

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF HARTLEY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL
HELD IN THE PAVILION, MANOR FIELD, CHURCH ROAD
ON MONDAY 13th JANUARY 2025 AT 7.30 P.M.

Present:

Cllr Larry Abraham
Cllr Penny Cole
Cllr Jim Colwell
Cllr David Conroy
Cllr Laurence Glander
Cllr David Graeme
Cllr Anne Oxtoby – (*Chairman*)
Cllr Brian Ramsay
Cllr Ian Ross
Cllr Vincent Sewell

In attendance:

Mrs Helen Boden - (*Clerk*)
Cllr David Brazier – (*Kent County Councillor*)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Perry Cole due to work commitments and Cllr Lesley Driscoll due to family commitments.

RESOLVED: That,

the absences of Cllr Perry Cole due to work commitments and Cllr Lesley Driscoll due to family commitments, be accepted and approved.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Dispensations

There were no requests from Members for a dispensation.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED: That,

the minutes of the meeting of Hartley Parish Council, held on 9th December 2024, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.31p.m. to receive reports from the County Councillor and District Councillors.

The meeting resumed at 7.56p.m.

5. Finance & General Purposes Committee

Cllr Ramsay commented on the recommendation contained in minute item 8. Budget 2025-26, that “the budget for 2025-26, including the budget for the Northfield Management Committee be approved and adopted by the Council, subject to any additional budgetary requirements considered necessary by the Council for the retention of the Community Warden, should it be agreed to proceed”

Cllr Ramsay reported that it would also be necessary for the Council to consider an increase in budgetary requirements relating to a number of other budget headings, but that this was due to be considered by the Council under agenda item 9. Budget 2025-26 later in the agenda.

It was agreed that an amendment be made to the recommendation to read as follows:

“the budget for 2025-26, for the Northfield Management Committee be approved and adopted by the Council”

RESOLVED: That,

the minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 18th December 2024, and the recommendations contained therein, including the above amendment, be received and, where necessary, approved and adopted.

6. Planning Committee

RESOLVED: That,

the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 18th December 2024 and the recommendations contained therein, be received and, where necessary, approved and adopted.

7. Woodland Avenue Fencing

The Council considered four quotations, including specifications for the replacement of the fencing around the perimeter of Woodland Avenue recreation ground with round post and rail fencing.

The Clerk advised that only one of the quotations stated that the posts would be concreted into the ground. Two stated that the posts would be driven into the ground and one did not state either way.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the quotation received from Hoist Fencing, for the sum of £8,650.00 + VAT, to dismantle and dispose of the existing post and rail fencing, clear obstructing vegetation from the proposed fence line leaving all existing steel gates. Supply and erect a total length of 162m x 1.2m high of round post and rail fencing consisting of 3 x 100mm half round rails fixed with hex timber lock screws to treated softwood posts driven to a depth of 600mm at 1.8m centers. Also supply and fit 1 x set of kissing gates, consisting of a 1.2m wide x 1.2m high treated softwood 5 bar field gate fitted to 2 x 150mm x 150mm four way weathered treated softwood posts, concreted to a depth of 800mm and fitted with large adjustable strap hinges opening into a post and rail double return, be accepted and,

(2) the total cost of the works be met from CIL funds.

8. Community Warden Service Review

Members considered a report on progress with the possible retention of Hartley's Community Warden and noted that Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council had agreed in principle to sponsor Jackie West for 1½ days per week.

Members noted that should the Council; agree to enter into a sponsorship, the cost would increase from 1st April each year and any agreement would include a means of calculating the uplift each year.

The County Council has confirmed that it wouldn't plan on issuing fixed term contracts as such, but that each contract would include a clause to permit either side to withdraw, having given notice to the other party.

Members agreed that the Council should do all it could to retain the services of Jackie West and that as such, budget provision would need to be made for 2025/26.

At its meeting held in May 2024, the Council had resolved that should the Parish Council wish to proceed with the sponsorship of Jackie, the cost for the remainder of 2024/25 would be met from the Council's general reserves.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) Hartley Parish Council agrees in principle to fund Jackie West, the Community Warden, under Model 1 of the two models offered by Kent County Council, whereby the parish council pays KCC to provide the service, subject to a formal agreement being considered and accepted by the Council;

(2) the cost of the service, for the remainder of the financial year 2024/25, be met from the Parish Council's general reserves and,

(3) budgetary provision be made in the 2025/26 budget for the cost of the service for the 2025/26 financial year.

9. Budget 2025-26

The Council considered the draft budget for 2025 – 26, including the Northfield Management Committee budget, as recommended by the Finance Committee at its meeting held on 18th December 2024 and the Northfield Management Committee at its meeting held on 18th November 2024.

Councillor Ramsay reported that the draft budget figures had been estimated based on the current and previous year's levels of income.

It was noted that the Band D equivalent for 2024/25 was £72.99 with a Tax Base of 2,586.69.

Cllr Ramsay reported that there would be a deficit of -£33,299 in the 2025/26 draft budget, largely due the additional provision required for sponsoring the Community Warden and increases in employers NIC contributions and grass cutting costs.

Members agreed that they had hoped to avoid increasing the Precept, but that in order to safeguard the Council's finances, it would be unavoidable.

Cllr Ramsay reported that in order for the budget to balance, based on the 2025/26 Tax Base, the Band D equivalent would need to be increased from £72.99 to £85.40.

RESOLVED: That, the Budget for 2025/26, including the budget for the Northfield Management Committee, as set out in **Appendix 1** to these minutes, be approved and adopted.

10. Precept 2025/26

(a) Members considered a letter dated 13th December 2024, received from the Chief Finance Officer at Sevenoaks District Council.

Members noted that the tax base for 2025/26, has been estimated to be 2,600.70. The tax base for 2024/25 was 2,586.69.

RESOLVED: That,
the letter dated 13th December 2024, received from the Chief Finance Officer at Sevenoaks District Council, advising of the estimated tax base for Hartley for 2025/26, be received and noted.

(b) Members considered the precept for 2025/26 and noted that the information relating to the Council's Precept request for 2025/26 had to be returned to Sevenoaks District Council by the end of January 2025.

Members noted that the precept will be paid as follows: 50% on 30th April 2025 and 50% on 30th September 2025. RESOLVED: That, Sevenoaks District Council be advised that Hartley Parish Council wishes to increase the Precept from £188,797, to £222,096, based on a tax base of 2,600.70 for 2025/26, which will result in an increase in the Band D charge for 2025/26 from £72.99 to £85.40, (an increase of 17%).

Members noted that under amended regulations, any Town or Parish with a precept over £140,000, is required to provide a breakdown of its precept over the following services:

Highways

Planning & Economic Development

Recreation & Tourism

Other Services

11. Financial Regulations

The Clerk advised that Financial Regulation 5.5 and 5.15 be reviewed, due to inconsistencies.

RESOLVED: That, the Financial Regulations, as amended and as set out in **Appendix 2** attached to these minutes, be approved and adopted by the Council.

12. Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

Members noted that the new positive duty for councils (employers) to prevent sexual harassment in the work place, came in to effect on 26th October 2024.

(a) Members considered the Advice Note dated 11th October 2024, received from NALC. RESOLVED: That, the Advice Note dated 11th October 2024, received from NALC, regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, be noted .

(b) Members considered a draft Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy. RESOLVED:
That, the Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy attached as **Appendix 3** to these minutes, be approved and adopted by the Council.

13. Grievance Procedure

Members considered a draft Grievance Procedure. RESOLVED:
That, the Grievance Procedure attached as **Appendix 4** to these minutes, be approved and adopted by the Council.

14. Disciplinary Policy

Members considered a draft Disciplinary Policy. RESOLVED:
That, the Disciplinary Policy attached as **Appendix 5** to these minutes, be approved and adopted by the Council.

15. Payments

RESOLVED: That,

(a) the payment of accounts for January 2025, attached as **Appendix 6** to these minutes, be approved;

(b) the Council detail report as at 7th January 2025, setting out actual income and expenditure against budgeted estimates be received and noted;

(c) it be noted that the bank reconciliations for the Council's 4 bank accounts and Barclaycard for December 2024 would be verified by Cllr Abraham and,

(d) it be noted that the bank reconciliations for the Council's four bank accounts and Barclaycard for November 2024 had been verified by Cllr Ross.

The meeting closed at 8.36p.m.

