

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

APPROVED BY COUNCIL ON 24 JANUARY 2023

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1. General

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

may be, or management information prepared for the Council from time to time comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations¹.

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

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

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

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

1.13. The Council is not empowered by these Regulations or otherwise to delegate certain specified decisions. In particular any decision regarding:

- setting the final budget or the precept (Council Tax Requirement);
- approving accounting statements;
- approving an annual governance statement;
- borrowing;
- writing off bad debts;
- declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and
- addressing recommendations in any report from the internal or external auditors,

shall be a matter for the full Council only.

1.14. In addition, the Council must:

- determine and keep under regular review the bank mandate for all Council bank accounts;
- approve any grant in excess of £5,000; and
- in respect of the annual salary for any employee have regard to recommendations about annual salaries of employees made by the relevant Committee in accordance with its terms of reference.

¹ In England - Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011/817

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

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

2. Accounting and Audit (Internal and External)

- 2.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined by the RFO/Finance Officer in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, appropriate guidance and proper practices.
- 2.2. On a regular basis, at least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a Member other than the Chair or a cheque signatory shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts). The Member shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification. This activity shall on conclusion be reported, including any exceptions, to and noted by the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 2.3. The Finance Officer 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. The RFO having certified the accounts shall submit them and report thereon to the Council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 2.4. The Council shall ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records, and of its system of internal control in accordance with proper practices. Any Officer or Member of the Council shall make available such documents and records as appear to the Council to be necessary for the purpose of the audit and shall, as directed by the Council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the Council considers necessary for that purpose.
- 2.5. The internal auditor shall be appointed by and shall carry out the work in relation to internal controls required by the Council in accordance with proper practices.
- 2.6. The internal auditor shall:
- be competent and independent of the financial operations of the Council;
 - report to Council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual written report during each financial year;
 - to demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, be free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
 - have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council.
- 2.7. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:
- perform any operational duties for the Council;
 - initiate or approve accounting transactions; or
 - direct the activities of any Council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.

- 2.8. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as is described in proper practices.
- 2.9. The RFO and Finance Officer 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.
- 2.10. The RFO and Finance Officer shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all Councillors, any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

3. Annual Estimates (Budget) and Forward Planning

- 3.1. Each committee shall review its annual forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments. Having regard to the forecast, it shall thereafter formulate and submit proposals for the following financial year to the Policy and Resources Committee not later than the end November each year including any proposals for revising the forecast.
- 3.2. The RFO and Finance Officer must each year, by no later than December, prepare detailed estimates of all receipts and payments including the use of reserves and all sources of funding for the following financial year in the form of a budget to be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.3. The Council shall consider annual budget proposals in relation to the Council's forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments including recommendations for the use of reserves and sources of funding and update the forecast accordingly.
- 3.4. The Council shall approve 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 February each year. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority by 1 March and shall supply each Member with a copy of the approved annual budget.
- 3.5. The approved annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

4. Budgetary Control and Authority to Spend

- 4.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:
 - a committee for any budgeted item under its area of competence as stated in terms of reference;
 - the Clerk within delegated authority including running costs and specific delegations such as £3,000 for each park or street scene improvement;
 - the Council for any unbudgeted items, or any items which require drawing from reserves or budget virement or any grants over £5,000.

Such authority is to be evidenced by a Minute or by an authorisation purchase order signed by the Clerk or Finance Officer, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chair. The exceptions to the above are contractual or statutory obligations such as salary payments or Service Level Agreements such as CCTV contributions, which are agreed on an annual basis.

