

# PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL

*Puxton & Hewish: in the North Somerset Council Ward of Congresbury & Puxton*

**Clerk: Donald Hill - 18 Mitford Slade Court, Mendip Road, Yatton, North Somerset BS49 4JG**

Tel: 01934 835578 Mobile: 07774 125578 e-mail: [clerk@puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk) Website: [puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk](http://puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk)

## You are Summoned to a Council Meeting in the Village Hall at 7.00pm on Thursday June 6th 2024

*All are welcome, unless precluded by a procedural resolution. You will not be entitled to speak, except within the Public Session*

**Don Hill - Clerk**

### AGENDA & AGENDA NOTES

*It is expected that members of the public attending Parish Council meetings will be respectful of the Councillors and of all attendees. Unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated and the offender will be asked to leave. Parishioners will be invited to speak for 3 minutes in the Public Session. Their contribution must be to do with an agenda item or on current matters only and should be in the form of a statement; to be noted and followed up as necessary. It is at the discretion of the Chairman to suspend standing orders so that contributions from the public can be sought during the meeting if it is thought to be useful.*

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Cllrs L Redding, H Riddell
- 2 **DECLARATIONS:** *(Dispensations apply to Cllrs re percept setting, and Village Hall matters)*
- 3 **PUBLIC SESSION:** *15 minutes - Contributions are limited to 3 minutes: they should be concise and to the point*
- 4 **LAST MEETING MINUTES + Matters Arising**  
**Minutes of the May 8th 2023 Annual & Ordinary Meetings** to be agreed and signed.  
**Minutes of The Annual Parish Meeting** of May 8th to be reviewed, noted and initialled. Signing of this document will be at the May 2025 Annual Parish Meeting.
- 5 **PLANNING** *Details at <https://planning.n-somerset.gov.uk/online-applications/>*
  - i. **New: 24/P/1039/AOC:** Cider House Conversion, The Grange, West Hewish. Discharge of Conditions 3 (Construction Management Statement) & 8 (Renewable Energy) on application 23/P/2556/FUL *(for information only).*
  - ii. **Decisions Due:**
    - (a) **19/P/0815/FUL** Puxton Park car park.
    - (b) **22/P/3067/OUT** Haybow Village (Banwell PC).
    - (c) **23/P/2782/AOC** Discharge of Conditions, Maysgreen Lane barn.
    - (d) **23/P/2593/FUL** Land Opposite The Full Quart.
    - (e) **23/P/2738/FUL** Villa Farm barn conversions.
    - (f) **24/P/0157/FUL** Barn conversion opposite Heathgate Farm.
    - (g) **24/P/0143/FUL:** Gypsy/Traveller site below Heathfield Park
    - (h) **24/P/0604/FUL** Hewish Barn
    - (i) **24/P/0745/CM2** Awaiting NSC Community Response reaction.
  - iii. **Approved:**
    - (a) **24/P/0567/LPD** 1 Council Houses
- 6 **FINANCE**
  - i. **2024-25 Accounts:** to be reviewed, reconciled against the bank statement and approved.
  - ii. **2023-24 Accounts:** Period of Public Rights runs from 3rd June to 12th July.
  - iii. **Governance:** Approval of updated Financial Regulations based on new NALC template.

- iv. **2022-23 Accounts:** The 2021-22 accounts were referred to our then External Auditors by our usual complainant at a cost to our community of some £3000. We now learn that he referred the 2022-23 accounts to our new External Auditors via some voluminous correspondence. These auditors, as is their duty, thoroughly investigated his complaints and concluded that there was nothing to report on. The cost of this exercise will be around £870 and will, as last time, seriously impact the Council's ability to progress some urgent highway matters within the Parish.
- v. **Payments Due:**

