

Constitution of the Parish Meeting of the Village of North Aston

Issued 6th May 2026

1. Name

The name of the Organisation is the *North Aston Parish Meeting*.

The extent of the powers conferred upon the Parish Meeting are laid out in the *Appendix*.

2. The Parish

The Area of the Parish covers the North Aston village boundary as outlined by the Cherwell District Council Ward.

3. Aims

The aims of the Parish Meeting are:

- a) To represent member residents in the Parish.
- b) To promote, support and achieve changes and improvements to the quality of life for local people.
- c) To work with other local organisations and Parishes.
- d) To consult and inform all members regularly.
- e) To be non-party political.
- f) To promote involvement to all members of the community.

4. Membership & Voting:

- a) Voting membership of the Parish Meeting is open to all residents over the age of 16 living in the Parish Meeting area.
- b) The Minutes, which shall include the Treasurers Reports and the business of the Parish Meeting, shall be published in the *North Aston News* and made available to all residents, and will be retained for a period of not less than 6 years.
- c) Voting rights will automatically end when a member ceases to live in the Parish.
- d) In the event of continuous or serious breaches of the Constitution, voting rights of a resident can be suspended or ended by a majority vote of the members present.
- e) A member whose membership has been suspended in accordance with clause 4(d) shall be entitled to have that suspension reviewed at the next General Meeting (herein sometimes referred to as a *Village Meeting*).

5. The Committee

- a) The Committee shall have the following Officers:
 - a. Chairperson
 - b. Secretary
 - c. Treasurer

In the event of the Meeting being unable to find three people to stand as Officers, it is acceptable for two roles to be combined.

- b) Officers shall be elected at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). The size of the committee should be no less than 2.
- c) The Officers shall be elected by the Membership as defined in (4) above.
- d) Officers will normally stand for a 3 year term subject to annual re-election by the membership but this may be amended by agreement of the Committee.
- e) The Chairperson shall chair all meetings of the Parish Meeting. In the absence of the Chair, another Officer present shall take the role of Chairperson.

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- f) Election or removal of Officers can only be carried out by a majority vote at a General Meeting or Special General Meeting called specifically for that purpose.
 - g) Any vacancies from the Committee occurring by resignation or otherwise may be filled by the Committee by co-opting members with full voting rights, until the next General Meeting.
 - h) The Committee may, when necessary or when deemed to be of benefit to the Parish Meeting, co-opt up to three people whose skills and/or experience would be advantageous to the Committee in carrying out its functions.
 - i) Copies of the Constitution are available free to all people in the Parish area. The Secretary must send out copies of the Constitution within seven days of a person requesting it.
 - j) The Committee shall, as far as possible, be representative of the community which it serves.
 - k) Any Officer who does not attend three consecutive meetings without giving reasonable apologies shall be deemed to have resigned.

6. Parish Meetings

Annual General Meetings

- a) The Parish Meeting shall hold an AGM once each calendar year between March and June and not more than 15 months shall pass between the date of one AGM and the next.
- b) The AGM shall
 - 1. Receive an Annual Report from the Committee.
 - 2. Present a Statement of Accounts to members.
 - 3. Elect Officers/ Committee members.
 - 4. Consider any Resolution put forward by members.
 - 5. Set the precept for the forthcoming year.
- c) Notification of an AGM will be issued not less than 14 days prior to the meeting. Notice of the AGM shall be posted in the monthly edition of the *North Aston News*.
- d) Every member present as defined above shall have the right to vote.

General Meetings

- a) There shall be at least one General Meeting of the Parish in any year (including the AGM).
- b) Meetings are open to all people living in the defined area.
- c) Every member present at a General Meeting shall have a vote.
- d) Decisions of the General Meeting shall be binding on the Committee.
- e) At least seven days' notice shall be given for a General Meeting.
- f) The Agenda for a Meeting must be published at least seven clear days before the Meeting is due to take place.
- f) The quorum for a General Meeting shall be six (6) members present including the Officers.

