

Financial Regulations

Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council

Tabled before council April 2025

Adopted 14/04/2025

(Based on the 2024 NALC template)

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on 25.11.2024.

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 and Scheme of Delegation.
- 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:
 - i. '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.
 - ii. "Approve" may refer to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
 - iii. "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
 - iv. 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
 - v. *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.
 - vi. 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
 - vii. 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and Officers.
- 1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The Chief Officer has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO:
 - i. acts under the policy direction of the council;
 - ii. administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
 - iii. determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
 - iv. ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
 - v. ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
 - vi. seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
 - vii. produces financial management information as required by the council.

1.6. The council must not delegate any decision regarding:

- i. setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);**
- ii. the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls;**
- iii. approving accounting statements;**
- iv. approving an annual governance statement;**
- v. borrowing;**
- vi. declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- vii. 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; and**
- **authorise any grant or single commitment in line with the Scheme of Delegation as set in Appendix 2.**

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 Chief Officer shall prepare, for approval by full Council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the B&A Committee at least annually.

2.3. When considering any new activity, the Chief Officer 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:

- i. ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
- ii. ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
- iii. prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud;**
- iv. allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
- v. identify the duties of Officers dealing with transactions; and**
- vi. ensure division of responsibilities.**

2.6. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair of the B&A Working Group 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 Full Council.

- 2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. 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 reasonable accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**
- i. **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate; and**
 - ii. **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 approved by the full 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:
- i. is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
 - ii. reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;

- iii. can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
 - iv. has no involvement in the management or control of the council.
- 3.9. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:
- i. perform any operational duties for the council;
 - ii. initiate or approve accounting transactions;
 - iii. provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
 - iv. 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 budget 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 initially by the relevant committees at least annually before the end of October for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Chief Officer and the Chair of the relevant committee. The RFO will inform Full Council of any salary implications before the consideration of 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 along with a forecast for the following three financial years, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.
- 4.4. Unspent project budgets may only be carried forward to a subsequent year by placing them in an earmarked reserve with the formal approval of the full Council.
- 4.5. B&A Working Group shall review the draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the council not later than the end of November each year.

- 4.6. The draft budget with any committee or working group proposals and three-year forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the B&A working group and a recommendation made to the full Council.
- 4.7. Having considered the proposed budget and three-year forecast, 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 in line with the Scheme of Delegation.

5. Procurement

- 5.1. **Members and Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any Officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.
- 5.2. The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.
- 5.3. Every contract shall comply with the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.4. **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.5. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 6.12) obtain prices as follows:
- 5.6. For contracts estimated to exceed £25,000 excluding VAT, the RFO shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers or advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.

- 5.7. **For contracts estimated to be over £10,000 excluding VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation¹ regarding the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices about the award of contracts.**
- 5.8. For contracts greater than £2,500 excluding VAT the RFO shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes in line with the Scheme of Delegation.
- 5.9. Where the value is between £500 and £2,500 excluding VAT, the RFO shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers in line with the Scheme of Delegation.
- 5.10. For smaller purchases, Officers 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. 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 in line with the Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 2)
- Such authorisation must be supported by a Council minute 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, 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 Chief Officer may authorise expenditure of up to £2,500 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is

¹ The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website if they advertise contract opportunities and also to publicise the award of contracts over £30,000 including VAT, regardless of whether they were advertised.

necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Chief Officer shall report such action to the Mayor / Leader of the Council as soon as possible and to the council, or relevant committee, 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. A purchase order shall be issued for all work, goods and services with no limit 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 full council. The arrangements shall be reviewed annually for security and efficiency and reported to full council at least annually.

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 the RFO. Where the certification of invoices is done as a batch, this shall include a statement by the RFO that all invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO.

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 a method in accordance with a resolution of the council.

6.6. For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (such as Salaries, PAYE, National Insurance, pension contributions, rent, rates, regular maintenance contracts and similar items), which the council may authorise in advance for the year.

6.7. A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate meeting of the council.

6.8. The Chief Officer / RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments in line with the Scheme of Delegation:

- i. 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 RFO certifies 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.
- ii. 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 council. If the transfer is between £5,000 and £20,000 this shall be reported to the RFO and members of the B&A Committee with immediate effect.

6.9. The RFO / Finance Officer shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, in the Scheme of Delegation, together with the relevant invoices, to the authorised signatories. The authorised signatories shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall authorise payment by e mail. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the next full council meeting.