## 7 PARISH MATTERS

- i. **A370. Signage and Speed Issues - Especially around St Anne's School:**
- (a) Police DCB (data collection box) erection awaited.
  - (b) Grant application result awaited re Police Sign Indicator Device (SID) fund.
  - (c) St Annes School: **Gully overflows:** pictures of flooding will help to push resolution of the problem up the NSC agenda. **Congresbury-end School warning sign** repair requested.
- ii. **Dolmoor Lane Fly-tipping:** No response has been received from NSC re possible help with this problem. **Cllr Thomas is seeing if his intervention can prompt some action.**
- iii. **Post Box by the Green in Puxton Road:** new box on a pole due.
- iv. **A370 Footpath:** This is becoming overgrown and dangerous for users again. It is too important an issue to be dropped from the agenda despite NSC's claim not to be able to prioritise the work.
- v. **NSC Local Plan**

## 8 PROJECTS AWAITING FURTHER ACTION FROM NSC

- i. **Footpaths:** 4 old items and one new item:
- Path 399628 - New kissing gate overgrown, making access to field impossible
  - Path 398631 - obstruction to access from the road on the corner
  - The roadside path at Puxton Court Farm: fence removal. Re-fit of exposed wires on pole.
  - Path at Wick Lane M5 bridge: NSC are to install a new kissing Gate adjacent to it.
  - Rotting bridge and bramble infested path at the junction of Puxton Road and Maysgreen Lane NSC dealing.
- ii. **Wick Lane Rail Bridge:** More regular weeding and overgrowth clearance, and clear, well maintained pedestrian markings, and 'Beware, Pedestrians' notices at either end needed.

## 9 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

10 **NEXT MEETING - Thursday June 27th 2024** in the Village Hall Meeting Room.

**Note changed date due to Hall being unavailable on July 4th due to General Election.**

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## Minutes of the Annual and Ordinary Meetings of The Council Held at 7pm on Thursday May 9th 2024

*All meetings are held at 7.00pm in the Village Hall unless stated otherwise -  
Although under no obligation to, Dan Thomas, our NSC Ward Cllr, attends when possible*

**Present:** Cllrs Lynda Redding (Chair), Jim Corbett, Clayton Penfold, Helen Riddell  
**In Attendance:** Don Hill (Clerk)  
**Public Attendance:** 2

### ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

#### 032/24 APOLOGIES

Cllrs P Penfold, Butterfield, Ellis; NSC Cllr Thomas

#### 033/24 ELECTION OF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR & ASSOCIATED PAPERWORK

The Chair addressed the election of Chair and Vice Chair. It was unanimously agreed, without discussion, that Cllr Redding would be re-appointed as Chair and Cllr Corbett would be re-appointed as Vice Chair. Cllr Redding completed the necessary Declaration of acceptance of office as Chair.

#### 034/24 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Redding was, again unanimously, re-appointed to to represent the Council on the NSC Standards Sub-Committee as and when called upon.

#### 035/24 AGREEMENT TO RE-CONFIRM RECENTLY APPROVED GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Governance documents for 2024-45 were individually reviewed in detail at Minute 019/24 of the February meeting of the Council, in the context of the financial year 2024-25 and then duly posted to the website together with an index and signed risk Assessment. The meeting agreed that this framework of Governance should remain in place for the coming political year from May 2024 to May 2025.

#### 036/24 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT *(this report was read out at the Annual Residents' Meeting, immediately following).*

##### **Meetings**

*The Parish Council held meetings on the first Thursday of each month except August, as usual, and February as we were not quorate due to illness. It is unfortunate that yet again we were unable to hold our May meeting on the first Thursday as the Hall was requisitioned as a Polling Station.*

##### **Agendas**

*We have had a steady stream of planning applications, mostly fairly routine. We were disappointed that North Somerset Council maintained their resistance to allow permission for any house to be built that is not on the footprint of an existing barn. We feel that young families of residents are being forced to move away from the parish because of a lack of suitable accommodation.*

*The speed of vehicles along our lanes are always a concern and we continue to urge North Somerset Council to consider reducing the speed limits. Damage to the roads caused by heavy traffic continues to be reported. Our concern about increased traffic through Puxton when the Banwell bypass is being constructed and after it is completed fell on deaf ears.*

