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Chairing Meetings – Code of Practice

Purpose

This Code sets out six principles expected of those chairing meetings of Beaulieu Parish Council and its Committees. It complements the Council's Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and Civility & Respect Pledge.

The Code also serves as a reminder to all councillors of the expected standards of behaviour during meetings and of the importance of respecting and supporting the Chair's role in the proper conduct of those meetings.

The Chair should be fair and seen to be fair. Public confidence in the Council's decision-making depends on impartiality, fairness and respect.

The Role of the Chair

The Chair's primary role is to facilitate fair, lawful and effective decision-making by the Council.

The Six Principles

1. **Fairness and Impartiality** – act fairly, impartially and be seen to do so at all times.
2. **Leadership** – lead the meeting, not the debate, and avoid using the Chair's position to promote a personal viewpoint.
3. **Respect and Civility** – promote courteous, respectful and constructive conduct.
4. **Inclusion** – ensure councillors, officers and members of the public are given a fair opportunity to be heard.
5. **Good Order** – ensure meetings are conducted efficiently, lawfully and in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and policies.
6. **Public Confidence** – act in a manner that promotes confidence in the integrity, transparency and decision-making of the Council.

Public Participation

Members of the public shall be welcomed and treated courteously at all times. Where public speaking is permitted, speakers will be allowed their allotted time without interruption from councillors or other members of the public, except where intervention is required by the Chair on procedural or conduct grounds. The Council's and Committees' primary role is to hear representations, not to debate them with the speaker.

Review

This Code shall be reviewed by the Council every 3 years.

Appendix A – Chair's Toolkit

Before the Meeting

- Read the agenda and supporting papers
- Identify potentially contentious items
- Clarify procedural matters with the Clerk

Managing Debate

- Keep the meeting focused on the agenda items
- Make it clear that Councillors and members of the public should address the meeting through the chair
- Ensure councillors who have not yet spoken have a full opportunity to contribute

Public Participation

- Explain the speaking arrangements clearly
- Listen first; discuss afterwards
- Do not debate with speakers

Interruptions

- Unless there are procedural issues, allow speakers their full three minutes, without interruption.
- One person speaking at a time

Rising Tension

- Focus on the issue, not the individual
- There may be disagreement, but it should be respectful

Repetition

- If there is repetition, simply confirm the point has been noted
- Unless there is new information, keep the meeting moving

Reaching a Decision

- Summarise the issues
- Clarify the motion
- Confirm proposer and seconder
- Take the vote clearly
- Announce and record the outcome

If there is disruption

- Calm reminder from the Chair
- Warning if disruption continues
- Short adjournment if required
- Resume when order is restored
- Use Standing Orders where necessary