



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

CCTV PROCEDURE

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1. Introduction

These procedures aim to ensure that the CCTV systems installed under the approval of Blyth Town Council and maintained by other contractors comply with the law and that the scope, purpose and the use of its systems are clearly defined. Blyth Town Council will give due regard to the Data Protection Act 1998, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) the freedom of information Act 2000, the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 the Human Rights Act 1998 and any subsequent data protection legislation

Any proposed CCTV installation will be considered alongside a Data Protection Impact Assessment as outlined within GDPR.

Blyth Town Council are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office – ZA065709.

2. Scope and Purpose of the CCTV system

Crime Prevention and Public Safety

3. System Overview

The system installed comprises of fixed cameras to cover the Council's Assets for the purpose/s listed above. All recordings are recorded onto a digital recorder and recordings are available for a period of approximately 28 days depending upon system technology and the number of cameras on each individual system. After this period, new images will overwrite onto the oldest images held.

Cameras are sited so that they cover the Council's Assets as far as is possible. Any cameras sited where they may also capture areas off site will have privacy zones set up so that they do not record any un-necessary footage.

The CCTV System does not record audio.

Each individual CCTV system may be monitored locally within the Council offices.

All operators are SIA Public Area CCTV Licenced and are screened and vetted to BS7858.

The access to CCTV images is by using a specific application stored on the computer of only those operatives duly authorised. The computers are username and password protected. Only appointed persons have access to the system and images.

Access to the system remotely is via a secure connection with layered protection, only authorised persons will have access to the system remotely.

Where the recorded data needs to be copied for further action to take place, only the proportionate amount of image will be recorded. This will be copied onto the appropriate media. Where this data leaves the office and is handed on e.g. to the Police, a signature will be obtained.

Any introduction of, or changes to the CCTV system will be subject to consultation with the contractor after the necessary agreement within Blyth Town Council. Any changes will be considered along the Data Protection Impact Assessment if it is deemed necessary.

The CCTV system policy and these procedures will be reviewed annually to ensure the system and scope are still relevant. Any data recorded will only be retained for as long as we believe necessary e.g. when subsequent action has been taken.

Authorised/licenced Council Officers will conduct a remote check of each system once a week to ensure the system is working correctly and complete the monitoring record accordingly.

Any defects found will be reported and corrected as soon as possible.

4. CCTV Monitoring

It is not Blyth Town Council`s policy to carry out **covert** monitoring unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so. **For this circumstance to occur would require the permission of the Town Clerk.**

Blyth Town Council may, in exceptional circumstances, determine that there is good sound reason for setting up covert surveillance. Examples could include.

- a. Where there is good cause to suspect that an illegal or unauthorised action(s) taking place or where there are serious grounds to suspect serious misconduct.
- b. Where notifying the individuals about the monitoring would seriously prejudice the reason for making the recording.

In these circumstances authorisation must be obtained from the Town Clerk and the data controller advised before the commencement of such covert monitoring.

Covert monitoring must cease immediately on completion of the investigation.

Cameras used for covert monitoring will not be used in areas expected to be private such as toilet cubicles, changing areas etc.

The **primary** use of monitoring will be to respond to issues which are brought to our attention in line with the scope and purpose of the system, and to then determine the necessary action to take.

If another Agency i.e. Police, Local Authority wish to carry out Directed Surveillance on an individual or group using Blyth Town Council CCTV then an Authorised RIPA application must be copied and shared with the Town Clerk so that consideration can be given, and authority obtained prior to commencement of any activity.

5. Subject Access Rights

All individuals have the right to request access to the CCTV footage relating to themselves under the data protection act and general data protection regulation.

All subject access requests must be made in writing to Blyth Town Council Office (Arms Everytne House Quay Road Blyth Northumberland NE24 2AS)

Anybody submitting a subject access request must supply sufficient details e.g. date time, location and other information to enable Blyth Town Council to identify the information, if any.

In accordance with the Council's General Public Privacy Notice there are no fees or charges for the first request but additional requests for the same personal data or requests which are manifestly unfounded or excessive may be subject to an administrative fee.

Blyth Town Council reserves the right to refuse access to CCTV footage where this would prejudice the rights of other individuals or an ongoing investigation.

There will be no access of recorded data to third parties other than to the authorised persons such as the Police or other enforcement e.g. Northumberland County Council.

The recorded data may be used in Blyth Town Council and the installed sites disciplinary and grievance procedure.

6. Complaints

Any complaints or enquiries about the CCTV system should be submitted in writing to Blyth Town Council Office (Arms Everytne House Quay Road Blyth Northumberland NE24 2AS).



HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CODE OF CONDUCT For MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

1. Policy Aim

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all employees of Blyth Town Council (BTC) maintain the highest standards of conduct. This policy will be reviewed at least annually or earlier if deemed necessary.

2. Policy Summary

All employees must be clear about the standards of conduct which are expected of them whilst employed by BTC. The policy provides a guide to managers and employees on what BTC considers appropriate in relation to conduct. The policy also embraces the seven principles of public life which were drawn up by the Nolan Committee and endorsed by Parliament.

The principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, and in the health, education, social and care services.

All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources.

You are expected to consider carefully where and how to apply them in your daily duties. Please refer to the Code of Conduct which gives more information.

The Seven Principles are:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Selflessness | Acting solely in terms of the public interest. |
| Integrity | Avoiding placing yourself under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence you in your work. You should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, or your friends. You must declare and resolve any interests and relationships as detailed in the Code of Conduct. |
| Objectivity | Act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. |

Accountability	Be accountable to the public for your decisions and actions and submit yourself to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
Openness	Act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
Honesty	Act with honesty, and be truthful.
Leadership	Exhibit these principles in your own behaviour. Actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

These principles apply to all aspects of public life. BTC has set them out here for the benefit of all who serve the public in any way.

What it means for staff

The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring adequate dissemination and implementation of the policy.

All Council staff – are responsible for reading and adhering to the policy.