*Safety along the A370, especially in front of the school, is of concern. There have been several minor accidents and near misses at school drop off and pick up times. We have been in communication with the Principal Engineer responsible for neighbourhood traffic and road safety voicing our concerns and asking that the speed limit be reduced. The response was to explain why*

*this is not possible for reasons that do not seem logical. We are seeking a grant to purchase a Vehicle Activated illuminated sign to alert drivers to their speed and the speed limit. This will also collect data on the speed and volume of traffic.*

*The central refuge has been installed to aid crossing the ever busy A370 at Hewish. The Parish Council has paid the agreed £4,300 towards the cost of the refuge. The new bridge across the Oldbridge river was scheduled to be built this year but has been delayed. We have not been informed when this will be re-scheduled. The bridge has to be strengthened, NSC assure us there will be a width restriction on the new bridge.*

**Finance**

*Another uneventful year, the precept was £10,082. The online banking continues to facilitate payments. We are grateful to our Clerk for managing our finances, accounts and audits efficiently.  
Lynda Redding*

**Lynda Redding - May 2024**

## ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

**037/24 APOLOGIES**

Cllrs P Penfold, Butterfield, Ellis; NSC Cllr Thomas

**038/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS**

Dispensations apply to resident Cllrs re the setting of the precept, and to all Cllrs relating to Village Hall matters)

None

**039/24 PUBLIC SESSION** 15 minutes - Contributions are limited to 3 minutes: they should be concise and to the point

There was no public session

**040/24 LAST MEETING MINUTES + MATTERS ARISING**

Minutes of the meeting held on April 4th 2024 were agreed and signed. There were no matters arising.

**041/24 GOVERNANCE**

The Annual Governance Statement, being Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-2024 was approved and signed.

**042/24 PLANNING** Details at <https://planning.n-somerset.gov.uk/online-applications/>

- i. **New: 19/P/0815/FUL** Puxton Park car park: new consultation material was received for comment by May 1st. This was circulated to Members and the comment to NSC planners below was noted and ratified.

*Puxton Parish Council reviewed the new consultation material circulated for review by May 1st via email. They say no reasons to divert from their comment of June 6th 2019: 'No objection: it is realised that these sorts of changes are part of keeping attractions like Puxton Park 'vital'.*

**24/P/0745/CM2** Flavours ground floor conversion to two flats. In realising that this form of application cannot be refused, the meeting pointed to the continuing disgraceful and unhygienic dumping of rubbish in the area designated to be 'the garden'. *(It was also reported at the following Annual Parish Meeting that, despite having an 18 space car park, residents park on the highway outside other properties in this small community lane, thus depriving those properties of visitor parking.)*. The meeting decided to ask NSC if the application can be conditioned to demand that the property be kept up to a proper level of cleanliness and order. They also plan to check, via North Somerset Council's Community Response Officer, to see if it is possible to arrange some monitoring or intervention to ensure that community standards are upheld. **Clerk to Action.**

**ii. Decisions Due:**

- (a) 19/P/0815/FUL Puxton Park car park.
- (b) 22/P/3067/OUT Haybow Village (Banwell PC).
- (c) 23/P/2782/AOC Discharge of Conditions, Maysgreen Lane barn.
- (d) 23/P/2593/FUL Land Opposite The Full Quart.
- (e) 23/P/2738/FUL Villa Farm barn conversions.
- (f) 24/P/0157/FUL Barn conversion opposite Heathgate Farm.
- (g) 24/P/0143/FUL: Gypsy/Traveller site below Heathfield Park
- (h) 24/P/0567/LPD 1 Council Houses
- (i) 24/P/0604/FUL Hewish Barn

**iii. Approved:**

- (a) 24/P/0320/LDP Barn next to Oakacre
- (b) 24/P/0598/CRN: Manor Farm West Wick Agricultural building

**iv. Training Centre for Disabled Young Adults:** The detail relating to this topic has not been provided, so the matter will be put on the agenda after it has.

