



# **SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN COUNCIL**

# **STANDING ORDERS**

**To be reviewed 2026**

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1. Meetings

- a) Meetings of the Council shall be held at the Council Offices at 7.30pm on the last Monday of the month unless the Council; otherwise decides at a previous meeting.
- b) Smoking is not permitted at any meeting of the Council.
- c) If, due to space limitations at the Council Offices, and it being apparent that there would be likely to be great public interest in any item on the agenda, meetings of the Council may be held at another venue and on another day of the week, at the instigation of the Clerk in consultation with the Mayor. Due notice to be given at the earliest opportunity.

2. The Statutory Annual Meeting

- a) **In an election year shall be held on a Monday within 14 days following the day on which the councillors elected take office**
- b) **In a year which is not an election year shall be held on the last Monday in May.**

3. **In addition to the Statutory Annual Meeting at least three other statutory meetings shall be held on the last Monday in the months of September and November and January.**

4. Chairman of the Meeting

**The person residing at a meeting may exercise all the powers and duties of the Chairman in relation to the conduct of the meeting.**

5. Proper Officer

Where a statute, regulation or order confers function or duties on the proper officer of the Council in the following cases, (s)he shall be the Clerk or nominated officer:-

- a) To receive declarations of acceptance of office
- b) To receive and record notices disclosing personal and prejudicial interests.
- c) To receive and retain plans and documents
- d) To sign notices or other documents on behalf of the Council
- e) To receive copies of bylaws made by a District Council
- f) To certify copies of bylaws made by the Council
- g) To sign summons to attend meeting of the Council
- h) To keep proper records for all Council meetings

6. Quorum of the Council

**Four members shall constitute a quorum.**

7. If a quorum is not present or if during a meeting the number of councillors present (not counting those debarred by reason of a declared prejudicial interest) falls below the required quorum, the meeting shall be adjourned and business not transacted shall be transacted at the next meeting or on such other day as the Chairman may fix.
8. For a quorum relating to a committee or sub-committee, refer to standing order 47.

9. **Voting**

Members shall vote by show of hands or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot.

10. **If a member so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of the members who voted on any question so as to show whether they voted for or against it. Such a request may be made before or after the vote but in any event before moving on to the next business.**
11.
  - a) **Subject to (b) and (c) below the Chairman may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in any case of an equality of votes may give a casting vote whether or not (s)he gave an original vote.**
  - b) **If the person presiding at the annual meeting would have ceased to be a member of the Council but for the statutory provisions which preserve the membership of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman until the end of their term of office (s)he may not give an original vote in an election for Chairman.**
  - c) **The person presiding must give a casting vote whenever there is an equality of votes in an election for Chairman.**

12. **Order of Business**

**At each Annual Meeting the first business shall be:-**

- a) **To elect a Chair of the Council**
- b) To establish whether anyone present wishes to record the meeting
- c) **To receive the Chair's declaration of acceptance of office or, if not then received, to decide when it shall be received.**
- d) **In the ordinary year of election of the Council to fill any vacancies left unfilled at the election by reason of insufficient nominations.**
- e) **To decide when any declarations of acceptance of office and written undertakings to comply with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council which have not been received as provided by law shall be received.**
- f) To receive members' apologies for absence this should be directly to the Clerk in advance of the meeting start time by the member concerned unless due exceptional circumstances. The minutes should clearly reflect whether the absence has been formally

approved/accepted by the majority of Councilors present and voting or not.

- g) To elect a Vice-Chair of the Council
- h) To appoint representatives to outside bodies
- i) To appoint committees and sub-committees
- j) To consider the payment of any subscriptions falling to be paid annually
- k) To inspect any deeds and trust investments in the custody of the council as required;

and shall thereafter follow the order set out in Standing Order 15.

**13. At every meeting other than the Annual Meeting the first business shall be to**

- a) Appoint a Chair if the Chair and Vice-Chair be absent.**
- b) To receive members' apologies for absence this should be directly to the Clerk in advance of the meeting start time by the member concerned unless due exceptional circumstances. The minutes should clearly reflect whether the absence has been formally approved/accepted by the majority of Councilors present and voting or not.**
- c) To receive such declarations of acceptance of office (if any) and undertaking to observe the Council's code of conduct as are required by law to be made or, if not then received, to decide when they shall be received.**

14. In every year, not later than the meeting at which estimates for next year are settled, the Council shall review the pay and conditions of service of existing employees. Standing Order 37 must be read in conjunction with their requirement.