Scope

This Code applies to all employees of BTC and others working within it regardless of the basis of the employment including:

- Secondments (both to and from the Town Council)
- Temporary assignments (both to and from the Town Council), Apprentices, Work Placements and Trainees
- Full-time, part-time, casual, seasonal employees and volunteers
- Employees acting as members of companies, charities or voluntary organisations
- Contractors acting on behalf of the Town Council

The Code also extends to additional or dual employment that has been secured as a result of working for local government.

Inevitably some of the issues covered by the Code will affect senior, managerial and professional employees more than it will others - but the basic principles apply to everyone.

3. Standards

General Principles

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all BTC employees. The role of employees is to serve the Council in providing advice, implementing its policies, and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, they must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity. The public, and members of the Council, are entitled to demand of a local government office, conduct of the highest standard and public confidence in his/her integrity. This would be affected were the least suspicion to arise that they could in any way be influenced by, for example, making inappropriate comments, voicing personal opinions etc.

Accountability

All BTC employees work for their employing authority and serve the whole of the authority. They are accountable to, and owe a duty to the authority. They must act in accordance with the principles set out in this Code, recognising the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.

Political Neutrality

All BTC employees, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every lawfully expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work. Where employees are politically restricted (by reason of the post they hold, the nature of the work they do, or the salary they are paid), they must comply with any statutory restrictions on their political activities.

Relations with members, the public and other employees

Mutual respect between employees and members is essential to good local government, and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis.

All BTC employees should deal with the public, members and other employees sympathetically, efficiently, and without bias.

Equality and Diversity

All BTC employees must comply with policies relating to equality and diversity issues, as agreed by the authority, in addition to the requirements of the law.

Stewardship

All BTC employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner, and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the authority for personal use unless expressly authorised to do so.

Personal Interests

Whilst employees' private lives are their own concern, they must not allow their private interests to conflict with their public duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interests, or the interests of others. In particular, they must comply with:

The Council's rules on the registration and declaration by employees of financial and non - financial interests.

The Council's policy on the declaration by employees of hospitality or gifts offered to or received by them, from any person or organisation doing or seeking to do business, or otherwise benefiting or seeking to benefit from a relationship with the authority. Employees must not accept benefits from a third party unless authorised to do so by their relevant authority.

Complete the BTC Gifts and Hospitality Register.

Whistleblowing

In the event that an employee becomes aware of activities which they believe to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this Code, the employee should report the matter. This should be done in accordance with the employee's rights under the Public Interest.

If an employee has a concern please refer to the NCC suite of policies and/or raise this matter with the Town Clerk.

Treatment of Information

Openness in the dissemination of information and decision making should be the norm in the Council. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate for a wide audience. Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a member, Council employee or other person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions. Nothing in this Code can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.

Appointment of Staff

All BTC employees involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, such employees must not be involved in any appointment, or any other decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other employee, or prospective employee, to whom they are related, or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside work. Employees should notify the Town Clerk if they are aware of an application from such an individual at the earliest opportunity so as to avoid embarrassment.

Investigations by the Monitoring Officer

Where the monitoring officer (NCC) is undertaking an investigation in accordance with regulations made under section 73(1) of the Local Government Act 2000(4) a qualifying employee must comply with any requirement made by that monitoring officer in connection with such an investigation.

4. Guidance on Standards

Loyalty

It is a fundamental implied term of your contract of employment that you are loyal to BTC.

Generally speaking, you must not actively criticise or challenge the policies or decisions of the Town Council or its managers in public.

However, it is perfectly legitimate (unless you hold a politically restricted position and therefore you should seek assistance from your Town Clerk for you to use the methods of protest and persuasion that any other citizen can use such as letters of complaint, approaches to your local councillor, attendance at protest meetings or writing to the press.

What you must not do is to use "inside information" which is not available to the public at large or to capitalise on your position in the Town Council if you make statements intended to be published to the public at large. Neither must you deliberately set out to publicly embarrass or undermine your colleague, the Town Clerk or the Town Council.

Personal Behaviour

At all times, employees are ambassadors for the BTC and their behaviour should reflect that. Any behaviour that could be seen to bring the Council into disrepute could lead to disciplinary action being taken.

The consumption of alcohol or non-prescription drugs during the working day (including lunch breaks) or before commencing work is strictly prohibited as even small quantities have an adverse effect on work performance and the reputation of the BTC. If you are suspected of being incapable of properly performing your official duties by reason of alcohol or drugs, you will be sent home from work and may be liable to be suspended from duty pending a decision on disciplinary action being taken. BTC will refer to NCC drug and alcohol policy that offers support for those employees who admit to having a problem with alcohol or drugs.

You must observe the statutory smoking ban and adhere with the Council's Smokefree Workplace Policy (NCC suite of policies). The policy states clearly where smoking is banned and those who breach the rules may be liable to disciplinary action. You are expected to report incidents where the policy is being breached.

BTC accepts that social networking and use of the internet for other ways of recording personal thoughts is commonplace, but employees have a duty to represent the authority at all times. This means that staff should not post photos, videos or comments online that could bring the Town Council into disrepute, either through referring to the Town Council or its clients directly, or by making comments that could be deemed to harm the public's image of the staff the Town Council employ. Further information regarding the expected behaviour of staff when using the internet is included in BTC's Internet Policy.

Personal Appearance

In your appearance as well as in your behaviour, you should regard yourself as an ambassador for the BTC and dress in clothing that is appropriate for your duties.

If you are required to wear specific items of clothing, hairstyles or jewellery in accordance with your ethnic background or faith, your needs will be accommodated where possible and practicable, however this must not pose a hazard to the health and safety of any person or contravene any legitimate or reasonable requirement of the Town Council.

Further guidance on what the Council deems acceptable regarding employee's appearance is available in the Acceptable Standards of Appearance at Work Policy (NCC suite of policies).

