

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT HARTLEY LIBRARY, ASH ROAD
ON WEDNESDAY 30th JULY 2025 AT 10.27 a.m.**

Present:

Cllr Jim Colwell
Cllr David Conroy
Cllr Lesley Driscoll
Cllr Laurence Glander
Cllr Brian Ramsay – *Chairman*
Cllr Vincent Sewell

In attendance:

Mrs H Boden - *Clerk*

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr Brian Ramsay be elected Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2026.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED: That,

Cllr David Conroy be elected Vice Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2026.

3. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED: That,

the minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 7th May 2025, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. Terms of Reference

The Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, as approved by the Council at its Annual Meeting held on 12th May 2025 and was satisfied that they met the needs of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That,
the Terms of Reference of the Finance & General Purposes Committee,
as approved by the Council at its Annual Meeting held on 12th May
2025, be received and noted.

7. Review of Income and Expenditure

The Committee reviewed a Council detail report from 1st April 2025 to 24th July 2025 and was satisfied that the Council's income and expenditure was in line with budgeted estimates.

RESOLVED: That,
the Council detail report setting out income and expenditure by budget heading as at 24th July 2025, be received and noted.

8. Financial Regulations

The Clerk reported that the Model Financial Regulations have been updated because of the Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulation 2024, which recently came in to effect.

The changes are to Model Financial Regulations 5.4, 5.7 and 5.11.

The Clerk reported that Financial Regulation 9.3 refers to the corporate credit card which should be "specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and Chairman of the Council".

Members noted that due to the recent change in Chairman, the Clerk was in the process of transferring the Council's Barclaycard into the new Chairman's name.

RECOMMENDED: That, (1) the Financial Regulations, as amended and as set out in **Appendix 1** attached to these minutes, be approved and adopted by the Council and, (2) arrangements be made for Cllr Oxtoby to be removed as a signatory on the Parish Council's Barclaycard, to be replaced by Cllr Glander.

9. Banking

(a) The Committee considered a letter dated 4th July 2025, received from the Nationwide Building Society.

The letter requests that the Parish Council completes a "Business Savings Automatic Exchange of Information (AEIO) – Entity Self-Certification Form".

The Committee agreed that the majority of the form was not applicable to the Parish Council and should be completed stating as such.

RECOMMENDED: That, (1) the letter dated 4th July 2025, received from the Nationwide Building Society, requesting that the Parish Council completes a "Business Savings Automatic Exchange of Information (AEIO) – Entity Self-Certification Form," be noted and, (2) the Clerk be authorised to complete and return the form, as agreed by the Committee.

(b) The Committee considered a Business Savings Additional Information Form received from the Nationwide Building Society, recently completed by the Clerk.

The Clerk reported that the additional information had been required in order to keep the Nationwide Building Society Savings account open.

Members noted that the form had been required to be submitted by 7th July to prevent the account from being closed.

RECOMMENDED: That, (1) the completed Business Savings Additional Information Form received from the Nationwide Building Society, be noted and approved and, (2) the Clerk's actions in returning the completed form be confirmed and approved.

10. Kent Pension Fund – Pooling of Town & Parish Council – Consultation

At the meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th July 2025, Members considered an email dated 4th June 2025, received from the Kent Pension Fund.

In preparation for the 31st March 2025 triennial valuation results, the Kent Pension Fund (the Fund) is formally consulting with town and parish councils currently participating in the Fund and other interested parties (e.g. borough, district and city councils), on proposals to form a Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funding pool (the Pool) specifically for town and parish councils as at 31st March 2025, with a possible universal LGPS pooled employer contribution rate for all involved, operative from 1st April 2026.

It was agreed that clarification should be sought as to the likely effect on the Parish Council's contributions.

The Committee considered emails dated 18th July 2025 & 21st July 2025, received from the Kent Pension Fund, in response to the Clerk's enquiry.

Members noted that the decision to proceed or not proceed with Pooling would be taken by the Pension Fund Committee at its September meeting.

