

Lorton Parish Council. Minute addendum added 5th March 2025
Note on Minutes

Applied at meeting 5th March 2025

Background

There have been lots of comments on both the current set of minutes and the preceding set of minutes. Dealing with such comments takes up a lot of time for both myself and the clerk.

Minutes are a record of decisions made, but are not a verbatim record of all discussions. It would be impossible for the clerk to produce such a record, without recording and transcription.

I therefore have the following observations and suggestion.

Minutes Procedure

For clarity, the minutes production process is as follows:

- The Clerk produces draft minutes from his notes, which are then passed to the Chair.
- The Chair reviews the minutes, and returns these to the Clerk.
- The Clerk revises then circulates the minutes to Councillors for further comments. In the nature of things there are often minor typos and comments.
- The Clerk receives the comments, makes the necessary changes, and circulates the final draft minutes. The minutes are then published (as a draft) at this stage.
- The minutes are then formally approved at the next council meeting, when they become the legal record.

As can be seen, the Chair and the Clerk work closely together in preparation of the minutes.

Minutes Contents

Our own Standing Orders, adopted from the NALC¹ Model Standing Orders, state:

- 3(t) *The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:*
- i. the time and place of the meeting;*
 - ii. the names of councillors who are present and the names of councillors who are absent;*
 - iii. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;*
 - iv. the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;*
 - v. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;*
 - vi. if there was a public participation session; and*
 - vii. the resolutions made.*

The guidance from NALC and SLCC² is similar:

NALC *“The minutes must record the resolutions passed at the meeting.”* and

“...the content of the minutes should be informative and relevant, yet concise.”

SLCC *“Minutes are formal records of decisions taken and not meant to be a verbatim record of a whole meeting. Some background context of the decision taken may be necessary.”*

¹ National Association of Local Councils

² Society of Local Council Clerks

Proposed Amendment to Standing Orders

Having contextual and relevant information as to our decision-making process is, I feel, of benefit to ourselves and our community, and also gives an appropriate historical record.

Going forward, I therefore suggest that our minutes should:

1. Record those items as required by our current Standing Orders, including the resolutions passed at the meeting
2. Be concise.
3. Summarise other matters that are important, informative, contextual, and relevant as to the basis of those resolutions.
4. Are not a verbatim record.

I therefore propose that items 2, 3 & 4 above be added to our Standing Orders, by resolution at the next meeting.

Current Minutes (Jan 2025)

Turning to the current minutes, I propose that these minutes are revised in line with my recommendation above. This will comply with our current Standing Orders, but also have the helpful contextual and relevant information.

The Clerk has therefore revised the current minutes on this basis.

Reports to Council

It is not possible for the clerk to record all the details of a lengthy report, if given verbally. Councillors also need time to peruse such reports. Such reports are an important part of our decision-making process.

I suggest that in the future reports should be dealt with as follows.

- Brief reports or updates of a few words can be given verbally at the meeting.
- Fuller reports can be given verbally, but a brief and concise summary, e.g. a few bullet points, should be given to the clerk for inclusion in the minutes, preferably prior to or otherwise immediately after the meeting.
- Longer detailed reports should be in writing and circulated before the meeting, preferably with the agenda. A brief summary, a few bullet points, could also be given to the clerk for inclusion in the minutes. If appropriate, the report could be appended to the minutes in its entirety.

Peter Deeks

24 January 2025

chair's note on minutes 2025-01-24 ver02