



WINTERBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Regulations



ADOPTED JANUARY 2024 TO BE REVIEWED MAY 2025

WINTERBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. GENERAL

- 1.1 These financial regulations govern the conduct of financial management by the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council. The council is responsible in law for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that the Council has a sound system of financial control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk and for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. These financial regulations are designed to demonstrate how the Council meets these responsibilities.
- 1.2 The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) is a statutory office and shall be appointed by the Council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO for this council and these regulations will apply accordingly. The RFO, acting under the policy direction of the Council, shall administer the Council's financial affairs in accordance with proper practices. The RFO shall determine on behalf of the Council its accounting records, and accounting control systems. The RFO shall ensure that the accounting control systems are observed and that the accounting records of the Council are maintained and kept up to date in accordance with proper practices.
- 1.3 The RFO shall produce financial management information as required by the Council.
- 1.4 At least once a year, prior to approving the annual return, the Council shall conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control which shall be in accordance with proper practices.
- 1.5 In these financial regulations, references to the Accounts and Audit Regulations shall mean the regulations of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and then in force, noting that Winterbourne Parish Council is a smaller authority as defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.
- 1.6 In these financial regulations the term 'proper practice' or 'proper practices' shall refer to guidance issued in *Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - a Practitioners' Guide (England)* issued by the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG), available from the websites of NALC and the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

2. ANNUAL ESTIMATES (BUDGET)

- 2.1 Detailed estimates of all receipts and payments including the use of reserves and all sources of funding for the year shall be prepared in advance for each year by the RFO in the form of a budget to be considered by the Council.
- 2.2 The Council shall review the budget not later than the end of January each year and shall fix the precept to be levied for the ensuing financial year. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority and shall supply each member with a copy of the approved budget.
- 2.3 The annual budgets shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.
- 2.4 The Council shall consider the need for and shall have regard to a three year forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments which may be prepared at the same time as the annual budget (the Council can consider and defer unless there is a known item(s) coming up within 3 years).

3 BUDGETARY CONTROL

- 3.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget.
- 3.2 No expenditure may be incurred that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure. During the budget year and with the approval of Council having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate.
- 3.3 The RFO shall regularly provide the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each heading of the budget, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget. These statements are to be prepared at least at the end of each financial quarter.
- 3.4 The Clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council, in conjunction with the chairman acting on behalf of Winterbourne Parish Council (if the chairman is unavailable then the vice-chairman) which is necessary to carry out any repair replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £500. The Clerk shall report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter. Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate chairman.
- 3.5 Unspent provisions in the revenue budget shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year unless placed in an earmarked reserve by resolution of the council.
- 3.6 No expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available, or the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.

- 3.7 All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.
- 3.8 In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the Parish to contribute to or share costs incurred by another party provided that the other organisation(s) demonstrate adequate financial controls comparable to those of Winterbourne Parish Council. Such arrangements must be agreed by resolution of the Council.
- 3.9 Reimbursement of expenses incurred as part of Council business must be in accord with the provisions set out in Annex 1 to these financial regulations.

4. ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT

- 4.1 All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined & kept by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations & other relevant regulations.
- 4.2 The RFO shall complete the annual financial statements of the Council, including the council's annual return and a statement of Council's financial reserves (as required by its policy on financial reserves), as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them and report thereon to the Council.
- 4.3 The RFO shall complete the accounts of the Council contained in the Annual Return (as supplied by the auditor appointed from time to time by the Audit Commission) and shall submit the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for approval and authorisation by the Council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 4.4 The RFO shall ensure that there is adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting, financial and other operations in accordance with proper practices. Any officer or member of the Council shall, if the RFO or internal auditor requires, make available such documents of the Council which appear to the RFO or internal auditor to be necessary for the purpose of the internal audit and shall supply the RFO or internal auditor with such information and explanation as the RFO or internal auditor considers necessary for that purpose.
- 4.5 The internal auditor shall be appointed by and shall carry out the work required by the Council in accordance with proper practices. The internal auditor, who shall be competent and independent of the operations of the Council, shall report to Council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual written report in respect of each financial year. In order to demonstrate objectivity and independence, the internal auditor shall be free from any conflicts of interest and have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council.
- 4.6 The RFO shall make arrangements for the opportunity for inspection of the accounts, books, and vouchers and for the display or publication of any notices and statements of account required by Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

- 4.7 The RFO shall, as soon as practicable, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from the internal or external auditor, unless the correspondence is of a purely administrative matter.

5. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND CHEQUES

- 5.1 The Council's banking arrangements, including the Bank Mandate, shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council. They shall be regularly reviewed for efficiency.
- 5.2 A schedule of the payments required, forming part of the agenda for the meetings of the Council shall be prepared by the RFO and, together with the relevant invoices, be presented to Council.
- 5.3 Payments should be made by online banking (BACS) where possible. The Chairman of the Council (or other agreed signatory) will authorise the payments online as the second required signatory following agreement of the payments as set out in 5.2. The following security procedures must be followed regarding online banking:
- i. 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.
 - ii. 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.
 - iii. 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 for council bank account access.
- 5.4 Cheques drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule referred to in paragraph 5.2 or in accordance with paragraph 6.4, shall be signed by two members of Council.
- 5.5 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 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

- 6.1 All payments shall be effected by online BACS transfer, cheque, Parish Council Credit Card (the balance of which must be cleared monthly) or other order drawn on the Council's bankers.
- 6.2 All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the Clerk. The Clerk shall satisfy herself that the work, goods or services to which the invoice relates shall have been received, carried out, examined and approved. For invoices related to a particular portfolio task, written confirmation from the designated councillor or task manager can be accepted as confirmation that the goods or services have been received, carried out, and examined.
- 6.3 The RFO shall examine invoices for arithmetic accuracy and shall allocate them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The Clerk shall take all steps to settle all invoices submitted, and which are in order, at the next available Council Meeting.

- 6.4 If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, or to comply with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (payment of valid and undisputed invoices within 30 days), and the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of Council, where the Clerk certifies that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, the Clerk may (notwithstanding para 6.3) take all steps necessary to settle such invoices provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council.
- 6.5 The Council will not maintain any form of cash float. All cash received must be banked intact. Any payments made in cash by the Clerk or RFO (for example for postage or minor stationery items) shall be refunded on a regular basis, at least quarterly.
- 6.6 If thought appropriate by the council, payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone and water) may be made by variable Direct Debit provided that the bank instructions are authorised by two members and any payments are reported to council as made. The approval of the use of a variable Direct Debit shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.

7 PAYMENT OF SALARIES

- 7.1 As an employer, the council shall make arrangements to meet fully the statutory requirements placed on all employers by PAYE and National Insurance legislation. The payment of all salaries shall be made in accordance with payroll records and the rules of PAYE and National Insurance currently operating, and salaries shall be as agreed by Council.
- 7.2 Payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be made for tax, national insurance and pension contributions, may be made in accordance with the payroll records and on the appropriate dates stipulated in employment contracts, provided that each payment is reported to and ratified by the next available Council Meeting.

8 LOANS AND INVESTMENTS

- 8.1 All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the Council and shall be for a set period in accordance with Council policy.
- 8.2 The council shall consider the need for an Investment Policy which, if drawn up, shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Policy shall be reviewed at least annually.
- 8.3 All investments of money under the control of the Council shall be in the name of the Council.
- 8.4 All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the Council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be

approved by Council as to terms and purpose. The terms and conditions of borrowings shall be reviewed at least annually.

- 8.5 All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

9 INCOME

- 9.1 The collection of all sums due to the Council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 9.2 Particulars of all charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied shall be agreed annually by the Council, notified to the RFO and the RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the Council.
- 9.3 The Council will review all fees and charges annually, following a report of the Clerk.
- 9.4 Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the Council and shall be written off in the year.
- 9.5 All sums received on behalf of the Council shall be banked intact as directed by the RFO. In all cases, all receipts shall be deposited with the Council's bankers with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary.
- 9.6 The origin of each receipt shall be entered on the paying-in slip.
- 9.7 The Council bank account(s) shall not be used to pass cheques for individuals or other organisations.
- 9.8 The RFO shall promptly complete any VAT return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year end.
- 9.9 Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the Council, the RFO shall take such steps as are agreed by the Council to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

10 ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

- 10.1 An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained.
- 10.2 Order books shall be controlled by the RFO.
- 10.3 All members and Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining two or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any *de minimis* provisions in Regulation 11.1 below.

