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# FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

## INDEX

	Page
1. GENERAL .....	2
2. ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL) .....	4
3. ANNUAL ESTIMATES (BUDGET) AND FORWARD PLANNING.....	5
4. BUDGETARY CONTROL AND AUTHORITY TO SPEND .....	5
5. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS .....	6
6. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MAKING OF PAYMENTS .....	7
7. PAYMENT OF SALARIES.....	9
8. LOANS AND INVESTMENTS.....	10
9. INCOME .....	10
10. ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES.....	11
11. CONTRACTS .....	11
12. PAYMENTS UNDER CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKS .....	13
13. STORES AND EQUIPMENT .....	13
14. ASSETS, PROPERTIES AND ESTATES .....	13
15. INSURANCE .....	14
16. CHARITIES.....	14
17. RISK MANAGEMENT.....	14
18. SUSPENSION AND REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS .....	15
19. APPENDIX 1 – TERMS OF REFERENCE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE.....	15
20. APPENDIX 2 – DEBIT CARD POLICY.....	16
21. APPENDIX 3 – CREDIT CARD POLICY.....	18

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## **1 GENERAL**

- 1.1 These Financial Regulations govern the conduct of financial management by the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council. Financial Regulations are one of the Council's three governing policy documents providing procedural guidance for members and officers. Financial Regulations must be observed in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders and any individual Financial Regulations relating to contracts.
- 1.2 The Council is responsible in law for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that the Council has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Council's accounting control systems must include measures:
- for the timely production of accounts;
  - that provide for the safe and efficient safeguarding of public money;
  - to prevent and detect inaccuracy and fraud; and
  - identifying the duties of officers.
- 1.4 These Financial Regulations demonstrate how the Council meets these responsibilities and requirements.
- 1.5 At least once a year, prior to approving the Annual Governance Statement, the Council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control which shall be in accordance with proper practices.
- 1.6 Deliberate or wilful breach of these Regulations by an employee may give rise to disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.7 Members of Council are expected to follow the instructions within these Regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow instructions within these Regulations brings the office of Councillor into disrepute.
- 1.8 The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office to be appointed by the Council.
- 1.9 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 accounting control systems;
  - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
  - maintains the accounting records of the Council up to date in accordance with proper practices;
  - assists the Council to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources; and
  - produces financial management information as required by the Council.
- 1.10 The accounting records determined by the RFO shall be sufficient to show and explain the Council's transactions and to enable the RFO to ensure that any record of receipts and payments and additional information, as the case may be, or management information prepared for the Council from time to time comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 1.11 The accounting records determined by the RFO shall in particular contain:

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- entries from day to day of all sums of money received and expended by the Council and the matters to which the receipts and payments account relate;
  - a record of the assets and liabilities of the Council; and
  - wherever relevant, a record of the Council's income and expenditure in relation to claims made, or to be made, for any contribution, grant or subsidy.

1.12 The accounting control systems determined by the RFO shall include:

- procedures to ensure that the financial transactions of the Council are recorded as soon as reasonably practicable and as accurately and reasonably as possible;
- procedures to enable the prevention and detection of inaccuracies and fraud and the ability to reconstruct any lost records;
- identification of the duties of officers dealing with financial transactions and division of responsibilities of those officers in relation to significant transactions;
- procedures to ensure that uncollectable amounts, including any bad debts are not submitted to the Council for approval to be written off except with the approval of the RFO and that the approvals are shown in the accounting records; and
- measures to ensure that risk is properly managed.

1.13 The Finance Committee's purpose is to ensure the Council's finances and accounting arrangements are conducted effectively – see Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference of Finance Committee. Council is not empowered by these Financial Regulations or otherwise to delegate certain specified decisions. In particular, any decision regarding:

- setting the final budget or the precept (Council tax requirement);
- approving accounting statements;
- approving an annual governance statement;
- borrowing;
- writing off bad debts;
- declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and
- addressing recommendations in any report from the internal or external auditors, shall be a matter for the full Council only.