Signed:..... Date.....
Chairman of Hartley Parish Council

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	<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26 Draft</u>		
	Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
100 Income											
1076 Precept	160,390	160,390	0	0	188,797	0	188,797	188,797	222,096	0	0
1080 CIL Receipts	2,000	680	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	4,458	2,000	0	0
1090 Bank Interest	100	3,221	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	3,219	1,200	0	0
Total Income	162,490	164,292	0	0	191,797	0	191,797	196,473	225,296	0	0
6001 less Transfer to EMR	0	680	0	0	0	0	0	4,458	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	162,490	163,611			191,797		191,797	192,016	225,296		
101 Staff Costs											
4000 Salaries	66,231	70,490	0	0	84,926	0	84,926	58,629	89,610	0	0
4001 Employers NIC	6,629	7,113	0	0	7,954	0	7,954	6,093	11,190	0	0
4002 Employers Pension	13,710	14,175	0	0	17,580	0	17,580	11,548	18,549	0	0
4003 Staff Expenses	50	14	0	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	0
4005 Training	500	335	0	0	500	0	500	120	500	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	87,120	92,127	0	0	111,010	0	111,010	76,391	119,899	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(87,120)	(92,127)			(111,010)		(111,010)	(76,391)	(119,899)		
102 General Costs											
1100 Green Sacks	5,600	5,579	0	0	5,250	0	5,250	4,900	5,250	0	0
1101 Recycling Sacks	300	350	0	0	300	0	300	372	75	0	0
1102 Black Sacks	600	943	0	0	600	0	600	617	0	0	0
1103 Insurance	0	632	0	0	0	0	0	689	650	0	0
1106 Grants/Donations	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	4,050	0	0	0

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		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
1107	N/Plan Groundworks Grant	0	4,075	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1108	Subscriptions	0	204	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income		6,500	11,833	0	0	6,150	0	6,150	10,627	5,975	0	0
4030	Chairman's allowance	500	500	0	0	500	0	500	500	500	0	0
4031	Members Expenses	100	35	0	0	100	0	100	0	75	0	0
4032	Members Training	300	243	0	0	300	0	300	70	300	0	0
4033	Audit Fees Internal	1,000	855	0	0	600	0	600	379	600	0	0
4034	Room Hire	80	216	0	0	80	0	80	18	80	0	0
4035	Insurance	2,000	2,601	0	0	2,100	0	2,100	2,796	2,800	0	0
4036	Subscriptions	3,200	3,640	0	0	3,800	0	3,800	3,233	3,800	0	0
4037	Loan Charges	650	651	0	0	650	0	650	651	650	0	0
4039	Newsletter inc AR	2,000	1,825	0	0	2,300	0	2,300	1,508	2,300	0	0
4040	Bank Charges	250	316	0	0	250	0	250	233	320	0	0
4041	Legal Fees	0	1,550	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4043	Green Sacks	5,250	5,000	0	0	5,000	0	5,000	3,437	5,000	0	0
4044	Advertising	0	280	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0
4045	Audit Fees External	400	420	0	0	420	0	420	0	630	0	0
4046	Election Expenses	950	492	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4047	Recycling Sacks	300	344	0	0	300	0	300	376	75	0	0
4050	Website	600	-91	0	0	560	0	560	0	560	0	0
4051	Misc Costs	50	4,977	0	0	50	0	50	509	500	0	0
4053	Black Sacks	150	853	0	0	600	0	600	220	0	0	0
4054	Donations	750	7,430	0	0	750	0	750	4,154	750	0	0
4055	Groundworks Grant	0	4,075	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>					<u>Next Year 2025-26 Draft</u>			
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4056	VE Day 80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,000	0	0
4057	Community Warden Sponsorship	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14,000	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	18,530	36,212	0	0	18,360	0	18,360	18,133	35,940	0	0
	102 Net Income over Expenditure	-12,030	-24,379	0	0	-12,210	0	-12,210	-7,506	-29,965	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	2,879	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(12,030)</u>	<u>(21,500)</u>			<u>(12,210)</u>		<u>(12,210)</u>	<u>(7,456)</u>	<u>(29,965)</u>		
103	Office Costs											
1105	Postage	0	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Income	0	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4060	Rent/Rates	2,600	3,661	0	0	3,700	0	3,700	-1,233	3,800	0	0
4061	Telephone/broadband	700	659	0	0	650	0	650	540	750	0	0
4062	Postage	650	478	0	0	500	0	500	11	400	0	0
4063	Stationery	500	695	0	0	600	0	600	438	650	0	0
4064	Photocopier	1,800	1,326	0	0	1,700	0	1,700	716	1,700	0	0
4066	Misc Expenses Office	50	30	0	0	50	0	50	0	50	0	0
4069	General Maintenance	150	70	0	0	150	0	150	0	150	0	0
4070	New Office Equipment	400	37	0	0	300	0	300	10	300	0	0
4071	Office Equipment Maintenance	250	220	0	0	250	0	250	230	250	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	7,100	7,176	0	0	7,900	0	7,900	712	8,050	0	0
	103 Net Income over Expenditure	-7,100	-7,119	0	0	-7,900	0	-7,900	-712	-8,050	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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	<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>				<u>Next Year 2025-26 Draft</u>				
	Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(7,100)</u>	<u>(7,066)</u>			<u>(7,900)</u>		<u>(7,900)</u>	<u>(712)</u>	<u>(8,050)</u>		
201 Burial Grounds											
1200 Graves/Interment	2,500	755	0	0	1,700	0	1,700	2,900	2,000	0	0
1201 Ashes Interment	2,400	1,640	0	0	2,400	0	2,400	1,465	2,400	0	0
1202 Memorial	1,965	1,125	0	0	1,965	0	1,965	725	1,200	0	0
1203 Plaques	1,635	600	0	0	1,635	0	1,635	750	1,200	0	0
1204 Ashes plot preparation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	110	150	0	0
Total Income	<u>8,500</u>	<u>4,120</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7,700</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7,700</u>	<u>5,950</u>	<u>6,950</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
4200 BG - Grass Cutting	2,500	2,970	0	0	4,000	0	4,000	1,120	5,000	0	0
4201 BG - General Maintenance	2,500	1,983	0	0	2,500	0	2,500	747	2,500	0	0
4202 BG - Maintenance Contract	3,000	2,862	0	0	4,000	0	4,000	1,950	4,000	0	0
4204 BG - New Grass Cut	1,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4206 All Saints Grass Cut	1,200	868	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	1,120	1,800	0	0
4207 All Saints General Maintenance	150	30	0	0	150	0	150	4,032	150	0	0
4208 BG - Health & Safety	900	745	0	0	300	0	300	0	300	0	0
4209 Blue Trade Sacks	170	402	0	0	350	0	350	241	400	0	0
4212 Ashes Plot Preparation	0	225	0	0	0	0	0	50	150	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	<u>11,920</u>	<u>10,084</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>12,800</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>12,800</u>	<u>9,260</u>	<u>14,300</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
201 Net Income over Expenditure	<u>-3,420</u>	<u>-5,964</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>-5,100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>-5,100</u>	<u>-3,310</u>	<u>-7,350</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
6000 plus Transfer from EMR	0	719	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(3,420)</u>	<u>(5,246)</u>			<u>(5,100)</u>		<u>(5,100)</u>	<u>(3,310)</u>	<u>(7,350)</u>		

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	Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
301 Allotments											
1300 Allotment Rents	1,140	1,247	0	0	1,254	0	1,254	1,341	1,380	0	0
Total Income	1,140	1,247	0	0	1,254	0	1,254	1,341	1,380	0	0
4300 Allot - Maintenance	500	196	0	0	500	0	500	521	500	0	0
4302 Allot - Water	600	600	0	0	500	0	500	192	500	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	1,100	796	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	714	1,000	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	40	451			254		254	627	380		
401 Open Spaces											
1400 Cricket	2,000	1,936	0	0	2,040	0	2,040	1,392	2,100	0	0
1401 Football	1,900	2,088	0	0	2,090	0	2,090	2,298	2,300	0	0
1404 Wayleave Payments	39	38	0	0	39	0	39	-38	38	0	0
1405 O/S General Maintenance	0	92	0	0	0	0	0	2,875	0	0	0
Total Income	3,939	4,153	0	0	4,169	0	4,169	6,528	4,438	0	0
4400 OS - Grass Cutting	9,500	6,402	0	0	9,500	0	9,500	0	11,000	0	0
4401 OS - Gang Mowing	3,640	3,046	0	0	4,000	0	4,000	0	6,000	0	0
4402 OS - General Maintenance	2,000	6,145	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	3,588	2,000	0	0
4403 Playground Maintenance	1,500	13,389	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	5,323	1,500	0	0
4404 Playground Inspection	860	704	0	0	950	0	950	1,020	1,300	0	0
4406 Dog Bins	1,800	1,373	0	0	1,600	0	1,600	637	1,400	0	0
4407 Rectory Meadow	1,800	2,194	0	0	1,800	0	1,800	2,094	1,900	0	0
4409 OS - Misc Expenses	200	94	0	0	200	0	200	-17	150	0	0