7. Electronic payments

- 7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO and Finance Officer shall be appointed as the Service Administrators. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify 6 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.
- 7.2. All authorised signatories shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online on request.
- 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.
- 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 all authorised signatories.
- 7.5. In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrators a trained officer shall set up any payments.
- 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 and a printout of the transaction confirming that the payment has been made shall be appended to the invoice for audit purpose.

- 7.8. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next B&A Committee meeting.
- 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 by e mail by two authorised signatories. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by the council at least every year.
- 7.10. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of full Council provided that each payment is approved by e mail by two authorised bank signatories, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to the B&A Committee / full Council at the next meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by the council at least annually.
- 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 approved by e mail by two authorised signatories, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to full council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 7.12. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by two of the Chief Officer, Finance Officer and Operations Manager. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine.
- 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 shall be signed by two authorised signatories.
- 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.

9. Payment cards

- 9.1. Any debit card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Chief Officer / Operations Officer / Finance Officer and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council in writing before any order is placed.

- 9.2. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Chief Officer / Operations Manager / Finance Officer and any balance shall be paid in full each month.
- 9.3. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used except for expenses of up to £250 including VAT, incurred in accordance with council policy.

10. Petty Cash

- 10.1. The council will not maintain any form of cash float, all cash received should be intact.

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 approved by the full Council in closed session, on the recommendation of 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.
- 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. Payroll is undertaken by an approved external contractor. Payroll reports will be reviewed by council 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 in closed session.
- 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. The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 12.4. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 12.5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO / Finance Officer.
- 12.6. 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 Chief Officer. The Finance Officer 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. The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date. 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. Where significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the RFO shall 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 record such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken for the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.
- 13.8. 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 ensure that a record of all such payments is maintained, 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. This would have prior approval from the council.
- 14.2. Any variation or addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Chief Officer 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 Operations Manager shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment.
- 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.
- 15.3. Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.
- 15.4. The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.

16. Assets, properties and estates

- 16.1. The Chief Officer 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 RFO shall give prompt notification to full council 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 full Council at the next available meeting. The RFO shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers in consultation with the Finance Officer.
- 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.

18. Charities

- 18.1. Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Chief Officer / RFO and Finance Officer 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 Chief Officer 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 Chief Officer / RFO. The RFO 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.

20. Compliance with Procurement Act 2023

- 20.1 The Financial Regulations now incorporate the provisions of the Procurement Act 2023, effective from 24 February 2025. All procurement activities must adhere to the updated guidelines as outlined below.

20.2 General Principles

All procurement must achieve best value for money, with transparency, integrity, and accountability.

Councils must prioritise including Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises wherever possible.

All procurement processes must demonstrate fairness and impartiality.

Environmental and social sustainability should be considered in procurement decisions.

20.3 Procedures

Procurement processes are streamlined for lower-value contracts, with enhanced flexibility for higher-value contracts.

All procurement opportunities above £25,000 must be published on the Central Digital Platform to ensure transparency.

The Council must ensure a competitive process through open invitations to tender or quotation.

For contracts exceeding £25,000, adherence to the new tendering requirements under the Procurement Act 2023 is mandatory.

All contracts above £50,000 require formal Council approval before proceeding.

Contracts must not be artificially split to avoid compliance thresholds.

20.4 Reporting Requirements

Councils are required to report annually on supplier performance for contracts exceeding £25,000, promoting better contract management and accountability.

Annual reports must be submitted to the Council's Finance Committee detailing:

Supplier performance against agreed standards.

Issues encountered and resolutions implemented.

Recommendations for future procurement processes.

20.5 Training and Compliance

Relevant staff members must receive training on the updated regulations to ensure full compliance. All procurement processes must be reviewed and adjusted accordingly.

Periodic refresher training must be provided to maintain adherence to best practices.

Documentation of compliance training must be retained for audit purposes.

20.6 Responsibility and Oversight

The RFO is responsible for ensuring adherence to these regulations and reporting any non-compliance to the Full Council.

Regular audits must be conducted to ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023.

Non-compliance or breaches of procurement rules must be promptly reported to the Full Council along with recommendations for corrective action.

Appendix 1 - Tender Process

- 1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Chief Officer 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 Chief Officer 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 Chief Officer 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 Orders and the Scheme of Delegation and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the council 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.

Appendix 2 – The Scheme of Delegation

Scheme of Delegation

This document sets out the delegated powers and responsibilities.