1.14 In addition, the Council must:

- determine and keep under annual review the bank mandate for all Council bank accounts;
- approve all grants and expenditure excluding consumables and urgent expenditure (see 4.1)
- in respect of the annual salary for any employee have regard to recommendations about annual salaries of employees made by the relevant committee in accordance with its terms of reference.

1.15 In these Financial Regulations, references to the Accounts and Audit Regulations or ‘the regulations’ shall mean the regulations issued under the provisions of section 27 of the Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation, and then in force unless otherwise specified.

In these Financial Regulations, the term ‘proper practice(s)’ shall refer to guidance issued in *Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - a Practitioners’ Guide (England)* issued by the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG), available from the websites of NALC and the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

## **2 ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)**

2.1 All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, appropriate guidance and proper practices.

2.2 On a regular basis, at least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, two members shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The members shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification. This activity shall on conclusion be reported, including any exceptions, to and noted by the Finance Committee and full Council.

2.3 The RFO shall complete the annual statement of accounts, annual report, and any related documents of the Council contained in the Annual Return (as specified in proper practices) as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and having certified the accounts shall submit them and report thereon to the Council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

2.4 The Council shall ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records, and of its system of internal control in accordance with proper practices. Any officer or member of the Council shall make available such documents and records as appear to the Council to be 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 for that purpose.

2.5 The internal auditor shall be appointed annually and shall carry out the work in relation to internal controls required by Council in accordance with proper practices.

2.6 The internal auditor shall:

- be competent and independent of the financial operations of the Council;
- report to Council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual written report during each financial year;
- to demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, be free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
- have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council.

2.7 Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:

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

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- 2.8 For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms ‘independent’ and ‘independence’ shall have the same meaning as is described in proper practices.
- 2.9 The RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors’ rights in relation to the accounts including the opportunity to inspect the accounts and books, and display/publish any notices and statements of account required by Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 2.10 The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all Councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

### **3 ANNUAL ESTIMATES (BUDGET) AND FORWARD PLANNING**

- 3.1 Each committee shall review its three-year forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments. Having regard to the forecast, it shall thereafter formulate and submit proposals for the following financial year to the Council not later than the end of October each year including any proposals for revising the forecast.
- 3.2 The RFO must each year, by no later than November, prepare detailed estimates of all receipts and payments including the use of reserves and all sources of funding for the following financial year in the form of a budget to be considered by the Finance Committee before making a recommendation to full Council.
- 3.3 The Council shall consider annual budget proposals in relation to the Council’s three year forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments including recommendations for the use of reserves and sources of funding and update the forecast accordingly.
- 3.4 The Council shall fix the precept (Council tax requirement), and relevant basic amount of Council tax to be levied for the ensuing financial year not later than by the end of January each year. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority and shall supply each member with a copy of the approved annual budget.
- 3.5 The approved annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

### **4 BUDGETARY CONTROL AND AUTHORITY TO SPEND**

- 4.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by the Council for all items with the following exceptions:
- the Clerk or Deputy Clerk for consumables or
  - the Clerk or Deputy Clerk in conjunction with Chair of Council for urgent matters (See 4.5).

Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

- 4.2 No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the Council, or duly delegated committee. During the budget year and with the approval of Council having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate (‘virement’).
- 4.3 Unspent provisions in the revenue or capital budgets for completed projects shall be moved into general reserves and not carried forward to a subsequent year.
- 4.4 The salary budgets are to be reviewed at least annually in October/November for the following financial year and such review shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk/RFO and the Chair of the Council or

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relevant committee. The RFO will inform committees of any changes impacting on their budget requirement for the coming year in good time.