Equality Issues

The Town Council is committed to tackling discrimination in how it treats its employees and how it delivers services, and also to actively promoting and championing equality in the community. You are entitled to expect fair and reasonable treatment by your colleagues, managers and Councillors. If you feel that you have been unfairly treated, discriminated against or harassed, you are entitled to make use of the Council's Grievance Procedure. You are also entitled to be treated with respect by clients, service users and members of the public, and be supported with this by the Council. In the same way, you are required to treat your colleagues, staff and members of the public fairly and with respect. Not only is it a criminal offence to harass another person on any ground, it is also a disciplinary offence in the Council. It is your responsibility to read and abide by the Council's Equality Policies, undertake the mandatory training and to be familiar with your legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Health and Safety Issues

In line with legal and contractual obligations, all employees are required to cooperate and ensure compliance with Corporate and Group Health & Safety Policies and objectives. This includes adherence to all identified safe working procedures and risk assessments. All employees are actively encouraged to familiarise themselves with Health and Safety documentation, especially risk assessments, attend any training identified as part of their role and raise any health and safety concerns with, in the first instance, their line manager.

If you use a car on BTC business you are responsible for ensuring that you are properly licensed to drive and that the vehicle in question is properly maintained, taxed, insured and has a current MOT certificate. The insurance policy must cover you for the use of the vehicle in connection with your employment (business use). On a regular basis you will have to produce satisfactory evidence that you and any vehicle that you use complies with prevailing statutory requirements in relation to driving and vehicle licensing, taxation and certification. If you or the vehicle are unable to meet the statutory requirements you must notify the Town Clerk immediately and you must not use the vehicle on BTC business. Failure to comply with these provisions may be a disciplinary matter.

Outside Commitments

An employee's off-duty hours are their own personal concern but they should not subordinate their duty to their private interests or put themselves in a position where their duty and their private interests conflict. As a general rule, BTC will not attempt to preclude employees from undertaking additional employment, but any such employment must not, in the view of BTC conflict with or react detrimentally to the Council's interests, or in any way weaken public confidence in the conduct of the Council's business.

No secondary employment will be allowed if it results in a breach of the Working Time Regulations. If you are in any doubt about this you should seek advice from the Town Clerk. If you wish to pursue an application you should complete the relevant form which is available on the shared drive.

It is a condition of this Contract of Employment that you inform the Council of any alternative employment you undertake in order to ensure that no tax or insurance liabilities will accrue to the Council. The Council also reserves the right to require that any other employment that you undertake does not conflict with the role or standards required to be undertaken or met in the public office of the Clerk to the Council.

If you engage in any paid or unpaid secondary employment or business you must not use or mention your employment with the BTC in order to gain business or trade for that secondary employment.

You must not engage in any secondary employment or business on BTC premises at any time. To do so could be interpreted as gaining a pecuniary advantage by way of your employment and that is illegal.

If you are engaged in secondary employment you must not park any vehicle on BTC property if it can be identified as being a vehicle used for that employment or if it contains any visible materials relating to that secondary employment. If the vehicle otherwise satisfies the foregoing conditions it must also be suitable and available for use in your official capacity if you are required to use a vehicle in your employment with the BTC.

You must not store any items connected with any secondary employment or any personal items (except those which are used in connection with your official duties) on BTC property.

Intellectual Property

All creative designs, writings and drawings produced by employees in the course of their duties are the property of the Council.

All inventions made by employees remain the property of the BTC if made during the course of normal duties. Normal duties are those described in an employee's terms of employment, job description and those arising from an instruction from a manager or other authorised representative of the BTC.

This means that you are not free to disclose, publish or otherwise use the work you produce for the BTC for personal gain or benefit unless you have express, prior approval from the Town Clerk.

Fees for giving lectures or writing articles may only be retained by employees where these activities are not integral to their employment or position with BTC and they are conducted in the employee's own time.

Personal Interests

You must declare any financial and/or non-financial interests which could conflict with BTC's interests to your Town Clerk/Monitoring Officer using the "declaration of interests and memberships" form, which is available from the Town Clerk.

You must declare membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct to the Council's Monitoring Officer using the "declaration of interests and memberships" form, which is available from the Town Clerk.

In accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act, certain employees occupy politically restricted posts and are required to seek exemption if proposing to engage in certain activities. Further details are available from HR.

The information supplied under the paragraphs above will not affect your position in the BTC. The information will normally be made available only to your Town Clerk and the officer nominated to be responsible for its secure storage. However, where a relevant complaint or query is made, the Monitoring Officer and the BTC auditors will also have access to the information so that a proper response can be made to the complaint or query.

5. Use of Blyth Town Council Property and Information

The general rule is that you must only use BTC property for work purposes and the paragraphs below set out this requirement in more detail.

Where equipment is made available to the public you may use it at the same charge (if any) as is made to the public. Otherwise, equipment and property belonging to BTC must only be used for official purposes.

If you are involved in the tendering process or dealing with contractors, you should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within BTC. If you are a senior employee with both a client and contractor responsibility, you must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

If you are employed in a contractor or client unit, you must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors. If you have any direct or indirect interest in the outcome you must play no part in the selection of tenderers, contractors or subcontractors and such interests should be declared to your Town Clerk.

If you are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors, you should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

You should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

6. Bribery Act 2010

You are warned that it is a serious criminal offence corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing or not doing anything or showing favour or disfavour to any person in your official capacity. If an allegation is made, the law is such that the onus is on you to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.

The public is entitled to demand of a local government employee, conduct of the highest standard and public confidence in their integrity would be shaken were the least suspicion to arise that they could be influenced by improper motives. Any offers of a bribe must be reported immediately to the Town Clerk.

There are several offences under the Bribery Act 2010 including:

Bribing - where a person offers, promises or gives a financial or other advantage to another person, with the intention of inducing them to perform improperly a relevant function or activity, or to reward a person for such improper performance.

Receiving a bribe - Where a person requests, agrees to receive or accepts a financial or other advantage with the intention that, in consequence, a relevant function or activity should be performed improperly by themselves or another. It does not matter whether the advantage is direct or through a third party, or whether the benefit is for that person or another.

Bribing a foreign official - Where a person with the intention of obtaining or retaining business, or an advantage in the conduct of business, bribes a foreign public official with the intention of influencing them in their capacity.

The offences under the Act carry a maximum of 10 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine for an individual. You should read and abide by any advice provided by the Council in relation to its Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

7. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY - Rules and guidance for members and staff of Blyth Town Council.

