

# Financial Regulations Policy

Reviewed and Approved

Council Meeting Date	Minute Reference
13 May 2024	2024/05-7 ii
12 May 2025	2025/05-7a)ii
18 May 2026	2026/05-7a)2

## **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. 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 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 Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) is a statutory office and shall be appointed by the Council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO for Legbourne Parish Council and these regulations will apply accordingly. The RFO, acting under the 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 financial 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 Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and then in force.
- 1.6 In these Financial Regulations the term 'proper practice(s)' 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 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 & 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, the bank reconciliation will be presented to and approved by Council
- 2.3 The RFO shall complete the annual financial statement of the Council, including the Council's Annual Return, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them to the Council.
- 2.4 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.

- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 The internal Auditor shall be appointed by and shall carry out 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. In order to demonstrate objectivity and independence, the Internal Auditor shall be free from any conflicts of interest and have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council
- 2.7 The RFO shall make arrangements 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 Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 2.8 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.

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

- 3.1 Each Committee (if any) shall formulate and submit proposals to the Council in respect of revenue and capital including the use of reserves and sources of funding for the following financial year not later than the end of November each year.
- 3.2 Detailed estimates of all receipts and payments including the use of reserves and all sources of funding for the year shall be prepared annually by the RFO in the form of a budget to be considered by the Council.
- 3.3 The Council shall review the budget not later than the end of January each year and shall fix the Precept to be levied for the forthcoming financial year. The RFO shall issue the precept to East Lindsey District Council and shall supply each member with a copy of the proposed and approved budget.
- 3.4 The approved annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for each year.
- 3.5 The Council shall consider the need for and shall have regard to a three year forecast Receipts and Payments which may be prepared at the same time as the annual budget.

- 3.6 The Council will approve a policy regarding the purpose and methodology of calculating the level of earmarked reserves and set / review the contributions as part of its annual budget process.

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

- 4.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by full council unless it agrees to delegate authority for a specific item to the Chairman / Vice Chairman or Clerk / RFO. Such authority is to be evidenced by a Minute.
- 4.2 No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the council, or duly delegated committee. During the budget year and with the approval of Council having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate (virement).
- 4.3 The RFO shall, when requested, 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.
- 4.4 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 £150. The Clerk shall consult with the Chairman immediately and then report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.5 Unspent provisions in the revenue budget shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year unless agreed otherwise by the Council
- 4.6 No expenditure shall be incurred 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, or the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.
- 4.7 All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations relating to contracts.
- 4.8 The RFO shall regularly provide the council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget. These statements are to be prepared at least at the end of each financial quarter and shall show explanations of material variances.
- 4.9 Changes in earmarked reserves may be approved by council as part of the budgetary control process.

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

- 5.1 The Council's banking arrangements, including the Bank Mandate, shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council, banking arrangements may not be delegated to a committee. They shall be regularly reviewed for safety and 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. If more appropriate the detail may be shown in the Minutes of the Meeting.
- 5.3 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, carried out, examined and approved.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 The Clerk & RFO 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 & 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 council.
  - b) An expenditure item authorised under 5.6 below (continuing contracts & obligations) provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council; or
  - c) Fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £10,000 provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council.
- 5.6 In respect of grants a duly authorised committee shall approve expenditure within any limits set by council and in accordance with any Policy statement 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.
- 5.7 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.

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

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

- 6.2 Following authorisation under Financial Regulation 5 above, the council, a duly delegated committee or, if so delegated, the Clerk or RFO shall give instruction that a payment shall be made.
- 6.3 All payments shall be effected by cheque, online transfer or other instructions to the council's bankers, or otherwise, in accordance with a resolution of Council or duly delegated committee.
- 6.4 Cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule as presented to council or committee shall be signed by two members of council in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment. Online payments will be set up by the authorised Clerk/RFO and require two members of council to approve electronically in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment. If a member who is also a bank signatory has declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, or has any other interest, in the matter in respect of which the payment is being made, that Council shall be required to consider Standing Orders and thereby determine whether it is appropriate and/or permissible to be a signatory to the transaction in question.
- 6.5 To indicate agreement of the details shown on the cheque or order for payment with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall each also initial the cheque counterfoil or provide online electronic authorisation on the bank account.
- 6.6 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). Any signatures obtained away from such meetings shall be reported to the council at the next convenient meeting.
- 6.7 If thought appropriate by the council, payment for certain items (principally Salaries) may be made by Bankers Standing Order provided that the instructions are signed, or otherwise evidenced by two members, are retained and any payments are reported to council as made. The approval of the use of a Banker's Standing Order shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 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. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 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. 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 all members

immediately and formally to the next available meeting of the council. This will not be required for a member's personal computer used only for remote authorisation of bank payments.

- 6.11 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 Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Clerk (RFO) shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The Bank Mandate approved by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts, two authorised Councillors to sign the payment submission document, with one of the two delegated to authorise the payment on line.
- 6.15 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.
- 6.16 Changes to account details for suppliers, which are used for internet banking may only be changed on written hard copy notification by the supplier and supported by hard copy authority for change signed by the Clerk & a member. A programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed.
- 6.17 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 (for example postage or minor stationery items) shall be refunded on a regular basis.

## **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 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.
- 7.3 No changes shall be made to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council.

- 7.4 Each and every payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a separate confidential record. This confidential record is not open to inspection or review (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or otherwise) other than:
- a) By any Councillor who can demonstrate a need to know.
  - b) By the Internal Auditor
  - c) By the External Auditor, or
  - d) By any person authorised under Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 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 Clerk.
- 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 loans and investments shall be effected 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 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 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 an 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 financial year end.

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

- 10.1 An official 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 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 seeking three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any de minimis provisions in Regulation 11 (1) below. In the event three quotations cannot be obtained the matter will be referred to Council to determine whether to place an order or seek further interest.
- 10.3 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**

- 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 these regulations shall not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:

- (i) For the supply of telephone and internet access 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 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 (in excess of this sum the Clerk and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council);
- (vi) For goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and/or are advertised / sold at a fixed price.

(b) Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding £2,000 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 shall seek interest via public advertisement or through trade publications or bodies as appropriate and invite tenders from at least three firms that respond, unless the number of respondents is fewer than three, when the matter will be referred to Council for a decision on how to proceed.

(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) 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 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 one member of Council.

(f) If less than three tenders are received for contracts above £1,000 or if all the tenders are identical the Council may make such arrangements as it thinks fit for procuring the goods or materials or executing the works.

(g) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall contain a statement reflecting the Council's standing orders

(h) The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

## **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**

Legbourne Parish Council does not own any stores or equipment under this heading.

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

- 14.1 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, and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 14.2 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.
- 14.3 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.

### **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 Clerk.
- 15.2 The Clerk shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or other items 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 risk 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 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.

### **16 CHARITIES**

- 16.1 Legbourne Parish Council has no interests in a charitable body.

### **17 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 17.1 The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the Council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the Council. Risk policy statements

and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.

- 17.2 When considering any new activity, the Clerk shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council.

## **18 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.