

Bicester Town Council



Policy Committee Meeting

Ref: POL06/2324

**Monday 22nd April 2024
at 19:00hrs**

**The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The
Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**

Members:

Cllr Rachel Mallows – **Chairman**, Cllr Paul Wheatley – **Vice-Chairman**
Cllr Tom Beckett, Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Dan Hallett, Cllr Sam Holland, Cllr
Harry Knight, Cllr Nicholas Mawer, Cllr Alisa Russell and Cllr Les Sibley

Other Circulation, Substitute Members:

Cllr Donna Ford, Cllr Damien Maguire, Cllr Jim Webb, Cllr Chris Pruden

Other Circulation:

Cllr John Broad (CDC), Cllr Dallimore (CDC), Cllr Simon Lytton (CDC), Cllr
Calum Miller (OCC), Cllr Lynn Pratt (CDC), Cllr Dan Sames (CDC) and Cllr
Michael Waine (OCC)



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16 April 2024

To all Members of the Policy Committee

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Policy Committee** at **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS** on **Monday 22nd April 2024** to commence at **19:00hrs** for the transaction of the following business.

Phil Evans
Town Clerk

Agenda

All Council Meetings are open to the public and press, unless otherwise stated.

1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence. Committee members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify Bicester Town Council (enquiries@bicester.gov.uk) prior to the meeting, stating the reason for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors are reminded to declare any interests on any item on this Agenda in accordance with Bicester Town Council's Code of Conduct.

3. Minutes of Policy Committee

The Committee is asked to **APPROVE** the minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on:

(Pages 4 -
5)

- **POL05/2324 – Monday 19th February 2024**

4. Public Session

In accordance with Standing Orders 1 d-f, members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence in respect of any

Agenda: POL06/2324 Policy Committee
Monday 22nd April 2024

item of business included in the agenda. Time allocated shall not exceed 10 minutes. No member shall speak for more than 2 minutes.

5. Matthew Barber - Police & Crime Commissioner

Questions to be asked by Councillors.

6. Policy Review

The Committee are recommended to **REVIEW & COMMENT** on the following Policies:

(Pages 6 -
17)

- GP3 Fraud & Corruption Policy
- GP22 Flag Raising Policy

7. Exclusion of Press and Public

RECOMMENDED

That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

8. Standing Report - Lease's

The committee is asked to **APPROVE** in principle the attached documentation, with Nai's house consideration given to the rate and that they are a registered charity.

(Pages 18 -
47)

The Committee is asked to **APPROVE** the new rent in line with the previous allowances that were requested by the Policy Committee.

9. Forward Plan

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the Forward Plan.

(Page 48)

Minutes of the Policy Committee

A meeting of the **Policy Committee** was held on **Monday 19th February 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Rachel Mallows (Chairman)
Cllr Paul Wheatley (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Harry Knight
Cllr Damien Maguire
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Christopher Pruden (Substitute)

In Attendance:

52/2 Apologies for Absence

324 RESOLVED that apologies were received from Cllr Nick Cotter and Cllr Alisa Russell.

Cllr Christopher Pruden Substituted for Cllr Alisa Russell.

53/2 Declarations of Interest

324 RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

54/2 Minutes of Policy Committee

324 RESOLVED that Committee **APPROVED** the following minutes:

POL04/2324 – 29th January 2024

55/2 Public Session

324 RESOLVED that no members of the public were present.

56/2 Major Town Initiatives

324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the following:

- **Bicester Vision CIC Executive Board Meeting – 2nd November 2023**
- **Bicester Vision CIC Partnership Meeting – 7th December 2023**

The Chairman of the Committee took particular attention to:

- Market Town Square tender
- East West Rail – London Road Level Crossing
- Chiltern Railways – Bicester North Car Park closing

- Bicester Garrison HQ will be in situ for at least the next years
- Housing on site of Bicester Garrison HQ will be rebuilt/refurbished over the next 5-10 years
- The current Chairman of Bicester Vision CIC is standing down, recruitment to fill this role is underway

57/2 Policy Review

324 RESOLVED that Committee:

- **REVIEWED** the policies set out in Appendix 2 and 3
- **REVIEWED** and **NOTED** the Risk Management Schedule

And that with minor amendments, it be passed to Full Council.

58/2 GP8 Financial Regulations

324 RESOLVED that Committee **REVIEWED** the GP8 Financial Regulations. Amended document to go to Full Council for approval.

59/2 Ground Maintenance Contract

324 RESOLVED that Committee **APPROVED** the documentation as set out in item 2. The tender document can now be published.