- 4.5 In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, the Clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the Clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £500. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.6 No expenditure shall be authorised in relation to any capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.
- 4.7 All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations relating to contracts.
- 4.8 The RFO shall regularly provide the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget. These statements are to be prepared at least at the end of each financial quarter and shall show explanations of material variances. For this purpose, "material" shall be in excess of 15% of the budget.
- 4.9 Changes in earmarked reserves shall be approved by Council as part of the budgetary control process.

## **5 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS**

- 5.1 The Council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council; banking arrangements may not be delegated to a committee. They shall be reviewed annually for safety and efficiency. The Council may seek credit references in respect of members or employees who act as signatories.
- 5.2 The RFO shall prepare a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting and, together with the relevant invoices, present the schedule to Council. The Council shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself shall authorise payment by a resolution of the Council. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting at which payment was authorised. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of a contract of employment) may be summarised to remove public access to any personal information.
- 5.3 All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the RFO to confirm that the work, goods or services to which each invoice relates has been received, carried out, examined and represents expenditure previously approved by the Council.
- 5.4 The RFO shall examine invoices for arithmetical accuracy and analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The RFO shall take all steps to pay all invoices submitted, and which are in order, at the next available Council meeting.
- 5.5 The Clerk and Deputy Clerk shall have delegated authority to authorise the payment of items only in the following circumstances:
- a) If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, and the due date for payment is before the next scheduled Meeting of Council, where the Clerk and

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Deputy Clerk 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;

- b) An expenditure item authorised under 5.6 below (continuing contracts and obligations) provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council; or
- c) fund transfers within the Councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £2,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council.

5.6 For each financial year the Clerk and Deputy Clerk shall draw up a list of due payments which arise on a regular basis as the result of a continuing contract, statutory duty, or obligation (such as but not exclusively) Salaries, PAYE and NI, Pensions and regular maintenance contracts and the like for which Council may authorise payment for the year provided that the requirements of regulation 4.1 (Budgetary Controls) are adhered to, provided also that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council.

5.7 A record of regular payments made under 5.6 above shall be drawn up and be signed by two members on each and every occasion when payment is authorised - thus controlling the risk of duplicated payments being authorised and / or made.

5.8 Any Revenue or Capital Grant applications shall be checked by the RFO that the expenditure will be within any limits set by Council and in accordance with any policy statement approved by Council, before being presented for resolution by Council for payment.

5.9 Members are subject to the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the Council and shall comply with the Code and Standing Orders when a decision to authorise or instruct payment is made in respect of a matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary or other interest, unless a dispensation has been granted.

5.10 The Council will aim to rotate the duties of members in these Regulations so that onerous duties are shared out as evenly as possible over time.

5.11 Any changes in the recorded details of suppliers, such as bank account records, shall be approved in writing by the Clerk/RFO and a Member.

## **6 INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MAKING OF PAYMENTS**

6.1 The Council will make safe and efficient arrangements for the making of its payments.

6.2 Following authorisation under Financial Regulation 5 above, the Council, a duly delegated committee or, if so delegated, the Clerk or Deputy Clerk shall give instruction that a payment shall be made.

6.3 All payments shall be effected by cheque or other instructions to the Council's bankers, or otherwise, in accordance with a resolution of Council.

6.4 Cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule as presented to Council or committee shall be signed by two members of Council in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment. A member who is a bank signatory, having a connection by virtue of family or business relationships with the beneficiary of a payment, should not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to the payment in question.

6.5 To indicate agreement of the details shown on the cheque or order for payment with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall each also initial the cheque counterfoil.



