

Introduction

The minutes are a public record of the decisions of the council and great care should be taken in their format and production. The minutes can be produced in court and other judicial processes as evidence of decisions of the council, and they form part of the Council archives which must be preserved. Minutes should be:

- as brief as is consistent with accuracy;
- precise and concise;
- self contained (i.e. complete in themselves and understandable without reference to other documents);
- decisive (so that there is no doubt about the decision made);
- minutes, not hours!

Minutes shall be produced with a clear heading containing the status of the meeting, the place and date, also stating the time the meeting starts and ends and any adjournments. Minutes should start with an alphabetical list of the Councillors present at the meeting.

Minutes shall be numbered consecutively for ease of reference.

Each minute shall contain a heading clearly indicating what the minute is about, a narrative or text, as appropriate, that briefly summarises what took place, and the decision. For many routine items, for example, commenting on planning applications, a narrative will not be necessary.

The narrative shall be in the past tense (known as 'reported speech') and include reference to any written reports submitted and be in plain English using full sentences and appropriate grammar. It is not necessary to refer to individual speakers by name unless this is significant. It may be appropriate to record the fact that an applicant or an objector addressed the Council or committee on a planning application or that the Clerk, other Officer or an Officer of the district or county council reported on a matter. The narrative should summarise points raised in debate on a sensitive matter. This can be done by bullet points.

Abbreviations to be avoided and acronyms only used after having written the title in full at the first mention.

The decision shall be separately highlighted for ease of identification and words used to show that it is a decision, for example;

Resolved

- 1) **That----**
- 2) **That----**

The wording of the decision should be included in full. It is not normally necessary to note the name of the member moving and seconding a motion in the minutes or the fact that a vote was taken (unless a recorded vote is requested). Members may request that names be recorded.

The order of the minutes will normally follow the order of the agenda.

Declarations of interest must be carefully recorded in the minutes, naming the Councillor and clearly indicating which item the interest referred to, whether the interest is a personal interest or a personal and prejudicial interest, giving the nature of the interest and, in the case of a personal and prejudicial interest, recording that the member left the meeting during the discussion and decision on the item. For example;

"26 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

The following disclosures of interest were received:

Planning application for conservatory at 12 Smith Road, Firsttown

Cllr Green disclosed a personal and prejudicial interest as the owner of land adjoining the development site. Cllr Green left the room during the discussion and decision on this matter.”

Where Council Procedures provide for the submission by notice of formal written motions to a council meeting, it is appropriate to record the names of the Councillors proposing and seconding the motion in the minutes.

Where Council Procedures provide for a special procedure (other than routine arrangements) to be followed at a meeting it is generally appropriate to include a reference in the minutes to the procedure being followed as evidence to that effect.

The Clerk should ensure that Councillors understand that decisions of HPC can be set aside by a Court for procedural irregularity, which is why it is so important that the correct meeting procedures are followed and decisions are accurately recorded.

Decisions to exclude the press and public should be fully recorded in the minutes, making it absolutely clear to which matter or part of it the exclusion applied.

Minutes Production

Decisions taken at a meeting take effect immediately and do not depend on the minutes being approved at the next meeting.

The minutes should be produced as quickly as possible after the meeting in order to circulate them to Members. The Clerk shall provide a draft of the minutes for the Chair of the meeting. This is an opportunity to pick up any mistakes in the content or identify typing errors, but it is not to be used by the Chair as a means of re-writing the minutes.

The draft minutes shall be circulated no later than 10 working days after the meeting. It is acceptable for the draft minutes to be published (on the website or notice board, or to provide copies to members of the public), but they do not become valid minutes until they are accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chair at the next meeting. Minutes in draft form should therefore record that fact clearly (at the top and bottom) to the effect: “Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting” or by using a “draft” watermark.

The signed minutes should be carefully retained by the Clerk for the council’s archives. It is prudent to retain a separate set of signed minutes for public inspection and for reference at meetings or for other purposes. The end of the published minutes should include the fact of being signed by the Chair and the date on which they were signed.

If changes are made to the minutes by the council or committee before acceptance and signing, the wording changes should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting that agreed the changes and the original minutes must be amended to reflect the changes. The copy signed by the Chair will contain the alterations, recorded in longhand, with the changes signed and dated.