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

- 4.2. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the Council, or duly delegated committee. During the budget year and with the approval of Council or relevant committee having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings, carried forward to a subsequent year or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate ('virement').
- 4.3. If the committee does not wish or is unable to make a virement, it may submit a request with supporting evidence to the Policy and Resources Committee or Council, as appropriate, for a supplementary estimate, the cost of which to be met from the Council's resources.
- 4.4. Unspent provisions in the revenue or capital budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year, unless approved by full Council.
- 4.5. The salary budgets are to be reviewed at least annually in November for the following financial year and such review shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of Council or relevant committee. The RFO will inform committees of any changes impacting on their budget requirement for the coming year in good time.
- 4.6. In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of services, the Town Clerk or Finance Officer may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the Clerk's judgement 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 £5,000. The Town Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.7. 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.
- 4.8. All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations relating to contracts.
- 4.9. The Finance Officer shall regularly provide the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget. These statements are to be prepared at least at the end of each financial quarter and shall show explanations of material variances. For this purpose "material" shall be in excess of 15% of the budget.
- 4.10. Changes in earmarked reserves shall be approved by Council as part of the budgetary control process.

5. Banking Arrangements and Authorisation of Payments

- 5.1. The Council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and Finance Officer and approved by the Council; banking arrangements may not be delegated to a committee. They shall be regularly reviewed for safety and efficiency. The bank shall seek credit references in respect of Members or employees who act as signatories.
- 5.2. A detailed schedule of payments requiring authorisation, together with the relevant invoices will be prepared and presented to the appropriate Members (authorised bank signatories) for approval.

Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of a contract of employment) may be summarised to remove public access to any personal information). The bank transfer schedule will require the approval via email, of the Town Clerk and two Members, from a pool of four to be determined by the Council. If paying by cheque, the schedule and cheques will require the signature of the Town Clerk and two Members from that pool.

- 5.3. A schedule of payments made in 5.2, will form part of the agenda for Policy and Resources Committee. The committee shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall confirm the payments were made as correct and appropriate by a resolution of the Policy and Resources Committee. The approval of the schedule shall be concerned in the minutes of the meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of a contract of employment) may be summarised to remove public access to any personal information.
- 5.4. All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the RFO and/or Finance Officer to confirm that the work, goods or services to which each invoice relates has been received, carried out, examined and represents expenditure previously approved by the council.
- 5.5. The RFO and/or Finance Officer shall examine invoices for arithmetical accuracy and analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The RFO and Finance Officer shall take all steps to pay all invoices submitted, and which are in order, before the next available Policy and Resources Committee.
- 5.6. The RFO and/or Finance Officer shall have delegated authority to authorise the payment of items only in the following circumstances:
 - a) If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, and the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of Council, where the Clerk and RFO certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.
 - b) An expenditure item authorised under 5.7 below (continuing contracts and obligations) provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.
 - c) Fund transfers within the council's banking arrangements up to the sum of £50,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Policy and Resources Committee.
- 5.7. For each financial year the RFO and Finance Officer shall draw up a list of due payments which arise on a regular basis as the result of a continuing contract, statutory duty, or obligation (such as but not exclusively, Salaries, PAYE and NI, Superannuation Fund and regular maintenance contracts and the like for which Council or the authorised committee may authorise payment for the year provided that the requirements of regulation 4.1 (Budgetary Controls) are adhered to, provided also that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

- 5.8. A record of regular payments made by the payroll provider on behalf of the Council under 5.7 above shall be included in the schedule detailed in 5.2.
- 5.9. In respect of grants a duly authorised committee shall approve expenditure within any limits set by Council and in accordance with the grants criteria approved by Council. Any Revenue or Capital Grant in excess of £5,000 shall before payment, be subject to ratification by resolution of the Council.
- 5.10. 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.
- 5.11. The Council will aim to rotate the duties of Members in these Regulations so that onerous duties are shared out as evenly as possible over time.
- 5.12. Any changes in the recorded details of suppliers, such as bank account records, shall be approved in writing by a Member.