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- 6.6 Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at a Council meeting (including immediately before or after such a meeting). Any signatures obtained away from such meetings shall be reported to the Council at the next convenient meeting.
- 6.7 If thought appropriate by the Council, payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone and water) and any National Non-Domestic Rates may be made by variable direct debit provided that the instructions are signed by two members and any payments are reported to Council as made. The approval of the use of a variable direct debit shall be renewed by resolution of the Council or Finance Committee at least every two years.
- 6.8 If thought appropriate by the Council, payment for certain items may be made by banker's standing order provided that the instructions are signed, or otherwise evidenced by two members are retained and any payments are reported to Council as made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be renewed by resolution of the Council or Finance Committee at least every two years.
- 6.9 If thought appropriate by the Council, payment for certain items may be made by BACS or CHAPS methods provided that the instructions for each payment are signed, or otherwise evidenced, by two authorised bank signatories, are retained and any payments are reported to Council as made. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the Council or Finance Committee at least every two years.
- 6.10 If thought appropriate by the Council payment for certain items may be made by internet banking transfer provided evidence is retained showing which members approved the payment.
- 6.11 Where a computer requires use of a personal identification number (PIN) or other password(s), for access to the Council's records on that computer, a note shall be made of the PIN/Password(s) and shall be handed to and retained by the Chair of Council in a sealed dated envelope. This envelope may not be opened other than in the presence of two other Councillors. After the envelope has been opened, in any circumstances, the PIN/ password(s) shall be changed as soon as practicable. The fact that the sealed envelope has been opened, in whatever circumstances, shall be reported to all members immediately and formally to the next available meeting of the Council. This will not be required for a member's personal computer used only for remote authorisation of bank payments.
- 6.12 No employee or Councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the working of the Council or its bank accounts, to any person not authorised in writing by the Council or a duly delegated committee.
- 6.13 All data on any computer is backed up on line through our IT service provider.
- 6.14 The Council, and any members using computers for the Council's financial business, shall ensure that anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software with automatic updates, together with a high level of security, is used.
- 6.15 Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate approved by the Council shall identify a number of Councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts. The bank mandate will state clearly the amounts of payments that can be instructed by the use of the Service Administrator alone, or by the Service Administrator with a stated number of approvals.
- 6.16 Access to any internet banking accounts will be directly to the access page (which may be saved under "favourites"), and not through a search engine or e-mail link. Remembered or saved passwords facilities must not be used on any computer used for Council banking work. Breach of this Regulation will be treated as a very serious matter under these regulations.



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- 6.17 Changes to account details for suppliers, which are used for internet banking may only be changed on written hard copy notification by the supplier and supported by hard copy authority for change signed by the Clerk/RFO and a member. A programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed.
- 6.18 Any Debit Cards issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Town Clerk and the Deputy Clerk and will be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £1,000 unless authorised by Council in writing before any order is placed. All transactions shall be notified to the next appropriate meeting of the Council. See Appendix 2 - Debit Card Policy.
- 6.19 Any corporate Credit Cards issued for use will be specifically restricted to use by the Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Maintenance Supervisor. There will be a single transaction maximum value of £1,500 unless authorised by Council in writing before any order is placed. All transactions shall be subject to automatic payment in full at each month-end. All transactions shall be notified to the next appropriate meeting of the Council. See Appendix 3 - Credit Card Policy.
- 6.20 The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of £250 for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses up to an individual item limit of £50.
- a) Petty cash expenditure shall be reported to the Finance Committee and thereafter full Council at least quarterly. Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept to substantiate the payment.
  - b) Any cash income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.
  - c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float may be made using the Council debit card and shall be notified to the next appropriate meeting of the Council.

## **7 PAYMENT OF SALARIES**

- 7.1 As an employer, the Council shall make arrangements to meet fully the statutory requirements placed on all employers by PAYE and National Insurance legislation. The payment of all salaries shall be made in accordance with payroll records and the rules of PAYE and National Insurance currently operating, and salary rates shall be as agreed by Council, or duly delegated committee.
- 7.2 Payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be required to be made for tax, national insurance and pension contributions, or similar statutory or discretionary deductions must be made in accordance with the payroll records and on the appropriate dates stipulated in employment contracts, provided that each payment is reported to the next available Council meeting, as set out in these regulations above. The Clerk or Deputy Clerk will submit all payroll information to Council's payroll service administrator at Shropshire Council for processing. Salaries, PAYE and National Insurance contributions shall be made by BACS. The Clerk or Deputy Clerk will notify NEST on a monthly basis of the pension contributions which shall be made by direct debit.
- 7.3 No changes shall be made to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the Council.
- 7.4 Each and every payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a separate confidential record. This confidential record is not open to inspection or review (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or otherwise) other than:
- a) by any Councillor who can demonstrate a need to know;

