

### 1. Powers of a Parish Meeting

- 1.1. All the residents of Redlingfield who are on the electoral register are “The Parish Meeting”. A Parish Meeting is a form of direct democracy whereby all the electors present decide what is or isn’t done by a direct vote.
- 1.2. There are no Councillors or Members and no-one is appointed or elected to make decisions on behalf of the Parish Meeting.
- 1.3. Each year the Parish Meeting elects a Chair – the Chair is instructed by the Parish Meeting to carry out the decisions of the Parish Meeting, i.e. whatever was voted on and agreed on - provided that it is legal and possible.

### 2. Organising Meetings

- 2.1. Meetings shall be convened by the Chair. If urgent business should arise, which cannot wait until the next scheduled Meeting and is outside the scope of actions that can be taken by the Treasurer/Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), Clerk or Chair, an Extraordinary Meeting may be convened by the Chair in consultation, where possible, with the Clerk and the Treasurer.
- 2.2. If a written request is made and signed by at least six local government electors of Redlingfield, the Chair shall convene an Extraordinary Meeting as soon as suitable arrangements can be made.

### 3. Dates of Meetings

- 3.1. The dates and times of Meetings shall be arranged so as to enable the efficient conduct of business. Redlingfield Parish Meeting will normally meet twice a year including for the Annual Parish Meeting, known locally as the Annual Village Meeting (AGM), which must be held on a date from 1 April to 1 June inclusive. In addition, the Village Committee will normally meet two to three times each year to organise events and deal with any relevant issues. The date for the first Village Committee meeting of each year will be agreed at the AGM.
  - 3.1.1. Election of officers must be held at the AGM.
  - 3.1.2. A final statement of the accounts for the year ending 31 March, prepared in line with current requirements, will be presented for agreement at the AGM.
  - 3.1.3. The planned expenditure for the new year will be presented at the AGM.
- 3.2. At each Meeting a date and time, after 6pm, for the next Meeting shall be agreed, if possible. The agreed date may be varied by the Chair in consultation with the Clerk and the Treasurer if circumstances make this necessary. Any new date or Meeting place shall then be announced as specified in Paragraph 3.
- 3.3. Online meetings can be held if required. *Notes: Currently, neither the AGM nor a meeting to elect of a new Chair, can be held online or remotely. Any meeting can be recorded or videoed, though members of the public who are in attendance may only be recorded/videoed with their explicit agreement.*

### 4. Notice of Meetings

- 4.1. As far as possible, a Notice of Meeting will be delivered to each Redlingfield household. In the case of the Annual Meeting, notice will be given, at least, two weeks before the Meeting. For other Meetings, other than urgent meetings, at least seven days’ notice will be given. Details of forthcoming Meetings will be posted on the village website and noticeboard, published in the Village magazine and emailed to Redlingfield subscribers or via other approved electronic mechanisms.

## 5. Conduct of Meetings

- 5.1. All local government electors for Redlingfield are entitled to attend all Meetings and to vote on any matter. Anyone else may attend and speak but are not allowed to vote.
- 5.2. Quorum: A Meeting shall not be held unless a minimum of five electors are present; at least one of these must be the Chair, Clerk or Treasurer.
- 5.3. In the absence of the Chair: The Meeting shall appoint another elector who, for the duration of that Meeting, shall have the powers and authority of the Chair.
- 5.4. Voting at Meetings
  - 5.4.1. A Meeting may discuss any village matter and either adopt resolutions, if it is within the competence of the Parish Meeting, or make representations to the appropriate authority. There must be a proposer and seconder for each resolution.
  - 5.4.2. Every resolution shall be decided by a majority of those present who are entitled to vote. Votes will normally be taken by a show of hands. The Chair is required to announce the result of a vote. That decision shall be final, unless a secret ballot is demanded before the end of the Meeting.
  - 5.4.3. The secret ballot may only be held if it is agreed by the Chair or insisted upon by at least one-third of the electors present.
  - 5.4.4. In addition to their right to vote in the first instance, in the case of a tie, the Chair will have a second or casting vote.

