

Bicester Town Council



Finance Committee Meeting

Ref: FIN06/2425

**Tuesday 1st April 2025 at 19:00hrs
Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Road,
OX26 6PS**

Members:

Cllr Alisa Russell – **Chair**, Cllr Tom Beckett – **Vice Chair**
Cllr Paul Wheatley Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Donna Ford, Cllr Dan Hallett, Cllr Sam
Holland, Cllr Rachel Mallows and Cllr Les Sibley.

Other Circulation, Substitute Members:

Cllr Harry Knight, Cllr Damien Maguire, Cllr Nick Mawer, Cllr Jim Webb and Cllr
John Willett.

Other Circulation:

Cllr John Broad (CDC), Cllr Frank Ideh (CDC), Cllr Simon Lytton (CDC), Cllr Calum
Miller (OCC), Cllr Rob Parkinson (CDC) and Cllr Michael Waine (OCC)



BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

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Bicester,
Oxon. OX2 6PS
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Tuesday 25th March 2025

To all members of the Finance Committee,

You are hereby Summoned to attend the meeting of the **Finance Committee** at the **Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Road, OX26 6PS** on **Tuesday 1st April 2025** 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 the Town Clerk (phil.evans@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 the Finance Committee (Pages 4-6)

To **APPROVE** the **MINUTES** and **RESOLUTIONS** of the following Finance Committee Meeting held on:

- **FIN05/2425** – Tuesday 7th January 2025

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 item of business included in the agenda.

Time allocated shall not exceed 10 minutes. No member shall speak for more than 2 minutes.

5. Finance Report (Pages 7-8)

As per Financial Regulation 4.8, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached Income, Expenditure and Variance Report to the 13th March 2025.

6. Bank Balances (Pages 9-10)

As per Financial Regulation 2.2, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached report detailing bank balances at 11th March 2025 and **NOTE** that Cllr Russel has signed the monthly bank reconciliation for the year to 31^s January 2025.

7. Aged Creditors (Pages 11-12)

In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** the Aged Creditors as of 20th March 2025.

8. Aged Debtors (Pages 13-15)

In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the aged debtors as of the 20th March 2025.

9. Grant Aid Applications (Pages 16-18)

The Committee is asked to **APPROVE** the Grant Aid Applications for 2025/2026.

10. Payments (Page 19)

As per Financial Regulations 5.2, the committee is asked to **APPROVE** the payment schedules since the last meeting held on Tuesday 24th September 2024, totalling £1,843,846.39 for 02/09/2025 to 28/02/2025.

11. Finance Regulations (Pages 20 - 41)

The Committee is asked to **REVIEW** this report and the amendments to Financial Regulations and to pass the amended document through to Policy Committee and from then to Full Council.

Date of the Next Meeting

3rd June 2025 at 19:00hrs

AGENDA ITEM 3 Minutes of the Finance Committee

A meeting of the **Finance Committee** was held on **Tuesday 7th January 2025** at **19:00hrs** at **The Chambers Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon, OX26 6PS.**

Present:

Cllr Alisa Russell (Chai
Cllr Tom Beckett (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Nick Cotter
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Paul Wheatley

Attendance:

Helen Pool, Responsible Finance Officer
Jodi Clarke, Finance Assistant

79/2425 Apologies of Absence

RESOLVED that no apologies were received.

19:01 Cllr Holland arrived.

80/2425 Declaration of Interest

RESOLVED that no declarations were received.

81/2425 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the committee **APPROVED** the following minutes with the following amendments:

- **FIN03/2425** – Tuesday 24th September 2024 at 19:00hrs.
Oxfordshire County Councillor to be added to the Declaration of Interest for Cllr Sibley.
- **FIN04/2425** – Wednesday 4th December 2024 at 19:00hrs

82/2425 Public Session

RESOLVED that no public were present.

19:04 Cllr Cotter arrived.

Item 6 & 5 have been swapped around.

83/2425 Budget Report

Councillors discussed the budget set out in the appendix.

Councillors raised concerns for the Whitelands Income, but the Responsible Finance Officer informed the group that the budget had been set to the incorrect code and sits in **308/1014 Whitelands/Inc-miscellaneous** rather than **308/1028 Whitelands/Inc-pavilion/pitches.**

Councillors raised questions about leases the council have, clarification is needed. Concerns were also raised in regards to the outstanding lease at Whitelands, the Responsible finance Officer informed the committee that the solicitors had given the council advice on this. Town Clerk is to send all councillors a list of all written legal leases that the council have, this must be done 5 working days prior to the Full Council meeting on the 20th January 2025.

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the contents of this report and the 2025/2026 budget as set out in the appendix and the level of estimated precept to be set for the financial year 2025/2026.

RESOLVED that the Committee **RECOMMENDED** the budget to Full Council on the 20th January 2025.

6 Councillors voted for & 2 abstained.

84/2425 Precept Report

Councillors raised concerns regarding the National Insurance increase and how they can mitigate this. Councillors also commented on the incredible inflation this year and how the council needs the money to improve the services.

RESOLVED that the Committee **RECOMMENDED** the precept with the understanding that the precept is subject to change once the Band D numbers are confirmed by Cherwell District Council and will ask the Full Council to **APPROVE** the precept and the amount of the precept of £1,872,967.62.

7 Councillors voted for & 1 abstained.

85/2425 Interim Audit Report

Councillors raised that the report states no councillor allowance which is incorrect.