A supplemental meeting of the Village Forum may take place at the same time as the AGM or Village Meeting but does not form part of the Village Meeting.

Special General Meetings

- a) A Special General Meeting may be called by the Committee or if requested by at least 10 members. This request should be made in writing to the Secretary at least 14 days before the requested meeting date. The Secretary must issue a written notice at least seven days in advance of the meeting.
- b) The Secretary shall call a Special General Meeting at the request of a majority of the Committee; or on receipt of a petition by not less than ten (10) members, giving reason for their request.
- c) The Secretary shall give not less than 7 days' notice of such a meeting, which will take place within 14 days of receipt of this petition.

Committee Meetings

- a) The quorum of Committee members shall be two (2) Officers.
- b) Committee Meetings may be called by the Chair and Secretary or at the request of two thirds of the Committee.
- c) At least 7 days' notice must be given to Committee members.

7. Conduct of Business

Voting

- a) At all Meetings (except those dealing with alterations to the Constitution) decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of those members present and voting. Each member has one vote.
- b) Alterations to the Constitution require a majority of those present and voting at a General Meeting at which the Constitution is proposed to be changed. Full details of proposed changes must be circulated at least fourteen days before the meeting.
- c) In the event of a tie in voting, the Chair of the meeting shall have the casting vote. This casting vote should not be used to change or introduce new policies or procedures.
- d) Conflict of interest must be declared. Members with a conflict of interest should then withdraw from discussion and voting on the issue in question.

Minutes

- a) All voting that takes place at an AGM, General Meeting, Special General Meeting or Committee Meeting shall be counted and recorded in the Minutes.
- b) All formal meetings such as Village Meetings, Special General Meetings and AGMs will be minuted and the Minutes published in the *North Aston News*, and subsequently formally approved at the next Village Meeting.

8. Finance

- a) A simple record of any income and expenditure must be produced each year at the AGM and be available to all members on request.
- b) Accounts should be open to inspection by members on request.
- c) The Parish Meeting may raise funds either by donation, grant application or other means. The proceeds of any such fundraising shall be used in accordance with: and to the furtherance of: the aims and objectives of the Parish Meeting.
- d) A bank account is open in the name of the Parish Meeting.
- e) The Committee may use online banking. All transactions must be authorised by 2 committee members. Any payments made by cheque or other banking instruments or instructions shall be signed by at least 2 signatories who must be elected officers
- f) Signatories must not be related or be members of the same household.

9. Changes to the Constitution

- a) Any proposed change to this Constitution can only be made at a Special General Meeting, a General (Village) Meeting or an Annual General Meeting.
- b) Any proposed change to this Constitution must be sent to the Secretary not less than 28 days prior to the meeting at which the alteration is to be discussed.
- c) The Secretary will send the new wording (amendment) together with the old wording and notice of the meeting to Members of the Committee at least fourteen days prior to the meeting at which the alteration is to be discussed.
- d) Upon agreement by Members of the Committee, the proposed Constitution will be sent to Members of the Parish together with the Agenda for the next General Meeting. Alterations to the Constitution require a majority of those present and voting at a General Meeting.

10. Dissolution

In the event that it proves impossible to recruit the minimum number of Officers, the Parish Meeting will be dissolved and the responsibility for the Parish Meeting shall pass to the Local Authority.