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		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4411	Football	1,100	1,115	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	580	1,600	0	0
4412	Routine Maint contract	12,000	8,409	0	0	15,000	0	15,000	5,844	15,000	0	0
4413	Equipment (new)	500	0	0	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	0
4414	Tree Work	8,000	2,675	0	0	8,000	0	8,000	4,525	8,000	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	42,900	45,545	0	0	46,550	0	46,550	23,595	50,350	0	0
	401 Net Income over Expenditure	-38,961	-41,392	0	0	-42,381	0	-42,381	-17,067	-45,912	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	15,594	0	0	0	0	0	5,737	0	0	0
6001	less Transfer to EMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,875	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(38,961)	(25,797)			(42,381)		(42,381)	(14,205)	(45,912)		
402	Manor Field Pavilion											
1450	Lettings Manor Field Pav	2,500	5,222	0	0	3,000	0	3,000	5,393	4,000	0	0
	Total Income	2,500	5,222	0	0	3,000	0	3,000	5,393	4,000	0	0
4450	Cesspool	1,000	639	0	0	600	0	600	995	1,600	0	0
4451	Calor Gas	3,000	2,074	0	0	2,500	0	2,500	777	2,500	0	0
4452	Electricity	1,000	549	0	0	750	0	750	481	750	0	0
4453	Water	200	200	0	0	150	0	150	-136	150	0	0
4455	Cleaning	2,500	2,279	0	0	2,500	0	2,500	1,826	2,500	0	0
4456	Cleaning Materials	100	248	0	0	150	0	150	202	200	0	0
4457	Maintenance	2,500	6,882	0	0	2,500	0	2,500	1,945	2,500	0	0
4458	Testing	1,000	1,935	0	0	1,300	0	1,300	961	1,800	0	0
4459	MFP - Misc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	0	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	11,300	14,807	0	0	10,450	0	10,450	7,109	12,000	0	0

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	<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26 Draft</u>		
	Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
402 Net Income over Expenditure	-8,800	-9,585	0	0	-7,450	0	-7,450	-1,716	-8,000	0	0
6000 plus Transfer from EMR	0	1,970	0	0	0	0	0	490	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(8,800)</u>	<u>(7,615)</u>			<u>(7,450)</u>		<u>(7,450)</u>	<u>(1,226)</u>	<u>(8,000)</u>		
403 Northfield											
4490 Contribution to NMC	500	500	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(500)</u>	<u>(500)</u>			<u>(2,000)</u>		<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>		
501 Youth Services											
4501 YS - Misc Expenses	4,000	2,993	0	0	4,000	0	4,000	2,245	4,500	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	<u>4,000</u>	<u>2,993</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4,000</u>	<u>2,245</u>	<u>4,500</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(4,000)</u>	<u>(2,993)</u>			<u>(4,000)</u>		<u>(4,000)</u>	<u>(2,245)</u>	<u>(4,500)</u>		
502 Hartley Village Hall											
1500 HVH Misc	0	187	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0
Total Income	<u>0</u>	<u>187</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
4551 HVH General Costs	0	245	0	0	0	0	0	84	0	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	<u>0</u>	<u>245</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>0</u>	<u>(58)</u>			<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>	<u>(34)</u>	<u>0</u>		
900 NMC Income											

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Hartley Parish Council
Annual Budget - By Centre
Note: Approved Budget

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		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>					<u>Next Year 2025-26 Draft</u>			
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
8000	NMC Hartley PC	0	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8001	NMC ACR PC	0	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8002	NMC Interest	0	91	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8003	NMC Wayleave	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8004	NMC Horse Riding	0	65	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8006	NMC Grants Rec'd	0	2,575	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income		0	3,248	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		0	3,248			0		0	0	0		
901 NMC General												
9102	NMC Subscriptions	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9103	NMC Rent	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9104	NMC Noticeboards	0	1,246	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9106	NMC Audit	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9111	NMC Insurance	0	204	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overhead Expenditure		0	1,493	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		0	(1,493)			0		0	0	0		
902 NMC Maintenance												
9200	NMC General Maintenance	0	462	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9201	NMC Grass Cutting	0	900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9203	NMC Hedge Cutting	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9204	NMC Inspections	0	721	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9207	NMC Dog Bin Clearance	0	257	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Hartley Parish Council
Annual Budget - By Centre
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		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>					<u>Next Year 2025-26 Draft</u>			
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
9211	NMC Tree Work	0	4,873	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	0	7,263	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	0	(7,263)			0		0	0	0		
903 NMC Projects												
9310	NMC Horse Riding Route	0	133	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	0	133	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	0	(133)			0		0	0	0		
	Total Budget Income	185,069	194,359	0	0	214,070	0	214,070	226,362	248,039	0	0
	Expenditure	184,470	219,374	0	0	214,070	0	214,070	140,241	248,039	0	0
	Net Income over Expenditure	599	-25,015	0	0	0	0	0	86,121	0	0	0
	plus Transfer from EMR	0	21,214	0	0	0	0	0	6,277	0	0	0
	less Transfer to EMR	0	680	0	0	0	0	0	7,333	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	599	(4,481)			0		0	85,065	0		

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Northfield Management Committee

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Annual Budget - By Centre

Note: Budget

	<u>Last Year 2022-23</u>		<u>Current Year 2023-24</u>						<u>Next Year 2024-25</u>		
	Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
100 Income											
1000 Hartley PC	500	500	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	0
1001 ACR PC	500	500	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	0
1002 Interest	0	181	0	0	30	0	30	204	150	0	0
1003 Wayleave	34	34	0	0	34	0	34	35	34	0	0
1004 Horse Riding	75	130	0	0	75	0	75	55	75	0	0
1006 Grants Recvd	3,900	5,150	0	0	3,900	0	3,900	2,291	3,900	0	0
1007 Misc Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,047	0	0	0
Total Income	5,009	6,496	0	0	8,039	0	8,039	7,632	8,159	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	5,009	6,496			8,039		8,039	7,632	8,159		
101 General											
4101 Survey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	401	0	0	0
4102 Subscriptions	180	24	0	0	205	0	205	238	250	0	0
4103 Rent	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
4105 Noticeboards	400	2,492	0	0	400	0	400	40	400	0	0
4106 Audit Fees	60	60	0	0	70	0	70	105	110	0	0
4111 Insurance	350	408	0	0	420	0	420	572	600	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	991	2,986	0	0	1,096	0	1,096	1,358	1,361	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(991)	(2,986)			(1,096)		(1,096)	(1,358)	(1,361)		
201 Maintenance											
4200 General Maintenance	500	924	0	0	500	0	500	2,547	500	0	0

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Northfield Management Committee

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Annual Budget - By Centre

Note: Budget

	<u>Last Year 2022-23</u>		<u>Current Year 2023-24</u>						<u>Next Year 2024-25</u>		
	Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4201 Grass Cutting	5,000	1,800	0	0	5,000	0	5,000	1,600	5,000	0	0
4202 Fence Repairs	500	0	0	0	500	0	500	440	500	0	0
4203 Hedge Cutting	2,000	100	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	197	2,000	0	0
4204 Inspections	1,100	1,441	0	0	1,100	0	1,100	464	1,500	0	0
4206 Ragwort	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4207 Dog Bin Clearance	800	515	0	0	800	0	800	592	800	0	0
4208 Ancient Woodland	1,500	0	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	0	1,500	0	0
4211 Tree work	2,000	9,745	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	1,245	2,000	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	14,400	14,525	0	0	14,400	0	14,400	7,085	14,800	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(14,400)	(14,525)			(14,400)		(14,400)	(7,085)	(14,800)		
301 Projects											
4310 Horse Riding Route	200	266	0	0	200	0	200	0	200	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	200	266	0	0	200	0	200	0	200	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(200)	(266)			(200)		(200)	0	(200)		
Total Budget Income	5,009	6,496	0	0	8,039	0	8,039	7,632	8,159	0	0
Expenditure	15,591	17,777	0	0	15,696	0	15,696	8,442	16,361	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(10,582)	(11,281)			(7,657)		(7,657)	(811)	(8,202)		

HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on 13th January 2025

1. General

1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.