Cllr Beckett takes over as chair due to the Chair being poorly.

Responsible Finance Officer to confirm the HMRC Gateway Log in.

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** and **RECOMMENDED** the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** at the Full Council on the 20th January 2025.

86/2425 Earmarked Reserves

RESOLVED that the committee **APPROVED** & **NOTED** the expenditure of £132,765 from proposal ii. Pay for the invoice of £132,765.93 (exc. VAT) out of 901/9014 from Earmarked Reserved 901/9014 Green Infrastructure.

87/2425 Garth Park Play Area

REOLVED that the committee **APPROVED** the expenditure of a new amount of £406,000 based on the originally proposed and amended play equipment design in the Environment Meeting 17th June 2024, and for it to be funded from **EMR 901/9011 Play areas and open spaces**.

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** that this subject to public consultation.

88/2425 Date of the Next Meeting

1st April 2025 at 19:00hrs

Meeting Closed: 20:17hrs

AGENDA ITEM 5

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 1st April 2025

Finance Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This is a standing report of the monthly Income & Expenditure to inform the Councillors of any possible overspending within the budget.

2. Background

Appended to this report – **APPENDIX 1** - is a detailed finance report showing the Council's expenditure to the end of *February 2025 – the eleventh month* of the current financial year created on the 13th March 2025 with information known to that date. The report compares expenditure against the full year agreed budget. Key variances that are apparent are summarised in an additional column with a final column demonstrating further estimated expenditure not within budget.

Structure and Interpretation of the Report

This is a "Cost Centre Report" and gives income and expenditure for each of the Council's cost centres (there are 15 in total). A cost centre is a separate service or area of expenditure, for example open spaces are one cost centre and the Garth House another. Each cost centre is given as a three-digit number with a narrative description beside it and they are:

- 102 Civic & Democratic
- 105 Central Services
- 106 Garth House
- 107 Garth Lodge
- 108 Corporate Finance
- 109 Community Support
- 110 Projects
- 300 Environmental Services
- 301 Open Spaces
- 305 Pingle Field
- 306 Sunderland Drive
- 501 Town Council Events
- 601 Cemetery
- 801 Street Scene
- 901 Earmarked Reserves (*allocations will be completed based on Council approval*)

There is a sub-total showing “Net Income over Expenditure” for each cost centre and at the end of the report a set of Grand Totals shows the total “Net Income over Expenditure” for the whole Town Council. On these totals a positive figure say **37,568** indicates that income was more than expenditure by that amount whereas a negative figure (in brackets) thus **(19,808)** indicates that expenditure exceeded income. Note that for all figures in this report a £ sign is assumed but not actually stated.

Within the costs centres the information is arranged in columns. Reading across the columns from left to right:

1. First column (no heading) is a four-figure digit which is the nominal code; a four-digit code that starts with 1 is an income code, if it starts with 4 it's an expenditure code Nominal codes describe the type of expenditure or income.
2. Second column (no heading) is a brief narrative description of each nominal code
3. Third column headed “Actual Last” (in a change to previous reports which had current month expenditure) is the figures for the previous financial year.
4. Fourth column headed “Actual Year To Date” is the part year figures for this year so for this particular report that's to the *13th March 2025*.
5. Fifth column headed “Current Annual Bud[get]” is the full year budget figures for the current financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 as agreed by Council.
6. Sixth column headed “Variance Annual Total” is the difference between the actual expenditure to date (Column 4) and the Annual Budget (Column 5) a figure with brackets around it in this column indicates that the budget has been exceeded or that there has been expenditure where there was no matching budget. Sometimes this indicates unanticipated expenditure.
7. The seventh column headed “Committed Expenditure” contains purchase orders raised.
8. The eighth column headed “Funds Available” shows figures mainly the same as those in column six against expenditure codes. As more “commitments” are entered then the information in this column will be different from the sixth column due to the anticipated spend.
9. Ninth column headed “% Spent” shows the percentage of the budget spent (or received). Not all expenditure or income is spread evenly across the year and Councillors will be reliant on a specific commentary from the RFO to identify areas where the figures are not where she would expect them to be at this point in the year (and where, in accordance with Financial Regulation 4.8 items are likely to produce a material variance of either £1,000 or 15% of budget at or before the year-end).
10. The eleventh column is based on the request by Councillors that further expenditure expected before year end be provided. In this case, the estimated further expenditure not in the budget has been provided for clarification and transparency purposes. However, this is only an estimated amount and is open to alteration.
11. The twelfth column provides an explanation for the material variances illustrated in the ninth column.

3. Recommendation

As per Financial Regulation 4.8, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached Income, Expenditure and Variance Report to **the 13th March 2025**.

AGENDA ITEM 6

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 1st April 2025

Bank Balances Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

Appended to this report is a detailed report showing accurate recording of all the Council's bank balances as at *11th March 2025*.

2. Background

Structure and Interpretation of the Report

The report generated by the accounting system is a consolidated bank reconciliation for each of the Council's bank accounts. At the top section of the report, it lists the bank statement balance for each account. The bottom section lists the cashbook balances for each account. Ideally the balances will duplicate each other demonstrating that each account has been reconciled to its bank statement.