60/2 Forward Plan

324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the Forward Plan.

61/2 Date of the Next Meeting

324 Monday 22nd April 2024 – 7pm, The Chamber Room, Garth House

CLOSE OF MEETING: 8.23PM

Date of next Meeting: Monday 22 April 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: Time Not Specified hrs

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

Monday 22nd April 2024

Bicester Town Council Policy Review

Chairman: Councillor Rachel Mallows

Telephone: 01869 252915 Rachel.Mallows@bicester.gov.uk

Phil Evans – Town Clerk

Telephone: 01869 252915 Phil.Evans@bicester.gov.uk

1. Background

1.2 All the Town Council's Policies' and Procedure's go through periodical review.

The Policy Committee requested that this item be considered a standing item and that a report be submitted to each meeting, updating on any changes.

Please refer to **APPENDIX 1** for overall policy condition.

2. Policies for review

2.1. GP3 Fraud Corruption Policy (No alteration Proposed)

2.2. GP22 Flay Raising Policy – Alterations to include to flag pole 4.

3. Recommendations

The Committee are recommended to:

- **REVIEW & COMMENT** the policies set out in Appendix 2 & 3



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL – LIST OF GENERAL POLICIES

POLICY No.	POLICY TITLE	REVIEWED & AMENDED WHERE NECESSARY	NEXT REVIEW DATE (OR BEFORE IF AMENDMENTS REQ)
GP1	STANDING ORDERS	March 2021	March 2024
GP2	HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY	December 2021	December 2023
GP3	FRAUD & CORRUPTION POLICY STATEMENT	February 2022	February 2024
GP4	RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY POLICY & RISK REGISTER	March 2024	March 2025
GP5	DATA SECURITY INCIDENT PROCEDURE	April 2023	April 2026
GP6	INVESTMENT POLICY	August 2023	SUSPENDED
GP7	GRANT AID AWARDING POLICY	August 2023	August 2026
GP8	FINANCIAL REGULATIONS	August 2024	August 2026
GP9	HIRE OF ROOMS AT THE GARTH	February 2022	February 2027
GP10	SNOW CLEARANCE POLICY	February 2022	February 2027
GP11	COMPLAINTS POLICY	February 2022	February 2025
GP12	FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY	August 2023	April 2026
GP13	SPONSORSHIP POLICY	August 2023	August 2027
GP14	PARTNERSHIP & OUTSIDE BODIES REPRESENTATION POLICY	August 2023	April 2026
GP15	EQUALITIES POLICY	October 2022	October 2025
GP16	DATA PROTECTION POLICY	April 2022	April 2025
GP17	PLAY AREAS ADOPTION POLICY	April 2022	April 2027
GP18	PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY	April 2023	April 2026
GP19	VIRTUAL MEETING PROCEDURE	May 2022	SUSPENDED
GP19A	BLUE PLAQUE POLICY	May 2022	April 2027
GP20	ALLOTMENT INSPECTION POLICY	August 2023	August 2026



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL – LIST OF GENERAL POLICIES

POLICY No.	POLICY TITLE	REVIEWED & AMENDED WHERE NECESSARY	NEXT REVIEW DATE (OR BEFORE IF AMENDMENTS REQ)
GP21	SAFEGUARDING POLICY	May 2022	April 2025
GP22	FLAG FLYING POLICY	June 2023	June 2026
GP23	VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY	April 2022	April 2025
GP24	TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY	August 2024	August 2026
GP25	DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY	April 2022	April 2025
GP26	COUNCILLOR VACANCY POLICY	January 2024	January 2028
GP27	SALE OF LAND STANCE	August 2023	August 2028
GP28	MAYORS EVENT POLICY	December 2021	December 2026
GP29	BANK AND CASH HANDLING POLICY	December 2022	December 2024
G30	DELEGATION TO THE TOWN CLERK	January 2024	January 2028

FRAUD & CORRUPTION POLICY STATEMENT

GP3

Document Control				
Review date is indicative and will depend on changes in legislation, best practice or when required. Alternative formats of this document may be available upon request.				
Version Number	Date Adopted	Minute Number	Amendments	Review Date
V1	28 th Jan 2019		Various changes after adoption	
V2	5 th February 2022		Removed title of Chief Officer & replaced with Town Clerk. Reflected split role of Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer	February 2024