11. Code of Conduct

- a) The role of the Committee is to carry out the day to day business of the Parish Meeting in an efficient, fair and responsive way. In taking decisions on behalf of the Parish Meeting, Committee members must always be aware of their responsibilities to represent all members.
- b) All Committee members must comply with the Constitution and Code of Conduct at all times. On being appointed to the Committee, all new Officers shall receive and be required to sign an acknowledgment of this Constitution and Code of Conduct and the document retained.
- c) All Officers shall be assigned an official, anonymised email address (e.g. chair@north-aston.co.uk) and any and all correspondence relating to the business of the Parish Meeting must be directed via this method of communication. The use of personal email addresses is not permitted when dealing with matters pertaining to the Parish Meeting.
- d) The Members of the Committee shall not make representation either collectively or individually in the name of the Parish Meeting or commit the Parish Meeting to any affiliation or association without having consulted the Members at a General Meeting. The matter must be debated and where relevant voted upon in accordance with the rules set out above.
- e) Committee Members shall conduct themselves in a manner that will not cause offence to others. Racist, sexist or inflammatory remarks or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. The Chair has the right to warn the members of their behaviour. If they persist they will be asked to leave the Meeting until further notice. The Committee must arrange a date and time and hold a meeting for them to discuss the incident and make a decision as to what action to take.

12. General

- a) Committee Members must never personalise issues and should be willing to recognise that everybody is entitled to express their point of view without unduly preventing progress of discussion on the Agenda at a Committee or General Meeting.
- b) A serious breach of any part of the Parish Meeting Code of Conduct may result in a member, following a majority vote of the Officers, being asked to resign.
- c) The Committee Members will take decisions based on there being unanimous agreement or a simple majority of those present if a vote is taken. Minority voters should always be prepared to accept the majority decision and not take such a decision as any form of personal slight or criticism.
- d) Committee Meetings must be held at times which are convenient to the majority of Members. If an Officer fails to attend three consecutive meetings without giving good reason, they must be asked to consider resigning at the next Committee Meeting. To prevent there being arguments about attendance at Meetings, a record will be kept showing who was at each Meeting.

13. Affiliations

- a) The Parish Meeting may affiliate to any non-party political organisation whose aims and objectives are commensurate with those of the Parish Meeting and which can help the Parish Meeting in achieving its aims and objectives, as set out in Section 3. Approval for such an affiliation requires a majority of those present and voting at a General Meeting.
- d) Members shall not make representation in the name of the Parish Meeting or commit the Parish Meeting to any affiliation or association without the matter having first been debated and where relevant voted upon in accordance with the rules.

14. Resolutions

The Parish Meeting may debate and approve supplementary Constitutional Resolutions during the course of a General Meeting or Annual General Meeting that will be binding upon the Parish Meeting and its Officers, if voted for and approved by a majority of the members present. As of April 2026, these include:

- a) **Planning - Parish Meeting**

As a consequence of Resolutions passed by the Parish Meeting (25th September 1995 and 17th January 2013) the Parish Meeting as a representative body is not permitted to support, object to, or otherwise comment upon, any planning application or proposed development cited in the Cherwell District Council Planning Register. This includes planning matters relating directly to the Parish of North Aston, as well as any development proposed within the local District Council area.

b) **Planning - Officers**

As a consequence of Resolutions passed by the Parish Meeting (1995, 2013) Officers of the Parish Meeting are not permitted to use their status or reference their position as Officers of the Parish Meeting when offering their support or objecting to any planning application or proposed development as listed in the Cherwell District Council Planning Register. Officers may not involve themselves or comment upon any planning matter in the name of North Aston Parish Meeting, although they are free to do so in their own name as electors and residents, without said reference.

Such Resolutions are open to debate and amendment at any General Meeting or Annual General Meeting. Any Member wishing to open a Resolution for debate or amendment should notify the Secretary not less than 14 days prior to the Meeting at which the Resolution is to be discussed, and the Secretary shall include that proposal as an item on the Agenda. Any such changes must be reflected in the Constitution, which must be updated accordingly.

Appendix

In England, a community with fewer than 200 residents (specifically, fewer than 200 local government electors) typically has a Parish Meeting rather than an elected Parish Council. Communities with between 151 and 199 residents have the option to establish a Parish Council, should they wish, with a minimum of 5 elected Officers.

