



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 21 September 2020

Title: Town Council Standing Orders review

Purpose of the Report: To seek Committee approval to commence the 2020-21 review process of Standing Orders with Member involvement.

Contact Officer: Sarah Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central Services/Deputy Town Clerk

Corporate Objective/s		n/a
Implications:		
Financial	None	
Human Resources	None	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	To ensure Council can operate and make decisions effectively
Procedural/Legal	Yes	To ensure compliance with the relevant legislation governing parish council meetings and operations
Risk/Health and Safety	None	

1. RECOMMENDATION/S

Should Members be minded, the proposals are:

- 1.1 To note the report.
- 1.2 To form a Task and Finish Group comprising at least four Members to review the Town Council's Standing Orders, with a view to making recommendations back to Committee in January 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Parish councils are empowered by the Local Government Act 1972 (Sch 12) to make Standing Orders to regulate their business and proceedings, and to vary or revoke them.
- 2.2 The National Association of Local Councils, which is the national body representing the 10,000 parish councils in England, issues Model Standing Orders for parish councils to use as a basis for their own Standing Orders.

- 2.3 The NALC Model includes reference to all legislation which parish councils are required to adhere to, such as for example the Local Government Act 1972, The Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the Localism Act 2011, the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 2.4 The NALC Model clearly indicates which Standing Orders are essential for compliance with legislation and which are open to consideration by individual councils.
- 2.5 Town Council Standing Orders have for many years been based upon the NALC Model but also include a number of additions which are specific to LLTC.

3. REVIEW PROCESS

- 3.1 The Town Council reviews its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations annually, usually in the period April-June, prior to approving the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in June.
- 3.2 The review process will include consideration of any amendments proposed by NALC or any issue of revised Model Standing Orders by NALC.
- 3.3 Unless otherwise instructed, the annual review may be conducted by senior officers, with findings and recommendations presented to Policy and Finance Committee for consideration. When a more detailed review is required by Council, a Task and Finish Group may be formed for this purpose, or the Terms of Reference of an existing body amended to include review of Standing Orders.
- 3.4 The NALC Model was last revised in 2018 and a Task and Finish Group met during November 2018 to review proposed changes alongside existing Town Council Standing Orders. Following proposal of amendments in January 2019, a revised version was adopted in April 2019.
- 3.5 The latest review during COVID-19 “lockdown” in May 2020 was undertaken by officers and resulted in the recommendation to Council to consider two minor amendments (as suggested by NALC and recommended to Committee at its meeting on 27 July 2020).
- 3.6 Standing Orders were further reviewed as a result of The Local Authorities and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, with temporary amendments to accommodate remote meetings adopted by Council in June 2020.
- 3.7 The next review of Standing Orders will be undertaken during this municipal year in order that Council may be assured at its next Annual Meeting in May 2021 and prior to approval of the next Annual Governance and Accountability Return in June 2021.

4. UPDATE

- 4.1 Meetings held during July 2020 have resulted in queries on the meaning and application of Standing Orders, both those originating in the NALC Model and those particular to the Town Council.
- 4.2 Queries include for example: clarification on amendments to motions, questions submitted to Council via the Proper Officer, content of ordinary Council meetings, content of Mayoral/Leaders' announcements.
- 4.3 As a result of queries, it is recommended that a Task and Finish Group be formed to undertake a thorough review of current Standing Orders to ensure they are clear and fit for purpose.
- 4.4 It is suggested that this review be undertaken by a series of meetings at which the following are considered:
- Current NALC model
 - Seeking clarification from NALC on any queries or areas which are deemed unclear in the model
 - Comparison with local authority or other larger town council Standing Orders
 - Consideration of how LLTC meetings operate and whether Standing Orders accurately reflect and support this
 - Whether Standing Orders clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of both elected Members and officers
 - Whether Standing Orders can be clearly interpreted and applied by Council
- 4.5 It is suggested that meetings take place during October-December 2020 with a view to making recommendations back to Committee in January 2021. If proposed and seconded to Council, any recommended changes would then be adopted by Council in April 2021.

End.