There are some accounts shown that are no longer in use – these are the Santander Deposit Account, Petty Cash and the Barclays Base Rate Tracker - these accounts are shown with a nil balance. The accounting system holds historic transactions for each of these accounts and therefore will not permit them to be deleted.

Bank Accounts in use are:

Barclays Current Account – majority of the council's financial transactions pass through this account.

Wages Account (held at Barclays) – a transfer is made monthly to this account to cover the costs of payroll. Astral is our payroll provider (which operates as a BACS bureau – making salaries and wages and disbursements to HMRC and Oxfordshire pensions on behalf of the Town Council). Historically, the separate account was to facilitate the automation of this process and enable the provider to take a direct debit without access to the main current account, however, we now monthly make a BACS payment to Astral and do not have a direct debit.

Ticketsource Account – also known historically as the Carnival Account (and the means to change that description within the accounting system is proving elusive) this account receives event ticket receipts from the ticket sales provider (current Ticketsource).

CCLA Deposit – this is an investment account, and the balance remains constant at £2m. The return on this investment, is paid into the Barclays Current Account.

Barclays Treasury Deposit – this is the deposit account linked to the main current account and surplus funds from the current account are moved here.

Santander Capital Account and **Lloyds Treasury Account** are both non-interest bearing accounts that are little used as we currently do not have an up-to-date mandate.

The Cash and Investment Reconciliation is shown below demonstrating the reconciliation between the bank statements and Cash Books on Rialtas.

Bicester Town Council

Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 11 March 2025

<u>Confirmed Bank & Investment Balances</u>			
<u>Bank Statement Balances</u>			
28/02/2025	Barclays Current Account	94,375.28	
28/02/2025	Wages Account	116,279.19	
28/02/2025	Ticketsource Account	1,758.00	
28/02/2025	CCLA Deposit	2,000,000.00	
28/02/2025	Barclays Treasury Deposit	850,000.00	
28/02/2025	Santander Capital Account	257,408.87	
28/02/2025	Lloyds Treasury Account	549,140.80	
			3,868,962.14
<u>Receipts not on Bank Statement</u>			
			0.00
Closing Balance			3,868,962.14
<u>All Cash & Bank Accounts</u>			
1	Current Bank A/c	94,375.28	
2	Wages Account	116,279.19	
3	Carnival Account	1,758.00	
4	CCLA Deposit	2,000,000.00	
5	Barclays Treasury Deposit	850,000.00	
6	Santander Capital Account	257,408.87	
7	Santander Deposit	0.00	
8	Lloyds Treasury Account	549,140.80	
10	Petty Cash	0.00	
11	Barclays Base Rate Tracker	0.00	
		Other Cash & Bank Balances	0.00
Total Cash & Bank Balances			3,868,962.14

3. Recommendation

As per Financial Regulation 2.2, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached report detailing bank balances at 11th March 2025 and **NOTE** that Cllr Russel has signed the monthly bank reconciliation for the year to 31^s January 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 7

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 1st April 2025

Aged Creditors

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Financial Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This report is a standing report to keep Councillors informed as to the Aged Creditors. The data shown is to 20th March 2025.

2. Background

To monitor debts owed by the Council, the Aged Creditors report tracks how old each debt is and the value that is outstanding. Note that the age of the debt is taken from the invoice date – this may be some days or weeks before the invoice is received for processing by finance.

Any debts over 1 month old are prioritised in the payment run unless there is a query regarding that invoice and this is chased regularly until the issue has been resolved and the invoice can either be paid or a credit note has been received.

3. Duplicate Payment

Forte Entertainment Ltd: A duplicate payment was made on the 01/11/2023 for £10,800.

Action taken: We had been working with Forte and they refunded the first stage of the refund on the 16/05/2024 for the value of £5000.00. A further payment plan was negotiated with Officers and Forte whereby 4 payments would be made to the value of £1450.00 at the end of each month starting from the 31/07/2024. The payments remaining outstanding are:

30/09/2024 - £1450

31/10/2024 - £1450

Conclusion: We have been in discussion with Forte Entertainment Ltd as at the time of this agenda creation and are seeking to engage a debt collection agency to reclaim the amount of monies owed.

4. Illustration table

The detailed report from the financial system Rialtas is shown below. There are 4 outstanding items (highlighted in orange) with an explanation of the actions taken

Purchase Ledger Aged Account Balances
Outstanding Balances by Due Date as at 20/03/2025

Supplier Name	Balance	Current	Up To 30 Days	Up To 60 Days	Over 60 Days	On A/c Pymnts	Action Taken
AMAZON BUSINESS	296.94	296.94	0	0	0	0	
AP THOMPSON	1458	0	1458	0	0	0	
BUCKS RECYCLING	96	96	0	0	0	0	
CHERWELL	32827.77	32827.77	0	0	0	0	
ELITESPORTS	20358	0	20358	0	0	0	
EURO	229.78	0	229.78	0	0	0	
FORTE ENTERTAINMENT	-2900	0	0	0	0	-2900	Will be engaging a Debt collection agency
GRUNDON	623.71	623.71	0	0	0	0	
OXFORD ALARM	204	204	0	0	0	0	
ODS	635.17	0	0	635.17	0	0	Now paid
ONLINE PLAYGROUNDS	958.8	0	958.8	0	0	0	
TRAVIS PERKINS	942.27	942.27	0	0	0	0	
PENINSULA	202.12	0	202.12	0	0	0	
RIO WORKWEAR	731.34	0	731.34	0	0	0	
SSE	-108.08	0	0	0	51.64	-159.72	Historic Credit Note needs investigation
TOOLSTATION	134.21	0	47.46	0	86.75	0	Now paid
WASHINGTON HSE	201.75	201.75	0	0	0	0	

5. Recommendation

In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** the Aged Creditors as of 20th March 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 8

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 1st April 2025

Aged Debtors

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool – helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This report is a standing report to keep Councillors informed as to the Aged Debtors.