15. After the first business has been completed, the order of business, unless the Council otherwise decides on the ground of urgency, shall be as follows:-

- A. To read and consider the Minutes, provided that if a copy has been circulated to each member not later than the day of issue of the summons to attend the meeting, the Minutes may be taken as read.
- B. After consideration to approve the signature of the Minutes by person presiding as a correct record.
- C. To deal with business expressly required by statute to be done.
- D. To dispose of business, if any, remaining from the last meeting.
- E. To receive such communications as the person presiding may wish to lay before the Council.
- F. To answer questions from Councillors.
- G. To receive and consider reports and minutes of committees and advisory committees.
- H. To receive and consider resolutions or recommendations in the order in which they have been notified.
- I. To authorise the sealing of documents.
- J. To receive and consider reports from officers of the Council.

- K. To authorise the signing of orders for payment
- L. Any other business specified in the summons.
- M. Parish Matters.

16. Urgent Business

A motion to vary the order of business on the ground of urgency:

- a) May be proposed by the Chairman or by any member and, if proposed by the Chairman, may be put to the vote without being seconded, and
- b) shall be put to the vote without discussion.

17. Resolutions Moved on Notice

Except as provided by these Standing Orders, no resolution may be moved unless the business to which it relates has been put on the Agenda by the Clerk or the mover has given notice in writing of its terms and has delivered the notice to the Clerk at least 7 clear days before the next meeting of the Council.

- 18. The Clerk shall date every notice of resolution or recommendation when received by him/her, shall number each notice in the order in which it was received and shall enter it in a book which shall be open to the inspection of every member of the Council.
- 19. The Clerk shall insert in the summons for every meeting all notices of motion or recommendation properly given in the order in which they have been received unless the member giving a notice of motion has stated in writing that (s)he intends to move at some later meeting or that (s)he withdraws it.
- 20. If a resolution or recommendation specified in the summons is not moved either by the member who gave notice of it or by any other member, it shall, unless postponed by the Council, be treated as withdrawn and shall not be moved without fresh notice.
- 21. If the subject matter of a resolution comes within the province of a committee of the Council, it shall, upon being moved and seconded, stand referred without discussion to such committee or to such other committee as the Council may determine for report, provided that the Chairman, if (s)he considers it to be a matter of urgency, may allow it to be dealt with at the meeting at which it was moved.
- 22. Every resolution or recommendation shall be relevant to some subject over which the Council has power or duties which affect its area.

23. Resolutions Moved Without Notice

Resolutions dealing with the following matters may be moved without notice:-

- a) To appoint a Chairman of the meeting

- b) to correct the Minutes
- c) to approve the Minutes
- d) to alter the order of business
- e) to proceed to the next business
- f) to close or adjourn the debate
- g) to refer a matter to a committee
- h) to appoint a committee or any members thereof
- i) to adopt a report
- j) to authorise the sealing of documents
- k) to consider otherwise than in committee a question affecting an employee of the Council
- l) to give leave to withdraw a resolution or amendment
- m) to extend the time for speeches
- n) to exclude the press
- o) to exclude the public (see Order 66 below)
- p) to silence or eject from the meeting a member named for misconduct (see Order 32 below)
- q) to give the consent of the Council where such consent is required by these Standing Orders
- r) to suspend any Standing Order (see Order 75 below).
- s) to adjourn the meeting.

24. Questions

A member may ask the Chairman of the Council or the Clerk any questions concerning the business of the Council, provided 7 clear days' notice of the question has been given to the person to whom it is addressed.

25. No questions not connected with business under discussion shall be asked except during the part of the meeting set aside for questions.

26. Every question shall be put and answered without discussion. If a question be answered the Member putting a question may put one supplementary question.

27. A person to whom a question has been put may decline to answer.

28. Rules of Debate

No discussion shall take place upon the Minutes except upon their accuracy. Corrections to the Minutes shall be made by resolution and must be initialled by the Chairman.

29. a) A resolution or amendment shall not be discussed unless it has been proposed and seconded, and, unless proper notice has already been given, it shall, if required by the Chairman, be reduced to writing and handed to him/her before it is further discussed or put to the meeting.

a) A member when seconding a resolution or amendment may, if he then declares his/her intention to do so, reserve his/her speech until a later period of the debate.