General Caution:

Treat with extreme caution any offer or gift, favour or hospitality that is made to you personally which may possibly be perceived to be in connection with your position as a Councillor.

Your personal reputation and that of Blyth Town Council can be seriously jeopardised by the inappropriate acceptance by you of a gift or hospitality.

The acceptance of favours, gifts and hospitality is not always unlawful or inappropriate. The decision for you in every case is whether or not it is appropriate to accept any gift or hospitality that might be offered to you, having regard to how it might be perceived.

No hard and fast rules can be laid down to cover every circumstance as to what is appropriate or inappropriate. This policy offers general principles to enable you to make your own decisions.

All gifts and hospitality should be properly authorised by the Town Clerk and must be recorded on the BTC Gifts and Hospitality Register.

Criminal Law:

It is a criminal offence corruptly to solicit or receive any gift, reward or advantage as an inducement to do anything in respect of any transaction involving Blyth Town Council.

The onus would be on you to disprove corruption in relation to a gift from a person holding or seeking to obtain a contract from the Council.

Limits of Guidance:

This protocol does not apply to: -

Gifts and hospitality you may receive from family and friends (as a birthday or other present) that are not related to your position as a Council Member. You should however, question any such gift or hospitality provided to you by the Council.

The acceptance of facilities or hospitality provided to you by the Council.

Gifts given to the Council that you accept formally on the Council's behalf and are retained by the Council and not by you personally.

Meaning of Gifts and Hospitality:

Have wide meanings and no conclusive definition is possible.

Gifts and hospitality include the: -

- Offer of favours, or the promise or implied promise of future favours, gifts or hospitality.
- Free gift of any goods or services.
- Opportunity to acquire any goods or services at a discount or at terms not available to the general public.
- Opportunity to obtain goods or services not available to the general public.
- Offer of food, drink, accommodation or entertainment or the opportunity to attend any cultural or sporting event.
- Use of a free car.

Common gifts include pens, diaries, calendars and other business stationery, articles of clothing, books, flowers and bouquets. You should, however, be cautious when purchasing anything, when additional services, privileges or advantages are offered, which might be related to your position as a Member of the Council.

Appropriate Gifts and Hospitality:

There are some circumstances where you may accept gifts and hospitality as being in the normal course of your duties as a member, for example: -

Civic hospitality provided by another public authority.

Normal and modest refreshments in connection with any meeting in the course of your work as a Council Member (e.g. tea, coffee, and other normal beverages and biscuits).

Tickets for sporting, cultural and entertainment events which are sponsored by Blyth Town Council or bodies to which you have been appointed by the Council and the tickets are offered in relation to that sponsorship or promotion.

Small low value gifts (below £25.00, such as pens, calendars, diaries, flowers and other mementoes).

Drinks or other modest refreshment in the normal course of socializing arising consequentially for Council business (e.g. inclusion in a round of drinks after a meeting).

Modest meals provided as a matter of courtesy in the office or meeting place of a person with whom the Council has a business connection.

Souvenirs and gifts from other public bodies intended as personal gifts (e.g. arising from twin-town and other civic events).

Principles to apply in relation to Gifts and Hospitality in deciding whether it is appropriate to accept any gift, favour or hospitality, you must apply the following principles:

Do not accept a gift, favour or hospitality as an inducement or reward for anything you do as a Council Member. If you have any suspicion that the motive behind the gift or hospitality is an inducement or reward, you must decline it.

Reward includes remuneration, reimbursement and fee, offered, paid, promised or implied.

Do not accept a gift or hospitality of significant value or whose value is excessive in the circumstances.

Do not accept a gift, favour or hospitality if acceptance might be open to misinterpretation. Such circumstances will include gifts and hospitality: -

- from parties involved with the Council in a competitive tendering or other procurement process, including from other Council Members.
- from applicants for planning permission and other application for licences, consents and approvals in which the Council has an involvement, including applications from other Council members.
- from applicants for grants, including voluntary bodies and other organisations applying for public funding from the Town Council.
- from parties in legal proceedings with the Council.

Do not accept a gift, favour or hospitality if you believe it will put you under an obligation to the provider as a consequence.

Do not solicit any gift, favour or hospitality and avoid giving any perception of so doing.

Registration of Gifts and Hospitality:

The Code of Conduct for the Council provides that: -

A member must, within 28 days of receiving any gift or hospitality over the value of £25.00, provide written notification to the Monitoring Officer of the responsible Authority of the existence and nature of that gift or hospitality.

While the notification requirement in the code is limited to gifts or hospitality over the value of £25.00 members are encouraged to give notification of any significant gift or hospitality they receive.

Members must record all notifications.

Reporting of Inappropriate Gifts and Hospitality offered:

It is a criminal offence for a person corruptly to give or offer any gift, reward or advantage as an inducement or reward to you for doing or forbearing to do anything as a Member of the Council.

You must immediately report to the Monitoring Officer at Northumberland County Council, any circumstances where an inappropriate gift or hospitality has been offered to you.

You may thereafter be required to assist the Police in providing evidence.

Monitoring and Audit

The Council will monitor the application of this policy and has discretion to review it at any time through the appropriate consultation mechanisms.

Responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and development of this policy lies with the Director of Human Resources. Day to day operation of this policy is the responsibility of Heads of Service who will ensure that this policy is adhered to.

Gifts and Hospitality

Checklists for considering whether to accept a gift or hospitality

The question in all cases is one of judgement, and the following checklist of queries should help you to decide whether a gift or an offer of hospitality should be accepted or tactfully declined.

- a. Is the value of the gift/hospitality £50 or over?
- b. If under £50 is it intended as an inducement?
- c. Is the extent of the hospitality, or nature of the gift reasonable and appropriate?
- d. Does the donor have any form of contractual relationship with the Council, does it provide goods or services to the Council of any kind?
- e. Is the invitation/gift directed to a large group of unrelated individuals or open to the public, or have you been targeted because of your employment with the Council and nature of your role?
- f. What do you think is the motivation behind the invitation/gift?
- g. For hospitality do you want to go and if so, why? Is it because there will be genuine benefits to the Council in terms of networking and contacts gained? Or is a desire to go centred around personal enjoyment?
- h. Would acceptance of the invitation be, in any way, inappropriate or place you under pressure in relation to any current or future matter involving the Council?
- i. For gifts is there a difficulty in returning the gift? If it would cause offence can the gift be given to charity or can you pay an equivalent price of the gift to charity?