This document is one of the three major ways in which the Council regulates its affairs - the others being its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

The intention of the delegation scheme is to allow the Council to act with all reasonable speed and to ensure decisions can be taken at the most suitable level.

The Chief Officer is responsible for the efficient administration of the Council

The power to delegate functions is set out in the Local Government Act 1972 s101.

101 Arrangements for discharge of functions by local authorities.

(1) Subject to any express provision contained in this Act or any Act passed after this Act, a local authority may arrange for the discharge of any of their functions

(a) by a committee, a sub-committee or an officer of the authority; or

(b) by any other local authority.

<i>Delegation to:</i>	<i>Powers delegated</i>	<i>Restrictions on power</i>
Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)	<p>The Chief Officer is the Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer of the Council.</p> <p>This is delegated in the following order if the Chief Officer is absent for more than one week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To the Operations Manager (ii) To the Mayor (iii) To the Deputy Mayor 	The Chief Officer and the Operations Manager are not expected to take planned leave at the same time.
Operations Manager	In the absence of the Operations Manager for more than 5 days, the required and due work is delegated to the Chief Officer, or in the absence of the Chief Officer, to the Administrative Officers	The Operations Manager and the Administrative Officers are not expected to take planned leave at the same time.
Chief Officer	Statutory power to call meetings, to help set agendas and to sign the summons to meetings as Proper Officer	To consult Mayor or Committee / Working Group Chairs on agenda items.
Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)	Power to authorise payments and purchases within existing budgets, subject to procurement limits set by Financial Regulations	Payments must be lawful and clearly within budget and Financial Regulations.
Chief Officer / Operations Manager	Power to manage staff and direct their work, including hours of work within contracts	Full Council to authorise changes to contracts or salaries.
HR Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The power to recruit and amend staff contracts (ii) The power to initiate and manage disciplinary procedures (iii) The power to prepare and adjust job descriptions (iv) The power to deal with appeals and staff complaints 	Subject to reporting to the full Council to ratify significant decisions
Chief Officer / Operations Manager / Mayor / Deputy Mayor	Power to initiate the Emergency Plan on notification of an emergency, and to vary staff contracts with regard to hours of work during the period of the emergency.	Subject to subsequent report to council and email notification.
Chief Officer	Statutory power to notify council vacancies to Returning Officer, and to initiate election / co-option processes.	Subject to subsequent report to council and notification to members via email

<i>Delegation to:</i>	<i>Powers delegated</i>	<i>Restrictions on power</i>
Chief Officer / Operations Manager	Power to authorise annual, compassionate and sick leave	(i) Report to Chair of HR Panel if absences are over 5 working days, and all compassionate leave (ii) Subject to subsequent report to HR Panel
Chief Officer	(i) Power to initiate first stage disciplinary and capability processes (ii) Power to sign employment related correspondence	Report all staffing concerns within 5 working days to the Chair of the Staffing Committee
RFO / Proper Officer	Staff are authorised to place orders up to £500 The Operations Manager and Finance Officer are authorised to place orders up to £2,500 Payments up to £2,500 may be authorised by the RFO /Proper Officer Payments between £2,500 and £10,000 must be authorised by the Mayor even if the decision has been taken at Committee/ full Council Payments over £10,000 must be agreed by the full Council- a tender is required Above £25,000 - a national tender is required All figures referred to in this document are exclusive of VAT	Payments must be lawful and clearly within budget, and either within procurement rules or from preferred supplier. No further delegation by officers is permitted.
RFO / Chief Officer	Power to dispose of assets with book value of less than £1000, provided they are not part of civic regalia or heritage items.	Decision to be reported to Full Council, and asset register is updated
RFO / Finance Officer	Power to refer correspondence to insurers for advice and to initiate the claims process.	Decision to be reported to Full Council.
RFO with the Finance Officer	Power to decide the form and format of financial records subject to approval by the Full Council	Decision to be reported to the Full Council
Officers	Power to sign correspondence on behalf of Council in connection with planning and conservation matters	Subject to consultation with chair of Planning Committee

<i>Delegation to:</i>	<i>Powers delegated</i>	<i>Restrictions on power</i>
Signatories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Councillors who are signatories are responsible for checking and authorising financial documentation sent to them for authorisation by the Finance Officer. (ii) The Finance Officer will make the payments after 2 Councillors have agreed by e mail and all queries have been clarified. (iii) The Council will appoint and maintain 6 signatories who shall be Councillors, reviewed at full Council Annually. 	Subject to the Financial Regulations.