- b) A member shall direct his/her speech to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or to a question of order.
- c) An amendment shall be either:-
  - i) to leave out words
  - ii) to leave out words and insert others
  - iii) to insert or add words.
- d) An amendment shall not have the effect of negating the resolution before the Council.
- e) If an amendment be carried, the resolution, as amended, shall take the place of the original resolution and shall become the resolution upon which any further amendment may be moved.
- f) A further amendment shall not be moved until the Council has disposed of every amendment previously moved.
- g) A member, other than the mover of a resolution, shall not, without leave of the Council, speak more than once on any resolution except to move an amendment or further amendment, or on an amendment, or on a point of order, or in personal explanation, or to move a closure.
- h) explanation. A member rising for these purposes shall be heard forthwith. A personal explanation shall be confined to some material part of a former speech by him/her which may have been misunderstood.
- i) A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the unanimous consent of the Council, which shall be signified without discussion, and no member may speak upon it after permission has been asked for its withdrawal unless such permission has been refused.
- j) When a resolution is under debate no other resolution shall be moved except the following:
  - i To amend the resolution
  - ii To proceed to the next business.
  - iii To adjourn the debate.
  - iv That the question be now put.
  - v That a member named be not further heard.
  - vi That a member named do leave the meeting
  - vii That the resolution be referred to a committee
  - viii To exclude the public and press
  - ix To adjourn the meeting

- 30. a) The ruling of the Chairman on a point of order or on the admissibility of a personal explanation shall not be discussed.
- b) Members shall address the Chairman.
- c) If two or more members rise, the Chairman shall call upon one of them to speak and the others shall resume their seat.
- d) Whenever the Chairman rises during a debate all other members shall be seated and silent.

31. Closure

At the end of any speech a member may, without comment, move “that the question be now put”, “that the debate be now adjourned” or “that the Council do now adjourn”. If such motion is seconded, the Chairman shall put the motion but, in the case of a motion “that the question be now put”, only if (s)he is of the opinion that the question before the Council has been sufficiently debated. If the motion “that the question be now put” is



carried, (s)he shall call upon the mover to exercise or waive his/her right of reply and shall put the question immediately after that right has been exercised or waived. The adjournment of a debate or of the Council shall not prejudice the mover's right of reply at the resumption.

32. Disorderly Conduct

- a) **All members must behave in a manner required by the Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council on 29 May 2007, a copy of which is annexed to these Standing Orders.**
- b) No member shall at the meeting persistently disregard the ruling of the Chairman, wilfully obstruct business, or behave irregularly, offensively, improperly **or in such a manner as to bring the Council into disrepute.**
- c) If, in the opinion of the Chairman, a member has broken the provisions of paragraph (a) or (b) of this Order, the Chairman shall express that opinion to the Council and thereafter any member may move that the member named be no longer heard or that the member named do leave the meeting, and the motion, if seconded, shall be put forthwith and without discussion. **If a member reasonably believes another member is in breach of the code of conduct, that member is under a duty to report the breach to the Standards Board for England.**
- d) If either of the motions mentioned in paragraph (c) is disobeyed, the Chairman may suspend the meeting or take such further steps as may reasonably be necessary to enforce them.

33. Right of Reply

The mover of a resolution shall have a right to reply immediately before the resolution is put to the vote. If an amendment is proposed the mover of the amendment shall be entitled to reply immediately before the amendment is put to the vote. A member exercising a right of reply shall not introduce a new matter. After the right of reply has been exercised or waived, a vote shall be taken without further discussion.

34. Alteration of Resolution

A member may, with the consent of his/her seconder, move amendments to his/her own resolution.

35. Rescission of Previous Resolution

- a) A decision (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special resolution, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least 7 members of the Council, or by a resolution moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a committee.

b) When a special resolution or any other resolution moved under the provisions of paragraph (a) of this Order has been disposed of, no similar resolution may be moved within a further six months.

c) This Order shall not apply to rescinding resolutions moved in pursuance of the report of recommendation of a committee.

36. Voting on Appointments

Where more than two persons have been nominated for any position to be filled by the Council and of the votes given there is not an absolute majority in favour of one person, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken, and so on until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person.

37. Discussions and Resolutions Affecting Employees of the Council

If at a meeting there arises any question relating to the appointment, conduct, promotion, dismissal, salary or conditions of service, of any person employed by the Council, it shall not be considered until the Council or committee (as the case may be) has decided whether or not the public shall be excluded. (See Standing Order No. 67)

38. Resolutions on Expenditure

Any resolution (which is moved otherwise than in pursuance of a recommendation of the Finance Committee or of another committee after recommendation by the Finance Committee) and which, if carried, would, in the opinion of the Chairman substantially increase the expenditure upon any service which is under the management of the Council or reduce the revenue at the disposal of any committee, or which would involve capital expenditure, shall, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council, and any committee affected by it shall consider whether it desires to report thereon (and the Finance Committee shall report on the financial aspect of the matters).