If you decide to accept a gift over £50 you must register that in the register of interests, if you decline a gift over £50 this should also be registered with a statement that the gift was declined.

Training and Support

Any queries in relation to this policy should be directed to the Town Clerk.

Monitoring and Audit

We review annually for the AGM or if other issues come to light earlier.



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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1. GENERAL

- 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. This includes 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.
- 2) The Town Clerk (Clerk) is employed by the Council, under section 112(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, ~~to provide administrative support for the Council's activities for the proper discharge of the Councils functions~~ and is also the Responsible Financial Officer under Section 151 of the same Act, administering the Council's financial affairs in accordance with proper practices. On those occasions where the Clerk is unable to carry out these duties then the Deputy Clerk will.
- 3) The Clerk shall produce financial management information as required by how to the Council.
- 4) At least once a year, prior to approving the Annual Return, the Council, through its Internal Auditor, shall conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control which shall be in accordance with proper practices and subsequently reported to the Governance Committee.
- 5) In these Financial Regulations, references to the Accounts and Audit Regulations shall mean the Regulations issued under the proviso of Section 27 of the Audit Commission Act 1998 as amended or replaced.
- 6) These Financial Regulations reflect the guidance issued in Governance and Accountability in local Councils in England and Wales – a Practitioners' Guide which is published jointly by NALC and SLCC and updated from time to time.
- 7) It shall be the responsibility of the Governance Committee to exercise their Terms of Reference and Powers in accordance with the governance arrangements in place. It should be noted that Members

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must not enter into any financial commitments on behalf of the Council.

8) Powers of Delegation

- a) A new Scheme of Delegation was agreed in February 2018 for commencement in the Council year commencing May 2018. This document outlines how Blyth Town Council delegates its powers and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- b) The Council have approved the following scheme of delegation in respect of financial matters for the Clerk and these provide the thread throughout these regulations.

9) Financial and Audit Powers and Authority

- a) Power to make day to day purchases on behalf of the Council in order to exercise its functions duties, and responsibilities in accordance with Financial Regulations.
- b) Power to authorise use of all Council facilities and equipment in accordance with any Council charging policies.
- c) Power to deal with all aspects of the Council's insurances and to negotiate and accept terms for renewal as and when required.
- d) To negotiate and recommend to the Council terms for acceptance relating to the Council's banking arrangements.
- e) To make proper arrangements for the payment of all sums owing to the Council and for the receipt of all sums due to the Council and to take appropriate recovery action where necessary.
- f) Power to seek and obtain any grants and donations for which the Council may be entitled to apply.
- g) Power to authorise any remedial or maintenance work on Council property or assets.
- h) Power to invest surplus funds in accordance with Council's agreed policy.
- i) Authority to vire budget amounts within a Committee's budget in consultation with the appropriate committee Chair in accordance with Financial Regulations. Any virement made under this power

should be reported to the appropriate Committee(s) at their next meeting for information.

10) Staffing – Delegated Power

- a) Authorised to apply the Council's staffing, employment and disciplinary procedures in accordance with the agreed policies.
- b) Power to appoint staff (full time, part time and temporary), in accordance with the current Council policy.
- c) Power to engage professional and consultancy advice in consultation with the Mayor and the Chairs of the three Committees up to a single amount per engagement of £5,000.
- d) Power to implement nationally agreed salary/pay awards subject to details being reported for information to the next meeting of the Governance Committee.
- e) Power to sanction and authorise payment of overtime within budget provisions.

11. Other General Delegated Powers

- a) Power to take immediate action on all other urgent matters subject to consultation with the Mayor and the three Committee Chairs or Vice-Chairs and a full report being taken to the next relevant Council or Committee meeting.
- b) Power to let contracts for works, supply of goods or services as required provided procurement is in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- c) Power to delegate any functions delegated to the Clerk to any other staff member of Blyth Town Council.
- d) Any powers delegated by the individual Committees within their terms of reference.

2. ANNUAL ESTIMATES (BUDGET)

- 1) Each Committee shall be provided with information to formulate and submit detailed proposals to the Governance Committee in respect of revenue and capital, including the proposed use of reserves and

sources of funding for the following financial year in accordance with the agreed timetable.

- 2) Detailed estimates of all proposals from Governance Committee, including the use of reserves and all sources of funding for the year shall be prepared each year by the Clerk in the form of a budget to be considered by the Council.
- 3) The Council shall review the budget as well as any other financial forecasts in accordance with the agreed timetable not later than January each year, in line with the process for agreeing the precept. The Council shall fix the precept to be levied for the ensuing financial year. The Clerk shall issue the precept to the billing authority. The annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

- 1) Where it appears that expenditure may be incurred which is not provided for within the approved budget, and virement is not possible (see section 6 below), the Clerk shall submit to the Council, before the expenditure is incurred, a request for a supplementary estimate. Where the matter is of a more urgent nature then delegated authority may be requested from the Mayor and 3 Chairs of Committees. The request shall be accompanied by a detailed statement in support of the proposed expenditure giving reasons why the expenditure cannot be found by economies in other budgets.

4. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 1) When appropriate a capital programme shall be considered by each Committee and by the Council annually.
- 2) Programmes shall be prepared by the Clerk and submitted to the various Committees for consideration as part of the budget process. The programme shall be supported by a written report detailing the nature of the schemes to be undertaken and the financial resources available, including grants, where appropriate, to fund the programme.
- 3) Generally, only capital schemes within the approved capital programme may be undertaken in any financial year. However, in the event of a situation arising which warrants a capital scheme not already in the programme, (for example, the availability of significant

funding) then a report may be submitted to the appropriate Committee and Council recommending approval of the scheme.

- 4) For the purpose of these Regulations only expenditure which complies with the prescribed definition of capital, and with a value of £2,000 and above, shall be classed as capital.