**043/24**

**FINANCE**

**i. 2024-25 Accounts:** were reviewed, reconciled against the bank statement and approved.

**ii. 2023-24 Accounts:**

- a) The Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2023/24 Form 2 was approved and signed.
- b) The 2023-24 internal auditor's report was noted: it contained no adverse comments.
- c) AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24: see Minute 041/24 above.
- d) The AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statement 2023/24 was approved and signed.
- e) The 2023-2024 Bank Reconciliation was approved and signed.
- f) The external auditor's conflict of interest form revealed no conflicts of interest and was signed to confirm that situation.

**iii. Payments Due:** P Smith, Internal Auditor £50.00. The payment was authorised

**044/24**

**PARISH MATTERS**

**i. A370. Signage and Speed Issues - Especially around St Anne's School:**

- (a) Police DCB (data collection box) erection awaited.
- (b) Grant application result awaited re Police Sign Indicator Device (SID) fund.
- (c) There have been several near-miss traffic incidents around pick up and drop off times at St Annes. As well as the earlier reported flooding between The Full Quart and the School, there is now flooding directly outside the school which is causing users of the path to have to step off the path onto the fast and dangerous highway. The warning sign approaching the school from the Congresbury side is not working properly. **Clerk to report these concerns to NSC.**

**ii Annual Parish Meeting : Fly-tipping : Village Agent flyers:** - these three flyers were printed and delivered to residents' homes.

**iii. Dolmoor Lane Fly-tipping:** No response has been received from NSC re possible help with this problem. **Cllr Thomas is seeing if his intervention can prompt some action.**

**iv. Post Box by the Green in Puxton Road:** new box on a pole due.

**v. Puxton Road/Puxton Lane triangle:** The meeting decided to remove this item from the agenda. Cllrs will continue to monitor the situation and will raise the matter again if needed.

- vi. **A370 Footpath:** This is becoming overgrown and dangerous for users again. It is too important an issue to be dropped from the agenda despite NSC's claim not to be able to prioritise the work.
- vii. **Potholes and Verge Collapses:** The NSC Area Officer is moving around the area organising that these be repaired. It will still take many weeks before the backlog of work can be caught up with across the district.
- viii. **NSC Car Parking and Waste Consultations:** This council's comments were relayed to the NSC Cllr leads and have been acknowledged.
- ix. **Community Bleed Kits:** These are provided by the police and fit as attachments to defibrillators. St Anne's School is looking into the police offer as they have a defibrillator.

**045/24 PROJECTS AWAITING FURTHER ACTION FROM NSC**

- i. **Footpaths:** 4 items:
  - Path 399628 - New kissing gate overgrown, making access to field impossible
  - Path 398631 - obstruction to access from the road on the corner
  - The roadside path at Puxton Court Farm: fence removal. Re-fit of exposed wires on pole.
  - Path at Wick Lane M5 bridge: The 'blockage' will remain, but NSC are to install a new kissing Gate adjacent to it.
- ii. **Wick Lane Rail Bridge:** More regular weeding and overgrowth clearance, and clear, well maintained pedestrian markings, and 'Beware, Pedestrians' notices at either end needed.

**046/24 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS**

**Cllr Riddell** has noted improvements in the natural environment and particularly mentioned the increase in the number of brown hares.

**Cllr Redding** reported that she will be away on June 6th, when the next meeting is due, and sends her apologies.

**047/24 NEXT MEETING - Thursday June 6th 2024 in the Village Hall.**

**The meeting closed at 7.58pm**

**THE CIVIL PARISH OF PUXTON**  
Comprising the villages of Puxton and Hewish  
*In the North Somerset Council Ward of Congresbury and Puxton*

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**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL**  
**Thursday 9th MAY 2024 AT 8.00 pm**

**Present:** Lynda Redding - Chair; Don Hill - Minute Taker; 13 Other Attendees

**APM24/01 APOLOGIES**

NSC Cllr Dan Thomas, PPC Cllrs P Penfold, Victoria Butterfield and Mel Ellis

**APM24/02 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST YEAR'S MEETING**

The Chair highlighted some key topics and action points from the minutes. There being no objections from anyone who attended the meeting, the minutes were signed by the Chair as a true record.