39. Expenditure

**Orders for the payment of money shall be authorised by resolution of the Council and signed by two members.**

40. Sealing of Documents

- a) A document shall not be sealed on behalf of the Council unless its sealing has been authorised by a resolution.
- b) Any two members of the Council named in a resolution moved under the provisions of paragraph (a) of this Order may seal, on behalf of the Council, any document required by law to be issued under seal.

41. Committees and Sub Committees

The Council may at its Annual Meeting appoint standing committees and may at any other time appoint such other committees as are necessary clearly defining roles of the committees and any delegated powers, but subject to any statutory provision in that behalf:-

- a) Shall not appoint any member of a committee so as to hold office later than the next Annual Meeting.
- b) May appoint persons other than members of the Council to any committee; and
- c) may subject to the provisions of Order 35 above at any time dissolve or alter the membership of the committee.

42. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman ex-office shall be members of every committee.

43. Every committee shall at its first meeting before proceeding to any other business, elect a Chairman and may elect a Vice-Chairman who shall hold office until the next Annual Meeting of the council, and shall settle its programme of meetings for the year.

44. Special Meeting

The Chairman of a committee or the Chairman of the Council may summon an additional meeting of that committee at any time. An additional meeting shall also be summoned on the requisition in writing of not less than a quarter of the members of the committee. The summons shall set out the business to be considered at the special meeting and no other business shall be transacted at that meeting.

45. Sub-Committees

Every committee may appoint sub-committee for purposes to be specified by the committee.

46. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the committee shall be members of every sub-committee appointed by it unless they signify that they do not wish to serve.

47. Except where ordered by the Council in the case of a committee, or by the Council or by the appropriate committee in the case of a sub-committee, the quorum of a committee or sub-committee shall be one half of its members.

48. The Standing Orders on rules of debate (except those parts relating to standing and to speaking more than once) and the Standing Order on interests of members in contracts and other matters shall apply to committee and sub-committee meetings.

49. Advisory Committees

- 1) The Council may create advisory committees, whose name, and number of members and the bodies invited to nominate members

shall be specified.

- 2) The Clerk shall inform the members of each advisory committee of the terms of reference of the committee.
- 3) An advisory committee may make recommendations and give notice thereof to the Council.
- 4) An advisory committee may consist wholly of persons who are not members of the Council.

50. Voting in Committees

Members of committees and sub-committees entitled to vote shall by show of hands, or, if at least two members so request, be signed ballot.

51. **Chairman of committees and sub-committees shall in the case of an equality of votes have a second or casting vote.**

52. Presence of Non-Members of Committees at Committee Meetings

A member who has proposed a resolution which has been referred to any committee, of which he is not a member, may explain his/her resolution to the committee but shall not vote.

53. Accounts and Financial Statement

- 1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this Standing Order or by statute, all accounts for payment and claims upon the Council shall be laid before the Council.
- 2) Where it is necessary to make a payment before it has been authorised by the Council, such payment shall be certified as to its correctness and urgency by the appropriate officer. Such payment shall be authorised by the committee, if any, having charge of the business to which it relates, or by the proper officer for payment with the approval of the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council.
- 3) All payments ratified under sub-paragraph (2) of this Standing Order or made without authority of the Council shall be separately included in the next schedule of payments before the Council.

54. The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each member at the ordinary meeting next after the end of the Financial Year a Financial statement of receipts and payments for the Council.

55. Estimates / Precepts

- 1) The Council shall approve written estimates for the coming financial year at its meeting at the end of the month of January.
- 2) Any committee desiring to incur expenditure shall give to the Clerk a

written estimate of the expenditure recommended for the coming year no later than 30 September.

**56. Interests**

**If a member has a personal interest as defined by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 29 May 2007 then (s)he shall declare such interest as soon as it becomes apparent, disclosing the nature and extent of that interest as required.**

57. If a member who has declared a personal interest then considers the interest to be prejudicial, (s)he will declare that and after making any representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to that business, (s)he must withdraw from the meeting for the remainder of the item to which the interest relates.
58. The Clerk shall hold a copy of the Register of Members' Interests in accordance with instructions received from the Monitoring Officer of the Responsible Authority and/or as required by statute.
59. If a candidate for any appointment under the Council is to his/her knowledge related to any member of or the holder of any officer under the Council, (s)he and the person to whom (s)he is related shall disclose the relationship in writing to the Clerk. A candidate who fails so to do shall be disqualified for such appointment, and, if appointed, may be dismissed without notice. The Clerk shall report to the Council or to the appropriate committee any such disclosure. Where relationship to a member is disclosed this Standing Order shall apply.
60. The Clerk shall make known the purport of this Standing Order to every candidate.
61. Canvassing of and Recommendations by Members
- 1) Canvassing of members of the Council or of any committee, directly or indirectly, for any appointment under the Council shall disqualify the candidate for such appointment. The Clerk shall make known the purport of this sub-paragraph of this Standing Order to every candidate.
  - 2) A member of the Council or of any committee shall not solicit for any person any appointment under the Council or recommend any person for such appointment or for promotion; but, nevertheless, any such member may give a written testimonial of a candidate's ability, experience or character for submission to the Council with an application for appointment.
62. Standing Order Nos. 59 and 61 shall apply to tenders as if the person making the tender were a candidate for an appointment.

