

Three Rivers District Council

Committee Report

Date 7 March 2023

**CONSTITUTION SUB-COMMITTEE – 7 MARCH 2023
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 13 MARCH 2023
ANNUAL COUNCIL – 23 MAY 2023**

PART I

**5. MINUTE WRITING STANDARDS
(EHoS)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report is being presented to the Constitution sub-committee to receive and consider a guide on minute writing standards at TRDC, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report.

2 Background

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, all full Council/Annual Council meetings have been recorded since 2014 and all Committee and sub-committee meetings have been recorded since 2020 with the recordings of these meetings being kept for a period of 7 years.

- 2.2 To meet the expectations of Members most formal Council, Committee and sub-committee minutes are written to a near verbatim standard.

- 2.3 This has added significant burden to the Committee Team and contributed to difficulties in meeting the statutory deadlines and timescales for the production of minutes. The drafting and proof reading of Council minutes alone takes a minimum of 4-5 days of officer time and greatly impacts on other work.

- 2.4 Over the last year the length of the minutes has been:

December 2022 – 42 pages; October 2022 – 32 pages; July 2022 – 48 pages

February 2022 – 45 pages

- 2.5 The production of near verbatim written records goes significantly beyond the statutory requirements for formally recording decisions and is out of keeping with normal practice in other local authorities.

- 2.6 As Members will be aware, the Council are currently in the process of launching the livestreaming of meetings with the view to going live in the spring. The livestreaming of the meeting will provide for a video recording of the meeting to be available online for a year and archived for a period of 6 years.

3. Minute Standards for Council and Committee Meetings in Three Rivers

- 3.1 The minimum standards for local authority minutes are detailed across a number of pieces of legislation (as provided in the guide).

- 3.2 Rule 8 of the Constitution refers to how the Council currently agree its minutes, but there is no guidance on the standard of the minutes included in the rule.

- 3.3 A summary of the statutory minimum requirements for minute taking, and how it is suggested that will be reflected in practice going forward is attached at Appendix 1.

4. Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed budget.
- 4.2 There is no Council policy on the minutes but any amendment or proposals which Members may wish to recommend on the minute writing standard would be included in the Council Constitution under Rule 8 of the Council Procedure Rules.

5. Financial, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Implications

- 5.1 None specific.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications beyond those described in the body of the report and at Appendix 1.

7. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	No – but will be completed to be included with the publication of the report.
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	No

- 7.2 Impact Assessment

None specific.

8. Staffing Implications

- 9.1 As set out in the body of the report.

9. Environmental Implications

- 9.1 Any environment implications will be addressed through any recommendation agreed by Members.

10. Communications and Website Implications

- 10.1 While the minutes are being drafted the Council action is published on the website as an interim measure until the minutes are published following the approval process. Communication is sent to all Councillors when the minutes are published.

11. Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 11.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

- 11.2

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Not being able to agree the minutes	No agreed minutes as a record of the meeting	To agree a format for the minutes	Treat	6

11.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
		Impact		
		Low ----->	Unacceptable	

Impact Score

- 4 (Catastrophic)
- 3 (Critical)
- 2 (Significant)
- 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

- 4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
- 3 (Likely (21-79%))
- 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
- 1 (Remote (≤5%))

11.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

12. Recommendation

The sub-committee is recommended to:

- 12.1 Note the issues raised in this report in relation to the production of formal minutes.

12.2 Consider the Guide to Minute Standards for Council and Committees at Appendix 1 and decide:

- If the guide is to be recommend to P&R;
- If the guide is to be recommended but with any suggested amendments made by the sub-committee;
- If no guide be adopted on minute taking.

Report prepared by: Ciara Feeney, Interim Monitoring Officer

Data Quality

Data sources:

None

Data checked by:

Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager, Kimberley Grout, Executive Head of Service

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	x
3	High	

Background Papers - none

Appendix 1 – Guide to Minute Standards for Council and Committees