The Officer will be available to answer any specific questions

2. Background

In order to monitor debts due to the council, the Aged Debtors report tracks how old each debt is and the value that is outstanding.

Any debts over 1 month old are chased unless it is a quarterly or annual invoice that is being paid by instalments. All outstanding invoices have been chased and will continue to be a priority.

The report below is exported from our Rialtas accounting system with a further column added to describe action taken for debt chasing.

3. Illustration Graph

For GDPR purposes, we haven't disclosed details of the following invoices, 8 unpaid invoices for Wreaths for Remembrance Day. The invoices have been chased.

Customer Name	Balance	Current	Up To 30 Days	Up To 60 Days	Over 60 Days	On A/c Pymnts	Action Taken	
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	Inv.no	
ALEXANDER CO	2000	0	0	2000	0	0	2649	Sponsorship for Xmas Light Switch-on. Emailed in February, have said they would make payment before year end.
BIC ACHIEVERS	60.8	100.8	0	0	-40	0		
BIC BOWLS CLUB	129.65	129.65	0	0	0	0		
BICESTER GREEN	660	660	0	0	0	0		Now paid

BONDS CATERING	50	0	0	0	50	0	35	Sponsorship for Xmas Light Switch-on. Attempting contact.
BROWNIE MACS	25	0	0	0	25	0	37	Sponsorship for Xmas Light Switch-on. Attempting contact.
CEMBOSC001	25	0	25	0	0	0		
CEM MEM HAVEN	115	0	115	0	0	0		
CEM OLIVER AND JAMES	115	0	0	0	115	0	2585	Funeral Directors, chased
CEM MEM PERFECTION	255	0	255	0	0	0		
EAST WEST RAILWAY	138.72	138.72	0	0	0	0		
FTC	70	0	70	0	0	0		
NAIS HOUSE	3.33	3.33	0	0	0	0		
OALC	250	0	0	0	250	0	2491	This requires investigating and then chased.
OCC	76.8	0	0	0	76.8	0	2610	Chased
OXFORD RTC	-23.45	0	0	0	0	-23.45		Payment missed allocated
ACE	2000	1000	1000	0	0	0		
RUSTIC WONDER	25	0	0	0	25	0	36	Sponsorship for Xmas Light Switch-on. Attempting contact.
SCM CREATIONS	25	0	0	0	25	0	43	Sponsorship for Xmas Light Switch-on. Attempting contact.
SUB-AQUA	25	0	0	0	25	0	42	Sponsorship for Xmas Light Switch-on. Attempting contact.
WHIT FC	315.34	157.67	157.67	0	0	0		
WRACA	126	0	0	0	126	0	2605	Remembrance Lunch - 10/11/2025, Chased

4. Pitchbooking Debtors

Our Rialtas and Pitchbooking systems are not linked and transactions taking place through Pitchbookings do not appear on Rialtas Debtors Report. They are listed below with actions taken.

Glory Farm:

12/09/2023	540	£120
12/10/2023	564	£105
07/10/2024	999	£168
23/10/2024	1041	£25
05/11/2024	1042	£184
19/12/2024	1079	£172
03/01/2025	1109	£72
05/03/2025	1170	£104

Whitelands FC: Total £2838.00

14/08/2023	518	£	1,260.00
12/10/2023	591	£	462.00
01/02/2024	747	£	440.00
12/04/2024	840	£	323.00
22/05/2024	880	£	353.00

Ace Academy:

02/08/2024	956	£90
07/10/2024	1008	£90
05/11/2024	1050	£128
03/01/2025	1114	£51
11/02/2025	1148	£30
05/03/2025	1175	£112.50

Graven Hill:

19/12/2025 1108 £25.00 – Chase email sent 05/03/2025, this will be chased again.

Kidlington FC:

03/01/2025 1121 £130.00 – Chase email sent 05/03/2025, this will be chased again.

Actions Taken:

- i. Glory Farm: Glory Farm have informed us that the club has folded. We have sent numerous emails since stating that the amount is still due as pitches have been used and provided. We are in the process of enlisting a debt collector to recover the amount outstanding.
- ii. Whitelands FC. A formal meeting was held with Whitelands FC and it was agreed that they could pay off the debt owing in monthly instalments via Direct Debit for 18 months. The direct debits are being paid.
- iii. Ace Academy: We have been in touch with Ace Academy and a meeting will be held with the Town and Deputy Town Clerk to discuss pitchbooking and sales level agreements.

5. Recommendation

In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the aged debtors as of the 20th March 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 9

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday, 1st April 2025

Grant Aid Applications

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.gov.uk

1. Overview

Bicester Town Council have set aside a budget of £22,000 for grants to be considered in line with our Grant Aid Awarding Policy with a closing date of Friday, 14th March 2025.

The report below shows the current applicants that applied before the closing date.