1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.

1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.

1.4. In these Financial Regulations:

- 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.

- "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.

- "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.

- 'Proper practices' means those set out in The Practitioners' Guide

- Practitioners' Guide refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England or

Governance and Accountability for Local Councils in Wales – A Practitioners Guide jointly published by One Voice Wales and the Society of Local Council Clerks in Wales.

- ‘Must’ and bold text refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
- ‘Shall’ refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.

1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO;

- acts under the policy direction of the council;
- administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
- determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
- ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
- ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
- seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources;

and

- produces financial management information as required by the council.

1.6. The council must not delegate any decision regarding:

- setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);
- the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls
- approving accounting statements;
- approving an annual governance statement;
- borrowing;
- declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and
- addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors

1.7. In addition, the council shall:

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or single commitment in excess of 10,000; and

2. Risk management and internal control

2.1. The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.

2.2. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.

2.4. At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.

2.5. The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:

- ensure that risk is appropriately managed;
- ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;
- prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and
- allow the reconstitution of any lost records;
- identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and
- ensure division of responsibilities.

2.6. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the council.

2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored in the fire safe located in the Parish Office. Regular back-ups of the council's accounts shall be stored off site with the accounts software providers. The council shall put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

3. Accounts and audit

3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.2. The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonably accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:

- day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;
- a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;

3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

3.4. The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.5. The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.

3.6. Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit and shall, as directed by the council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.

3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by the council and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.

3.8. The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:

- is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
- reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
- can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
- has no involvement in the management or control of the council

3.9. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:

- perform any operational duties for the council;

- initiate or approve accounting transactions;
- direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.

3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as described in The Practitioners Guide.

3.11. The RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the accounts, including the opportunity to inspect the accounts, books, and vouchers and display or publish any notices and documents required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.12. The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

4. Budget and precept

4.1. Before setting a precept, the council must calculate its council tax requirement for each financial year by preparing and approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.

4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee at least annually for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Chair of the Council or relevant committee. The RFO will inform committees of any salary implications before they consider their draft budgets.

4.3. No later than November each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.

4.4. Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward (by placing them in an earmarked reserve) with the formal approval of the full council.

4.5. Each committee (if any) shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the Finance & General Purposes Committee not later than the end of November each year.

4.6. The draft budget, with any committee proposals, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the Finance & General Purposes Committee and a recommendation made to the council.

4.7. Having considered the proposed budget, the council shall determine its council tax requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.

4.8. Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.

4.9. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.

4.10. The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.

4.11. Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by the council or relevant committee.

5. Procurement

5.1. Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.

5.2. The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.

5.3. Every contract shall comply with the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.

5.4. For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.

5.5. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.12) obtain prices as follows:

5.6. For contracts estimated to exceed £60,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers agreed by the council. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.

5.7. For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation regarding the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices about the award of contracts.

5.8. For contracts greater than £5,000 excluding VAT the Clerk shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes;

5.9. where the value is between £501 and £5,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk shall try to obtain 2 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.

5.10. For smaller purchases, the clerk shall seek to achieve value for money.

5.11. Contracts must not be split into smaller lots to avoid compliance with these rules.

5.12. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:

- i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;
- ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
- iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;
- iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.

5.13. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the council or relevant committee. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.

5.14. The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

5.15. Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:

- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items below £500 excluding VAT.
- the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council or Chair of the appropriate committee, for any items below £2000 excluding VAT.

- a duly delegated committee of the council for all items of expenditure within their delegated budgets for items under £5,000 excluding VAT
- the council for all items over £5,000;

Such authorisation must be supported by a minute (in the case of council or committee decisions) or other auditable evidence trail.

5.16. No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order unless instructed to do so in advance by a resolution of the council or make any contract on behalf of the council.

5.17. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget for that type of expenditure other than by resolution of the council or a duly delegated committee acting within its Terms of Reference except in an emergency.

5.18. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £2,000 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.

5.19. No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless the council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.

5.20. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.

5.21. Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the RFO.

6. Banking and payments

6.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The arrangements shall be reviewed regularly for security and efficiency.

6.2. The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the council's bank.

6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the council before being certified by a member of the council.

6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.

6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking/cheque, in accordance with a resolution of the council or a delegated decision by an officer, unless the council resolves to use a different payment method.

6.6. The Clerk and RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments only in the following circumstances:

- i. any payments of up to [£500] excluding VAT, within an agreed budget.

- ii. payments of up to [£2,000] excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises.
- iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 {or to comply with contractual terms}, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of [the council], where the [Clerk and RFO] certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council.
- iv. Fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of [£20,000], provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the council.

6.7. The RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the agenda for the meeting, together with the relevant invoices, to the council. The council shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall authorise payment by resolution. The authorised schedule shall be initialled immediately below the last item by a member of the council. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting.

7. Electronic payments

- 7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. No signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.
- 7.2. All authorised signatories shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online.
- 7.3. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.
- 7.4. The Service Administrator shall set up all items due for payment online. A list of payments for approval, together with copies of the relevant invoices, shall be sent by email to two authorised signatories.
- 7.5. In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator an authorised signatory shall set up any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.
- 7.6. Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment using the online banking system.
- 7.7. Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment online.
- 7.8. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next council meeting and appended to the minutes.
- 7.9. With the approval of the council in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are signed/approved online by two authorised members. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by the council at least every two years.
- 7.10. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of the council provided that each payment is approved online by two authorised bank signatories, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to the council at the next

meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.

7.11. If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are signed or approved online by two members, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by the council at least every two years.

7.12. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by the Clerk and a member. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.

7.13. Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.

7.14. Remembered password facilities other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

8. Cheque payments

8.1. Cheques or orders for payment in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two members.

8.2. A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.

8.3. To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.

8.4. Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at, or immediately before or after a council meeting. Any signatures obtained away from council meetings shall be reported to the council at the next convenient meeting.

9. Payment cards

9.1. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council or in writing before any order is placed.

9.2. A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the council. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to the council and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of the council.

9.3. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and Chairman of the Council and any balance shall be paid in full each month.

9.4. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used except for expenses of up to £500 including VAT, incurred in accordance with council policy.

10. Petty Cash

a) The council will not maintain any form of cash float. All cash received must be banked intact. Any payments made in cash by the Clerk (for example for postage or minor stationery items) shall be refunded on a regular basis, at least quarterly.

11. Payment of salaries and allowances

11.1. As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.

11.2. Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.

11.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or a duly delegated committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council or Personnel committee.

11.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.

11.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.

11.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook. Payroll reports will be reviewed to ensure that the correct payments have been made.

11.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.

11.8. Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

12. Loans and investments

12.1. Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.

12.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.

12.3. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.

12.4. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

12.5. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

13. Income

13.1. The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.

13.2. The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk. The RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.

13.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.

13.4. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.

13.5. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.

13.6. Any repayment claim under section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 shall be made quarterly where the claim exceeds [£100] and at least annually at the end of the financial year.

13.7. Any income that is the property of a charitable trust shall be paid into a charitable bank account. Instructions for the payment of funds due from the charitable trust to the council (to meet expenditure already incurred by the authority) will be given by the Managing Trustees of the charity meeting separately from any council meeting.

14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works

14.1. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works (subject to any percentage withholding as may be agreed in the particular contract).

14.2. Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

15. Stores and equipment

15.1. The Clerk shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment in that section.

15.2. Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.

16. Assets, properties and estates

16.1. The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.

16.2. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

16.3. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

16.4. No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate where required by law).

No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not

exceed £500. In each case a written report shall be provided to council with a full business case.

17. Insurance

17.1. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the council's review of risk management.

17.2. The Clerk shall give prompt notification of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.

17.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to the council at the next available meeting. The RFO shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers.

17.4. All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined annually by the council, or duly delegated committee.

18. [Charities]

18.1. Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Clerk and RFO shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial reports made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk and RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.

19. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations

19.1. The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of clerk or RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.

