

Fawkham Parish Council

Financial Regulations

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 03 June 2020.

1. General

1. These financial regulations govern the conduct of the financial transactions of the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council.
2. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) (ie the Clerk to the Council), under the policy direction of the Council, shall be responsible for the proper administration of the Council's affairs.
3. The RFO shall be responsible for the production of financial management information.
4. The Council shall be responsible for ensuring that the financial management is adequate and effective and that the council has a system of internal controls which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and which manages risk.
5. The Council shall review at least once a year the effectiveness of its systems of internal controls and shall produce a statement on internal control with its statement of accounts

2. Annual Estimates (Budget)

1. Each Committee (if any) shall formulate and submit proposals to the Council in respect of revenue and capital costs for the following financial year not later than the end of November each year.
2. Detailed estimates of all receipts and payments for the year shall be prepared each year by the RFO.
3. The Council shall review the estimates 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 supply each member with a copy of the approved estimates.
4. The annual budget(s) shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

3. Budgetary Control

1. Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included in the approved budget.
2. No expenditure may be incurred which will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget without the prior approval of Council. The RFO may, with the approval of Council, vire (switch) sums between budget subheads, which must be reflected in the next budget monitoring report.

3. The RFO shall provide the Council at every meeting with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure against that planned.
4. The RFO may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to carry out any repair replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £500.
5. Before incurring expenditure under paragraph 3.4.above, the RFO shall make reasonable attempts to contact the Chairman or Vice-Chairman in order to give them prior notice of that expenditure. However, if the RFO is unable to make contact, the RFO may proceed to commit that expenditure.
6. Where the RFO incurs expenditure under paragraph 3.4 above, the RFO shall report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
7. No expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available, or the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.
8. All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.

4. Accounting and Audit

1. All accounting records and accounting control systems as determined by the Council and as required by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, and any subsequent amendments thereto, shall be kept up to date in accordance with proper practices.
2. The RFO shall be responsible for completing the annual financial statements of the Council as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them and report thereon to the Council.
3. The RFO shall be responsible for completing 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 for submitting the Annual Return for approval and authorisation by the Council within the timescale set by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, or set by the Auditor.
4. The RFO shall be responsible for ensuring that there is adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting, financial and other operations in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, and any subsequent amendments thereto. 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.

5. The Council shall carry out a review of the effectiveness of internal audit on an annual basis in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, and any subsequent amendments thereto.
6. The Internal Auditor shall carry out the work required by the RFO and the Council, with a view to satisfactory completion of Section 4 - Internal Auditor's Report of the Annual Return (or equivalent) as required annually by the Audit Commission. The Internal Auditor, who shall be competent and independent of the operations of the Council, shall report to Council in writing on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual report in respect of each financial year.
7. The RFO shall make arrangements for the opportunity for public inspection of the accounts and documents required by Audit Commission Act 1998 section 15 (inspection of documents and questions at audit) and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, and any subsequent amendments thereto. As soon as reasonably possible after the conclusion of the audit the RFO must display the relevant notice of the completed audit
8. The RFO shall, as soon as practicable, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from the Internal or External Auditor, unless the correspondence is of a purely administrative matter.

5. Banking Arrangements and Cheques

1. The Council's banking arrangements including the Bank Mandate and Bank Account(s), shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council. They shall be regularly reviewed for efficiency.
2. A schedule of the payments required, forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting, shall be prepared by the RFO and, together with the relevant invoices, be presented to Council. If the schedule is in order it shall be authorised by a resolution of the Council and shall be initialled by the Chairman of the Meeting. The approved schedule of payments including the cheque number will be shown in the Minutes of the Meeting. For payments made via Online faster payment or BACS/CHAPS the date payment is to be made shall be added, with the payment reference number subsequently recorded on the invoice once payment has been effected. During Government restrictions on allowing meetings in person, invoices and cheques list will be circulated by email ahead of the monthly meeting and, if in order, confirmed by the Chair/Vice Chair by email.
3. 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. Those two Councillors must initial the stub of the cheque to confirm they have signed the cheque. During Government restrictions on allowing meetings in person, the cheque book will be circulated between two members who will sign cheques and initial cheque stubs and return to the Clerk, whilst following all Government advice and restrictions.

