

**Sandwich Town Council
Standing Orders Working Group Meeting**



Agenda

Chair: Cllr Black
Councillors: Breen, Csuka, Gray and Pennington

Members are hereby cordially invited to attend a Standing Orders Working Group Meeting in the Council Chamber, Guildhall on **Thursday 10th August 2023 at 10:30** to transact the business on the agenda below.

Date: **4th August 2023**
Gill Gray: Town Clerk

1	Apologies for absence received:	
2	Declarations of interest: To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests from Members in respect of business to be transacted on the agenda.	
3	Minutes of the SO Working Group To receive and approve the minutes as an accurate record of the SO Working Group meeting held on 3 rd August 2023 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes not covered elsewhere in this Agenda: Decision required	Attach 1
4	Public Participation: A 15-minute session is set aside for members of the public to make representations at the meeting in respect of the business on the agenda. Individual representations should not exceed 3 minutes. (Written notice of the desire to exercise the right to speak, together with the topic to be addressed, must be given to the Interim Town Clerk prior to 4pm on the Monday preceding the meeting).	
5	Standing Orders Progress Update Members to complete the scrutiny of written submissions concerning the Standing Orders, reflect further on any comments noted during the STC meeting held on 31 st July 2023 and to finalise the draft Standing Orders for adoption by the Council.	
6	Date of next SO Working Group Meeting: TBC	

Draft Minutes of the Standing Orders Working Party meeting held on 3rd August 2023

1. In Attendance:

Cllr Ian Black (Chair) IB
Cllr Peter Breen PB
Cllr Emmet Csuka EC
Cllr Martin Pennington MP

Ms. Christina Glynn (CG) was present to video the proceedings, and also contributed to the discussions.

No other members of the public attended

2. Apologies for Absence:

Cllr Nicholas Gray who was travelling

3. Public Participation:

None

4. Previous Meeting's Minutes:

The minutes from the previous meeting were corrected and approved.

5. Open Discussion:

The meeting discussed the comments from the Mayor and Town Clerk from a meeting in the Mayor's Parlour on 31/7, the comments from the Councillors at the STC meeting of 31/7, and written submissions from Cllrs Gray, Franklin, Marie, Moorhouse, Ungerson, and (briefly from) Wiles. KCC Cllr S Chandler had also written a reply.

Cllr Wiles asked for time for a later submission: the WG agreed to this because there were also some other outstanding issues not yet resolved/discussed.

Draft 20.3 of the Standing Orders formed the basis of the next iteration.

Cllrs Black & Csuka reported a very high level of agreement from the Mayor and Town Clerk. The sit or stand issue was not agreed. The Town Clerk repeated concerns about receiving requests for public participation just before a meeting. It was suggested that a cut-off time was needed, and we agreed to take this up with the WG.

The WG concluded today that persons wishing to speak must submit the request to the Town Clerk by noon on the the scheduled day of the meeting: this would apply to all meetings, whether Council, Committee (or Sub-ctte) or WG. This has been incorporated into the draft.

Cllrs Franklin and Marie suggested that a dress code be incorporated into the SOs. The WG considered this, but concluded this should not form any part of SOs, which concentrated on procedures and actual behaviours applicable to meetings.

Cllr Ungerson had asked about Vice Chairs for committees. The WG were informed that in 2022, committees would choose their own Chairs, rather than the Mayor automatically chairing all of them: as a compromise for the then current situation, the Mayor had been made Vice Chair for all 3 committees.

The WG considered this at length.

- The current Mayor is also in full-time employment, and the WG were concerned about additional pressures on the person if this protocol was continued.
- Second, if Committees were able to choose their own Chairs, it seemed unusual to be prevented from doing so for Vice Chairs.
- The Mayor is *ex officio* a member of each committee, but not one with any special rights on the Committee.
- Any Committee could ask the Mayor to be Chair or Vice Chair
- A majority of the current Chairs of the 3 committees were not in favour of automatically making the Mayor the Vice Chair.
- The Mayor himself had not raised concerns on this matter.
- The majority of the other commentators from STC had not supported the suggestion of automatic Vice Chair appointment.

Taking all these points into account, the WG declined to support the suggestion that the Mayor should automatically be the Vice Chair of any committee. The existing wording of 3.1.4 stands, we suggest.

Cllrs Franklin and Marie also proposed changes to the pronouns used in some places: the WG respectfully points out this use of pronouns is based upon Nalc's statement of what is, and what is not, statutory. As these are all in the first category, the WG declined to change the pronoun usage. Similarly, the start time for the Annual Meeting is statutory wording, but councils may opt for a different start time.

The WG then considered a range of other items including the duration of meetings (opting for the current 2 hour limit), and that public persons wishing to speak must inform the TC at least 6 hours in advance of a meeting. Some had suggested there were issues of one resident seeking to speak at every meeting, and suggesting a limit on the maximum opportunity to speak in any year: the WG recognised the challenge this raised, and proposed that a frequent speaker would have to be the last person selected, and if 4 others were in advance of that person, he/she would not be able to speak on that occasion except at the Chair's discretion. Most respondents favoured up to 4 speakers, but a time limit of 5 minutes each.

Many of the items in the last paragraph have been incorporated into the new draft version of the SOs

A number of respondents' views had not been addressed by the end of the meeting. It was agreed to reconvene in one week's time, and that hopefully this would be the last meeting.

These include:

- the KCC Councillor's response
- How to incorporate specific urgent reports from committees into STC agendas before the formal minuting progress has been completed (Cllr Ungerson & some WG members)
- What additional information should accompany any requests for grants and purchases (more in STBF arena)
- As agendas and meeting papers are on Council provided Ipads, should all councillors be prohibited from using mobile phones during meetings,

Three issues were raised at the previous WG meeting, as below:

Still to be resolved by STC are the issues of:

- Digital signatures
- Speaker time notification arrangements – now complete
- A clear, up to date, user-friendly policy on confidentiality

It was agreed IB would write to the 2 councillors who had raised many of the topics discussed

Next meeting, provisionally at 1030 on 10/8/23