

APPENDIX A

Longdon Parish Council Financial Regulations

Part 2 - Financial Regulations

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. Deliberate or wilful breach of the Regulations by an employee may give rise to disciplinary proceedings.

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. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office appointed by the council.

1.7. 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;
- 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.

1.8. The accounting records determined by the RFO shall be sufficient to show and explain the council's transactions and to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

1.9. The accounting records determined by the RFO shall in particular contain:

- entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which the income and expenditure or receipts and payments account relate;
- a record of the assets and liabilities of the council subsidy.

1.10. 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.
- A schedule of payments by the Council, cheque(s) or otherwise, shall be prepared monthly and submitted to each and every full Council meeting. The Chairman will sign and date the schedule if accepted and approved.
- Reimbursement for purchase(s) and/or expenditure paid on behalf of the Council will be subject to; valid VAT receipt being in the name of the Parish Council and completion of expenses claim form

The council is not empowered by these Regulations or otherwise to delegate certain specified decisions. In particular any decision regarding the following shall be a matter for the full council only:

- 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,

1.11. 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. 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, 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. 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.

2.3. 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.

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

2.5. The internal auditor shall:

- be competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
- report to council in writing, or in person, with a minimum of one annual written report during each financial year;
- demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, and 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.

2.6. 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.

2.7. 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.

2.8. 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 statements of account required by Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3. ANNUAL ESTIMATES (BUDGET) AND FORWARD PLANNING

3.1. The RFO must each year prepare detailed estimates of all receipts and payments including the use of reserves in the form of a budget to be considered by the council.

3.2. 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.

3.3. The approved annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

4. BUDGETARY CONTROL AND AUTHORITY TO SPEND

4.1. 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.

4.2. 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 chairman as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.

4.3. 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.

4.4. All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.

4.5. 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.

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.

5.2. The RFO shall prepare a schedule of payments either made or requiring authorisation, as part of the agenda for the council meeting.

5.3. All invoices for payment shall be examined by the RFO for arithmetical accuracy and to confirm that the work, goods or services to which each invoice relates has been received and carried out.

5.4. The Clerk and RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise the payment of items in the following circumstances:

- a) Where the amount is less than £300
- b) 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,
- c) The payment is part of a continuing contracts or obligations.

5.5 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.

5.6 That signatories for cheques should be: The Chair of the Council; all committee members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee; the Chair of Highways and Open Spaces Committee. The Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee will be recognised as the councillor to check the financial documents presented and prepared by the Clerk/RFO. The Clerk is to be a signatory on the account to allow her to access information and enable on-line banking.

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

6.3. 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. 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.

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

6.5. Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at a council or committee meeting (including immediately before or after such a meeting).

6.6. 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.

6.7. If thought appropriate by the council, payment for certain items (principally salaries) 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.

6.8. 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.

6.9. 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.

6.10. 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 and Passwords and shall be handed to and retained by the Chairman of Council in a sealed dated envelope. This envelope may not be opened other than in the presence of two other councillors. This will not be required for a member's personal computer used only for remote authorisation of bank payments.

6.11. 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.

6.12. Regular back-up copies of the records on any computer shall be made and shall be stored securely away from the computer in question, and preferably off site.

6.13. 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.

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

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

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.

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 (confidential cash book). This confidential record is not open to inspection or review (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or otherwise) other than:

- by any councillor who can demonstrate a need to know;
- by the internal auditor;
- by the external auditor; or
- 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.

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/Welsh Assembly Government (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. All investments of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.

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

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. The council will review all fees and charges at least annually, following a report of the Clerk.

9.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year.

9.4. The origin of each receipt shall be entered on the paying-in slip.

9.5. The RFO shall promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year end.

9.6. 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.

10. ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

10.1. A written order/instruction, via the or purchase order book, shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Only the Proper Officer can make the order.

10.2. 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

10.3. A member may not issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the council.

11. CONTRACTS

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:

i. for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services;

ii. for specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants;

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 £300 (in excess of this sum the Clerk and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chair of council).

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 value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold [£25,000 at July 2015] specified by the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (or subsequent legislation), the council must comply with the requirements of those Regulations, including any EU Procurement Directive requirements applicable.

c) 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.

d) Where tenders are invited, the invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases. 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.

e) All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least two members of council.

f) When it is to enter into a contract of less than £25,000 but more than £5,000 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 RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply);

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

h) The European Union Procurement Directive shall apply and the terms of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 and the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2006 including thresholds shall be followed.

12. PAYMENTS UNDER CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKS

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 RFO shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment/st 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, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed £500.

14.3. No 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.

14.4. Subject only to the limit set in Reg. 14.2 above, no tangible moveable property shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the full council.

14.5. 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 Financial Regulation 17), the RFO, in consultation with the Clerk, shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the council's insurers

15.2. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.

15.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to council at the next available meeting.

15.4. 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 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 in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk and RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.]

17. RISK MANAGEMENT

17.1. The council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk, with the RFO, 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, with the RFO, shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the council.

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 from time to time. The 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.

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