RESOLVED: That, the emails dated 18th July 2025 & 21st July 2025, received from the Kent Pension Fund, in response to the Clerk's enquiry, be noted.

11. Parish Office Lease

At the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 7th May 2025, it was recommended that enquiries be made with Kent County Council and the Parish Council's Solicitor, with regard to arrangements for renewing the lease on the Parish Office.

This recommendation was ratified by the full Council at its meeting held on 12th May 2025.

The Clerk reported that she had contacted the County Council and had received an email on 4th July 2025, from the Assistant Surveyor, advising that they had been assigned to handle the Parish Council's lease enquiry.

The Clerk reported that there had been no further communication since.

RESOLVED: That, the Clerk be requested to chase the Assistant Surveyor to request an update.

12. Highway Matters

Following the recent submission of the Parish Council's Highway Improvement Plan, the Committee noted that the Community Engagement officer had responded to confirm that of the six items included on the Plan, work had commenced on the first two, being speeding traffic on Ash Road, in particular the stretch of road outside Orchardside and the request for double yellow lines in St John's Lane, opposite Grange Way.

The Clerk reported that an ATC survey has been ordered to ascertain speed on the approach to the bend, but that this will take place after the school holidays.

With regard to the double yellow lines, Members noted that this would require a TRO consultation at a cost of £3,125 plus installation costs. In order for KCC to consider whether double yellow lines are possible, the Parish Council would be required to carry out pre-engagement consultation with residents to ascertain the level of acceptance prior to paying for the TRO.

The Committee agreed that as it was a road safety issue, it was not a scheme that should be funded by the Parish Council, particularly as St John's Lane is on a bus route.

Members noted that previous schemes involving double yellow lines had been organised and funded by the District Council.

RESOLVED: That,

1) the above report be noted and,

2) the Clerk be requested to contact Sevenoaks District Council to ask that they consider the implementation of double yellow lines in St John's Lane, opposite Grange Way, due to the fact that vehicles regularly park on the bend causing a hazard to road users and buses.

13. Website

(a) The Committee had been requested to consider whether any amendments or updates are required to the website.

Cllr Glander commented on the fact that there is an "Events" page on the website with no information on it.

In addition, the Annual Report relating to 2024/25 does not appear to have been uploaded to the website.

Cllr Glander also pointed out that there were no contact details for Jackie West, the Community Warden.

The Committee considered that it would be beneficial to have a counter on the website to obtain an idea as to current usage.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the website be updated in line with the comments above and,

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact the website provider to ask whether it would be possible to add a counter to the website and if so, whether there would be an additional cost.

(b) The Clerk reported that all Councillors had now transitioned to gov.uk emails, with one exception.

At the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 7th May 2025, it had been agreed that the Clerk be requested to make the necessary arrangements with the Parish Council's IT provider, for the remaining Councillor to transition to Gov.uk emails.

The Clerk reported that she had spoken to the Councillor to request that the transition be made as soon as possible, but that this had still not been actioned.

The Committee agreed that as this was a requirement on the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return, this needed to be actioned as soon as possible.

The Committee noted that the office email address was a shared email accessible by the Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Clerk's Assistant.

Members agreed that the Clerk should be allocated an individual email to be used for confidential matters.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Chairman of the Council be requested to contact the remaining Councillor still to transition to Gov.uk emails to ask that this be done as soon as possible and,

(2) the Clerk be requested to contact the Parish Council's website provider to ask whether it would be possible for an additional email address to be provided, for use by the Clerk.

14. GDPR

(a) The Committee considered the Satswana Council Update Summer 2025.

The Clerk reported that the main purpose of the Update was to share information on Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

Assertion 10 focuses on Digital and Data Compliance.

To meet assertion 10, Councils must:

- Use a generic email account hosted on a council owned domain
- Ensure that their website complies with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards and the 2018 Accessibility Regulations
- Publish the required documents under the Freedom of Information Act and the Transparency Code (where applicable)
- Be fully compliant with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, including having up-to-date policies and evidence of staff training
- Have a formal IT policy covering the secure and lawful use of both council-owned and personal devices for council business

This assertion does not introduce new legislation, but it does require Council's to explicitly confirm and evidence their compliance as part of the AGAR.

