parish councils can be set aside by a Court for procedural irregularity, which is why it is so important that the correct meeting procedures are followed and decisions are accurately recorded.

10 Minutes Production

Decisions taken at a meeting take effect immediately and do not depend on the minutes being approved at the next meeting.

The minutes will be produced as quickly as possible after the meeting and forwarded to the respective Chairman as soon as practicably possible. This is an opportunity to pick up any mistakes in the content or identify typing errors, or amend on points of order. This opportunity is not to be used by the Chair as a means of re-writing the minutes.

The draft minutes will be circulated to all Parish Councillors no later than 8 calendar days after a meeting. Issues then raised by a Councillor on a point of order can be amended with the agreement of the Chairman prior to any further publication.

11 Minutes Publication

The draft minutes will be published:

- on the website
- on the Parish Council notice board
- hard copies available at the meeting for members of the public

The draft minutes do not become valid minutes until they are accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chair at the next meeting.

The draft minutes will therefore record this fact clearly (at the top and bottom) in the header and footer of the document to the effect: “Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting” along with being stamped draft in red.

12 Changes to minutes

Councillors should give notice to the Clerk, not less than 24hrs prior to the scheduled start of the meeting of an intention to move an amendment to the minutes of the previous meeting.

Where possible notice should be given in writing or email and circulated to all Parish Councillors.

In circumstances unanimously regarded by the Council as reasonable a proposal made at a meeting to amend previous meeting minutes will be accepted.

For any changes which are made to the minutes by the council before acceptance and signing:

- the wording changes will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting that agreed the changes
- and the original minutes will be amended to reflect the changes.

The copy signed by the Chair will contain the alterations, recorded in longhand, with the changes signed and dated.

Should a Parish Councillor consider their amendment to be significant the clerk will ensure an amended copy of the approved minutes are published within 3 days of the meeting replacing the draft copy.

13 Storage

The signed minutes will be carefully retained by the Clerk for the council’s archives.

The end of the published minutes should include the fact of being signed by the Chair and the date on which they were signed.

The Parish Council reserve the right to amend or cancel this policy at anytime.

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