2025 Grant Applications

	Organisation	Amount Requested	Funding Applied For
1	Claypits Community Allotment	1000.00	Funding towards a self-build project of a building/shed to be a meeting place for members for recreation purposes and meetings.
2	Bicester Evergreen	£800.00	Funding towards a summer tea party and Christmas lunch for elderly and disabled people to ease loneliness, isolation and give a sense of belonging.
3	Lions Club of Bicester	£500.00	To help towards the cost of the purchase of 'Message in a Bottle' to be distributed to organisations and individuals in Bicester. People keep their personal and medical details in the bottle in a fridge where they can be found in an emergency.
4	OPA - Oxfordshire Play Association	£500.00	Play and Activity Days at Spider Park to give free entry and activities for the benefit of families and promotion of healthy lifestyles for children.
5	Launton Village Players	£1,000.00	Purchase of essential pieces of equipment for new stage blocks to enhance visual impact of our productions for Bicester audiences.

6	Bicester Food Bank	£1,000.00	Packs for temporary accommodation, homeless containing equipment to heat food, hygiene products, socks, gloves, etc.
7	ARCH readers	£1,000.00	Supporting 8 Bicester Schools and over 80 children in Bicester with reading
8	The Hummingbird Cancer Support & Therapy Centre	£1,000.00	Rebranding of gazebo and tablecloths used, to be seen in the community to connect with those families impacted by cancer.
9	Bicester Hindu Society	£1,000.00	Promoting the appreciation of art and children's development for Hindu families in Bicester with an art competition and Diwali event in line with the Town Council's social inclusion as well as supporting other charities.
10	Bicester East Community Association	£500.00	Purchase equipment and refreshments for BECause Talking Matters Coffee mornings held to combat loneliness and social isolation in the community
11	Bicester Autism	£1,000.00	The Group supports families in Bicester with children with Autism, ADHD, etc. and require funding towards their social group for teenagers utilising the bowling alley at Heyford.
12	Bicester Choral & Operatic Society	£750.00	To assist with the production of the stage musical Sweeney Todd which will help mitigate potential losses on the production.
13	Orchard Baptist Church, Café 103	£449.00	To purchase a laptop and printer for use by those in the community who do not have access to the internet or who need support in access essential services via the internet.
14	Bicester Community Hug	£462.00	First aid training for volunteers who service elderly and vulnerable members of the Bicester Community
15	Caroline's Café and Thrift Shop	£704.85	To provide outdoor seating to foster social interaction and community engagement for military and civilian families of Ambrosden.
16	Home Start Bicester, Banbury	£1,000.00	Funding to go towards Preparation Courses for new Volunteers that support families in Bicester and children.
17	Friends of Bardwell School	£914.92	For the purchase of equipment to set up an accessible forest school/outdoor learning for children and young adults with sever, profound and multiple learning disabilities.
18	Lowland Rescue Oxfordshire	£1,000.00	For the purchase of a water trailer to support the team who help find missing people in Bicester and surrounding areas working closely with Thames Valley Police, helping the team deploy equipment.
20	Langford Village Association	£1,000.00	Contribution towards a heating saving product for the community hall that is used by residents in Bicester and serving the Bicester community. This will maximise the heating system in the hall.
21	1st Bicester Intrepid Scout Group	£1,000.00	To replace old lighting with LED non-corrosive lights in the scout headquarters that will provide energy efficiency and a longer life span.
Page 17			

22	Bicester Community Fridge	£300.00	To cover the cost of a Level 2 Food Hygiene qualification for volunteers to be trained to provide safety around food.
23	Bicester Christian Action - Open Doors Café	£976.00	To help fund the Café that turns surplus food to tasty meals for everyone using volunteers.
24	Bure Park School PTA	£1,000.00	Funding towards arts workshops for an extra-curricular arts opportunity for all pupils.
25	Langford Community Orchard Group	£324.00	For the purchase of 2 scythes to maintain a community orchard providing fruit for the community to share and to share with wildlife whilst enhancing our green spaces.
26	Trinity Camerata	£750.00	To cover the costs of hiring a soloist and music for a Family Concert in St Edburys for families in the Bicester area in the autumn.
27	Bicester Green	£660.00	To help towards the cost of the publicity and some of the set-up costs to promote the Repair Café events and to encourage new volunteers. They connect people and their broken items with skilled volunteers who fix them.
28	Nais House	£1,000.00	To go towards the cost of running the music group for young people in Bicester to help with their emotional and mental wellbeing.

	£19,290.77
25/26 BUDGET	£22,000.00
Remaining	£2,709.23

Appendix 2: Consolidated Grant Aid Applications consists of the forms for the applicants in the list above.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **APPROVE** the Grant Aid Applications for 2025/2026.

AGENDA ITEM 10

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 1st April 2025

Payments Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This report is a standing report to keep Councillors informed of all the payments made since the last committee meeting. This includes payments to the 28th February 2025

2. Background

Appendix 3 shows the 'List of Payments' made through our current account illustrating all payments made including direct debits, BACS payments, etc.

Appendix 4 is the 'List of Purchase Ledger Payments' showing all payments supported by the Purchase Ledger sheets for the BACS batches. BACS batches dated 02/09/2024 to the 28/02/2025 (page numbers 1082-1347) were sent to members of the Finance Committee before being paid.

