

LYNDHURST PARISH COUNCIL

OPERATING FRAMEWORK

This statement summarises how Lyndhurst Parish Council operates. It is designed as a quick reference point for members of the public, and an “aide memoire” for officers and Councillors.

It is a summary only. Further information can be obtained from the Parish Clerk, and/or by consulting the Parish Council’s Standing Orders

The full Council

The Council is made up of 12 Councillors elected every 4 years (2007, 2011 etc). If a vacancy occurs during the 4 years, an election will be held if 10 residents call for one, otherwise the remaining Councillors can co-opt someone on to the Council.

The full Council is ultimately responsible for all the functions and decisions of the Council.

Committees

The Council has appointed Standing Committees to carry out some of its functions. These are:

- Allotments Committee
- Amenities Committee
- Cemetery Committee
- Recreation Committee
- Finance and General Purposes Committee
- Planning Committee

Committees have the power to appoint sub-committees, working parties or advisory groups for specific purposes who report back to the Committee.

Each Committee has its own Terms of Reference. These are a set of powers given to it by full Council. Each Committee is able to take decisions within the limits given to it. Anything falling beyond those limits must be referred to full Council.

In general, Committees are responsible for advising on, monitoring and reviewing their areas of responsibility, and working up proposals for the future. They cannot change existing Council policy or decisions. If they think such a change is desirable, they must refer the matter to the full Council, with a recommendation.

A full copy of the terms of reference of each Committee is available from the Parish Clerk.

The Clerk will attend all meetings and will be able to advise Councillors generally, including on whether a decision can be taken by the Committee or whether it needs to be referred to the full Council.

Councillors

Councillors are democratically accountable to the residents of the Parish/Town. Their over-riding duty is to the whole community.

Councillors have to follow a Code of Conduct, setting out the behaviour expected of them while acting in their official capacity.

Councillors cannot make decisions individually. They cannot undertake action on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so by the Council or a Committee (or Sub-Committee).

When communicating with the public about a Council matter, Councillors should make it clear whether they are speaking or writing on behalf of the Council, or as an individual.

Meetings of Council and Committees

Council meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, except for August when no meeting is held. They are open to the public, except when confidential items are discussed. Minutes of meetings are published on the Council's website, or can be obtained from the Clerk. Planning Committee meetings are usually held on the fourth Tuesday of each month and Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings are held on the third Tuesday in March. All other Committee meetings are held on an ad hoc basis.

Minutes are not a verbatim record of a meeting. However, any decisions the meeting makes are recorded.

The Parish Clerk

The Parish Clerk is the Chief Officer of the Council. His/her main role is to carry out the wishes of the Council, manage and oversee the delivery of its services, and advise on constitutional matters. He/she is also responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

Financial matters

The Council and Committees have capital and revenue budgets they can spend to carry out their duties. The budget for each Committee is approved annually by the full Council, in November for the forthcoming financial year. Committees can incur or approve expenditure only within their budget and except in case of extreme urgency, any other expenditure must be approved by the full Council.

Relationship between Clerk and Councillors

A close working relationship between Councillors and the Parish Clerk is important, and they should treat each other with mutual respect (the Councillors' Code of Conduct in any event requires Councillors to treat others with respect). However, the relationships should not become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question Councillors' or the Clerk's ability to deal impartially with others.