5. BUDGETARY CONTROL

- 1) Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget.
- 2) No expenditure may be incurred that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget, unless accommodated by other known savings in other appropriate budget headings, without the prior knowledge of the Chair of the particular Committee and Chair of Governance. Any such occurrences shall be reported to the next available Committee.
- 3) The Clerk shall regularly provide the Governance Committee with a statement of income and expenditure to date under each budget heading, and will highlight any issues of concern of which members should be aware. However, in the event of a situation arising which has the potential for a significant adverse financial impact on the Council, the Clerk shall submit a report to members as soon as possible detailing the nature of the situation and possible means for addressing it.
- 4) The Clerk may incur reasonable expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to deal with an emergency/urgent situation irrespective of whether there is budget provision. The Clerk, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation shall report the action to the Council as soon as is practicable thereafter.
- 5) Unspent provisions in the revenue budget shall not be carried forward to subsequent years unless placed in an earmarked reserve by resolution of the Council.
- 6) 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.
- 7) All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations relating to the contracts.

6. VIREMENT

- 1) The Clerk may authorise a virement proposal in accordance within the "Powers of Delegation".

7. ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT

- 1) All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined by the Clerk in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 2) The Clerk must ensure that these procedures include processes that will allow:
 - The timely production of accounts.
 - Safe and efficient safeguarding of public money.
 - The prevention and detection of fraud and inaccuracy.
 - The clarification of the duties of Officers.
- 3) The Clerk-RFO shall complete the Council's annual accounts ~~and other necessary information contained within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return~~, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them to the Governance Committee and then Council for approval and submission as set out in the External Audit guidelines.
- 4) The Clerk-Council shall ensure that there is an 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 Clerk or Internal Auditor requires, make available such documents and explanations which are considered to be necessary for the purpose of the internal audit and shall supply information accordingly.
- 5) An 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 the Governance Committee 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.

- 6) The Clerk shall make arrangements for the opportunity for inspection of accounts, books and vouchers and for the display or publication of any Notices and Statements of Accounts required by ~~Audit Commission Act 1998~~ Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 7) The Clerk shall, as soon as practicable, bring to the attention of all Councillors any correspondence or report from the Internal and External Auditor, unless the correspondence is of a purely administrative matter.
- 8) The Internal Auditor or other such appointment may also audit the use of any IT equipment provided for use away from the Council's office in accordance with an IT Protocol approved by the Council.

8. IREGULARITIES

- 1) Any member or Officer of the Council who becomes aware of any financial irregularities, or suspected irregularities, shall immediately notify the Clerk who shall take such steps as they consider necessary by way of investigation and report, taking into account the nature of the irregularity.
- 2) If it is found that any significant loss has been incurred it shall be the responsibility of the clerk to inform the Council, its Internal and External Auditor and if appropriate the Police.

9. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND CHEQUES

- 1) The Council's banking arrangements; including the Bank Mandate, shall be the responsibility of the Clerk and approved by the Council. This shall include ensuring adequate arrangements are in place for internet banking payments. The overall arrangements shall be regularly reviewed for credit ratings, efficiency, value for money and control purposes.
- 2) The Clerk shall prepare bank reconciliation on at least a monthly basis and produce these for the Governance Committee meetings.

10. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

- 1) All payments shall be effected by cheque, BACS, Debit Card or some other banking instruction.

- 2) All invoices for payment shall be examined and verified by the ordering Officer prior to certification for payment by the Clerk or Deputy Clerk. The Clerk/Deputy Clerk shall be satisfied that the work, goods or services to which the invoice relates, have been received, carried out, examined and approved by the Officer responsible.
- 3) Where cheques are used for a payment then these shall be signed by two Signatories from the authorised list.
- 4) To indicate agreement of details shown on the invoice the cheque counterfoil and/or invoice similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the payment voucher. In the case e.g. annual invoices as is the case of Business Rates, then this shall be certified and the details input as such into the on-line banking system.
- 5) Petty cash may be provided to Officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses. Proof of expenditure must be presented to the Clerk.
- 6) The Clerk shall maintain as petty cash a maximum float of £250 under normal circumstances. Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept to substantiate the payment. No payment of petty cash should normally exceed £50.00. The value of the float is allowed to vary as a result of operational issues.
- 7) Income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.
- 8) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately in the Cash Book.
- 9) Petty cash must be kept in a locked cashbox which is then kept in a secure location or safe.
- 10) If thought appropriate by the Council, e.g., payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone and water), may be made by Variable Direct Debit provided that the instructions are implemented by two Officers. The approval of the use of a variable Direct Debit for the payment of particular payments shall be kept under review by the Clerk and any issues reported to the Governance Committee.

11. PAYMENTS OF SALARIES

- 1) The Council shall make all necessary arrangements to meet fully the statutory requirements placed on all employers by PAYE, National Insurance legislation and Pension arrangements. The payment of all salaries and other associated expenses shall be made in accordance with contracts of employment and payroll records, other legislation and responsibilities.

12. LOANS AND INVESTMENTS

- 1) All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the Council and shall be arranged in accordance with Council policy.
- 2) The Council shall draw up an Investment Policy which shall be in accordance with ~~relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance~~ Statutory Guidance of Local Government Investments. The Policy shall be reviewed at least annually at the Annual General Meeting.
- 3) All borrowings shall be affected in the name of the Council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval from Secretary of State. Any application for borrowing shall be approved by Council as to terms and purpose. The terms and conditions of borrowings shall be reviewed at least annually.
- 4) All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be in the name of the Council and retained in the custody of the Clerk.

13. INCOME

- 1) The collection of all sums due to the Council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the Clerk.
- 2) The Council will review all fees and charges annually, following a report to Council from the Clerk.
- 3) The charges made for work undertaken, services provided and goods supplied shall be in accordance with those approved by the Council. Where a charge is to be made which has not been approved by the Council, the Clerk shall determine the appropriate charge and report the amendment to the next meeting of the Council.