**APM24/03 REPORTS FROM INTEREST GROUPS**

**PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**Meetings**

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**Agendas**

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*The speed of vehicles along our lanes are always a concern and we continue to urge North Somerset Council to consider reducing the speed limits. Damage to the roads caused by heavy traffic continues to be reported. Our concern about increased traffic through Puxton when the Banwell bypass is being constructed and after it is completed fell on deaf ears.*

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**Finance**

*Another uneventful year, the precept was £10,082. The online banking continues to facilitate payments. We are grateful to our Clerk for managing our finances, accounts and audits efficiently.*

**Lynda Redding - Chair of Puxton Parish Council**

**Hewish & Puxton Village Hall Ltd**

*The facilities at Hewish and Puxton Village Hall have continued to improve in the last year. With the help of a grant from North Somerset Council an impressive screen and projector has been installed to add to the hearing loop and sound system. The front door and exit door at the rear have been replaced, the side door is to be replaced tomorrow. Some of this has been funded from hire income. We are a not-for-profit charitable organisation and have not raised the hire charge for more than ten years but are pleased to report income has matched expenditure.*

*We had hoped to reinstate the New Year's Eve Party but it didn't work out this year, hopefully it will at the end of the year. I would be glad to hear of your opinion of a summer celebration.*

*I would like to thank our regular users and the committee for their support. Pauline has continued to do a great job juggling the bookings and Dave has kept on top of the maintenance.*

**Lynda Redding - Chair Hewish and Puxton Village Hall**

## **APM24/04 OPEN DISCUSSION**

### **Potholes**

A complaint was made about the pothole repairs on Puxton Lane towards Sandford. This matched a complaint to the Parish Council immediately after the work was completed. Three specific points were raised: 1. Several large potholes were not repaired. 2. The contractor's lorries did damage to the sides of the highway by the way they parked: and staff were abusive when this was pointed out to them. 3. Some of the new work will end up being pushed into the rhyes by the weight of traffic using this narrow road.

### **Planning Issue**

Concern was raised about a possible infringement of planning regulations on a site within the parish that has been the subject of several planning applications over recent years. The Parish Council can research the planning background. If a reasonable case is evidenced for submission of a complaint to North Somerset Council planning enforcement, this can be done.

### **Palmers Elm**

The garden and car park areas of Flavours continue to be a dumping ground for rubbish in a way that is unsightly and un-neighbourly. The lack of facilities for the upper floor bedsits remains a mystery. The existing garage is to become a bins and re-cycling area: it is feared that the bins will end up being left in an unsightly mess outside the garage rather than inside. In all, the standards of upkeep at Flavours is, and seems likely to continue as, a serious blight on the community cohesiveness of Palmers Elm. Despite having 18 parking spaces, residents of Flavours persistently park on the highway outside other residents' properties. It is understood that they are within their rights to park on the highway, but given their dedicated car parking facilities this is, at best un-neighbourly and and at worst leaves nowhere for visitors to other Palmers Elm properties to park. The Parish Council had noted this in their review of the planning application and the comment they will submit to North Somerset Council planners will urge that a condition be placed on the passing of the application that the property be kept up to a proper level of cleanliness and order. They also plan to check, via North Somerset Council's Community Response Officer, to see if it is possible to arrange some monitoring or intervention to ensure that community standards are upheld.

### **Parish communications**

Various attempts have been made over the years, both by enterprising residents and by the Parish Council, to produce a regular parish newsletter. These attempts have foundered, in part due to a lack of contributors, a lack of feedback and a lack of volunteer distributors. The building of specific email contact lists, as attempted by the Parish Council, have been inhibited by a lack of response and, over recent years, by the imposition of tight restrictions laid down by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Communication on parish issues therefore tends to rely on occasional flyers being produced and on spreading the word via personal communication networks.

It was proposed that a Facebook page be set up that could provide a good communications link between residents. To avoid such a page falling into the pitfalls of so many social media sites it was suggested that this Facebook page should be a private - membership only - site. This idea was enthusiastically received by the meeting and the proposer offered to set such a Facebook page up (*which they did at the Hall after the meeting closed*). As such schemes are known to work well in several other parishes, the success of this venture is to be looked forward to.