- b) by the internal auditor;
- c) by the external auditor; or
- d) by any person authorised under Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation.

- 7.5 The total of such payments in each calendar month shall be reported with all other payments as made as may be required under these Financial Regulations, to ensure that only payments due for the period have actually been paid.
- 7.6 An effective system of personal performance management should be maintained for the senior officers.
- 7.7 Any termination payments shall be supported by a clear business case and reported to the Council. Termination payments shall only be authorised by Council.
- 7.8 Before employing interim staff, the Council must consider a full business case.

## **8 LOANS AND INVESTMENTS**

- 8.1 All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the Council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be approved by Council as to terms and purpose. The application for borrowing approval, and subsequent arrangements for the loan shall only be approved by full Council.
- 8.2 Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase or Leasing of tangible assets) shall be subject to approval by the full Council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to Council in respect of value for money for the proposed transaction.
- 8.3 The Council will arrange with the Council's banks and investment providers for the sending of a copy of each statement of account to the Chair of the Council at the same time as one is issued to the Clerk.
- 8.4 All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the Council and shall be for a set period in accordance with Council policy, not exceeding 12 months.
- 8.5 The Council shall consider the need for an Investment Strategy and Policy which, if drawn up, shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.
- 8.6 All investments of money under the control of the Council shall be in the name of the Council.
- 8.7 All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.
- 8.8 Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, or branch, shall be made in accordance with Regulation 5 (Authorisation of payments) and Regulation 6 (Instructions for payments).

## **9 INCOME**

- 9.1 The collection of all sums due to the Council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 9.2 Particulars of all charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied shall be agreed annually by the Council, notified to the RFO, who shall be responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the Council.

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- 9.3 The Council will review all fees and charges at least annually, following a report of the RFO.
- 9.4 Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the Council and shall be written off in the year.
- 9.5 All sums received on behalf of the Council shall be banked intact as directed by the RFO. In all cases, all receipts shall be deposited with the Council's bankers with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary.
- 9.6 The origin of each receipt shall be entered on the paying-in slip.
- 9.7 Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the Council.
- 9.8 The RFO shall promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claims due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year end.
- 9.9 Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the Council, the RFO shall take such steps as are agreed by the Council to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.
- 9.10 Any income arising which 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 (see also Regulation 16 below).

## **10 ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES**

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 Order books shall be controlled by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.
- 10.3 All members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any *de minimis* provisions in Regulation 11.1 below.
- 10.4 A member may not issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the Council.
- 10.5 The Clerk and Deputy Clerk shall verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order, and in the case of new or infrequent purchases or payments, the Clerk shall ensure that the statutory authority shall be reported to the meeting at which the order is approved so that the minutes can record the power being used.

## **11 CONTRACTS**

- 11.1 Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:
- a) Every contract shall comply with these Financial Regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that this regulation need not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:



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- i. for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services;
  - ii. for specialist services such as are provided by legal professionals acting in disputes;
  - iii. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which consist of repairs to or parts for existing machinery or equipment or plant;
  - iv. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the Council;
  - v. for additional audit work of the external auditor up to an estimated value of £500 (in excess of this sum the Clerk and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Council); and
  - vi. for goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and / or are only sold at a fixed price.
- b) Where the Council intends to procure or award a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract as defined by The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”) which is valued at £25,000 or more, the Council shall comply with the relevant requirements of the Regulations<sup>1</sup>.
  - c) The full requirements of The Regulations, as applicable, shall be followed in respect of the tendering and award of a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract which exceed thresholds in The Regulations set by the Public Contracts Directive 2014/24/EU (which may change from time to time)<sup>2</sup>.
  - d) When applications are made to waive Financial Regulations relating to contracts to enable a price to be negotiated without competition the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the Council.
  - e) Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk/RFO shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases. The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post. 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.
  - f) 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.
  - g) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Orders 18d and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
  - h) When it is to enter into a contract of less than £25,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk or Deputy Clerk shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £1,000 and above £100 the Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10.3 above shall apply.
  - i) The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

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<sup>1</sup> The Regulations require Councils to use the Contracts of the new contracts Finder website to advertise contract opportunities, set out the procedures to be followed in awarding new contracts and to publicise the award of new contracts

<sup>2</sup> Thresholds currently applicable are:

- a. For public supply and public service contracts (£213,477)
- b. For public works contracts (£5,336,937)

- j) Should it occur that 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, provided that the specification does not change, 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.

## **12 PAYMENTS UNDER CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKS (PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACTS)**

- 12.1 Payments on account of the contract sum shall be made within the time specified in the contract by the RFO upon authorised certificates of the architect or other consultants engaged to supervise the contract (subject to any percentage withholding as may be agreed in the particular contract).
- 12.2 Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments. In any case where it is estimated that the total cost of work carried out under a contract, excluding agreed variations, will exceed the contract sum of 5% or more a report shall be submitted to the Council.
- 12.3 Any variation to a contract or addition to or omission from a contract must be approved by the Council and Clerk to the contractor in writing, the Council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the financial provision.

## **13 STORES AND EQUIPMENT**

- 13.1 The officer or employee in charge of each section shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment in that section.
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.
- 13.4 The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.

## **14 ASSETS, PROPERTIES AND ESTATES**

- 14.1 The Clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the Council. The RFO shall ensure a record is maintained of all properties held by the Council, recording the 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.
- 14.2 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.
- 14.3 No real property (interests in land) shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a report in writing 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).
- 14.4 No real property (interests in land) shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the Council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to Council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property

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(including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate).

- 14.5 No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the full Council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to Council with a full business case.
- 14.6 The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date. 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.

## **15 INSURANCE**

- 15.1 Following the annual risk assessment (per Regulation 17), the Clerk/RFO (as appropriate) shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers.
- 15.2 The Clerk shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 15.3 The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the Council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.
- 15.4 The RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and the Clerk shall report these to Council at the next available meeting.
- 15.5 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.

## **16 CHARITIES**

- 16.1 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 to Council on an annual basis, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk and RFO shall verify that any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document is undertaken.

## **17 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 17.1 The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the Council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the Council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.
- 17.2 When considering any new activity, the Clerk shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council.



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## **18 SUSPENSION AND REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

- 18.1 It shall be the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council annually, in May. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk shall make arrangements to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the Council of any requirement for a consequential amendment to these Financial Regulations.
- 18.2 The Council may, by resolution of the Council 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 drawn up and presented in advance to all members of Council.

### **APPENDIX 1**

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The overall purpose of this Committee is to ensure that the Council's finances and accounting arrangements are conducted effectively on behalf of the Town Council. The Committee will operate in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Committee will consist of four councillors as elected at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council with administrative support from the Town Clerk and/or Deputy Town Clerk if required.

