

Standing Orders

Recommendation: that the Council readopts its existing Standing Orders subject to deleting the second sentence of standing order 32.4 and updating the reference in existing standing order 27.3

1. At its 2019 Annual Meeting, the Council re-adopted its existing Standing Orders without amendment on an interim basis pending a report from me examining the merits of recent amendments to the model standing orders published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
2. At its last meeting, the Council extended this arrangement as it had not yet received such a report from me.
3. NALC published a new edition of its model standing orders in 2018 and in July 2018 published another version correcting four minor errors in the first version. I have finally undertaken a study of the Council's Standing Orders against both 2018 versions.
4. NALC's publications are available to the Council through its membership of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, one of NALC's national network of county associations. If any member wishes to access these publications, I can arrange for them to have access.
5. There are many differences between the Council's standing orders and NALC's model ones but, in this report, I limit myself to drawing attention to differences that struck me as significant.

Legal compliance

6. There is one provision in the Council's Standing Orders which used to be lawful but is no longer. The second sentence of Standing Order 32.4 states:
"There shall be no audio or video recording or photographs of the meeting without the express approval of the Council."
7. This restriction has been unlawful since August 2014 and **I advise the Council at this meeting to delete it.**
8. The only limitation on filming, photographing, recording or broadcasting a Council meeting is that a report or commentary on a meeting may only be provided as the meeting takes place if the Council gives its permission.
9. **I invite the Council** to discuss whether it wishes to write this power to withhold permission into its own Standing Orders.

Out of date reference

10. The reference in Standing Order 27.3 to “Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners’ Guide (England) issued by the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group” should now be amended to “Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance”.
11. Somewhat surprisingly, this reference has not been updated in NALC’s model standing orders.

Significant differences

12. NALC’s model standing orders require members to stand when speaking whereas the Council’s Standing Order 12.15 has the opposite default. I have no reason to believe the Council would wish to change its current practice.
13. The Council’s Standing Order 21.2 provides that its Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be ex officio members of all Council committees. NALC’s model standing orders contain no such requirement.
14. The Council’s Standing Order 23.2 contains a similar default for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of a committee in relation to its sub-committees, the difference being that either or both may choose not to be a member.
15. The Council’s Standing Orders 6.1 and 25.1 provide that in any Council or Committee meeting, voting will take place by signed ballot if any two members request it. NALC’s model standing orders contain no such provision. I cannot recall a vote being taken by signed ballot in the four years I have served as your Clerk.
16. The Council’s Standing Order 9.2 provides:
“The Clerk shall date every notice of resolution or recommendation when received by him, 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.”
17. I have no such book and believe my predecessor kept none either. On the other hand, I cannot recall members sending me motions for the agenda although they often send me reports that contain recommendations.

Geoffrey Ferres
Parish Clerk
Monday 26th August 2019