### **Hall Parties**

These have proved a success among those who have attended them ( as evidenced at his meeting!). The meeting hoped that, with good early publicity, another New Year party can be held at the end of this year. There was also good support for the idea of another mid-year party - in September rather than earlier to avoid it taking place during a time when many families will be away on holiday. These reactions will be taken on board by the Village Hall management team.

**There being no further topics raised, the Chair thanked everyone for coming, offered them tea and cakes before their departure, and closed the meeting at 8.45pm.**



**PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL INCOME & EXPENDITURE: 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025 (Precept £10871.00)**

DATE	ITEM	BANK CH	IN	OUT	BALANCE	Stmnt	NOTES	GENERAL FUND EXPENSE ANALYSIS									TOTALS	VAT	OPERATING FUNDS				
								Clerk	Clk/Clr Exp	Hall Hire	Parish Maint	Ins/Subs Audit	Pub-licity	Other Costs	Web Site	Bank Chrgs			Election	Capital Prov	General Fund	Total Op Funds	
Apr 1	Funds Bought Forward				11,485.24													1830.14	5401.00	4254.10	11485.24		
	<b>OPERATING BAL B/F</b>				11,485.24		Agrees											1,830.14	5,401.00	4,254.10	11485.24		
Apr 18	ALCA Sub 2023-24	BACS		114.19	11,371.05	130						114.19									114.19		
	Clerks Pay & Expenses	SO		339.90	11,031.15	131		305.60	34.30													339.90	
	Hall Hire	SO		22.92	11,008.23	131				22.92													22.92
	NSC half year precept	BACS	5435.50		16,443.73	131													150.00	500.00	4,785.50		
	Bank Charges			5.00	16,438.73	131	Agrees										5.00					5.00	
May 9	Hall Hire			22.92	16,415.81	RT				22.92												22.92	
	P Smith re Internal Audit			50.00	16,365.81	RT						50.00										50.00	
	Clerks Pay & Expenses			339.90	16,025.91	RT		305.60	34.30													339.90	
May 30	Bank Charges			5.00	16,020.91	RT	Agrees										5.00					5.00	
					16,020.91																	0.00	
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**PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL**  
*In the North Somerset Council Ward of Congresbury and Puxton*

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**PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Adapted from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) template April 2024

These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on June 10th 2024

## 1. General

- 1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.4. In these Financial Regulations:
  - 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under 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.
  - "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
  - "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
  - 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
  - *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England or Governance and Accountability for Local Councils in Wales – A Practitioners Guide jointly published by One Voice Wales and the Society of Local Council Clerks in Wales.
  - 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
  - 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.
- 1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. 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 control systems;
  - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
  - ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
  - seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
  - produces financial management information as required by the council.
- 1.6. **The council must not delegate 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;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors**

1.7. In addition, the council shall:

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or single commitment in excess of £500.

## **2. Risk management and internal control**

2.1. **The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.**

2.2. The Clerk/RFO shall prepare, for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk/RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.

2.4. **At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.**

2.5. **The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:**

- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
- **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
- **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
- **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
- **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
- **ensure division of responsibilities.**

2.6. The monthly accounts will form part of the pre-meeting paperwork supplied to members and as published on the website. At each monthly meeting and at each financial year end, the council shall verify bank reconciliations as shown in the accounts and via the bank statements. The meeting's acceptance and approval of the reconciled accounts will be recorded as a minute of the meeting.

2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records 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.