- 1 At the first meeting of the Committee after the Annual Meeting of the Town Council the Committee shall elect a Chair (and a Vice-Chair) for the forthcoming year from amongst the Committee membership.
- 2 The Committee shall meet on a quarterly basis, more often if required.
- 3 The Committee will submit its minutes of meetings for endorsement at the next meeting of the Town Council and make them publicly available (except for any confidential business).
- 4 The Committee shall effectively conduct the Council's budgetary, financial and precepting responsibilities in accordance with statutory requirements, and to keep the smooth functioning of the Council's work under review through regular monitoring and make appropriate recommendations to Council.  
The Committee shall:
  - 4.1 Review income and expenditure against budget and forecasting levels;
  - 4.2 Undertake sampling of income and expenditure transactions;
  - 4.3 Review and confirm ear-marked reserves as being appropriate;
  - 4.4 Confirm bank reconciliations;
  - 4.5 Consider spending proposals for Council and Committee projects;
  - 4.6 Review grant applications (received by Council) and make recommendations to full Council for approval;
  - 4.7 Make grant applications on behalf of the Council;
  - 4.8 Review fees and charges annually and make recommendations to full Council for approval;
  - 4.9 Prepare Budget and Precept proposals and make recommendations to full Council for approval.



- 5 The Committee shall refer to the Joint Practitioners' Advisory Group (JPAG) Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England to ensure compliance; monitor the Council's internal controls and review its effectiveness on an annual basis.

These Terms of Reference form Appendix 1 of the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

## **REVIEW**

The effectiveness of these Terms of Reference and associated arrangements will be reviewed annually in conjunction with the Council's Financial Regulations.

## **APPENDIX 2**

# **DEBIT CARD POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In view of the increase of internet purchasing due to the potential savings that online purchasing may offer and the requirements of maintaining operations of Cleobury Mortimer Town Council the issue of debit cards to employees for business use may be authorised. This policy refers only to the issue and use of Council debit cards.

### **2. ISSUE OF CARDS**

The issue of a Council debit card to the designated officers of the Council must be authorised by the Finance Committee and be issued to a named employee for their use only, no other individual may use the debit card.

The financial limit of each issued debit card shall not exceed £1,000. Upon being issued a debit card the employee shall be advised of their individual financial limit.

Each employee issued with a debit card is solely responsible for its safe keeping and usage and for ensuring that the card is not used by others. In particular, PIN numbers will only be issued to the card holder and must be kept confidential, as must the card security (CSC/CVN) number.

Debit cards will be kept in office safe and issued only when required.

Lost or stolen cards must be reported to the issuing bank immediately upon discovery that the card is missing directly by the named cardholder themselves. With no exceptions the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) must also be informed immediately.

In the event of any employee's termination of employment, the employee must return any issued debit card to the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and the card will be destroyed. The issuing bank must be advised to cancel the debit card to prevent any unauthorised usage.

### **3. USAGE OF CARDS**

The debit card should only be used for purchases where Petty Cash is not appropriate and invoicing is not possible. Cash withdrawals are only permitted when being made to:

- top-up the Town Council's Petty Cash account;
- top-up the Food Bank's Petty Cash; or

- make payment to local shops in form of reimbursement for Food Bank vouchers where debit card or cheque payments are not accepted.

Cash withdrawals for Petty Cash should not exceed £250 and must be authorised in advance by the RFO.

Cash withdrawals for Food Bank vouchers must be for the exact amount of the vouchers being reimbursed.

All cash withdrawals must be reconciled with the relevant Petty Cash/Payments statements.

A debit card issued to an employee shall be used for business purposes only and in conjunction with the employee's job role. It shall not be used for any non-business transactions nor for any personal purchases.

#### **4. RECONCILIATION AND INSPECTION**

Every debit card transaction must be entered by the cardholder on to their Debit Card Transaction spreadsheet.

Receipts for all purchases must be submitted with the spreadsheet to the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) on the first working day of each month. The spreadsheet and accompanying receipts are checked by the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and subsequently reviewed and authorised by the Finance Committee/Council and signed by two Councillors.

The transaction receipts shall be reconciled monthly with the bank statements. In the event of any discrepancy, the RFO and Chair of the Finance Committee must be notified and an investigation initiated.

The cardholder is responsible for obtaining and submitting receipts for all transactions. Failure to produce transaction receipts may result in the cardholder being held liable for the sum of said transaction/s.