3. Recommendation

As per Financial Regulations 5.2, the committee is asked to **APPROVE** the payment schedules since the last meeting held on **Tuesday 24th September 2024**, totalling £1,843,846.39 for 02/09/2025 to 28/02/2025.

AGENDA ITEM 11

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

1st April 2025

Review of Financial Regulations

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

The purpose of this report is to conduct a review of Financial Regulations for consideration of the Committee and onward presentation to Policy Committee before adoption by Full Council.

2. Background

The Town Council's Financial Regulations were last reviewed in 13 February 2024 and at that time a review date of March 2025 was set.

The following points are required to be reviewed:

- In these Financial Regulations, 'Must' refers to a statutory obligation the council cannot change. 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff - 1.10, 1.11, 2.4, 4.1.
- FR 1.15 – Update of Acts information.
- FR 1.12 – Addition to make allowances for lost records and prevention of inaccuracy or fraud
- FR 1.13 – Addition of effectiveness of internal controls.
- FR 1.14 - Addition of regular review of bank mandate.
- FR 1.16 – Addition of measures for Council computers.
- FR 2.7. – Addition of limitations for internal and external auditors.
- FR 3.7 & 3.8 - Additions for requirements for the precept.
- FR 6.1 – Addition of dual authorisation for making payments as this process is already in place.
- FR 7.11 – Inclusion of councillors' allowances, as this is already in practice.
- FR 11.1.h – Alteration to amounts for authorisation purposes.
- FR 17.3 – Allowance for emergency review of Financial Regulations.

3. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **REVIEW** this report and the amendments to Financial Regulations and to pass the amended document through to Policy Committee and from then to Full Council.

GP8 - FINANCIAL REGULATIONS – April 2025



BICESTER TOWN / COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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	Adopted 18 th November 2019	276/1920	Various changes after adoption	2022
V2	22 nd August 2022		A) Removed title of Chief Officer & replaced with Town Clerk. Reflected split role of Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer B) Credit card authorisations C) Approved suppliers and <i>de minimis</i> clarification D) Other minor amendments and updates as per updated regulations.	Aug 24
V3	11 th March 2024		- FR 1.1 – removal of footnote cross referencing NALC model standing orders - FR 2.2 – amendment consequent upon a	March 25

			recommendation of the internal auditor – so that the regulations reflect actual practice relating to bank reconciliations FR 9.1 – add in wording for the NALC Model regulations – reflecting the addition of Whitelands	
V4	1 st April 2025		- FR – Replacing the word 'shall' with the word 'must' when referring to a statutory obligation the council cannot change. – 1.10, 1.11, 2.4, 4.1. - FR 1.15 – Update of Acts. - FR 1.12 – addition to make allowances for lost records and prevention of inaccuracy or fraud - FR 1.13 – Addition of effectiveness of internal controls. - FR 1.14 Addition of regular review of bank mandate. - FR 1.16 – Addition of measures for Council computers. - FR 2.7. – Addition of limitations for internal and external auditors. - FR 3.7 & 3.8 Additions for requirements for the precept. - FR 6.1 – Addition of dual	April 2026

			authorisation for making payments as this process is already in place. • FR 7.11 – Inclusion of councillors' allowances. • FR 11.1.h – Alteration to amounts for authorisation purposes. • FR 17.3 – Allowance for emergency review of Financial Regulations.	
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These Financial Regulations were adopted by Bicester Town Council at its Meeting held on 1st April 2025

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. 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 orders¹ 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
 - for 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. 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.
- 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 **must** 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 Regulations.
- 1.11. The accounting records determined by the RFO **must** 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 account 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 must 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 appropriate 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.
 - **allow the reconstitution of any lost records**
 - **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud.**
- 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);
 - **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**
 - approving accounting statements;
 - approving an annual governance statement;

- borrowing;
- writing off bad debts following a recommendation of the Finance Committee;
- declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and
- addressing recommendations in any report from the external auditors and the annual report of the internal auditor.

shall be a matter for the full council only.

1.14. In addition the council must

- Determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts
- approve any grant or a single commitment in excess of £25,000 not already specifically approved in any budget.

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 sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, 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 *The Practitioners' Guide (England)* issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC, available from the websites of NALC and the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

1.16. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. The council shall put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

2. ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)

2.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, appropriate guidance and proper practices.

2.2. On a regular basis, monthly for the current account and quarterly for all other accounts, and at each financial year end, the Chairman of the Finance Committee shall verify bank reconciliations produced by the RFO. The Chairman shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification. This activity shall, on conclusion, be reported to and noted by the Finance Committee.

2.3. The RFO shall complete the annual statement of accounts, annual report, and any related documents of the council contained in the Annual Return (as specified in proper practices) as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and having certified the accounts shall submit them and report thereon to the council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

2.4. The council **must** 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 Town Clerk, 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 the Bicester Town Council and shall carry out their 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 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;
- provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
- 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 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 and Accountability Act 2014**, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

2.10. The RFO 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 relevant committee shall review its three year 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 Finance Committee not later than the end of December each year including any proposals for revising the forecast.

3.2. The RFO must each year, by no later than November, 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 relevant committee and the council.

3.3. The council shall consider annual budget proposals in relation to the council's three year 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 fix the precept (council tax requirement), and relevant basic amount of council tax to be levied for the ensuing financial year not later than by the end of January each year. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority and shall supply each member with a copy of the approved annual budget.
- 3.5. The approved annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.
- 3.6. Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.
- 3.7. Before setting a precept, the council must calculate its council tax requirement for each financial year by preparing and approving a budget, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.
- 3.8. Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider 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.