## 6. Declaration of an interest

- 6.1. Those attending a Meeting at which a matter is discussed in which they have a direct interest shall declare their interest at the beginning of the section of the Meeting during which this matter is discussed. *For best practice the Department for Communities and Local Government publication "Openness and Transparency on Personal Interests" September 2013 will be followed with regard to the Declaration of Interests.*
- 6.2. If the Chair, Clerk, Treasurer or any other elected official has declared a direct personal pecuniary interest in any matter, they should stand down from their official position during the discussion of that item, unless the Meeting decides otherwise.

*Note: Because Redlingfield is not a Parish Council and does not have any elected Councillors/Members, legally, it is not covered by the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, regarding the Code of Conduct or the need to complete the Register of Interests. However, locally Redlingfield Parish Meeting has agreed to adopt these regulations and the Code of Conduct, the Chair is required to complete the Register of Interests form which is placed on the website and open to public scrutiny.*

## 7. Agenda for Meetings (see item 12 Standing items for the AGM agenda)

- 7.1. The agenda is drawn up by the elected officers, in consultation with the Village Committee and circulated to electors with the Notice of Meeting posted on the Parish Noticeboard and website.
- 7.2. Redlingfield residents are encouraged to contact the Clerk with any issues or items they would like to see on the agenda.
- 7.3. Other items may be added, at the discretion of the Chair, if requested at or before the Meeting.

## **8. Elected officers and other officials of the Village Meeting**

8.1. The officers of the Parish Meeting are: The Chair, Clerk and Treasurer (Responsible Finance Officer) they are elected annually.

*Note: As a Parish Meeting, legally, only the Chair can be the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO). The Chair also signs the annual financial returns. Having a Treasurer role, along with several Bank Signatories, are long-standing local Redlingfield arrangements, designed to assist the Chair and provide checks and balances with regard to financial activities.*

8.2. These officers and other officials may not receive any honorarium or payment for their services.

8.3. The Village Meeting, in the 1990s, voted to implement a local agreement whereby the Chair could only stand for election and serve as Chair, a maximum of three times in a row. So as to give more people the opportunity to be the Chair. Someone who has previously been elected as Chair and served for three times in a row, may in future stand for election, provided that some other Chair has served in the meantime.

## **9. Election of officers and officials**

9.1. Elections take place for a Treasurer, Clerk and Chair, to hold office until the elections at the next AGM. A candidate may vote for themselves.

9.2. An Internal Auditor shall be appointed annually; they need not be a local government elector for Redlingfield.

9.3. If an officer or official leaves their post during the year, there shall be an appointment of a replacement for the remaining portion of the year, in consultation with the Village Committee and a replacement elected, if possible, at the next scheduled Meeting. Where necessary the Clerk can take on the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) role until a suitable candidate is appointed, provided that all Financial Regulations are adhered to.

## **10. Procedure for election of Chair**

10.1. When this item of the agenda is reached a temporary Chair, who is not a candidate shall be appointed to conduct the election. The Meeting will then proceed to choose the Chair, who will hold this office until the election at the next AGM.

10.2. If more than one candidate is proposed and seconded, the temporary Chair shall put the names of the candidates to the Meeting. The temporary Chair shall declare elected that candidate who obtains the largest number of eligible votes cast. In event of a tie, the temporary Chair shall have a casting vote.

10.3. Appointments for other specified tasks may be made at any Meeting. Where appropriate, the terms of reference, and the period of time for which the position is to be held, should be agreed by the Meeting before the appointment is made.

## **11. Delegated powers of officers between Meetings**

11.1. Matters that arise between Meetings, for example Freedom of Information requests, planning applications, settlement of financial matters and accounts, can be dealt with by the three elected officers. If they decide that it is not necessary or is not practicable to call an Extraordinary Meeting, they are empowered to take action on behalf of the Parish Meeting, except for any matter which the Parish Meeting may have voted to exclude. Such actions shall be reported to the next Parish Meeting. If any expenditure is involved, Section 3.3 of the Financial Regulations must be observed.

## **12. Standing items for the Annual Village Meeting Agenda Include**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Reports from Guests
3. Minutes of the last meeting
4. Matters arising from the minutes
5. Chair's report
6. Treasurer's report – including
  - a. The Acceptance and minuting of Accounts & Governance
  - b. Adoption of current Financial Risk Assessment and Management Actions document
  - c. Acceptance of the current Assessment of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit report
7. Village Committee Membership. Village Committee members are proposed and elected
8. Election of Officers (See standing orders paragraphs 8, 9 & 10)
  - a. Treasurer
  - b. Secretary (Clerk)
  - c. Chair
9. Neighbourhood Watch
10. Projects and organisations reports eg Redlingfield Amenities, Parochial Church Council, Church updating, Play area upgrade, Village Magazine...
11. Any other business
12. Dates of events for the year
13. Date of next Village Committee Meeting
14. Close of Meeting: When the business of the Meeting has been completed, the Chair shall declare the Meeting Closed. No other business shall then be transacted or recorded.