Note: Designated officers of Council for the purpose of this policy and authorised to use a debit card are the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk only.

#### **5. FRAUDULENT OR MISUSE OF DEBIT CARD**

If the cardholder misuses the debit card or fraudulently uses the card, this will result in disciplinary action being taken against the cardholder.

#### **REVIEW**

This Policy forms Appendix 2 of the Town Council's Financial Regulations. As such the effectiveness of this Policy will be reviewed annually, each May, in conjunction with the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

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**APPENDIX 3**

# **CREDIT CARD POLICY**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In view of the increase of internet purchasing due to the potential savings that online purchasing may offer and the requirements of maintaining operations of Cleobury Mortimer Town Council the issue of credit cards to employees for business use may be authorised. This policy refers only to the issue and use of Council credit cards.

## **2. ISSUE OF CARDS**

The issue of a Council credit card to designated employees of the Council must be authorised by the Finance Committee and be issued to a named employee for their use only, no other individual may use the credit card.

Designated employees of the Council for the purpose of this policy and authorised to receive and use a credit card are the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Maintenance Supervisor only.

Each employee issued with a credit card will be issued with a copy of this Credit Card Policy to ensure understanding of the terms of the policy and the conditions relating to unauthorised use.

Each employee issued with a credit card is solely responsible for its safe keeping and usage and for ensuring that the card is not used by others. In particular, a PIN number will be issued to each cardholder and must be kept confidential, as must the card security (CSC/CVN) number.

Credit cards should be returned and kept in the office safe when not required (ie. if cardholder on leave).

Lost or stolen cards must be reported to the issuing bank immediately upon discovery that the card is missing directly by the named cardholder themselves. With no exceptions the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) must also be informed immediately.

In the event of any employee's termination of employment, the employee must return any issued credit card to the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and the card will be destroyed. The issuing bank must be advised to cancel the credit card to prevent any unauthorised usage.

## **3. USAGE OF CARDS**

The credit card should only be used for purchases online, in-person or on the phone for purchases which require immediate payment and where payment on invoice is not an option. When online payments are made, the cardholder should be aware of internet security precautions and, where possible, only purchase from reputable and known suppliers with a valid website security certificate. Credit card details and security information should not be supplied via email to make payments.

The financial limit of each issued credit card is £1,500.

Credit cards must not be used for cash withdrawals or payment of Food Bank vouchers. Debit Cards are provided for this purpose – see Debit Card Policy.

A credit card issued to an employee shall be used for approved business purposes only and in conjunction with the employee's job role. It shall not be used for any non-business transactions nor for any personal purchases.

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#### **4. RECONCILIATION AND INSPECTION**

Every credit card transaction must be entered by the cardholder on to their Credit Card Transaction spreadsheet. Receipts for all purchases must be submitted with the spreadsheet to the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) on the first working day of each month. The spreadsheet and accompanying receipts will be checked by the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and subsequently reviewed and authorised by the Finance Committee/Council and signed by two Councillors.

The transaction receipts shall be reconciled monthly with the credit card statements. In the event of any discrepancy, the RFO and Chair of the Finance Committee must be notified and an investigation initiated. The cardholder is responsible for obtaining and submitting receipts for all transactions. Failure to produce transaction receipts may result in the cardholder being held liable for the sum of said transaction/s.

A direct debit will be set up to ensure the balance of all credit card statements will be paid in full each month and that no interest is chargeable.

#### **5. FRAUDULENT OR MISUSE OF CREDIT CARD**

If the cardholder misuses the credit card or fraudulently uses the card, this will result in the card being withdrawn and disciplinary action being taken against the cardholder.

#### **REVIEW**

This Policy forms Appendix 3 of the Town Council's Financial Regulations. As such the effectiveness of this Policy will be reviewed annually, each May, in conjunction with the Town Council's Financial Regulations.