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:
- the council for all items over £25,000;
 - a duly delegated committee of the council for items over £10,000; or
 - the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below £10,000 and above £2,500.

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an email or authorisation slip duly signed by the Town Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman.

Contracts **must** 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 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. Unspent provisions in the revenue or capital budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year without specific resolution of the council, or duly delegated committee.
- 4.4. The salary budgets are to be reviewed at least annually by the Personnel Sub-Committee for the following financial year in accordance with National Joint Council (NJC) guidance on pay scales and the Council's appraisal process. The RFO will inform committees of any changes impacting on their budget requirement for the coming year in good time.
- 4.5. In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of council services, the Town Clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the council which in the Town Clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of **£3000**. The

Town Clerk shall report such action to the chairman of Policy Committee as soon as possible and to the council, or duly delegated committee, as soon as practicable thereafter.

- 4.6. 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.
- 4.7. 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 Finance Committee 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 for the Finance Committee meetings and shall show explanations of material variances. For this purpose "material" shall be in excess of £1000 or 15% of the budget .
- 4.9. Changes in earmarked reserves shall be approved by council as part of the budgetary control process. Approval for in-year spend against earmarked reserves shall be by resolution of Council or duly delegated committee.

5. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS

- 5.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the Town Clerk and 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. The RFO shall prepare a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, this will be emailed to each councillor two days before payment allowing time for members to comment or otherwise influence the payment of specific invoices. This schedule counter-signed by the Town Clerk or in their absence the Service Manager/RFO, accompanied with the relevant invoices, will be presented to two councillors who are authorised bank signatories for signature. The approved schedule shall be presented to the next Finance Committee for endorsement. A summary list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting at which payment was endorsed.
- 5.3. All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the RFO 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.
- 5.4. The RFO shall examine invoices for arithmetical accuracy and analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The RFO shall take all steps to pay all invoices submitted, and which are in order, within 30 days of receipt.
- 5.5. The Town Clerk or RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise the payment of items only in the following circumstances:
 - a) An expenditure item authorised under 5.6 below (continuing contracts and obligations) provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of finance committee; or
 - b) fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £300,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be countersigned by a member of Finance Committee.

- 5.6. For each financial year the RFO 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 and regular maintenance contracts and the like for which a relevant 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 Finance Committee. Salaries, PAYE and NI, Superannuation Fund payments shall be authorised annually by the Personnel Sub-Committee with payment being authorised by the Town Clerk upon submission from the payroll bureau.
- 5.7. A record of regular payments made under 5.6, above shall be drawn up and be signed by two members on each and every occasion when payment is authorised - thus controlling the risk of duplicated payments being authorised and / or made.
- 5.8. In respect of grants the Finance 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 £25,000 shall before payment, be subject to ratification by resolution of the council.
- 5.9. 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.
- 5.10. 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.
- 5.11. Any changes in the recorded details of suppliers, such as bank account records, shall be approved in writing by the RFO.

6. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MAKING OF PAYMENTS

- 6.1. The council will make safe and efficient arrangements for the making of its payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the council's bank.
- 6.2. Following authorisation under Financial Regulation 5 above, the RFO shall give instruction that a payment shall be made.
- 6.3. All payments shall be effected by direct payment via internet banking from the Council's bank accounts, BACS, cheque or other instructions to the council's bankers..
- 6.4. Cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule shall be signed by two members of council, and countersigned by the Town Clerk. 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.
- 6.5. 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.

- 6.6. Direct payments from the bank account via internet banking, will be set up by the RFO in accordance with 5.2 above and made as agreed on the schedule by the RFO and Town Clerk, each having separate and individual approval access to the direct payments system, requiring access from two parties to complete payment.
- 6.7. The Town Clerk or RFO shall be responsible for signing cheques from the Town Mayors accounts following approval from the relevant Mayor and subject to the Mayor's Accounts Policy
- 6.8. If thought appropriate by the Finance Committee, payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone and water) and any National Non-Domestic Rates may be made by variable direct debit provided that the instructions are signed by two members and any payments are reported to Finance Committee as made. The approval of the use of a variable direct debit shall be renewed by resolution of the Finance Committee at least every two years.
- 6.9. If thought appropriate by the Finance Committee, payment for certain items may be made by banker's standing order provided that the instructions are signed, or otherwise evidenced by two members are retained and any payments are reported to Finance Committee as made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be renewed by resolution of the Finance Committee at least every two years.
- 6.10. If thought appropriate by the Finance Committee, 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 Finance Committee as made. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the Finance Committee at least every two years.
- 6.11. Where a computer requires use of a personal identification number (PIN) or other password(s), for access to the council's records or banking arrangements, no record of that PIN will be made or kept.
- 6.12. 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.
- 6.13. Regular back-up copies of the records on all computers shall be made and shall be stored securely away from the computer in question off site.
- 6.14. 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.
- 6.15. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Town Clerk and RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administration Officers. The bank mandate approved by the council shall identify who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts.
- 6.16. 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.
- 6.17. 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 RFO. A programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed.

