



MODEL STANDING ORDERS & MODEL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Model Standing Orders

The National NALC [Website](#) has loads of useful documents and guidance notes that all Clerks and Councillors can access for free with annual membership - NALC have recently updated [Model Standing Order \(England\) 18](#) to comply with new procurement legislation and ensure consistency with our [Model Financial Regulations](#). The changes are to 18.a.v, 18.c, 18.d, and 18.f. We've also updated [Model Standing Order \(England\) 14](#) to better reflect Code of Conduct requirements. 14.a, 14.b, and 14.c have been removed. We have also changed the language in the document to gender-neutral terms to align with our policy and the [Civility and Respect Project](#).

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Last week, on the National [Website](#) we [published the 2025 edition of the Practitioners' Guide](#), bringing important updates for authorities preparing Annual Governance and Accountability Returns (AGAR) for financial years starting on or after 1 April 2025. The most notable changes to the Practitioners' Guide this year are a requirement for parish and town councils to have a generic email account hosted on an authority-owned domain and a new Assertion 10, which clarifies requirements for data compliance, previously covered under Assertion 3. You can read the guide and see the complete list of changes on NALC website.



The NALC Legal team are here to assist Parish & Town Councils - here is a summary of issues they have assisted with or have been working on in the last month.

New procurement legislation

The Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulations 2024 came into force on 24 February 2025. Schedule 1 of the 2023 Act contains the thresholds for contracts for the supply of goods, services and the provision of works. The new legislation replaces previous legislation, such as the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. We will update Model Standing Orders later this month. We worked with Parkinson Partnership LLP to update the [Model Financial Regulations](#). The Parkinson Partnership LLP will also update the procurement advice note.

Parish poll thresholds

We considered a recent question on whether the law has changed. Our [advice note on meetings of parish meetings](#) says: "A poll may be demanded before the conclusion of an assembly on any question arising at the assembly, but no poll shall be taken unless either (i) the person presiding at the meeting consents or (ii) the poll is demanded by not less

This confirms the wording in Paragraph 18 (4) of Schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972. Confusion may have arisen because www.legislation.gov.uk shows changes proposed but not appointed rather than the current version in force. The correct position is in the advice note.

Keeping hens on allotments

A council came to us with a question from an allotment tenant about whether tenants can keep female bird species other than chickens on allotments. There is no definition of "hen" in the Allotments Act 1950. Where an Act does not define a common word, we can turn to dictionary definitions. The [Collins English Dictionary](#) defines "hen" as "the female of any bird, especially the adult female of the domestic fowl". The [Oxford English Dictionary](#) says, "The female of the domestic chicken, esp. one that lays eggs". It also says, "The female of birds other than chickens". The [National Allotment Society guidance](#) says, "When referring to hens, the law means the female of the species and excludes cockerels, which aren't needed for hens to lay eggs". Our general understanding is that it tends to be female chickens, that is, hens, that are kept on allotments, and that is how the term is understood.

New waste duties

From 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 for micro-firms), all workplaces (businesses and non-domestic premises) in England have a [legal duty to separate recycling and food waste](#) from their non-recyclable waste. "Micro-firms" are workplaces with fewer than 10 full-time employees in total. Offices and premises used only or mainly for public meetings are included within the relevant non-domestic premises to which the rules apply. We are seeking urgent clarification from the government as to whether parish and town councils are included within the definition and micro-firm definition.

Change of town name mistake

We had an unusual request, where a new council was formed following a community governance review, and after a year or so, the council realised that the order had used a slightly different name. Our advice was that the name in the order was the legal name for the council but that it should put the issue to the principal authority, who had made the error, for them to deal with any associated costs needed. Our view was that any contracts entered into would still be valid.

Recent team activity

In addition to the team's work on procurement, we have reissued the [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and publicity during the pre-election period \(England\)](#), further to the Local Government Association updating its guidance.

Northumberland County Office is only or email away.

Best regards

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