6. Instructions for the Making of Payments

- 6.1. The Council will make safe and efficient arrangements for the making of its payments.
- 6.2. Following authorisation under Financial Regulation 5 above, the Council, a duly delegated committee or, if so delegated, the RFO shall give instruction that a payment shall be made.
- 6.3. All payments shall be affected by BACS (bank transfer) or cheque to the Council's bankers, or otherwise, in accordance with a resolution of Council or duly delegated committee.
- 6.4. Cheques shall be signed by the Town Clerk and two Members from the pool of signatories in accordance with a resolution or approval for that payment/expenditure. Bank transfer schedules shall be authorised via email by the Town Clerk and two Member signatories. Bank transfers shall be electronically signed on the BACS platform by the Finance Officer and either the Town Clerk or Administration and Events Manager. All payments will be reported to Policy and Resources Committee as made.
- 6.5. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the Council at least every two years.
- 6.6. 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.
- 6.7. If thought appropriate by the Council, payment for utility supplies or other appropriate supply for example payroll provision, leases, 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 Policy and Resources Committee 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.
- 6.8. 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.

- 6.9. 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, each Officer holding such a PIN or password shall not disclose either PIN or password to anyone else. They shall place a record of the PIN or password in an envelope which shall be retained in the safe. This envelope may not be opened other than in the presence of the Clerk and a Councillor, and only where necessary to maintain the operations of the Council in the absence of the Officer. After the envelope has been opened, in any circumstances, the PIN and/or passwords shall be changed as soon as practicable. The fact that the sealed envelope has been opened, in whatever circumstances, shall be reported to the chair of the Policy and Resources Committee immediately, and formally to the next available meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. This will not be required for a Member's personal computer used only for remote authorisation of bank payments.
- 6.10. 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 the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 6.11. All Council data is securely stored in the cloud with daily cloud backups managed as part of the Council's ongoing contract with its IT provider. Email and user data are imaged to the cloud in real-time
- 6.12. 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.
- 6.13. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO or Finance Officer shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The Bank Mandate approved by the Council shall identify a number of Councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts. The bank mandate will state clearly the amounts of payments that can be instructed by the use of the Service Administrator alone, or by the Service Administrator with a stated number of approvals.
- 6.14. Access to any internet banking accounts will be directly to the access page (which may be saved under "favourites"), and not through a search engine or e-mail link. Remembered or saved passwords facilities must not be used on any computer used for Council banking work. Breach of this regulation will be treated as a very serious matter under these regulations.
- 6.15. Changes to account details for suppliers, which are used for internet banking may only be changed on written hard copy notification by the supplier, which shall include variations noted on invoices sent by the supplier. A programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed.
- 6.16. Government Procurement Cards (GPC) are held by the Town Clerk and the Mayor's Officer for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses, which require immediate payment and are greater than petty cash. The cards will be administered and controlled by the Finance Officer.
- 6.17. The GPC cannot be used to withdraw cash or for personal use which would be gross misconduct. A monthly spend limit of £1,200 will be placed on each card with a single transaction limit of £250 and an overall account spend limit of £2,000. All payments shall be supported by either an invoice or VAT receipt, if applicable.

- 6.18. Payment to clear the card balance shall be made by monthly variable Direct Debit. Payments made on the GPC shall be drawn on the Council's current account and shown separately on the schedule of payments.
- 6.19. The approval of the use of Government Procurement Cards shall be renewed by resolution of the Council at least every two years.
- 6.20. The RFO may provide petty cash to officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses. Vouchers for payments made shall be forwarded to the Finance Officer with a claim for reimbursement.
- a) The Finance Officer shall maintain a petty cash float of £200 for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses. Vouchers together with appropriate receipts for payments made from petty cash shall be kept to substantiate the payment.
 - b) Income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.
 - c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately on the schedule of payments presented to Policy and Resources Committee.
 - d) Payments shall be linked to items of a minor nature not exceeding a cost of £20.00 for a single item.