## **3. Accounts and audit**

3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.2. **The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonably accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**

- **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
- **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;**

3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

3.4. The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall

submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

- 3.5. **The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.**
- 3.6. **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.
- 3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by the council and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.
- 3.8. The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:
  - is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
  - reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
  - can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
  - has no involvement in the management or control of the council
- 3.9. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:
  - perform any operational duties for the council;
  - initiate or approve accounting transactions;
  - provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future 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.
- 3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as described in The Practitioners Guide.
- 3.11. 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 documents required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.12. The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

## 4. Budget and precept

- 4.1. **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.**
- 4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the council at least annually for the following financial year and the final version shall be included in the budget proposals that receive approval at the January meeting of the Council each year.
- 4.3. No later than December each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.
- 4.4. Capital projects tend to be reliant on North Somerset Council input. They take a long and tortuous route from inception to completion. The Council budgets for them via its current budget and/or via its Capital Provision. The Capital Provision is primarily accumulated for Highway and Parish Maintenance projects that would in the past have been funded by North Somerset Council. As a project emerges to the point of being budgeted for, the Council will ring-fence a budget within the Capital Provision and adjust it nearer completion between current budget and Capital Provision funding as is deemed appropriate.

- 4.5. The Council shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to its December meeting.
- 4.6. The draft budget forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the council.
- 4.7. Having considered the proposed budget and forecast, the council shall determine its council tax requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.
- 4.8. 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.**
- 4.9. The RFO shall **issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February** and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.
- 4.10. The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.
- 4.11. Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by the council.

## 5. Procurement

- 5.1. **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.
- 5.2. The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.
- 5.3. Every contract shall comply with the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.4. For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.5. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.12) obtain prices as follows:
- 5.6. There are no circumstances in which the council is likely to issue contracts estimated to exceed £30,000 including VAT, as at 5.7 below.
- 5.7. For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation<sup>1</sup> regarding the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices about the award of contracts.**
- 5.8. For contracts greater than [£3,000] excluding VAT the Clerk/RFO shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes;
- 5.9. where the value is between £500 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk/RFO shall try to obtain 3 estimates, which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.
- 5.10. For smaller purchases, the clerk shall seek to achieve value for money.
- 5.11. Contracts must not be split into smaller lots to avoid compliance with these rules.**
- 5.12. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:
  - i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;
  - ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
  - iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;

<sup>1</sup> The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website if they advertise contract opportunities and also to publicise the award of contracts over £30,000 including VAT, regardless of whether they were advertised.

- iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier - for example North Somerset Council - or are sold at a fixed price.
- 5.13. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the council. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.
- 5.14. The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- 5.15. Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:
- the Clerk, in an emergency, for any items below £200 excluding VAT, such expenditure to be ratified and minuted at the next following meeting of the council.
  - the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council, and only in an emergency, for any items below £500 excluding VAT, such expenditure to be ratified and minuted at the next following meeting of the council.
  - The council, for all other items of expenditure.
  - in respect of grants, the council, or a duly authorised committee of the council, within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council.
  - the council for all items over £500.
- Such authorisation must be supported by a minute in the case of council decisions, or other auditable evidence trail.
- 5.16. No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the council.
- 5.17. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget for that type of expenditure other than by resolution of the council except in an emergency.
- 5.18. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety in relation to council assets, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £500 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 5.19. No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless the council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.
- 5.20. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £250 excluding VAT unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.
- 5.21. Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the RFO.

## 6. Banking and payments

- 6.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The council has resolved to bank with HSBC. The arrangements shall be reviewed annually for security and efficiency.
- 6.2. The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making 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.
- 6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the council before being certified by the RFO. Where the certification of invoices is done as a batch, this shall include a statement by the RFO that all invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO.

- 6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.
- 6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking/cheque, in accordance with a resolution of the council.
- 6.6. For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (such as Salaries, PAYE, National Insurance, pension contributions, regular maintenance contracts and similar items), which the council may authorise in advance for the year.
- 6.7. These regular payments shall be evidenced to the council via the presentation to each meeting of the annual accounts to date, duly reconciled with bank statements and subject to the meeting's minuted scrutiny and approval.
- 6.8. A list of such payments shall be indicated within the accounts as being paid by direct debit (DD) or by standing order (SO).
- 6.9. The Clerk/RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments only in the following circumstances:
  - i. any emergency payments of up to £200 excluding VAT, within an agreed budget.
  - ii. Any emergency payments of up to £500 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety in relation to council assets.
  - iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 or to comply with contractual terms, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of the council, where the Clerk/RFO certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council for review and ratification.
  - iv. Details regarding fund transfers or payments that have not been pre-authorised and minuted at a meeting, must be circulated to all council members by email for their comment and approval, except that emergency payments at i. And ii above shall be notified by email for information. In all cases a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council for review and ratification via a minute of the meeting.
- 6.10. The RFO shall present details of payments requiring authorisation as part of the agenda for the meeting, together with the relevant invoices, to the council. The council shall review the invoices for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall authorise payment by resolution. The authorised invoices shall be signed by the person chairing the meeting and one other councillor who is authorised to approve payments by virtue of them being signatories on the bank mandate. A detailed list of all payments so authorised shall be disclosed within the minutes of that meeting.

