

Shadow Horsham Parish Council

1. Purpose

The Shadow Horsham Parish Council (“the Shadow Council”) is established to undertake all preparatory work and to oversee the transition required ahead of the formal creation of Horsham Parish Council on **1 April 2026**. Its purpose is to ensure that appropriate governance, policies, procedures, and administrative arrangements are in place for the effective operation of the new Parish Council once elected members take office in May 2026.

2. Status and Powers

- The Shadow Council is **not an elected local council** and therefore does not exercise statutory decision-making powers.
- Its role is **advisory, organisational and preparatory**, operating under the oversight of the District Council.
- It may make **recommendations**, develop draft policies, and prepare documentation for consideration by the future elected Parish Council.
- It may not enter into contracts, incur expenditure, or make binding decisions unless explicitly authorised by the District Council.

3. Key Responsibilities

The Shadow Council will:

3.1 Governance and Policy Development

- Draft Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Terms of Reference, a Code of Conduct, and other core governance documents.
- Develop and draft a scheme of delegation for the future Parish Council.
- Prepare draft policies in line with recognised best practice (e.g., SLCC/NALC model templates).

3.2 Financial and Administrative Preparation

- Identify required financial systems, banking arrangements, and budget structures.
- Prepare a draft recommended first-year budget and precept proposal for consideration by the newly elected Parish Council; ensure the elected Parish Council are ready to issue the precept to Horsham District Council.

- Establish administrative processes, recordkeeping systems, and meeting procedures.
- Identify premises and plan for inaugural meetings.
- Identify the proposed staffing structure required for the new Parish Council.
- Draft job descriptions, person specifications, and recruitment recommendations for consideration by the future elected Council.

3.3 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- Identify local priorities through engagement with residents, community groups, and stakeholders where time permits.
- Support transparent communication with the public, including publication of agendas, minutes, and updates.
- Draft communication strategy for future Parish Council.

3.4 Asset and Service Preparation

- Work with the District Council to identify any assets, services, or responsibilities that may transfer to the new Parish Council.
- Prepare recommendations on service delivery priorities for the elected council.

3.5 Elections and Transition

- Support preparations for the May 2026 parish elections.
- Ensure a smooth handover to the newly elected Parish Council, including the transfer of documents, draft policies, and preparatory work.

4. Membership

- Membership of the Shadow Council is determined by the District Council.
- Members serve until the 31st of March 2026.
- Members are expected to uphold the principles of public life (Nolan Principles) and act in the best interests of the future parish community.
- A Chair and Vice-chair to be appointed at the first meeting of the Shadow Council.
- Members should attend meetings regularly.
- Contribute to discussions and decision-making.
- Participate in working groups as required.

5. Meetings

- Meetings will be conducted in accordance with the principles of openness and transparency.

- Agendas will be published at least **three clear days** before each meeting.
- Minutes will be recorded by the interim Clerk and published once approved.
- Meetings will normally be held in public unless confidential matters require exclusion of the press and public.
- The appointed Chair will lead the meetings with Members contributing to debate.
- Meetings to be held monthly or as required.
- Quorum is at least one quarter of the whole number of Councillors for the relevant meeting or three Councillors, whichever is the greater.
- Decisions should be made by consensus where possible; majority vote will decide.
- Conflicts of interest must be declared at the start of each meeting.
- The Chair will have the casting vote in the event of a tied vote.

6. Role of the Interim Clerk

The interim Clerk will:

- Act as Proper Officer for the purposes of administration during the shadow period.
- Provide professional advice and administrative support to the Shadow Council.
- Ensure that work aligns with current legislation and recognised sector best practice and standards (including SLCC and NALC guidance).
- Prepare agendas, minutes, reports, and draft policies.
- Maintain records, correspondence, and the website once established.
- Act as the primary liaison with the District Council and other stakeholders.
- Support preparations for the transition to the elected Parish Council.

7. Reporting and Accountability

- The Shadow Council is accountable to the District Council for its conduct and progress.
- Regular updates will be provided to the District Council as required.
- All preparatory work will be documented and handed over to the elected Parish Council.

8. Urgent Matters

Where an urgent issue arises that cannot reasonably wait for a meeting, the interim Clerk may take necessary preparatory action **in consultation with the Chair**, provided that:

- the action is strictly preparatory in nature,
- no statutory powers are exercised, and
- the matter is reported to the next meeting of the Shadow Council.

9. Matters Reserved to the District Council

The following cannot be delegated to the Shadow Council or interim Clerk:

- Setting the legal precept
- Entering into contracts or financial commitments
- Making statutory decisions
- Employing staff
- Acquiring or disposing of assets
- Exercising any powers under local government legislation

These remain the responsibility of the District Council until the elected Parish Council takes office.

10. Review and Amendment

These Terms of Reference may be reviewed and amended by the District Council.