Section 1 – Introduction

1. The Council is committed to an effective anti-fraud and corruption strategy designed to:
 - Encourage prevention,
 - Promote detection, and
 - Identify a clear pathway for investigation.
2. The Council requires Members and staff at all levels to lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.
3. The Council also requires all individuals and organisations that it deals with, e.g. suppliers, contractors, service providers, to act with integrity towards it and without thought or actions involving fraud and corruption.
4. The Council's anti-fraud and corruption procedures are designed to frustrate any attempted fraudulent or corrupt act. These cover:
 - Culture (Paragraphs 7 to 14)
 - Prevention (Paragraphs 15 to 26)
 - Detection and Investigation (Paragraphs 27 to 34)
 - Training (Paragraphs 35 to 37)
5. The Council's affairs are scrutinised by a variety of bodies and people including:
 - External Auditors
 - The Public/Local Government Electors – Annual Inspection of Accounts
 - The Public/Service Users – The Council's Complaints Procedure
 - Central Government Departments
 - HM Customs and Excise
 - Inland Revenue
 - External Inspectorates

In addition, there is internal scrutiny applied by the Town Clerk, and through internal audit and internal controls under Proper Practices.

6. The Council's internal auditor is also required to ensure that the Council has adequate arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.

Section 2 – Culture

7. Bicester Town Council is determined that the culture of the organisation is one of honesty and opposition to fraud and corruption.
8. There is an expectation and requirement that all individuals and organisations associated in whatever way with the Council, will act with integrity. Council Members and staff, at all levels, will lead by example in these matters.
9. The Council's staff are an important element in its stance on fraud and corruption. They are positively encouraged to raise any concerns that they may have on these issues where they are associated with the Council's activities. They can do this in the knowledge that such concerns will be treated in confidence and properly investigated. If necessary a route other than a line manager may be used to raise such concerns. Examples of possible routes are:
 - Town Clerk
 - Responsible Finance Officer,
 - Chairman of Finance Committee
 - Mayor
10. Members of the public are also encouraged to report concerns through any of the above routes or, if appropriate, through the Council's complaints procedure.
11. If staff feel unable to raise their concerns through any of the internal routes, then they may wish to raise them through Protect (telephone 020 31172520 <https://www.pcaw.org.uk/contact-us/>). This is a registered charity whose services are free and strictly confidential.
12. Managers are responsible for following up any allegations of fraud and corruption received and will do so through agreed procedures and will
 - deal promptly with the matter,
 - record all evidence,
 - ensure that evidence is sound and adequately supported,
 - ensure security of all evidence collected,
 - contact the Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer, Chairman Finance, or Mayor and arrange for the allegation to be investigated. Where appropriate, the police will be notified,
 - where appropriate, notify the Council's insurers
 - implement Council disciplinary procedures, as necessary.
13. Managers are expected to deal swiftly and firmly with those who defraud the Council, or are corrupt. This includes using the Council's disciplinary procedures where appropriate. The Council will be robust in dealing with malpractice.
14. There is, of course, a need to ensure that any investigation process is not misused. Therefore, any deliberate or malicious abuse of the process, may be dealt with as a

disciplinary matter and could also leave the complainant open to an action for defamation of character.

Section 3 – Prevention Staff

15. The Council recognises that a key preventative measure in the fight against fraud and corruption is to take effective steps at the recruitment stage to establish, as far as possible, the previous record of all potential staff, in terms of their honesty and integrity. Written references will be obtained for all staff offered employment with the Council.
16. Staff of the Council are required to follow any code of conduct related to their Professional Institute and also to abide by the Codes of Conduct adopted by the Council.
17. The Council has in place Disciplinary Procedures for all categories of its staff.
18. The role that appropriate staff are required to play in the Council's framework of internal control will be covered in staff training.
19. Staff are required under the Council's Standing Orders to operate within Section 117 of the Local Government Act, 1972. This requires staff to disclose any pecuniary (of or relating to money) interests in contracts relating to the Council and not to accept any fees or rewards whatsoever for their Council work other than their proper remuneration.
20. Staff are required to operate within the Council's guidelines relating to gifts and hospitality.

Members

21. Members are required to operate within the:
 - National Code of Local Government Conduct,
 - Sections 94-96 of the Local Government Act 1972,
 - Localism Act 2011 and the Council's Code of Conduct,
 - Council Standing Orders,
 - Council's guidelines relating to gifts and hospitality.