1. Meetings and AGMs

The annual meeting of parish electors must take place between 1 March and 1 June, both dates inclusive, and must take place no earlier than 6 pm. In the case of a Parish Meeting, this will also be the community's AGM. The Annual General Meeting of a Parish Council must be held in May (or within 14 days of election day, if it is an election year).

2. Powers, where there is no Parish Council

In communities with no Parish Council, the Parish Meeting has the following powers:

Allotments: A Parish Meeting may hold and administer allotments for cultivation (s.33 (3) Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908);

Bus Shelters: A Parish Meeting may provide and maintain a bus shelter (s. 4 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1953 and s.179 of the Local Government Act 1972);

Burials: A Parish Meeting is a burial authority. It may therefore provide burial grounds and may contribute towards the cost of burial facilities provided by others (Para 1(c) of schedule 26 to the Local Government Act 1972);

Cemeteries and Crematoria: A Parish Meeting has the power to adopt byelaws made by a district or London borough council or the City of London (Para 1(1) of schedule 26 to the Local Government Act 1972);

Charities: A Parish Meeting has the same powers as a Parish Council to appoint trustees to parochial charities. The audited accounts of all parochial charities (except those for the relief of poverty) must be sent to the Chair of the Parish Meeting, who must lay them before the next Meeting (s.79 (2) of the Charities Act 1993);

Churchyards: The liability to maintain a closed Church of England churchyard may be transferred to a Parish Meeting by the same process by which such liability is transferred to Parish Council (s.215 (2) of the Local Government Act 1972). i.e. by serving written request on the Chair of the Meeting. See also LTN 65 - Closed Churchyards and Disused Burial Grounds.

Commons: A Parish Meeting may be registered as the owner of Common Land if it has inherited ownership from the appropriate pre-1894 authority (often the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor) pursuant to section 67 of the Local Government Act 1894 (56 & 57 Vict. c. 73);

Land: A Parish Meeting has no general power of acquisition but may acquire land to exercise its allotments or burial powers. It may appropriate land from one purpose to another with the approval of the Secretary of State. A Parish Meeting may dispose of land on the same conditions applicable to Parish Councils (s.126 of the 1972 act). Section 13(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that the parish trustees shall be the Chair of the Parish Meeting and the proper Officer of the district council. The parish trustees may hold on behalf of the Parish Meeting the following categories of land:

- Common land
- Allotments
- Cemeteries
- Open Space

Licensing: A Parish Meeting may be an "interested party" and may be consulted in respect of applications for premises licenses(s.13(3) of the Licensing Act 2003);

Lighting: A Parish Meeting may light roads and other public places (section 3 of the Parish Councils Act 1957);

Rights of Way: A Parish Meeting is entitled to be notified of a public path creation order; an extinguishment order, a diversion order or a definitive map modification order. In relation to the last named, the Meeting is also entitled to be consulted by the County Council before the order is made (part III Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and schedule 15);

Village Greens: A Parish Meeting may prosecute a person who damages or encroaches upon a village green in the parish and thus commits an offence under section 12 of the Inclosure Act 1857 or section 29 of the Commons Act 1876 (39 & 40 Vict. c. 56). See also LTN 56 - The Provision of Play and Sports Equipment on Village Greens);

War Memorials: A Parish Meeting may maintain, repair or protect any war memorial in the parish (ss.1 and 4 of the War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923).

Staff: A Parish Meeting does not have the power to appoint staff.

Funding: Section 39(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1972 provides that a Parish Meeting is a precepting authority. This means that where there is no Parish Council the Parish Meeting must meet its own expenses, usually by precepting on Council Tax collected by the District Council.

A Parish Meeting may only precept for expenditure relating to specific functions, powers and rights which have been conferred on it by legislation.

A Parish Meeting may request that the District Council confers the powers of a Parish Council on a Parish Meeting under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. This would enable the Parish Meeting to do any of those things that a Parish Council can do as specified in the order of which the list is given above.

May 2026