- 4) All appropriate steps must be taken to recover sums due to the Council. In bankruptcy and liquidation cases, the Clerk may write these sums out of Council's accounts and thereafter pursue these, if considered appropriate, in the most cost effective means.
- 5) Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the Council and shall be written off in the year. Where appropriate the accounts shall reflect a provision within the estimates for such amounts.
- 6) All sums received on behalf of the Council shall be promptly banked intact as directed by the Clerk. In all cases, receipts shall be deposited with the Council's bankers with such frequency as the Clerk considers necessary.
- 7) The bank paying in slip, counterfoil and other control document should reflect adequate details to show any individual receipts within the overall total.
- 8) Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the Council.
- 9) Adequate arrangements should be in place for when sums of cash are regularly received by the Council. Consideration must be given to the number of staff and their security and safety and the form of income reconciliation necessary.

10)All grant claims to Government Departments or other organisations shall be submitted by the Clerk.

~~10)~~11) Any income that is the property of a charitable trust shall be paid into a charitable bank account. Instructions for the payment of funds due from the charitable trust to the council (to meet expenditure already incurred by the authority) will be given by the Managing Trustees of the charity meeting separately from any council meeting

14. VAT

- 1) The Clerk shall promptly complete any VAT return that is required. Any claim due in accordance with VAT regulations, shall be made at least quarterly. All returns shall be reconciled to the Council's books of account.

15. ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

- 1) An official order, letter or formal contract shall be issued for all work, goods and services as deemed appropriate. Copies of order documentation shall be retained for control and audit purposes. Where, because of the value of the work, a formal contract is required this is detailed within Section 16 (Contracts).
- 2) All Councillors 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 in accordance with Financial Regulations.
- 3) Formal open tender exercises should be followed where the cost of the works/services is likely to exceed £~~50~~30,000.
- 4) Orders within the financial banding of £5,000 to £~~50~~30,000, then 3 quotations are required.
- 5) When the value is above £1,000 but less than £5,000 then 2 quotations are required. Unless they are of a regular nature and where this takes place prices are sought on an annual basis or if it is felt that prices have changed.
- 6) Where the value is above £100 but below £1,000, then two estimates are required unless the work is of a regular nature and an exercise has been carried out to ensure value for money. Where this exercise takes place, it is repeated after 1 year or if it is felt that prices have changed.
- 7) Where smaller transactions take place, but over the year add up to a substantial value, then these are aggregated into a 'basket of purchases'. This will allow interested parties to submit prices which will allow a decision to be made for orders over a 12 month period.
- 8) For expenditure below £100, although there is no specific guidance, the overarching principle of obtaining value for money still applies but in a less formal approach
- 9) In the event of it not being possible to secure the quotations or estimates required, the Clerk may proceed on the basis of fewer being received, having discussed the situation where necessary with Mayor and the three Chairs of Committees.

- 10) The procedure detailed above may be inappropriate when it is necessary for the Council to acquire work, services or goods of a specialist nature. In this case the Clerk shall consult with the Chairs of; the Governance Committee, the Responsible Committee as well as the Mayor and agree as necessary. All firms invited to carry out works must satisfy the Clerk of their technical ability, financial standing and any other legislative requirement e.g. regarding health and safety, before any order/contract is awarded.
- 11) The Clerk shall ensure that processes are in place to ensure that approval has been given and to verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order.
- 12) Payments for services of this nature should be done so after satisfactory completion of the goods/services required. On occasions where a payment in advance is required then this should be agreed by the Clerk in consultation, where necessary, with the Mayor and Chairs of the three Committees.

16. CONTRACTS

- 1) Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations except in relation to the following:
 - a. In an emergency.
 - b. For the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services.
 - c. For specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants.
 - d. For work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the Council.
 - e. For additional audit work of the external auditor up to an estimated value of £500. In excess of this sum the Clerk shall act after consultation with the Mayor and three Chairs.
 - f. For goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and/or are only sold at a fixed price.
 - g. Where work may already be carried out by Northumberland County Council or its approved contractor, e.g. Partnership Agreement.

- 2) 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 which is valued at ~~£2530,000~~ or more, the Council shall comply with the relevant requirements of the various Regulations.
- 3) These regulations state that a public contract with an estimated value in excess of ~~£2530,000~~ but less than the relevant thresholds ~~referred to~~ in Standing Order 18(f) is subject to Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which include a requirement on the Council to advertise the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder website regardless of what other means it uses to advertise the opportunity unless it proposes to use an existing list of approved suppliers (framework agreement).
- 4) The full requirements of the Regulations, as applicable, shall also be in accordance with the Public Contracts Directive 2014/24/EO, as and when amended.
- 5) 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.
- 6) 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 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.
- 7) All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least four members of the Council.
- 8) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Orders and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 9) The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest of any tender, quote or estimate. Where the most economically advantageous bid is not accepted, the reasons for this shall be documented and such documents signed by both the Mayor, the Clerk and the three Chairs.

- 10) Should the Council, or duly delegated Committee, not accept any tender, quote or estimate, then this decision will be documented accordingly. Where the Council requires further pricing, provided that the specification does not change, no person shall be permitted to submit another tender, estimate or quote if they submitted a price when the original decision making process was being undertaken. A price may be submitted if the Council seeks prices after a three month period has passed.
- 11) Contracts should be awarded according to the most economically advantageous tender.
- 12) The Clerk, with prior consent of the Mayor and three Chairs, may seek tenders from select lists prepared by one of the following:
 - Northumberland County Council
 - The North East Regional Employers Organisation
 - A list prepared by a Northumberland Town or Parish Council provided that it has been compiled after a tender process.

17. PAYMENT UNDER CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKS

- 1) Payments on account of the contract sum shall be made within the time specified in the contract by the Clerk upon authorised certificates of the architect or other consultants engaged to supervise the contract (subject to any percentage withholdings as may be agreed in the particular contract).
- 2) Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the Clerk 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 by 5% or more a report shall be submitted to the Council.
- 3) The Clerk is authorised to agree variations below £2,000 and in consultation with the Mayor and the three Chairs, is authorised to approve variations over £2,000. The variations will subsequently be reported to the appropriate Committee under "Delegated Actions."

