

CHADWICK END PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. GENERAL

- 1.1 These financial regulations govern the conduct of fiscal management by the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council. The council is responsible in law for ensuring that its fiscal management is adequate and effective, and that the council has a sound system of financial control which facilitates the effective exercise of the council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk and for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. These financial regulations are designed to demonstrate how the council meets these responsibilities.
- 1.2 The Clerk has been appointed as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) for this council and these regulations will apply accordingly. The RFO, acting under the policy direction of the Council, shall administer the Council's financial affairs in accordance with proper practices. The RFO shall determine on behalf of the council its accounting records, and accounting control systems. The RFO shall ensure that the accounting control systems are observed and that the accounting records of the council are maintained and kept up to date in accordance with proper practices.
- 1.3 The RFO shall produce fiscal management information as required by the council.
- 1.4 At least once a year, prior to approving the annual return, the council shall conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control which shall be in accordance with proper practices.
- 1.5 In these financial regulations, references to the Accounts and Audit Regulations shall mean the Regulations issued under the provisions of section 27 of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and then in force.
- 1.6 In these financial regulations the term 'proper practice' or 'proper practices' shall refer to guidance issued in *Governance and Accountability in local Councils in England and Wales - a Practitioners' Guide* which is published jointly by NALC and SLCC and updated from time to time.

2. ANNUAL ESTIMATES (BUDGET)

- 2.1 Detailed estimates of all receipts and payments including the use of reserves and all sources of funding for the year shall be prepared each year by the RFO in the form of a budget to be considered by the council.
- 2.2 The Council shall review the draft budget no later than the end of December each year and shall fix the budget and Precept to be levied for the ensuing fiscal year by the end of January. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority and shall supply each member with a copy of the approved budget.
- 2.3 The annual budgets shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.
- 2.4 The Council will consider, on a rolling programme, a three-year forecast of Revenue and Capital Receipts and Payments which may be prepared at the same time as the annual Budget.

3 BUDGETARY CONTROL

- 3.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget.
- 3.2 No expenditure may be incurred that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure. 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The Clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to carry out any repair replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £1,000. The Clerk shall report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter. All procedures must be agreed by the Clerk before any work is undertaken.
- 3.5 Unspent provisions in the revenue budget shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year unless placed in an earmarked reserve by resolution of the council.
- 3.6 No expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any capital project and no contract entered or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available, or the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.
- 3.7 All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.

4. ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT

- 4.1 All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 4.2 The RFO shall complete the annual financial statements of the Council, including the council's annual return, as soon as practicable after the end of the fiscal year and shall submit them and report thereon to the Council.
- 4.3 The RFO shall complete the Accounts of the Council contained in the Annual Return (as supplied by the Auditor appointed from time to time by the Audit Commission) and shall submit the Annual Return for approval and authorisation by the Council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 4.4 The RFO shall ensure that there is adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting, financial and other operations in accordance with proper practices. Any officer or member of the Council shall, if the RFO or Internal Auditor requires, make available such documents of the Council which appear to the RFO or Internal Auditor to be necessary for the purpose of the internal audit and shall supply the RFO or Internal Auditor with such information and explanation as the RFO or Internal Auditor considers necessary for that purpose.

4.5 The Internal Auditor shall be appointed by and shall conduct the work required by the council in accordance with proper practices. The Internal Auditor, who shall be competent and independent of the operations of the Council, shall report to Council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual written report in respect of each fiscal year. To demonstrate objectivity and independence, the internal auditor shall be free from any conflicts of interest and not be involved in the financial decision making, management or control of the council.

4.6 The RFO shall plan for the opportunity for inspection of the accounts, books, and vouchers and for the display or publication of any Notices and statements of account required by Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

4.7 The RFO shall, as soon as practicable, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from the Internal or External Auditor, unless the correspondence is of a purely administrative matter.

5. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND CHEQUES

5.1 The Council's banking arrangements, including the Bank Mandate, shall be made by the RFO, and approved by the Council. They shall be regularly reviewed for efficiency.

5.2 A schedule of the payments required, forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting shall be prepared by the RFO and, together with the relevant invoices, be presented to Council. If the schedule is in order, it shall be authorised by a resolution of the Council and shall be initialled by the Chair of the Meeting. If more appropriate the detail may be shown in the Minutes of the Meeting.

5.3 Cheques drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule referred to in paragraph 5.2 or in accordance with paragraph 6.4 shall be signed by the RFO and one member of the Council or two members of the Council. The Council will monitor electronic banking, and online transactions will require online approval from one councillor once submitted by the RFO or a second councillor if submitted by one Councillor in the absence of the RFO.

5.4 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.

6 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

6.1 All payments shall be affected by cheque or bank transfer drawn on the Council's bankers.

6.2 All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified, and certified by the Clerk. The Clerk shall satisfy him/herself that the work, goods, or services to which the invoice relates shall have been received, conducted, examined and approved.