The Committee considered the Digital & Data Compliance checklist contained on page 2 of the Update and agreed that the Council already complied with the majority of the items.

The Clerk advised that regular data protection audits and reviews should be carried out and that as previously reported, there was still work to be done, in order to ensure full compliance with the Council's Document Retention Policy.

The Clerk reported that she and the Assistant Clerk would be carrying out an audit of stored documents on 5th August 2025, but that additional audits would be required to be undertaken to ensure full compliance.

The Clerk reported that she was in the process of compiling an Information Asset Register and that she had sent a draft copy to the Parish Council's Data Protection Officer who had confirmed that the document would be more than sufficient.

The Clerk reported that the final draft would be available for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

The Clerk recommended that all Councillors be requested to attend training on UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the Satswana Council Update Summer 2025, be noted;

(2) the audit of stored documents due to be carried out by the Clerk and Assistant Clerk on 5th August 2025, be noted; (3) it be noted that additional audits of stored documents will be required in order to ensure full compliance with the Parish Council's Document Retention Policy and, (4) the Clerk be requested to identify suitable UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 training for Councillors and that all Councillors be requested to attend.

(b) The Committee considered an email dated 11th July 2025, received from Satswana in response to an enquiry from the Clerk regarding the necessity to produce an Information Asset Register.

The Clerk reported that a draft Register would be available at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That, the email dated 11th July 2025, received from Satswana in response to an enquiry from the Clerk regarding the necessity to produce an Information Asset Register, be noted.

(c) The Committee reviewed the Council's Data Protection Policy, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 11th June 2018 and was satisfied that it fully met the Council's requirements.

RECOMMENDED: That, the Council's Data Protection Policy, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 11th June 2018, be confirmed and approved.

(d) The Committee reviewed the Council's General Privacy Notice, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 11th June 2018, and was satisfied that it fully met the Council's requirements. RECOMMENDED: That, the Council's General Privacy Notice, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 11th June 2018, be confirmed and approved.

(e) The Committee reviewed the Council's Document Retention Policy, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 11th June 2018, and was satisfied that it fully met the Council's requirements.

RECOMMENDED: That, the Council's Document Retention Policy, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 11th June 2018, be confirmed and approved.

15. Emergency Plan

The Committee reviewed the Council's Emergency Plan, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 14th November 2022, and agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman's telephone numbers should be included in the Plan.

The Clerk reported that she was in the process of confirming the current contact details for the Kent Resilience Team at KCC and Sevenoaks Emergency Planning and that this information would be updated on the Plan once received. RECOMMENDED: That, the Council's Emergency Plan, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 14th November 2022, including the above amendments, be confirmed and approved.

16. Health & Safety Policy

The Committee reviewed the Council's Health & Safety Policy, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 14th October 2024, and was satisfied that it fully met the Council's requirements.

RECOMMENDED: That, the Council's Health & Safety Policy, approved and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 14th October 2024, be confirmed and approved.

17. Risk Assessments

At the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 29th January 2025, it was resolved that quotations be sought from a suitably qualified company, to provide risk assessment advice to the Parish Council for all aspects of Council business.

The Clerk reported that several companies had been approached, but that none were able to offer advice on Council business.

The Committee noted that one company had emailed to request a call back to discuss the Council's requirements and that this was due to be followed up by the Clerk's Assistant.

It was suggested that KALC be approached to ask whether they were able to assist with any recommendations. RESOLVED: That, (1) the Clerk's report be noted; (2) the Clerk be requested to contact KALC to ask whether

they are able to assist with any recommendations for suitably qualified companies to provide advice on the Council's risk assessments and, (2) consideration of the matter be deferred until the next meeting.

18. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 11.45 a.m.

Signed:..... Date:..... Chairman of the Finance &
General Purposes Committee

HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on

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 Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulations 2024 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 publication of invitations and notices.
- 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.