## **13. Committees**

- 13.1. The Parish Meeting may appoint committees of its members with specific terms of reference to discharge any of its functions for terms up to the next AGM. The committee may carry out the wishes of the Meeting, to which it reports. Any such arrangement will not prevent the Meeting from exercising those functions.

## **14. Minutes of Meetings and other documents – Freedom of Information Act 2000**

- 14.1. Minutes of the proceedings of every Parish Meeting shall be kept by the Clerk. they may be assisted by a Minutes Secretary. In the absence of the Clerk, a Minutes Secretary shall be agreed for that Meeting. The Minutes should include a summary of all matters discussed, and the results of all votes and elections. The Minutes shall be signed by the Chair of the next Meeting, after a majority of those present have agreed that, amended if necessary, they are a true record. Copies will be posted on the village website and notice board.
- 14.2. The Clerk shall retain all important documents. On leaving office, they shall pass them on to the next Clerk or, if the Parish Meeting so direct, deposit them with the Suffolk Record Office.
- 14.3. The Clerk, will ensure that all Parish Meeting minutes and other official documents and correspondence are available for inspection at the earliest practicable opportunity, in accordance with our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Most important documents will also be made available on-line, where possible and with regard to the Department for Communities and Local Government “Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities” published December 2014.

## **15. Communications**

- 15.1. The Clerk and Chair are responsible for ensuring good, clear communication is maintained with residents and that they are involved and kept informed in the most appropriate ways including using new technology.

## **16. Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

- 16.1. The Clerk, Treasurer and Chair are responsible for ensuring the Parish Meeting's registration under the act is kept up to date and renewed annual.
- 16.2. The Chair, Clerk & Treasurer must abide by the law and data protection principals:- They must make sure the information is:
- used fairly, lawfully and transparently
  - used for specified, explicit purposes
  - used in a way that is adequate, relevant and limited to only what is necessary
  - accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
  - kept for no longer than is necessary
  - handled in a way that ensures appropriate security, including protection against unlawful or unauthorised processing, access, loss, destruction or damage

## **17. Changes to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

- 17.1. It shall be the duty of the Parish Meeting to review the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the Parish Meeting from time to time. The Clerk shall make arrangements to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the Parish Meeting of any requirement for changes.
- 17.2. Any member of the Parish Meeting may ask for a review of existing Standing Orders, Financial Regulations or risk management arrangements be added to the agenda of the next Meeting.

## **18. Further explanatory notes regarding the Powers of a Parish Meeting**

- 18.1. *Parish Meetings must account for their expenditure and are regulated and audited in the same way as Parish and Town Councils but cannot reclaim VAT on purchases.*
- 18.2. *A Parish Meeting can raise a precept (local Council Tax) provided the majority of residents agree.*
- 18.3. *A Parish Meeting is formally "consulted" on a range of matters, for example Planning Applications, Licencing Laws and changes to Rights of Way etc but does not have the power to make any decisions about them.*
- 18.4. *A Parish Meeting can make formal representations to the relevant authorities about matters of concern to residents e.g. speeding traffic or flooding or lack of affordable housing.*
- 18.5. *In relation to land ownership, a Parish Meeting can own Allotments and Burial grounds but no land for other purposes.*
- 18.6. *A Parish Meeting can maintain War Memorials and closed Churchyards. It can also provide bus shelters and street lighting as well as play and sports equipment for village greens.*
- 18.7. *With people's agreement, a Parish Meeting is able to provide grants for the local church or a "Doorstep Green" or anything else that people consider important.*
- 18.8. *Legally a Parish Meeting cannot sign contracts with commercial or other companies for services, instead the "Parish Trustees" have to do this. (See Financial Regulations paragraph 9 below).*

## **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

### **1. General**

- 1.1. These financial regulations shall govern the conduct of financial management by Redlingfield Parish Meeting and may only be amended by resolution of the Parish Meeting.
- 1.2. The Parish Meeting shall from time to time, as necessary, conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control, which shall be in accordance with proper practices.
- 1.3. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) is a statutory office.