Internal Control Systems

22. The Council has Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in place that put a requirement on staff, when dealing with the Council's affairs, to act in accordance with best practice.
23. The Responsible Finance Officer has a statutory responsibility under Section 151 of the Local Government Act, 1972 to ensure the proper arrangements of the Council's financial affairs. The Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are designed to provide a framework of procedures, which assist the Responsible Financial Officer in fulfilling this obligation. In addition, the operation, of an adequate system of internal control is an integral part of the provision of proper financial arrangements. The existence, appropriateness and effectiveness of internal controls are independently monitored by the Council's Internal Audit.
24. The Council has developed and is committed to continuing with systems and procedures, which incorporate efficient and effective internal controls. This includes adequate separation of duties to ensure that error, or impropriety are prevented. Under Financial Regulations, Members are required to ensure that such controls are properly maintained

and reflective. It is also good practice to ensure that these matters are adequately documented.

Combining with others

25. Arrangements are in place to encourage the continued development of exchange of information between the Council and other agencies on both national and local fraud and corruption activity relating to local authorities.
26. With the rapid increase in recent years of fraud perpetrated against a variety of local authorities and benefit agencies, which usually involve fraudsters having multiple identities and addresses, the necessity to liaise between organisations has become paramount. Some of these include:
 - Police
 - National Audit Office and External Auditors

Section 4 – Detection and Investigation

27. The array of preventative systems, particularly internal control systems within the Council, has been designed to provide indications of any fraudulent activity, although generally they should be sufficient in themselves to deter fraud.
28. It is the responsibility of Management to prevent and detect fraud and corruption. However, it is often the alertness of staff and the public to such indications that enables detection to occur. Appropriate action can then be taken where there is evidence that fraud or corruption may have been committed, or is in progress.
29. Many frauds are discovered by chance or “tip off” and the Council has arrangements in place to enable such information to be properly dealt with. These are shown within this statement in Section 2.
30. Managers and supervisors of the Council are required by Financial Regulations to report to the Town Clerk or the Responsible Finance Officer, any matter which involves, or is thought to involve, irregularities concerning cash, stores or other property of the Council or any suspected irregularity in the exercise of the functions of the authority. The Town Clerk and/or the Responsible Financial Officer shall then take such steps, as s/he considers necessary by way of investigation. Reporting is essential to the Council’s anti-fraud strategy and ensures:
 - consistent treatment of information about fraud and corruption.
 - proper investigation by an independent and experienced audit team ,
 - the proper implementation of a fraud investigation plan,
 - the best protection of the Council’s interests.
31. Depending on the nature and the anticipated extent of the allegations, the Town Clerk will normally work closely with other agencies, such as the police. This is to ensure that all allegations are properly investigated and reported upon and where appropriate, maximum recoveries are made for the Council.
32. The Council’s Disciplinary Procedures will be used where the outcome of the investigation establishes misconduct by staff. Fraud and corruption constitute gross misconduct under the Council’s Disciplinary Procedures, with summary dismissal applying.

33. Where financial irregularities are discovered, the Council's presumption is that the police will be called in and arrangements made, where appropriate, for the prosecution of offenders by the Crown Prosecution Service. Referral to the police is a matter for the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of Finance and the Chairman of Personnel.

Section 5 – Training

34. The Council recognises that the continuing success of its anti-fraud and corruption strategy and its general credibility, will depend largely on the effectiveness of its training programmes and the responsiveness of staff throughout the organisation.
35. As part of training requirements all existing and new Members and staff of the Council should be issued with a copy of this policy statement.
36. The investigation of fraud and corruption centres on the Council's Internal controls. It is apparent, therefore, that managers must ensure that staff involved in this work are properly and regularly trained. Training plans for staff will reflect this requirement.

Section 6 – Conclusion

37. The Council has in place a clear network of systems and procedures to assist in the fight against fraud and corruption. It is determined that these arrangements will keep pace with any future developments, in both prevention and detection techniques regarding such activities that may affect its operation or related responsibilities.
38. To this end the Council maintains a continuous overview of such arrangements through its Responsible Finance Officer, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, various Code of Conduct and audit arrangements. All Managers/supervisors are similarly required to keep departmental procedures under continuous review and to report to the Responsible Finance Officer where new risks are identified or changes in procedures are required.
39. As part of their activities, the Town Clerk will monitor the operation of this Policy Statement. The Town Clerk and/or the Responsible Finance Officer will report to the Policy Committee on the operation of the Policy Statement and any proposed change to it.