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 Policy and Resources Committee, 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 Policy and Resources Committee.
- 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 (Rialtas Finance System – which has restricted access). This confidential record is not open to inspection or review (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or otherwise) other than:
- a) by any Councillor who can demonstrate a need to know;
 - b) by the internal auditor;
 - c) by the external auditor; or

d) by any person authorised under Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation.

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

8. Loans and Investments

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

9. Income

- 9.1. The collection of all sums due to the Council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 9.2. Particulars of all charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied shall be agreed annually by the Council, notified to the RFO 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 at least 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 Finance Officer shall promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made quarterly and coinciding with the financial year end.
- 9.9. Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the RFO shall take such steps as are agreed by the Council to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.
- 9.10. Any income arising which is the property of a charitable trust shall be paid into a charitable bank account. Instructions for the payment of funds due from the charitable trust to the Council (to meet expenditure already incurred by the authority) will be given by the Managing Trustees of the charity meeting separately from any council meeting (see also Regulation 16 below)].

10. Orders for Work, Goods and Services

- 10.1. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained.
- 10.2. All orders shall be raised by the Finance Officer or Administration Officer and be authorised by the RFO or a Senior Manager.
- 10.3. All Members and Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any de minimis provisions in Regulation 11 (l) below. Purchases made through a recognised local authority supplier, which has been subject to a prior competitive procedure, shall not require additional quotation or estimates.
- 10.4. A Member may not issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the Council.
- 10.5. The RFO shall verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order.

11. Contracts

11.1. Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:

- a. Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that this regulation need not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:
 - 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 £500 (in excess of this sum the RFO shall act after consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of council); and
 - vi. for goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and / or are only sold at a fixed price.
- b. Where the Council intends to procure or award a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract as defined by The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”) which is valued at £25,000 or more, the Council shall comply with the relevant requirements of the Regulations. The Regulations require Councils to use the Contracts Finder website to advertise contract opportunities, set out the procedures to be followed in awarding new contracts and to publicise the award of new contracts.
- c. The full requirements of The Regulations, as applicable, shall be followed in respect of the tendering and award of a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract which exceed thresholds in The Regulations set by the Public Contracts Directive 2014/24/EU (which may change from time to time).

Thresholds currently applicable are:

- i. For public supply and public service contracts 209,000 Euros (£181,302)
 - ii. For public works contracts 5,225,000 Euros (£4,551,413)
- d. When applications are made to waive financial regulations relating to contracts to enable a price to be negotiated without competition the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the Council.

- e. Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk 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 the contract.
- f. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of a at least one Member of the Council.
- g. Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order 71 and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- h. When it is to enter into a contract of less than £25,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £3,000 and above £100 the RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10.3 above shall apply.
- i. The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- j. Should it occur that the Council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated, and the council requires further pricing, provided that the specification does not change, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision making process was being undertaken.

12. Payments Under Contracts for Building or Other Construction Works

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

13. Stores and Equipment

- 13.1. The officer in charge of each section shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment in that section.
- 13.2. Delivery Notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.

13.3. Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.

13.4. The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores at least annually.

14. Assets, Properties and Estates

14.1. The RFO 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 or relevant committee, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed £250.

14.3. No real property (interests in land) shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law, In each case a report in writing shall be provided to Council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate).

14.4. No real property (interests in land) shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of full Council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to Council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate).

14.5. Subject only to the limit set in Reg. 14.2 above, no tangible moveable property shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of full Council. In each case a Report in writing shall be provided to council with a full business case.

14.6. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

15. Insurance

15.1. Following the annual risk assessment (per Financial Regulation 17), the RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers in consultation with the Finance Officer.

15.2. The RFO shall give prompt notification of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.

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

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

15.5. All appropriate Members and employees of the Council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined annually by the Policy and Resources Committee.

16. Charities

16.1. Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the 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 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 RFO with the Finance Officer 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 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 Policy and Resources Committee and full Council to review the Financial Regulations of the council from time to time. The RFO and Finance Officer 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.

Steve Kerry
Town Clerk