### **2. Annual estimates**

- 2.1. Estimates of all receipts and payments, including use of reserves and all sources of funding for the year, shall be prepared each year by the Clerk/RFO, in the form of a budget projection - to be considered by the January/February Village Committee Meeting and the Annual Village Meeting (AGM).
- 2.2. The Parish Meeting has on two occasions voted not to have set a precept but to organise fundraising events to meet the budgetary requirements of Redlingfield.

### **3. Budgetary control**

- 3.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget.
- 3.2. The RFO shall provide the Parish Meeting with the accounts, a statement of receipts and payments to date under each of the budget heads, and shall draw attention to the actual income and expenditure against that planned in the budget.
- 3.3. The RFO or Clerk, with the agreement of the Chair, may incur expenditure on behalf of the Parish Meeting in urgent circumstances. The RFO or Clerk shall report such action to the next Parish Meeting.

### **4. Accounting and audit**

- 4.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the Parish Meeting shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 4.2. The accounts are held electronically, currently in the Scribe parish accounts system. The RFO shall ensure that transactions and financial information is held on the system, including copies of invoices and receipts.
- 4.3. The RFO shall complete the annual financial statements of the Parish Meeting, including the Parish Meeting's annual return, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them to the Chair/Parish Meeting.
- 4.4. An Internal Auditor shall be appointed by and shall carry out the work required by the Parish Meeting in accordance with proper practices. The appointment will normally take place at the Annual Meeting. The RFO shall provide the Auditor with appropriate, secure, read-access to the electronic accounting system and provide them with copies/access to any financial information or records that they request.
- 4.5. The RFO shall make arrangements for the opportunity for inspection of the accounts, books and vouchers and for the display or publication of any notices and statements of account required by the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 4.6. The RFO shall, as soon as practicable, bring to the attention of the Chair/Parish Meeting any correspondence or report from the internal or external auditor, unless the correspondence is of a purely administrative matter.

## **5. Banking arrangements**

- 5.1. The Parish Meeting's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO in consultation with the Chair and shall be approved by the Parish Meeting.
- 5.2. All payments must be for items that have been previously approved by the Parish Meeting, except for urgent matters as covered by paragraph 3.3.
- 5.3. Cheques drawn on the bank account shall be signed by any two of the approved signatories. There may be a number of approved signatories. Two signatories from the same household may not sign the same cheque.
- 5.4. To indicate agreement of the details shown on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall each also initial the invoice and the cheque counterfoil.

## **6. Payment of accounts**

- 6.1. All payments shall be by cheque or other order drawn on the Parish Meeting's bankers.
- 6.2. Approved Direct Debits can be set up by the Clerk/RFO with the written approval of the Chair.
- 6.3. All claims for reimbursement must be on the approved Parish Expenditure Reclaim Sheet and will only be paid if accompanied by receipts.
- 6.4. All income, including any collected by volunteers at village fundraising events, must be accompanied by the approved Parish Income Sheet, correctly filled in. Monies should be handed to the RFO/Clerk as soon as possible.
- 6.5. The Parish Meeting will not maintain any form of cash float.

## **7. Insurance**

- 7.1. The RFO/Clerk, in consultation with the Chair should review risks and insurance cover and ensure they are adequate. They shall affect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Parish Meeting's insurers.

## **8. Risk management**

- 8.1. The Parish Meeting is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk and RFO shall, where necessary, prepare, for the approval of the Parish Meeting, risk management statements in respect of activities of the Parish Meeting. Risk policies and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the Parish Meeting from time to time, as necessary.

## **9. The Parish Trustees, Contracts and the ownership of Parish Property**

- 9.1. The Chair of Redlingfield Parish Meeting and the proper officer of the Mid Suffolk District Council, currently their Chief Executive, are the body corporate of the Parish Meeting and are known as "the Parish Trustees".
- 9.2. Contracts with Redlingfield Parish Meeting are signed by the Parish Trustees and ownership of parish property is vested in the Parish Trustees. The Parish Trustees must act in accordance with the directions given by the Parish Meeting.