- 6.18. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Town Clerk, RFO and Service Manager and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £2,500 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed.
- 6.19. A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the Finance Committee. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to the Finance Committee and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of the RFO.
- 6.20. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by authorised officers and shall be subject to payment in full at each month-end. Any corporate credit card will be subject to a reasonable limit matched to the type of expenditure regularly being met and all purchases will be subject to the same authorisation steps as in sections 4 and 10 of this document. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall only be used under exceptional circumstances where other payment methods are not available.
- 6.21. 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 RFO with a claim for reimbursement.
 - a) The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of £200 for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses. Vouchers 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 under 5.2 above.

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 Policy Committee at the recommendation of the Personnel Sub-Committee. Payments shall be effected via an external payroll bureau at the instruction of the Town Clerk.
- 7.2. Time sheets shall be submitted and certified by the relevant line manager in respect of all staff, including casual, agency or locum staff and retained by the Town Clerk.
- 7.3. 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, as set out in these regulations above. The Town Clerk shall verify all payments as outlined by the payroll bureau as authorisation for payment. The Town Clerk shall notify the payroll bureau of all relevant information for the purpose of keeping the above records i.e. appointments, resignations, dismissals, absence through sickness or other reason.

- 7.4. No changes shall be made to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the Personnel Sub-Committee.
- 7.5. Each and every payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a separate confidential record (confidential cash book). This confidential record is not open to inspection or review (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or otherwise) other than:
- 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.
- 7.6. The total of such payments in each calendar month shall be made from a wages account recorded by the payroll bureau to ensure that only payments due for the period have actually been paid.
- 7.7. An effective system of personal performance management should be maintained for the senior officers.
- 7.8. Any termination payments shall be supported by a clear business case and reported to the council. Termination payments shall only be authorised by council.
- 7.9. Before employing interim staff in excess of the available budget the Personnel Sub-Committee on behalf of council must consider a full business case.
- 7.10. Member and Mayoral allowances are to be offered in line with the recommendations of the remuneration panel.
- 7.11. Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.

8. LOANS AND INVESTMENTS

- 8.1. All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be approved by Council as to terms and purpose. The application for borrowing approval, and subsequent arrangements for the loan shall only be approved by full council.
- 8.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase or Leasing of tangible assets) shall be subject to approval by the full council at the recommendation of the Policy Committee. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to council in respect of value for money for the proposed transaction.
- 8.3. All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the council and shall be for a set period in accordance with council policy.
- 8.4. The council shall consider the need for an Investment Strategy and Policy which, if drawn up, shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least bi-annually.

- 8.5. All investments of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 8.6. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.
- 8.7. Payments in respect of short term or long term investments, 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 or relevant committee, notified to the RFO and the RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the council.
- 9.3. The council, or relevant committee will review all fees and charges at following a report of officers.
- 9.4. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts over £200 shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year. The RFO shall have the authority to write off debts below £200 subject to having taken appropriate steps to recover such debts.
- 9.5. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be banked intact as directed under the supervision of 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 oversee the completion of any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made quarterly.
- 9.9. Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the RFO shall take such steps to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

10. ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

- 10.1. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained.
- 10.2. Order logs shall be controlled by the RFO.
- 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. This is either through using an approved supplier, being those that offer the Council a discount and which the Council has a trade account with or by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from other appropriate

suppliers, subject to any *de minimis* provisions in Regulation 11.1 below which for daily operational expenditure is taken to mean any single order below £500.

- 10.4. A member may not issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the council.
- 10.5. A senior officer 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 Town Clerk 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 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 Town Clerk and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Policy Committee); 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 Regulations².
- 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)³.

² The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder/Find a Tender website to advertise contract opportunities, set out the procedures to be followed in awarding new contracts and to publicise the award of new contracts

³ Thresholds currently applicable are (PPN 06/19 November 2019):

- a. For public supply and public service contracts (£189,330)
- b. For public works contracts (£4,733,252)

- 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 or the relevant committee.
- e. Full sealed tender arrangements shall apply only to contracts with an expected value in excess of £60,000 including VAT unless decided otherwise by Council or the appropriate committee. Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Town 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 Town 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.
- f. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Town Clerk and RFO in the presence of at least one member of council.
- g. Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Orders 29, ⁴ and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- h. When it is to enter into a contract of less than £60,000 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 Town Clerk or RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £42,500-£10,000 and above £3,000 the Town Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10.3 above shall apply. For expenditure of £3,000 or less in value the Town Clerk or RFO shall have executive power.
- 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 (PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACTS)

- 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

⁴ Based on NALC's model standing order 18d © 2018 National Association of Local Councils

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 Town 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 Town Clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council. The Town Clerk 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 £1,000.
- 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 the full council following a report of the Policy Committee. 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 Regulation 14.2 above, no tangible moveable property shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the 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 Regulation 16), the Town Clerk or RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the council's insurers.
- 15.2. Senior Officers shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 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 or Service Manager 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 by the council, or duly delegated committee.

16. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 16.1. The council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Town Clerk with the RFO shall prepare, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 16.2. When considering any new activity, the Town Clerk and RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the council.

17. SUSPENSION AND REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

- 17.1. It shall be the duty of the council to review the Financial Regulations of the council from time to time following a recommendation of the Policy Committee. The Town Clerk and RFO 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.
- 17.2. 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.
- 17.3. The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

APPROVED by Council

Adopted:

Reviewed: 01 April 2025

Next Review: April 2026