

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

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Operating Framework

Adopted by Council on 8 May 2017, amended on 2 November 2020

This Statement summarises how Rowlands Castle 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 ('the Clerk') and/or by consulting the Parish Council's Standing Orders at www.rowlandscastlepc.org.uk.

The Full Council ('the Council')

The Council is made up of 9 Councillors (8 for Rowlands Castle Ward and 1 for Finchdean Ward, incl outlying areas) elected every 4 years (2015, 2019 etc). If a vacancy occurs during the 4 years, an election will be held if 10 or more electors call for one, otherwise the Council is at liberty to co-opt someone onto the Council.

The 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:

Staffing and Remuneration Committee
The Parish Hall Management Committee *
The Recreation Ground Management Committee *

* The latter two are appointed by Council in its capacity as sole trustee of the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) of Rowlands Castle Parish Hall and Rowlands Castle Recreation Ground.

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 (ToRs). These are a set of powers given to it by the Council. Each Committee is able to take decisions within the limits given to it. Anything falling beyond those limits must be referred to the 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 a change is desirable, they must refer the matter to the Council, with a recommendation.

A full copy of the ToRs of each Committee is available from www.rowlandscastlepc.org.uk or the Clerk.

The Clerk will attend all meetings of the Council (unless indisposed) 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 Council.

Councillors

Councillors are democratically accountable to the residents of the Parish. Their over-riding duty is to the whole community but they have a special duty to the constituents in their Ward.

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 and with its authority, or as an individual.

Meetings of Council and Committees

Council meetings are held generally every month. They are open to the public, except when confidential items are discussed. Minutes of meetings are published on the Council's website at www.rowlandscastlepc.org.uk, or can be obtained from the Clerk. Meetings of committees are held as required and/or in accordance with the ToRs. If the Committee has delegated powers, its meeting will also be held in public, save for any confidential items (see above).

Minutes of Council and Committee Meetings are not intended as verbatim records of a meeting. However, any decisions the meeting makes are recorded.

The Parish Clerk ('the Clerk')

The Clerk is the Chief Officer of the Council and also the Responsible Financial Officer. 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 usually in December for the forthcoming financial year. Committees can incur or approve expenditure only within their budget.

Relationship between Clerk, other officers and Councillors

A close working relationship between councillors the Clerk and any other officers the Council may employ is important and they should treat each other with mutual respect (the Council's 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.