FLAG FLYING POLICY - GP22

Document Control				
Review date is indicative and will depend on changes in legislation, best practice or when required. Alternative formats of this document may be available upon request.				
Version Number	Date Adopted	Minute Number	Amendments	Review Date
V1	Originally Adopted 18 th Sept 2017			3 rd November 2020
V2	3 rd November 2020		Make an amendment to section 14	24 th April 2023
V3	24 th April 2023		Change Chief Officer to Town Clerk. Add a section to Authorise flags already flown.	12 th June 2023
V4	12 th June 2023		Swap the 'unscheduled flag flying' paragraph and the 'flags not covered by this policy' paragraphs	June 2026
V5	15 th April 2024		Policy to include Flag Pole 4	

Bicester Town Council
The Garth
Launton Road
Bicester
OX26 6PS

GENERAL

1. The flying of flags is a national tradition in the UK. The Government made changes to regulations in 2012 to ease controls over flag flying which are reflected in this policy.

2. All flags flown will be maintained in good condition and shall be replaced when they become worn and begin to fray.
3. The Council has four flag poles all located to the front Garth House. they are numbered one to four the first being nearest the bandstand.

FLAGPOLES IN GARTH PARK

Flagpole 1

4. The Flag of the Town Council shall fly continuously from flagpole 1.

Flagpole 2

5. The Union Flag shall fly continuously from flagpole 2.

Flagpole 3.

6. The English flag of St George shall fly continuously on flagpole 3, other than at times determined in this policy.

FLAGS OF OTHER COUNTRIES

Flags of the countries within the UK

7. The flags of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland shall be flown on their respective Saint's days (1st March 17th March and 30th November) from flagpole 4.

Flags of other countries with which there is an established connection

8. The flags of those countries with which Bicester has twinning connections shall be flown on the national day of each country. France – Bastille Day (14th July), and Germany - German Unity Day (3rd October) on flagpole 4; Poland – Poland National Independence Day (11th November) on flagpole 4.
9. In recognition of the connection to the USA via RAF Croughton, the national flag shall be flown on USA Independence Day (4th July) on flagpole 4.

OTHER FLAGS

Commonwealth Flag

10. The Commonwealth Flag shall be flown on Commonwealth Day second Monday in March from flagpole 4.

Armed Forces Day Flag

11. The Armed Forces Day flag shall be flown from flagpole 4 for one week commencing on the Friday before Armed Forces Day (last Saturday in June).

Remembrance Flag

12. The Royal British Legion Remembrance Flag shall be flown from flagpole 4 from 1st November to 12th November or until the day after Remembrance Sunday (whichever is later).

Pride Flag

13. The Pride Flag shall be flown from flagpole 4 for one week from 1st June to celebrate pride month.

Flags not covered by this policy

14. Ad hoc requests from Bicester based constituted groups to fly flags that are not covered by this policy should be made to the Town Council by request in writing to the Town Clerk. They will be determined by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of Policy Committee if there is insufficient time to be presented to the policy committee for approval. In cases where a particular flag will need to be purchased the requestor will need to purchase an appropriate flag.
15. If a flag that has been authorised by the council to be flown previously it may be appropriate to fly the flag again at the discretion of Chairman of Policy, Mayor and Town Clerk.

LOWERING OF FLAGS TO HALF-MAST

16. On receiving a formal announcement or, in the case of a local situation, upon becoming aware, the Town Clerk will authorise the Union Flag outside Garth House to be lowered to half-mast**. The Union flag will fly in line with the agreed action plan within the marking of the Death of a Senior National Figure.
17. ** Half-mast – the flag is flown two-thirds of the way up the flagpole with at least the height of the flag between the top of the flag and the top of the mast. When flag is flown at half-mast, it should first be raised all the way to the top of the mast, allowed to remain there for a second and then be lowered to the half-mast position. When the flag is lowered from the half-mast position, it should be raised to the top of the mast for a second before being fully lowered.
18. Such occasions may include but are not limited to:
- i) Upon the announcement of the death of the Sovereign;
 - ii) The funeral of a member of the Royal Family;
 - iii) The funeral of a foreign ruler;
 - iv) The funeral of a Prime Minister or former Prime minister of the UK;
 - v) The death of prominent individuals who have influenced the social, economic or cultural life of Bicester;
 - vi) Times of national or international tragedy as notified by the Government (usually via Oxfordshire County Council);
 - vii) Times of national mourning.

POLICY REVIEW

19. This policy shall be reviewed at least every four years to ensure fitness for purpose.

DRAFT

By virtue of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL POLICY COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

Monday 22nd April 2024

Date/ Item/ Comment

Pending: Closure policy for cemetery

Pending: Retention of assets policy

Pending: Future management of 'new' open space play areas

Pending: New burial ground and memorial policy

On-going: Working on town centre group

Pending: 20mph speed limits