10.4 A member may not issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the council

10.5 The RFO shall confirm the lawful nature of all proposed expenditure before the approval of the annual budget, and in the case of new or infrequent purchases or payments, the RFO shall ensure that the statutory authority shall be reported to the meeting at which the order is approved so that the minutes can record the power being used.

11 CONTRACTS

11.1 Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:

- (a) Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that these regulations shall not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:
 - (i) for the supply of 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 £250 (in excess of this sum the Clerk and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council);
 - (vi) for goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and/or are only sold at a fixed price.
- (b) Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding £1,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk shall invite tenders from at least three firms to be taken from the appropriate approved list.
- (c) When applications are made to waive financial regulations relating to contracts to enable a price to be negotiated without competition the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the Council.
- (d) Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases. The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk by email communication and by a stated time and deadline. Each tendering firm shall be requested to supply the tender as an attached document in pdf format. Once all the tenders have been received by the

stated time and deadline to the Clerk, the Clerk shall collate the tenders and ensure that the tenders are distributed to the Parish Council as one communication.

- (f) Other than factual responses to requests for clarification on the contract specification or tender process, no correspondence shall be entered into with potential bidders between the dates of the call for tenders and the closing date for their receipt by the Clerk.
- (g) If less than three tenders are received for contracts above £1,000 or if all the tenders are identical the Council may make such arrangements as it thinks fit for procuring the goods or materials or executing the works.
- (h) When it is to enter into a contract less than £1,000 but more than £250 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk or RFO shall obtain 2 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply). In all cases (regardless of value and including the exceptions listed at 11.1a) the price for goods and services must be agreed prior to purchase or contract.
- (i) The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- (j) 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 Regulations¹.

12. PAYMENTS UNDER CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKS

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

13 STORES AND EQUIPMENT

¹ The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website to advertise contract opportunities, set out the procedures to be followed in awarding new contracts and to publicise the award of new contracts

- 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 Clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds of properties owned by the Council. The RFO shall ensure a record is maintained of all properties owned by the Council, recording the location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 14.2 No property shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed £50.
- 14.3 The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate register of assets and investments is kept up to date. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

15 INSURANCE

- 15.1 Following the annual risk assessment (per Financial Regulation 17), the RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers.
- 15.2 The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances purchased by the Council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.
- 15.3 The RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to Council at the next available meeting.
- 15.4 All appropriate employees of the Council shall be included in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined by the Council.

16 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 16.1 The council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The RFO shall prepare, for approval by the Council, a financial risk assessment in respect of all financial activities of the council. Financial 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 RFO shall prepare an assessment of financial risk including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the council.

17 REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

- 17.1 It shall be the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council from time to time. The Clerk shall 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.

WPC updated/amended February 2021 – confirmed as current copy February 2022

Annex 1 to Winterbourne Parish Council Financial Regulations

Reimbursement of Councillor & Officer Expenses

The Parish Council will reimburse councillors for reasonable expenses wholly, necessarily and exclusively incurred in connection with its business. Councillors should not be either financially disadvantaged or advantaged because of genuine Parish Council expenses. Except for expenses covered by employment contract, these provisions will apply also to expenses incurred by officers of the Council. The following procedures apply:

1. The circumstances leading to reimbursable costs must be agreed in advance by the Parish Council.
2. Expenses must be reasonable and necessary, and within HMRC limits and guidelines.
3. Expenses shall be submitted to the Parish Clerk, using the form provided, and must be accompanied by receipts (showing VAT where applicable) for all items other than mileage.
4. Payment will be made by BACS, following the next parish council meeting after the submission of claims.

In some situations, it may be practicable and cost effective for a Parish Councillor to provide goods or services in a business capacity. This should normally comply with the Council's financial regulations section 10; however, for small items the Parish Council may exceptionally agree to waive the regulations subject to the following:

- i. The Councillor's business must be included in the public register of interests for councillors.
- ii. The procurement of the goods or services on this basis must be agreed in advance by the Parish Council.
- iii. The goods or services are provided "at cost" with no labour, overhead, profit or other additional charge.
- iv. The limit for any one such transaction is £50, and the limit for any one business is £250 in any financial year.
- v. Invoices (showing VAT where applicable) shall be submitted to the Parish Clerk.

- vi. Payment will be made by BACS, following the next parish council meeting after the submission of invoice.