19.2. The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.

19.3. The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 1 - Tender process

1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.

2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.

3) Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.

- 4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
- 5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order 18 d and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken

HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL ANTI-HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

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Introduction

All staff should be able to work in an environment free from harassment and bullying and be treated with dignity and respect regardless of gender, sexual orientation, transgender status, marital or family status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, creed, culture, religion or belief, age, or disability.

This policy and procedure provide guidance on what to do if you are concerned about bullying or harassment and what to expect if you raise concerns. It applies to all staff (whether permanent, fixed term, or casual), contractors and agency staff.

Policy

The Council does not tolerate bullying or harassment in the workplace. This is the case for work-related events that take place within or outside of normal working hours; on council property or elsewhere; whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether done purposefully or not.

The Council does not tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. Retaliation or victimisation will also constitute a disciplinary offence, which may in appropriate circumstances lead to dismissal. You should also be aware that if a court or tribunal finds that you have bullied or harassed someone, in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

The council will take appropriate action if any of our staff are bullied or harassed by staff, councillors, members of the public or suppliers.

What type of treatment amounts to bullying or harassment?

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, threatening, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or injures the person on the receiving end.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to relevant 'protected characteristics', which are sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. Harassment amounts to unlawful discrimination if it relates to a 'protected characteristic'.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- Verbal abuse or offensive comments, jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Lewd or suggestive comments
- Deliberate exclusion from conversations or work activities
- Withholding information, a person needs in order to do their job
- Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies or inappropriate birthday rituals
- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling
- Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property
- Subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, often in front of others

- Abusing a position of power

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable. All employees must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity.

Bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or proper performance management.

Reporting concerns

What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to harassment or bullying

If you witness such behaviour you should report the incident in confidence to the Clerk or a councillor. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

What you should do if you feel you are being Bullied or Harassed by a member of the public or supplier (as opposed to a colleague)

If you are being bullied or harassed by someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with the Clerk or a councillor in the first instance. They will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.

What you should do if you feel you are being Bullied or Harassed by a councillor

If you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor, please raise this with the Clerk or the Chair of the Council in the first instance. They will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you. There are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. The Informal Resolution is described below. Formal concerns regarding potential breaches of Code of Conduct breaches will be investigated by the Monitoring Officer.

What you should do if you are being Bullied or Harassed by another member of staff

If you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague or contractor, there are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. These are described below.

Informal resolution

If you are being bullied or harassed you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to our policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask the Clerk, a colleague or another councillor to put this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

If the above approach does not work or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by your own manager, you should raise the issue with the Chair of the Council. The Chair (or another appropriate individual) will discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by:

- Telling the alleged perpetrator(s), without prejudging the matter, that there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a member of staff;
- That such behaviour is contrary to our policy;

- That for employees, the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence.

It may be possible to have the conversation with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. They will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances we may be able to involve a neutral third party to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The Chair will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as a serious allegation of harassment or in cases where a problem has happened before) the council may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step.

Raising a formal complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about the harassment or bullying to the Clerk or the Chair of the Council if the behaviour was not from a Councillor (if it was please raise it with the Monitoring Officer). A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s) where they are employed.

The Clerk or the Chair of the Council will appoint someone to investigate your complaint. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s),
- The nature of the harassment or bullying,
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred
- The names of any witnesses and
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally

... against a colleague or contractor

The alleged perpetrator(s) would need to be told your name and the details of your complaint for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, we will consider whether it is appropriate to separate you whilst the matter is being investigated.

... against a member of the public or supplier

We will investigate the complaint as far as possible by contacting the member of public or the supplier's employer and asking for a response to the allegations.

... against a councillor

Formal concerns regarding potential breaches of Code of Conduct breaches will be investigated by the Monitoring Officer.

During the investigation

Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. If, after an investigation, we decide that an employee has harassed or bullied another employee, then the employee may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

The Council will consider how to protect your health and wellbeing whilst the investigation is taking place and discuss this with you. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the Investigator may want to meet with you to better understand your complaint. Whilst there is no Statutory right to be accompanied at investigation meetings, the Investigator will consider your request if you want to have a work colleague or union representative with you at that meeting.

Hearing

After the investigation, a panel will meet with you in a Grievance Hearing (following the Grievance Procedure) to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation. At the meeting you may be accompanied by a fellow worker or a trade union official.

After the meeting the panel will write to you to inform you of the decision and to notify you of your right to appeal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the decision. Your appeal will be heard under the appeal process that is described in the Grievance Procedure.

Victimisation

Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

False allegations

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. False allegations made in bad faith will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

Disclosure and confidentiality

We will treat personal data collected during this process in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing data is provided in the employee privacy notice.

Use of the disciplinary procedure

Harassment and bullying constitute serious misconduct. If, at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our disciplinary procedure. Any employee found to have harassed or bullied a colleague will be liable to disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

Date of policy: 13th January 2025

Approved by full Council

Date of council meeting: 13th January 2025

Policy version reference: 1

Supersedes: N/A

Policy effective from: 13th January 2025
Date for next review: January 2026

— policy ends here —

Notes

1. Protected characteristics

A 'protected characteristic' is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and marriage and civil partnership. It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual because of any of the protected characteristics.

Discrimination includes treating people differently because of a protected characteristic. Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a 'protected characteristic'. Employees can complain of harassment even if the behaviour in question is not directed at them. This is because the complainant does not actually need to possess the relevant protected characteristic. An employee can complain of unlawful harassment if they are related someone with a protected characteristic, or because a colleague believes they have a protected characteristic.

2. Legal risks

An employee does not need to be employed to make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.

- Job applicants who believe they have not been appointed because of a 'protected characteristic' can make a claim.
- New or established employees who are dismissed because of a health condition can make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.
- An employee in their probationary period may claim discrimination if their employment has been ended for no credible reason.
- An employee subjected to harassment can make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.
- An employee asked to retire can make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.

Successful unfair dismissal claims are limited to a compensation cap, whereas those for unlawful discrimination have no cap.

A positive employment culture, and swift action if conduct falls beneath acceptable standards will help mitigate the risks. An unhealthy culture will make it difficult to defend claims.

The time to defend and the cost of defending tribunal claims can be significant, irrespective of the outcome.

3. Culture and behaviour

Modern day workforces are eclectic, and a positive culture throughout the council enables staff with different backgrounds and beliefs to share ideas and shape how the council achieves what councillors decide for the community.

Different people find different things acceptable. It may not be obvious that some behaviour would be unwelcome or could offend a person. Those in positions of 'power' over an employee may not always understand how words or actions are received. An employee may not always find it easy to communicate how they really feel. 'Banter' that on the face of it is reciprocated may nonetheless be unwelcomed and damaging. Others who overhear comments, or learn of them third hand, will form judgements about the culture.

Whilst both staff and councillors jointly determine what the working culture is like, councillors are key in demonstrating what is and isn't acceptable behaviour. This is apparent from how

councillors behave with each other in council meetings and also in how standards of behaviour are applied through the use of informal discussion and formal policies. Examples of unacceptable behaviour at work include (but are not limited to):

- physical conduct ranging from touching to sexual advances and serious assault;
- the offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances, e.g. promotion, access to training;
- suggestions that refusing sexual advances will adversely affect aspects relating to employment (such as pay, promotion, training, work opportunities, or any other condition of employment or development);
- comments about a person's appearance;
- jokes or comments of a sexual or racial nature or about an individual's age, disability, sexual orientation or religion;
- questions about a person's sex life;
- unwanted nicknames, especially related to a person's age, race or disability;
- the use of obscene gestures;
- excluding an individual for a non-work reason
- treating an employee differently because they have, or are perceived to have, a 'protected characteristic' or are associated with someone who does;
- the open display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person;
- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone;
- picking on someone or setting them up to fail;
- making threats or comments about someone's job security without good reason;
- ridiculing someone;
- isolation or non-cooperation at work; and
- excluding someone from social activities.

4. During the investigation

Employers have duty of care to provide a safe place of work. If a complaint is made, discuss how to manage working relationships whilst the allegation is being investigated and until the outcome is disclosed. This is as much for the protection of the alleged perpetrator as for the aggrieved.

Consider whether a neutral person should be offered as a 'listening ear' for both parties in the investigation. Offer other support that may be appropriate to the situation such as signposting to support groups, time off for counselling etc. If you have suspended a staff member, your duty of care continues and it's important to consider their wellbeing and mental health.