6. Payment of Accounts

1. All payments shall be effected by cheque or other order drawn on the Council's bankers such as a Faster Online payment, in every case signed or authorised by two members of Council.
2. Payment can in exceptional circumstances (where a cheque or online Faster Payment cannot be made) be made via telephone banking using the telephone banking passcode.
3. All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the RFO. The RFO shall satisfy him/herself that the work, goods or services to which the invoice relates shall have been received, carried out, examined and approved.
4. The RFO shall examine invoices in relation to arithmetic accuracy and shall analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The RFO shall take all steps to settle all invoices submitted, and which are in order, at the next available Council Meeting.
5. If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, and the due date for payment is before the next scheduled Meeting of Council, where the RFO certifies that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, the RFO 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. Prior to acting under paragraph 6.4 above, the RFO will always seek permission from the relevant creditor to delay payment (without penalty) until the following Council meeting can authorise the cheque. Only where such permission is refused, shall the RFO act under paragraph 6.4.
7. The Council will not maintain any form of cash float.

7. Payment of Salaries

1. 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.
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, provided that each payment is reported to and ratified by the next available Council Meeting.

8. Loans and Investments

1. All investments of money under the control of the Council shall be in the name of the Council. The terms and conditions of investments shall be reviewed at least annually

2. All borrowings shall be 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.
3. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

9. Income

1. The collection of all sums due to the Council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
2. Particulars of all fees and charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied shall be agreed annually by the Council, following a report of the RFO and the RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the Council.
3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the Council and shall be written off in the year.
4. All sums received on behalf of the Council shall be banked intact by the RFO. In all cases, all receipts shall be deposited with the Council's bankers with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary.
5. The origin of each receipt shall be entered on the paying-in slip.
6. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the Council.

10. VAT

1. 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 or once the VAT to be reclaimed is above £100, coinciding with the timetable for setting the precept. A running total of the VAT to be reclaimed shall be monitored monthly by the RFO.

11 Orders/Contracts for Work, Goods and Services

1. A numbered 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 all orders or letters shall be retained by the RFO and available for inspection by members as required.
2. The RFO shall verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order, and in the case of new or infrequent purchases or payments, the RFO shall ensure that the statutory authority shall be reported to the meeting at which the order is approved so that the Minutes can record the power being used.

3. Where it is intended to enter into a contract or purchase exceeding £500 but no more than £5,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services the RFO shall invite quotations from at least three suitable firms.
4. Where it is intended to enter into a contract or purchase exceeding £5,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services the RFO shall invite tenders from at least three suitable firms.
5. When applications are made to waive financial regulations relating to contracts/purchases exceeding £500, to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, or where it proved impossible to obtain three quotations or tenders, the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the Council.
6. Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract/purchase and the RFO 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 RFO 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/purchase.
7. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the RFO in the presence of at least two members of Council.
8. If fewer than three tenders are received for contracts/purchases exceeding £5,000 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, taking into consideration any tenders received.
9. Where it is intended to enter into a contract/purchase for £500 or less in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services the RFO shall strive to obtain three quotations (itemised and priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £250 the RFO shall strive to obtain three estimates (a brief overall description of the proposed supply with a total price).
10. The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
11. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments.
12. In any case where it is estimated that the total cost of work carried out under a contract, excluding previously agreed variations, will exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, a report shall be submitted to the Council.
13. Any variation to a contract or addition to or omission from a contract must be approved by the Council and notified by the RFO to the Contractor in writing, the Council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the financial provision.

12. Assets, Properties and Estates

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 Regulation 4(3)(b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996 as amended.
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.
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.

13. Insurance

1. Following an annual risk assessment, the RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers
2. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the Council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it and renew it after obtaining approval from the Council.
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.
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 and/or advised by the Council's auditors.

14. Risk Management

1. The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. 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.
2. When considering any new activity, the RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council.

15. Revision of Financial Regulations

1. These Financial Regulations cannot be altered otherwise than by approval at a meeting of the Parish Council

2. It shall be the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council from time to time. The 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.

Dated 03 June 2020.