## 7. Electronic payments

- 7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any approval process per 6.10 above. The clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.
- 7.2. All authorised signatories shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online.
- 7.3. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council.
- 7.4. The Service Administrator shall process all items due for payment online under the authority of the minuted approval and the two authorising signatures on each payment made.
- 7.5. In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator an authorised signatory shall make any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.
- 7.6. Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment using the online banking system per 6.10 above.



- 7.7. Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment online and a printout of the transaction confirming that the payment has been made shall be appended to the invoice for audit purposes.
- 7.8. All payments made in a month shall be detailed via the accounts presented to the next council meeting.
- 7.9. With the approval of the council in each case, regular payments (such as pension contributions and HMRC) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are signed by two authorised members. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by the council at least every two years.
- 7.10. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of the council provided that each payment is approved per 6.10 above, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to the council at the next meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 7.11. If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are signed by two authorised members, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by the council at least every two years.
- 7.12. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by the Clerk/RFO and notified to the next meeting of the council for approval. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.
- 7.13. Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.
- 7.14. Remembered password facilities {other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification} should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

## 8. Cheque payments

- 8.1. Cheques or orders for payment in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two authorised members.
- 8.2. A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.
- 8.3. To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.
- 8.4. Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at, or immediately before or after a council meeting. Any signatures obtained away from council meetings shall be reported to and ratified by the council at its next meeting.

## 9. Payment cards

- 9.1. to 9.4. The council does not have any payment cards.

## 10. Petty Cash

- 10.1. The council does not handle any petty cash.

## 11. Payment of salaries and allowances

- 11.1. **As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**
- 11.2. **Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.**
- 11.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the council. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council.

- 11.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.
- 11.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.
- 11.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the accounts. To ensure accounting accuracy payroll payments will be reviewed with the accounts at each meeting of the council and, in relation to the payments to HMRC, at the end of each payment quarter.
- 11.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.
- 11.8. Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

## **12. Loans and investments**

- 12.1. Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.
- 12.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.
- 12.3. The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 12.4. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 12.5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.
- 12.6. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

## **13. Income**

- 13.1. The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 13.2. The council conducts no income-generating activities.
- 13.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.
- 13.4. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.
- 13.5. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.
- 13.6. Any repayment claim under section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 shall be made where the claim exceeds £100 during a financial year.
- 13.7. The council does not handle cash.
- 13.8. The council is not involved with any charity except via a non-interest bearing and non-repayment first charge of £40000 on Hewish and Puxton Village Hall Ltd, as detailed in the council's asset register and the charge deed on file.

## **14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works**

14.1. - 14.2. The council has no property or land interests and no involvement with building works.

## 15. Stores and equipment

15.1. - 15.4. The council has no stores or equipment.

## 16. Assets, properties and estates

16.1. The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.

16.2. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

16.3. 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.

16.4. No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report 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 where required by law).

No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £500. In each case a written report shall be provided to council with a full business case.

## 17. Insurance

17.1. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the council's review of risk management.

17.2. The Clerk/RFO shall give prompt notification to the council of all new risks which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.

17.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to the council at the next available meeting. The clerk/RFO shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers.

17.4. 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.

## 18. Charities

18.1. The council is not involved with any charity except as at 13.8 above.

## 19. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations

19.1. The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of clerk/RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.

19.2. The council may, by resolution 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 presented to all members. Suspension does not dis-apply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.

19.3. 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.