Ensure that you regularly communicate with both parties.

5. Victimisation

All employees have the right to raise genuine concerns without the fear of reprisals. If the aggrieved (or a witness) is treated differently / less favourably because they have raised a complaint, then this is victimisation. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint, cancelled a planned training event, or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload. Victimisation can lead to a claim to an employment tribunal.

6. False allegations

If an employee makes an allegation that they know to be untrue, or gives evidence that they know to be untrue, the council should consider the matter under the disciplinary procedure. Such an allegation would be potentially Gross Misconduct.

7. Complaints against councillors

Following the Ledbury case, the law is clear that any formal complaint regarding a breach of the Code of Conduct must be referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation. During the investigation, it is critical to ensure that where an employee of the council has made the complaint, that the council agrees with the employee reasonable measures to protect their health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties, change of work location, not attending meetings with the person to whom the complaint has been made etc.

Guidance

Where there is text in [square brackets] this part may be updated or be deleted if not relevant. An alternative option may have been provided.

Important notice

This is an example of an employment policy designed for a small council adhering to statutory minimum requirements and does not constitute legal advice. As with all policies it should be consistent with your terms and conditions of employment.

This document was commissioned by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for the purpose of its member councils and county associations. Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this document are correct at time of publication. NALC cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions and changes to information subsequent to publication.

This document has been written by the HR Services Partnership – a company that provides HR advice and guidance to town and parish councils. Please contact them on 01403 240 205 for information about their services.

HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL'S GRIEVANCE POLICY

Introduction

1. This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice
2. It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work.
3. It also takes into account relevant law affecting Councils.
4. It aims to encourage and maintain good relationships between the Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complaints about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
 - Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager.
5. This policy confirms:
 - employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a companion who can be a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official. This includes any meeting held with them to hear about, gather facts about, discuss, consider or resolve their grievance. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for their grievance/appeal and to confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining their case.
 - the Council will give employees reasonable notice of the date of the grievance/appeal meetings. Employees and their companions must make all reasonable efforts to attend. If the companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date
 - any changes to specified time limits must be agreed by the employee and the Council
 - an employee has the right to appeal against the decision about their grievance. The appeal decision is final
 - information about an employee's grievance will be restricted to those involved in the grievance process. A record of the reason for the grievance, its outcome and action taken is confidential to the employee. The employee's grievance records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
 - audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a

reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition

- if an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after completion of the disciplinary procedure
- if a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if they raised the grievance in good faith
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the grievance procedure where appropriate, (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process which requires the consent of affected parties
- Employees can only use all stages of the grievance procedure if the complaint is not a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. Employees can use the informal stage of the council's grievance procedure (paragraph 4) to deal with all grievance issues, including a complaint about a councillor. Employees cannot use the formal stages of the council's grievance procedure for a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. If the complaint about the councillor is not resolved at the informal stage, the employee can contact the monitoring officer of Sevenoaks District Council who will inform the employee whether or not the complaint can be dealt with under the code of conduct. If it does not concern the code of conduct, the employee can make a formal complaint under the council's grievance procedure (see paragraph 5)
- the Council may engage external investigators, grievance or appeal panels for the purposes of the process.
- If the grievance is a code of conduct complaint against a councillor, the employee cannot proceed with it beyond the informal stage of the council's grievance procedure. However, whatever the complaint, the council has a duty of care to its employees. It must take all reasonable steps to ensure employees have a safe working environment, for example by undertaking risk assessments, by ensuring staff and councillors are properly trained and by protecting staff from bullying, harassment and all forms of discrimination
- If an employee considers that the grievance concerns their safety within the working environment, whether or not it also concerns a complaint against a councillor, the employee should raise these safety concerns with their line manager at the informal stage of the grievance procedure. The council will consider whether it should take further action in this matter in accordance with any of its employment policies (for example its health and safety policy or its dignity at work policy) and in accordance with the code of conduct regime

Informal grievance procedure

6. The Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and as quickly as possible. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with their manager to see if an informal solution is possible. Both should try to

resolve the matter at this stage. If the employee does not want to discuss the grievance with their manager (for example, because it concerns the manager), the employee should contact the Chairman of the personnel committee or, if appropriate, another member of the personnel committee. If the employee's complaint is about a councillor, it may be appropriate to involve that councillor at the informal stage. This will require both the employee's and the councillor's consent.

Formal grievance procedure

7. If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally and the employee's complaint is not one that should be dealt with as a code of conduct complaint (see above), the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the personnel committee.
8. The personnel committee will appoint a sub-committee of 3 members to hear the grievance in the event that the grievance is raised by or relates to the Clerk. Where the grievance is not raised by or relates to the Clerk, the personnel committee may appoint the Clerk to hear the Grievance. The sub-committee will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-committee.

Investigation

9. If the sub-committee decides that it is appropriate, (e.g. if the grievance is complex), it may appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation before the grievance meeting to establish the facts of the case. The investigator may be an appropriate employee, Councillor or external party. The investigation may include interviews (e.g. the employee submitting the grievance, other employees, councillors or members of the public).
10. The investigator will summarise their findings (usually within an investigation report) and present their findings to the sub-committee.

Notification

11. Within 14 calendar days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance (this may be longer if there is an investigation), the employee will normally be asked, in writing, to attend a grievance meeting. The written notification will include the following:
 - the names of its Chairman and other members
 - the date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will normally be within 35 calendar days of when the Council received the grievance
 - the employee's right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
 - a copy of the Council's grievance policy

- confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend (or submit witness statements) on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of their witnesses as soon as possible before the meeting
- confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence in advance of the meeting, usually with at least two days' notice
- findings of the investigation if there has been an investigation
- an invitation for the employee to request any adjustments to be made for the hearing (for example where a person has a health condition).

The grievance meeting

12. At the grievance meeting:

- the Chairman will introduce the members of the sub-committee to the employee
- the employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and present the evidence
- the Chairman will ask the employee questions about the information presented and will want to understand what action does they wants the Council to take
- any member of the sub-committee and the employee (or the companion) may question any witness
- the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up the case
- a grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the sub-committee.

The Chairman will provide the employee with the sub-committee's decision, in writing, usually within 7 calendar days of the meeting though may be longer e.g. where further investigations are required. The letter will notify the employee of the action, if any, that the Council will take and of the employee's right to appeal.

The appeal

13. If an employee decides that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved by the sub-committee, they may submit a written appeal to the personnel committee. An appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving the sub-committee's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.
14. Appeals may be raised on a number of grounds, e.g.:
- a failure by the Council to follow its grievance policy
 - the decision was not supported by the evidence
 - the action proposed by the sub-committee was inadequate/inappropriate
 - new evidence has come to light since the grievance meeting.
15. The appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 members of the personnel committee who have not previously been involved in the case. There may be insufficient

members of the personnel committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a committee of three Council members who may include members of the personnel committee. The Council may engage external parties if there are insufficient councillors to form the panel. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

16. The employee will be notified, in writing, usually within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will normally take place within 35 calendar days of the Council's receipt of the appeal. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.
17. At the appeal meeting, the Chairman will:
 - introduce the panel members to the employee
 - explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the decision of the personnel sub-committee
 - explain the action that the appeal panel may take.
18. The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of appeal.
19. The Chairman will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, and when they are likely to receive the letter. This may be within 14 calendar days of the appeal meeting however will be longer where further investigations are required.
20. The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the personnel committee or substitute its own decision.
21. The decision of the appeal panel is final.

