SCHOOL COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS

Implementation Date: Thursday, 11 March 2004
Review Date: Term 4 2015

DEECD DOCUMENTATION

The following DEECD website relates to this area:

BELIEF

While standing orders are formal rules, it is expected that the Zeerust Council, like most school councils, will choose to work within the spirit of these standing orders rather than apply them rigidly. It is expected that the standing orders will be reviewed sometime during the term of each new council. Standing orders should define local rules, in particular, meeting procedures. It is recognized that the Education Act, the Education Regulations and a school council’s constituting order take precedence over a school council’s standing orders.

GENERAL RULES

• Focus on issues, not on personalities.
• Individual students, staff and parents are not to be discussed.
• Listen to all members.
• No question is too trivial.
• Only one person speaks at a time.
• Respect the opinions of all council members.
• Avoid using jargon and acronyms.
• Keep discussion simple and practical.
• Keep to the topic.
• Focus on what needs to be done in relation to the topic.
• Start and finish meetings on time.
• Maintain confidentiality where appropriate.
MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

- Initial and continued membership of the school council will be in accordance with departmental council election guidelines.
- The president and the executive officer are responsible for ensuring that new council members receive appropriate induction and that all members should be provided with access to ongoing training and development.

- **Office Bearers**
  - At each new council the following positions will be filled from the elected councillors:
    - Council president.
    - Council vice-president.
    - Council secretary.
  - The executive officer of the council will remain the principal.

- **President**
  - The president cannot be a DEECD employee.
  - The main roles of the president are to:
    - Be the spokesperson, along with the principal, for the council.
    - Act as its representative on public occasions.
    - Chair council meetings.
    - Be a signatory to accounts, contracts and the school charter and school policies.
  - The president should ensure that his or her personal opinions do not influence any decisions made about meeting and decision-making procedures.
  - The occasions on which the president speaks as a private individual, should be clearly defined from those, in which rulings are made as the president of school council.
  - The president, as a member of council, is entitled to a personal vote on any issue before council.

- **Vice president**
  - The vice president cannot be a DEECD employee.
  - There is no legal requirement to elect a vice president but it is normal practice to do so.
  - The vice president acts as chair of council meetings in the absence of the president.

- **Secretary**
  - The secretary is responsible for:
    - Recording the minutes of school council meetings.
    - Collecting supporting documentation.
• The safe and systematic storage of the minutes at the school.
• A minute secretary may be appointed to assist the secretary (this person need not be a member of council).

• Executive officer
  • The principal must act as the executive officer of the council and ensure that:
    ▪ Informed advice is given to council on educational and other matters.
    ▪ The decisions of council are implemented.
    ▪ That school policies are signed off when implemented.
    ▪ There is liaison with the president about council business, and
    ▪ That adequate support and resources are provided for the conduct of council meetings.
  • The executive officer will act as the secretary of council and perform the following functions:
    ▪ Maintaining a list of members, their addresses and telephone contacts.
    ▪ Circulating the agenda, reports and background information among council members prior to the next council meeting.
    ▪ Overseeing the maintenance of the records of the proceedings of the council (the minutes).
    ▪ Providing council with copies of relevant incoming and outgoing correspondence at the meeting.
    ▪ Drafting outwards correspondence.
    ▪ Notifying councillors of all meetings and making arrangements for venues and any facilities required.

MEETINGS

• Frequency
  • Council is to meet twice each term.
  • Meeting times will be published in the school newsletter.
  • The date and time of the next meeting should be agreed at each council meeting. This may be later altered at the discretion of the council president if a quorum looks unlikely.

• Quorum
  • A quorum is formed when:
    ▪ Not less than one half of the councillors are present, and
    ▪ The majority of members present are parents. *Note: DEECD/parent members are counted as employees in this instance.*
- A quorum must be maintained throughout a meeting. Proxies are not permitted.
  o Eligible members must be present at the meeting to be part of the decision-making process.
  o Unless the meeting is declared closed, parents may attend and speak at council meetings. Parents cannot put motions or vote.