6.3 The RFO shall examine invoices in relation to arithmetic accuracy and shall analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The Clerk shall take all steps to settle all invoices submitted, and which are in order, at the next available Council Meeting.

6.4 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 RFO certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, the Clerk may (notwithstanding para 6.3)

take all steps necessary to settle such invoices provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council.

6.5 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.

6.6 If thought appropriate by the council, payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone, and water) 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 at least every two years.

7 PAYMENT OF SALARIES

7.1 As an employer, the council shall plan 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 salaries shall be as agreed by Council.

7.2 Payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be made for tax, national insurance and pension contributions, may be made in accordance with the payroll records and on the appropriate dates stipulated in employment contracts, provided that each payment is reported to and ratified by the next available Council Meeting.

8 LOANS AND INVESTMENTS

8.1 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.

8.2 The council shall consider the need for an Investment Policy which, if drawn up, shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices, and guidance. Any Policy shall be reviewed at least annually.

8.3 All investments of money under the control of the Council shall be in the name of the Council.

8.4 All borrowings shall be affected 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 terms and conditions of borrowings shall be reviewed at least annually.

8.5 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 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 and the RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the Council.
- 9.3 The Council will review all fees and charges annually, following a report of the Clerk.
- 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 claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made at least annually coinciding with the fiscal 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.

10 ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

- 10.1 An official order, email 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 RFO.
- 10.3 All members and Officers are responsible for always obtaining value for money. 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 (I) below.
- 10.4 The RFO 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 RFO 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

Procedures as to contracts for works to be undertaken are laid down as follows:

- (a) Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made except in an emergency and 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; 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 £250 (more than this sum the Clerk and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairman 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) Whatever the value of the contract the RFO and Councillors are responsible for obtaining value for money whenever possible for every service or goods purchased on behalf of the Council, irrespective of the amount involved. The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest of any tender or quote.

The following criteria is designed to help achieve this.

i) Services/Goods valued over £20,000

A formal tender process must be used whenever possible, except for those goods and services detailed in a) above. This will involve the RFO inviting sealed tenders from at least three specialist contractors which can conduct the works or supply the goods. Should it prove impossible to find three specialist contractors this should be brought to the attention of the Council and a decision reached on whether non specialist contractors should be used. If it felt appropriate to waive financial regulations relating to contracts over £20,000 to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason shall be discussed at a Council meeting, a resolution passed, and a minute prepared before proceeding.

The invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the RFO shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases. The invitation shall state that tenders must be addressed to the RFO at their working address. Each contractor shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed. These will 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 RFO in the presence of at least one member of Council. The RFO will summarise the tenders for discussion at the next Council meeting.

If less than three tenders are received for contracts above £20,000 or if all the tenders are identical the Council should discuss this at a meeting and agreement reached on the best way to proceed.

ii) Services/Goods valued £2000 to £19,999.

The RFO shall obtain three written quotations except in cases as detailed in a) above. The quotations can be either typed, ideally on letter headed notepaper and posted to the RFO working address or emailed to the RFO using the Council email address. The RFO will summarise the quotations for discussion at the next Council meeting.

If less than 3 quotations are obtained the Council will discuss this at a meeting and agreement reached on how to proceed.

iii) Services/Goods valued at £1999 to £500.

The RFO should obtain at least two written quotations except in cases as detailed in a) above. If a single quotation is obtained and is deemed to be more than the expected cost at least one more quotation should be obtained, if possible, from a different contractor. The quotation(s) will be summarised by the RFO and sent with a recommendation to 2 Councillors for consideration. If the recommendation is accepted the RFO will instruct the recommended contractor and the next Council meeting will be updated on this order. Should the recommendation not be accepted the matter will be referred to the next Council meeting for discussion on how to proceed.

iv) Services/Goods valued at less than £500.

The RFO should advise at least 2 Councillors of the requirements before ordering the services or goods and receive a confirmation to proceed from the Councillors. This includes any emergency work/goods required urgently.

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 conducted 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 ASSETS, PROPERTIES AND ESTATES

13.1 The Clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds of properties owned by the Council. The RFO shall ensure a record is maintained of all properties owned 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.

13.2 No property shall be 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 £50.

13.3 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, in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

14 INSURANCE

14.1 Following the annual risk assessment (per Financial Regulation 17), the RFO/Clerk shall affect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers.

14.2 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.

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

14.4 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.

14.5 All appropriate employees of the Council shall be included in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined by the Council.

15 CHARITIES

15.1 Where the Council is sole 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.

16 RISK MANAGEMENT

16.1 The council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk/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.

16.2 When considering any new activity, the Clerk/RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the council.

17 REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

17.1 It shall be the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council from time to time. The Clerk shall plan to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the council of any requirement for a consequential amendment to these financial regulations.

Signed

Date:

2nd March 2021