Date of policy: 13th January 2025
Approving committee: Full Council
Date of council meeting: 13th January 2025
Policy version reference: 1
Supersedes: N/A
Policy effective from: 13th January 2025
Date for next review: January 2026

HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL'S DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Introduction

- 1 This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice
- 2 It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. The policy is designed to help Council employees improve unsatisfactory conduct and performance in their job. Wherever possible, the Council will try to resolve its concerns about employees' behaviour informally, without starting the formal procedure set out below.
- 3 The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 4 This policy confirms:
 - informal coaching and supervision will be considered, where appropriate, to improve conduct and / or attendance
 - the Council will fully investigate the facts of each case
 - the Council recognises that misconduct and unsatisfactory work performance are different issues. The disciplinary policy will also apply to work performance issues to ensure that all alleged instances of employees' underperformance are dealt with fairly and in a way that is consistent with required standards. However, the disciplinary policy will only be used when performance management proves ineffective. For more information see ACAS "Performance Management" at
 - employees will be informed in writing about the nature of the complaint against them and given the opportunity to state their case
 - employees will be provided, where appropriate, with written copies of evidence and relevant witness statements in advance of a disciplinary hearing
 - employees may be accompanied or represented by a companion – a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official - at any investigatory, disciplinary or appeal meeting. The companion is permitted to address such meetings, to put the employee's case and confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining his/her case
 - the Council will give employees reasonable notice of any meetings in this procedure. Employees must make all reasonable efforts to attend. Failure to attend any meeting may result in it going ahead and a decision being taken. An employee who does not attend a meeting will be given the opportunity to be represented and to make written submissions
 - if the employee's companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an

alternative date that is within 7 calendar days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date

- any changes to specified time limits in the Council's procedure must be agreed by the employee and the Council
- information about an employee's disciplinary matter will be restricted to those involved in the disciplinary process. A record of the reason for disciplinary action and the action taken by the Council is confidential to the employee. The employee's disciplinary records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the disciplinary procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition
- employees have the right to appeal against any disciplinary decision. The appeal decision is final
- if an employee who is already subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after the completion of the disciplinary procedure
- disciplinary action taken by the Council can include a written warning, final written warning or dismissal
- this procedure may be implemented at any stage if the employee's alleged misconduct warrants this
- except for gross misconduct when an employee may be dismissed without notice, the Council will not dismiss an employee on the first occasion that it decides there has been misconduct
- if an employee is suspended following allegations of misconduct, it will be on full pay and only for such time as is necessary. Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction. The Council will write to the employee to confirm any period of suspension and the reasons for it,
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the disciplinary procedure where appropriate (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process that requires the consent of affected parties

Examples of misconduct

5 Misconduct is employee behaviour that can lead to the employer taking disciplinary action. The following list contains some examples of misconduct: The list is not exhaustive.

- unauthorised absence
- poor timekeeping
- misuse of the Council's resources and facilities including telephone, email and internet
- inappropriate behaviour

- refusal to follow reasonable instructions
- breach of health and safety rules.

Examples of gross misconduct

6 Gross misconduct is misconduct that is so serious that it is likely to lead to dismissal without notice. The following list contains some examples of gross misconduct: The list is not exhaustive

- bullying, discrimination and harassment
- incapacity at work because of alcohol or drugs
- violent behaviour
- fraud or theft
- gross negligence
- gross insubordination
- serious breaches of council policies and procedures e.g. the Health and Safety Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy and any policies regarding the use of information technology
- serious and deliberate damage to property
- use of the internet or email to access pornographic, obscene or offensive material
- disclosure of confidential information.

Suspension

7 If allegations of gross misconduct or serious misconduct are made, the council may suspend the employee while further investigations are carried out.

Suspension will be on full pay. Suspension does not imply any determination of guilt or innocence, as it is merely a measure to enable further investigation.

8 While on suspension, the employee is required to be available during normal hours of work in the event that the council needs to make contact. The employee must not contact or attempt to contact or influence anyone connected with the investigation in any way or to discuss this matter with any other employee or councillor.

9 The employee must not attend work. The council will make arrangements for the employee to access any information or documents required to respond to any allegations.

Examples of unsatisfactory work performance

10 The following list contains some examples of unsatisfactory work performance: The list is not exhaustive.

- inadequate application of management instructions/office procedures
- inadequate IT skills

- unsatisfactory management of staff
- unsatisfactory communication skills.

The Procedure

- 11 Preliminary enquiries. The council may make preliminary enquiries to establish the basic facts of what has happened in order to understand whether there may be a case to answer under the disciplinary procedure.
- 12 If the employee's manager believes there may be a disciplinary case to answer, the council may initiate a more detailed investigation undertaken to establish the facts of a situation or to establish the perspective of others who may have witnessed misconduct.
- 13 Informal Procedures. Where minor concerns about conduct become apparent, it is the manager's responsibility to raise this with the employee and clarify the improvements required. A file note will be made and kept by the manager. The informal discussions are not part of the formal disciplinary procedure. If the conduct fails to improve, or if further matters of conduct become apparent, the manager may decide to formalise the discussions and invite the employee to a first stage disciplinary hearing.

Disciplinary investigation

- 14 A formal disciplinary investigation may sometimes be required to establish the facts and whether there is a disciplinary case to answer.
- 15 If a formal disciplinary investigation is required, the Council's personnel committee will appoint an Investigator who will be responsible for undertaking a fact-finding exercise to collect all relevant information. The Investigator will be independent and will normally be a councillor. If the personnel committee considers that there are no councillors who are independent (for example, because they all have direct involvement in the allegations about the employee), it will appoint someone from outside the Council. The Investigator will be appointed as soon as possible after the allegations have been made. The personnel committee will inform the Investigator of the terms of reference of the investigation. The terms of reference should specify:
 - the allegations or events that the investigation is required to examine
 - whether a recommendation is required
 - how the findings should be presented. For example, an investigator will often be required to present the findings in the form of a written report
 - who the findings should be reported to and who to contact for further direction if unexpected issues arise or advice is needed.
- 16 The Investigator will be asked to submit their findings usually within 35 Calendar days of appointment where possible. In cases of alleged unsatisfactory

performance or of allegations of minor misconduct, the appointment of an investigator may not be necessary and the Council may decide to commence disciplinary proceedings at the next stage - the disciplinary meeting (see paragraph 22).

- 17 The staffing committee will notify the employee in writing of the alleged misconduct and details of the person undertaking the investigation. The employee may be asked to meet an investigator as part of the disciplinary investigation. The employee will be given sufficient notice of the meeting with the Investigator so that they have reasonable time to prepare for it. The letter will explain the investigatory process and that the meeting is part of that process. The employee will be provided with a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure. The Council will also inform the employee that when they meets with the Investigator, they will have the opportunity to comment on the allegations of misconduct.
- 18 Employees may be accompanied or represented by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official at any investigatory meeting.
- 19 If there are other persons (e.g. employees, councillors, members of the public or the Council's contractors) who can provide relevant information, the Investigator should try to obtain it from them in advance of the meeting with the employee.
- 20 The Investigator has no authority to take disciplinary action. Their role is to establish the facts of the case as quickly as possible and prepare a report that recommends to the staffing committee whether or not disciplinary action should be considered under the policy.
- 21 The Investigator's report will contain their recommendations and the findings on which they were based. They will recommend either:
 - the employee has no case to answer and there should no further action under the Council's disciplinary procedure
 - the matter is not serious enough to justify further use of the disciplinary procedure and can be dealt with informally or
 - the employee has a case to answer and a formal hearing should be convened under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- 22 The Investigator will submit the report to the staffing committee which will decide whether further action will be taken.
- 23 If the Council decides that it will not take disciplinary action, it may consider whether mediation would be appropriate in the circumstances.

The disciplinary meeting

- 24 If the personnel committee decides that there is a case to answer, it will appoint a personnel sub-committee of 3 councillors, to formally hear the allegations. The personnel sub-committee will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. The Investigator shall not sit on the sub-committee.
- 25 No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-committee. The employee will be invited, in writing, to attend a disciplinary meeting. The sub-committee's letter will confirm the following:
- the names of its Chairman and other two members
 - details of the alleged misconduct, its possible consequences and the employee's statutory right to be accompanied at the meeting
 - a copy of the information provided to the sub-committee which may include the investigation report, supporting evidence and a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure
 - the time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing so that they has sufficient time to prepare for it
 - that witnesses may attend on the employee's and the Council's behalf and that both parties should inform each other of their witnesses' names at least 2 working days before the meeting
 - that the employee may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
- 26 The purpose of the disciplinary meeting hearing is for the allegations to be put to the employee and then for the employee to give their perspective. It will be conducted as follows:
- the Chairman will introduce the members of the sub-committee to the employee and explain the arrangements for the hearing
 - the Chairman will set out the allegations and invite the Investigator to present the findings of the investigation report (if there has been a previous investigation)
 - the Chairman will invite the employee to present their account
 - the employee (or the companion) will set out their case and present evidence (including any witnesses and/or witness statements)
 - any member of the sub-committee and the employee (or the companion) may question the Investigator and any witness
 - the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up
- 27 The Chairman will provide the employee with the sub-committee's decision with reasons, in writing, within 7 calendar days of the meeting. The Chairman will also notify the employee of the right to appeal the decision.