**Pre-meeting arrangements**

  o Except for issues identified in the preceding meeting, other items for the agenda should be forwarded to the principal at least one week before the next meeting.
  o Information for the consideration of councillors at the next meeting is to be collated by school staff and sent home at least one week before the upcoming meeting.
    • Councillors should be cognisant of the requirements of the school’s privacy policy.
    • This will not include financial information.

**Organisation of school council meetings**

  o Apologies. *Note: Check quorum numbers – accept apologies.*
  o Minutes of the previous meeting
    • These are draft only until accepted.
    • The minutes secretary is to ensure that the president signs one copy of the minutes and keep this in the official record.
  o Correspondence.
    • These are to be available for perusal before the meeting.
    • A summary of correspondence is to be made available.
  o Confirmation of the agenda.
    • The inclusion of last minute items is allowed at the discretion of the president.
      • Normally only urgent issues should be considered for inclusion in the agenda at this time.
      • Items of a non-urgent nature should be deferred until the next meeting.
  o Business arising.
  o Reports.
    • These are to be available for perusal prior to the meeting.
    • Financial report
      • All copies to be collected at the end of the meeting.
      • Motion required to accept / reject financial report and to pass bills for payment.
    • Parent club report
- Motions are required to approve parent club activities.
  - General business
    - Policy Development
      - At least one meeting per year should review policy.
      - Implemented policy should be signed by the president and principal and kept with the official record and posted on the school website.
    - Councillors should properly consider every agenda item, therefore:
      - Background information should be provided if appropriate, and
      - Enough time must be allowed to consider each issue.
    - The time, date and place of the next meeting should be set.

- Hints for chairing meetings
  - Have a good understanding of the constitution of the council, the council code of practice (charter) and the standing orders of council.
  - In collaboration with the principal ensure that the agenda is set prior to each meeting.
  - Control the discussions during the meetings to ensure that business is expeditiously addressed. For this, the chair must understand the powers of the chair and be willing to use them discreetly to ensure that the council keeps to points at issue.
  - Ensure that no councillor dominates a discussion and encourage all councillors to express an opinion before calling for a vote. Summarise the points made in any debate.
  - Acknowledge the work of individuals or groups who have prepared work for council’s consideration.
  - Keep an eye on the scheduled closing time of the meeting and try to pace the discussion to complete the business by that time.
  - Call for a specified extension of time if that is required.
  - Ensure that councillors know the date and venue of the next meeting before officially declaring the current council meeting closed.
  - Ensure that decisions of the council are correctly recorded.
  - When the minutes are approved by council, the person presiding at the meeting is to sign the minutes to this effect.

- Voting at school council meetings
  - The president has a second, or casting vote where a vote is tied.
  - The principal is a voting member of council.
  - Abstentions
    - Councillors must abstain from voting if they have a pecuniary interest in the matter under discussion.
• It is at the council president’s discretion whether such members will participate in the discussion.
• Such councillors are not to be present for the vote.

  o Decisions
    • All motions, whether defeated, carried or deferred, should be recorded in the minutes.
    • Decisions are generally reached by consensus, however where counts are taken, the number for, and against, should be recorded.
    • Dissenting councillors may choose to have their names recorded in the minutes.

• Minuting of council meetings
  o The minutes are the official record of the council and may be referred to by councillors, representatives of DEECD and the wider school community.
  o As a minimum the written minutes should record the following information:
    • The date, time and place of the meeting.
    • Those present and any apologies submitted.
    • All decisions of council.
    • The person responsible for enacting a decision of council.
  o The minutes and any supporting information are to be collected, along with copies of all policies, reports and correspondence, by the minute secretary, and stored at the school.

Darren Schreck
School Council President

Peter Farrell
Principal