**63. Inspection of Documents**

A member may for the purpose of his/her duty as such (but not otherwise) inspect any document in possession of the Council or a committee, and if copies are available shall, on request, be supplied for the like purpose with a copy.

**64. (a) All minutes kept by the Council and by any committee shall be open for the inspection of any member of the Council.**

(b) The Minutes of the Council shall be open for inspection by any local government elector of the parish without charge.

**65. Unauthorised Activities**

No member of the Council or of any committee or sub-committee shall in the name of or on behalf of the Council:-

- a) inspect any lands or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or
- b) issue orders, instructions or directions unless authorised to do so by the Council or the relevant committee or sub-committee.

**66. Admission of the Public and Press to Meetings**

**The public and press shall be admitted to all meetings of the Council and its committees and sub-committees, which may, however, temporarily exclude the public by means of the following resolutions:-**

“That in view of the [special] [confidential] nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.”

67. The Council shall state the special reason for exclusion.

68. At all meetings of the Council the Chairman may at his(her) discretion and at a convenient time in the transaction of business adjourn the meeting so as to allow any member of the public to address the meeting in relation to the business to be transacted at that meeting. This opportunity will also apply to any member who is otherwise excluded due to a declared interest per SO 57.

**69. The Clerk shall afford to the press reasonable facilities for taking their report of any proceedings at which they are entitled to be present.** There shall be no audio or video recording or photographs of the meeting without the express approval of the Council.

Audio or video recording or photographs of meetings of Council and its Committees are permitted provided that

- a) Recording is overt and plainly evident to anyone present at the meeting
- b) No additional lighting or flash photography are to be used unless prior approval of the Council has been obtained

- c) No interruptions to or disturbance of the meeting are caused
- d) No oral commentary or reporting of the meeting as it takes place is permitted by a person present at the meeting
- e) Only members, officers of the Council and members of the public who are speaking under 'Public Participation' are recorded unless prior permission has been obtained from the individuals concerned who do not fall within these categories (and, in the case of minors, from a parent or guardian)

No liability is accepted by the Council for any actions(s) of the person recording

70. If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings at any meeting the Chairman may, after warning, order that (s)he be removed from the meeting.

71. Confidential Business

- 1) No member of the Council or of any committee or sub-committee shall disclose to any person not a member of the Council any business declared to be confidential by the Council, the committee or the sub-committee as the case may be.
- 2) Any member in breach of the provisions of paragraph (1) of this Standing Order shall be removed from any committee or sub-committee of the Council by the Council.

72. Liaison with County and District Councillors

A notice of meeting shall be sent together with an invitation to attend to the County, Unitary or District Councillor for the appropriate ward.

73. Unless the Council otherwise orders, a copy of each letter ordered to be sent to the County Council or Planning Authority shall be transmitted to the County Councillor for the division or to the Planning Authority Councillor for the ward as the case may require.

74. Planning Applications

- 1) The Clerk shall, as soon as it is received, enter in a book kept for the purpose the following particulars of every planning application notified to the Council:-
  - (a) the date on which it was received ;
  - (b) the name of the applicant ;
  - (c) the place to which it relates
  - (d) a summary of the nature of the application.
- 2) The Clerk shall refer every planning application received to the Chairman / Chairman of the Planning Committee or in the Chairman's absence to the Vice-Chairman within 48 hours of receipt.

75. Code of Conduct on Complaints

The Council shall deal with complaints of maladministration allegedly committed by the Council or by any officer or member in such manner as adopted by the Council except for those complaints which should be properly directed to the Standards Board for consideration.

76. Variation, Revocation and Suspension of Standing Orders

Any or every part of the Standing Orders except those printed in **bold type** may be suspended by resolution in relation to any specific item of business.

77. A resolution permanently to add, vary or revoke a Standing Order shall, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

78. Standing Orders to be given to Members

A copy of these Standing Orders shall be given to each member by the Clerk upon delivery to him/her of the member's declaration of acceptance of office and written undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.