28 The disciplinary meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be further investigated by the sub-committee.

Disciplinary action

29 If the sub-committee decides that there should be disciplinary action, it may be any of the following:

First written warning

30 If the employee's conduct has fallen beneath acceptable standards, a first written warning will be issued. A first written warning will set out:

- the reason for the written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action
- the employee's right of appeal
- that a note confirming the written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

Final written warning

31 If the offence is sufficiently serious, or if there is further misconduct or a failure to improve sufficiently during the currency of a prior warning, the employee will be given a final written warning. A final written warning will set out:

- the reason for the final written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal
- the employee's right of appeal
- that a note confirming the final written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

Dismissal

32 The Council may dismiss:

- for gross misconduct
- if there is no improvement within the specified time period, in the conduct which has been the subject of a final written warning
- if another instance of misconduct has occurred and a final written warning has already been issued and remains in force.

34. The Council will consider very carefully a decision to dismiss. If an employee is dismissed, they will receive a written statement of the reasons for their dismissal, the date on which the employment will end and details of their right of appeal. If the sub-committee decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file. Action taken as a result of the disciplinary meeting will remain in force unless it is modified as a result of an appeal.

The appeal

33 An employee who is the subject of disciplinary action will be notified of the right of appeal. Their written notice of appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving written notice of the disciplinary action and must specify the grounds for appeal.

34 The grounds for appeal include;

- a failure by the Council to follow its disciplinary policy
- the sub-committee's disciplinary decision was not supported by the evidence
- the disciplinary action was too severe in the circumstances of the case
- new evidence has come to light since the disciplinary meeting.

35 Where possible, the appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 members of the staffing committee who have not previously been involved in the case. This includes the Investigator. There may be insufficient members of the staffing committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a committee of 3 members of the Council who may include members of the staff committee. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

36 The employee will be notified, in writing, within 14 calendar days of receipt of the notice of appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.

37 At the appeal meeting, the Chairman will:

- introduce the panel members to the employee
- explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the disciplinary decision
- explain the action that the appeal panel may take.

38 The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds for appeal.

39 The Chairman will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, usually within five working days of the appeal hearing.

- 40 The appeal panel may decide to uphold the disciplinary decision of the staffing committee, substitute a less serious sanction or decide that no disciplinary action is necessary. If it decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file.
- 41 If an appeal against dismissal is upheld, the employee will be paid in full for the period from the date of dismissal and continuity of service will be preserved.
- 42 The appeal panel's decision is final.

Date of policy: 13th January 2025

Approving committee: Full Council

Date of council meeting: 13th January 2025

Policy version reference: 01

Supersedes: N/A

Policy effective from: 13th January 2025

Date for next review: January 2026

Schedule of Payments January 2025 - Paid by Internet Banking/DDR from Unity Trust Bank

Ref:	Payment to	Particulars	Net	VAT	Total
DDR		Charges 01/11/24-3/11/24	9.00	-	9.00
636093346		PAID 27/12/24 - Payment of December statement	6.00	-	6.00
91310341		PAID 03/01/24 - Water at Pavilion 01/04/24-30/11/24	74.10	-	74.10
		Water @ allotments 01/12/24 - 31/12/24	22.88	-	-
973064630		Water at pavillion 01/12/24-31/12/24	68.25	-	91.13
31272971		Salary 01/01/25-31/01/25 (Pre approved)	2,791.40	-	2,791.40
779441405		Salary 01/01/25 - 31/01/25 (Pre-approved)	1,705.75	-	1,705.75
590064483		Month 10 Employer & Employee NIC & PAYE	1,901.33	-	1,901.33
307526402		Employer & Employee pension contributions January	1,671.87	-	1,671.87
41865835		Woodland Avenue repairs to swing Inv 28631	102.30	20.46	-
		Chantry Avenue roundabout repairs inv 28632	595.00	119.00	-
		Chantry Avenue repairs to junior swing inv 28630	675.00	135.00	1,646.76
869083939		Waste clearance & disposal Gorse Wood inv 2094396	475.00	95.00	-
		Emptying of dog waste bins October inv 2094754	318.50	63.70	-
		20 x bundles garden sacks 07/01/25 inv 2094828	400.00	-	1,352.20
961503609		Hand towels & black refuse sacks inv 32117	31.94	6.39	-
		Toilet rolls inv 33908	19.99	4.00	62.32
619250806		Annual Membership	36.00	-	36.00
766776254		Biennial fee for .gov.uk domain inv 19530	65.00	13.00	-
		Website hosting (£175) Email Hosting (£300) SLL Cert (£50) inv 19530	525.00	105.00	708.00
157258357		Weekly clean of Pavilion inv 5527	158.66	-	158.66
339794505		External Audit 2024/25 inv 2460571	630.00	126.00	756.00
803919150		Maplink Tech Support & Updates inv 144435	95.00	19.00	114.00
		Grass Cutting contract Dec Inv SI2425401	583.33	116.66	699.99
725810683		Additional insurance premium re fencing W/Ave inv 540178057	24.03	-	24.03
771074531		Maintenance, football pitch marking, water flushing, ashes inter inv 181	1,002.50	-	1,002.50
320403089		Dismantle cherry tree Hoselands green inv 2729	400.00	80.00	480.00
250185599		3 x pitchmarker Super C inv SI247729	98.56	19.71	118.27
59624246		Operational inspection of 3 playgrounds inv 28853	217.50	43.50	261.00
613809867		Gain entry and replace lock to boiler cupboard @ Pavilion inv 1544	130.00	-	130.00
			14,833.89	966.42	15,800.31

APPENDIX 6

Schedule of Payments January 2025 - Paid by cheque/DDR from Barclays Bank					
Chq No	Payment to	Particulars	Net	VAT	Total
DDR		Mixed Payment Plan charges 13/11/24 - 12/12/24	14.70	-	14.70
DDR		Electricity @ Pavilion 22/11/24-25/12/24	82.52	4.13	86.65
			97.22	4.13	101.35

Schedule of Payments January 2025 - Paid by Barclaycard					
Ref:	Payment to	Particulars	Net	VAT	Total
		PAID 07/01/25 - ID Card inv 677d49412c34d	12.49	2.50	14.99
		PAID 10/01/25 - Data protection Fee	40.00	-	40.00
			52.49	2.50	54.99

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7.31 p.m.

Councillor Brazier reported that the government's devolution deal would give people across Kent a stronger voice in how national decisions affect them and let local councils make important decisions closer to where residents live and work.

The government says the benefits of devolution would include:

- a stronger transport network based on local needs
- investment to put priorities of local businesses first
- a skills base suited to business needs
- development of more homes and infrastructure.

Currently the government's plans are for a mayor and combined authority to lead on strategic issues including:

- transport
- skills
- housing
- economic growth
- environment and climate change
- health
- public safety.

In addition to devolution, the government has said it wants residents to be served by just one local council (known as a 'unitary council'). Kent currently has a two-tier model with a county council (KCC) and 12 borough and district councils. Medway Council is already a unitary council. As well as the creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority, local government across the area currently served by all these councils would be reorganised into a number of unitary councils.

Councillor Brazier reported the Leaders of Kent County Council and Medway Council have formally written to Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister for Local Government and Devolution, to request that Kent and Medway be included in the Devolution Priority Programme.

The Government's Devolution Priority Programme will see some areas in the country progressing through the devolution process on an accelerated timescale, with Mayoral elections taking place in the county as early as May 2026 if Kent and Medway are accepted onto the DPP.

The government's decision on accepting Kent and Medway on Devolution Priority Programme should be known before the end of January 2025.

If Kent and Medway are accepted on to the Devolution Priority Programme, the government will then consult residents on their views on the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority before the end of March 2025.

The government could also decide to postpone the May 2025 county council elections to help plan for a mayoral election in 2026 and consider proposals for local government reorganisation.

Kent County Council and Medway Council will work with Kent's 12 district and borough councils to develop proposals for local government reorganisation, and continue to shape an innovative and comprehensive devolution deal for Kent and Medway.

Full proposals for reorganisation are set to be submitted in autumn 2025, in line with the government's timeline.

According to the government's timescales, unitary councils covering Kent and Medway could be introduced in 2027 or 2028.

Cllr Penny Cole reported that Sevenoaks District Council's Big Waste Conversation was ongoing and that the consultation was currently running.

The meeting resumed at 7.56p.m.