BTC Financial Regulations – reviewed [April 2023](#) [July 2024](#)

18. PURCHASES AND EQUIPMENT

- 1) The Clerk shall ensure processes are in place to help ensure the safe custody of any items within the control of the Council.
- 2) All items received must be checked against the delivery note/order to verify satisfactory goods have been received and discrepancies actioned.
- 3) Stocks shall be kept at levels consistent with operational requirements.
- 4) The Council's property shall not be removed, other than in accordance with the ordinary business of the Council, or used other than for Council purposes.

19. LEASING

- 1) The Clerk shall be responsible for the negotiation and management of all leasing arrangements where expenditure has been authorised by the Council.

20. ASSETS, PROPERTIES AND ESTATES

- 1) The Clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties owned held by the Council. The Clerk shall make sure a sufficiently detailed an appropriate and accurate record is maintained of all assets owned by the Council and purpose for which held in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 2) No asset shall be 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 of tangible movable property does not exceed £50.00.
- 3) The Clerk 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. This shall not apply to consumables used in the ordinary course of the Council's work.

21. INSURANCE

- 1) Following the annual risk assessment the Clerk shall effect all insurances, submit and negotiate all claims with the Council's insurers.
- 2) The Clerk shall give prompt notification to the Council of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 3) The Clerk shall keep a record of all insurances affected by the Council and the property and risks covered thereby should be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 4) The Clerk shall be notified of any loss, liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these at the next available Committee meeting. Any such report shall be considered in private to avoid prejudicing the Council's position.
- 5) 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.

22. SECURITY

- 1) The Clerk shall be responsible for maintaining proper security of all the buildings, stocks, stores, furniture, equipment, cash etc. of the Council. The Clerk shall be consulted where security is considered to be defective or where special security arrangements are thought appropriate.
- 2) Maximum limits for cash holdings shall be agreed with the Clerk and these shall not be exceeded without the express authority of the Clerk.

23. CHARITIES

- 1) Where the Council is the sole trustee of a Charitable body the Clerk shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial records made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with the Charity Law and Legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk

shall arrange for any Audit or Independent Examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.

24. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 1) The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the Council, risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements; these shall be reviewed by the Governance Committee at least annually.
- 2) When considering any new activity, the Clerk shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council.

25. REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

- 1) It shall be the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council annually. The Clerk shall make arrangements to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the Council of any requirements for a consequential amendment to these financial regulations.



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

Risk Management Policy

The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Town Clerk shall prepare for approval by the Council, a risk management policy and assessment in respect of all activities of the Council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk managements shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.

When considering any new activity or in consideration of changes to existing arrangements, the Town Clerk shall consider risk assessment, including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council/Committee.

All Decision Reports will cover this aspect along with any associated impact.

Major Threat

The greatest risk facing the Council is either not being able to deliver the activity or services expected by residents/within a legal/financial/operational framework or delivery in such a way that it has a detrimental impact.

Risk assessment is a systematic general examination of various elements which contribute towards an activity that enable to Council to identify any and all potential risks inherent in the place or practices.

Based on a recorded assessment the Council should then take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible, making sure that all employees are made aware of the results of the risk assessment.

This document has been produced to help enable the Council to assess the risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them. In conducting this exercise, the following main points have been followed and documented accordingly. This has been considered alongside the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the NALC Joint Panel on Accountability and Guidance Manual:

- Identify the areas to be reviewed.
- Identify what the risk may be.
- Evaluate the management and control of the risk and record all findings.
- Review assess and revise if required
- The points and areas identified below cover the Council as a whole and where individual considerations are made a number of these will be taken into account.

FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT

Topic	Risk	H/M/L	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess/Revise
Business Continuity	Risk of Council not being able to continue its business due to an unexpected or tragic circumstance.	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Business Continuity Plan agreed, and a suitable staffing structure is in place.</p> <p>All documents are backed up both on/off site.</p> <p>Where instances require working outside of the office a separate Google drive has been set up to allow access to documents on our main server. All staff have access to laptops, additional mobile phones purchased, and video conferencing facilities are in place.</p>	Ongoing review.
Precept Determination	Fit for purpose	L	Councillors receive updates at each planned committee meeting showing actual against budget. This provides effective analysis and monitoring. When budgets are formed (October - January) the Town Clerk works with each Committee to	Process used has been established for some time and operates effectively.

			determine the budget for the next year. In January, the precept calculations are received and budget finalised.	
Precept Income	Income not received from NCC or reduced from January's projected amounts.	L	Reserves value is based on good practice and is based on 25% of the precept as a minimum. An unlikely scenario.	Procedure set to mitigate this risk.
Financial Records	Not complete or inaccurate and associated risks	L	The Council has Financial Regulations, which govern the conduct for financial management by Officers. Regular information sent to the Chair of governance. Regular internal audit visits.	Ongoing review.
Cash	Loss through theft or dishonesty	L	Council requirements are set out in the Financial Regulations. Cash received is banked as soon as practicably possible in line with insurance requirements. Insurance cover in place. Safety of staff paramount and 2 staff must travel to the bank, although this is greatly reduced by card payments now available.	Existing procedures are adequate and financial regulations are reviewed annually.

Ordering of Services	No budget resource/approval	L	Other than very minor/routine purchases done without the knowledge of TC/DTC. Compliance with F R's.	Adequate
Reporting and Auditing	Information not communicated Auditing and Governance	L M	Financial management statement produced for each Governance Committee and a copy of the accounts and bank reconciliation is forwarded to the Chair of Governance, along with TC and DTC, on a weekly basis. Xcel cash book reconciled with VAT system Council undertakes internal and external independent audits. All reports are sent to the Governance Committee. Council appoints an independent Auditor annually and all reports are submitted to the Governance Committee.	Existing communication procedures adequate. Committee Review

Payment Approval	Payments authorised by Officer receiving the goods/services.	L	<p>All payment transactions made are following the Financial Regulations process. Cash book updated immediately and just prior to payment. The Free Agent, VAT system, updated. Any new asset marked as such for specific part of cash book. Insurance question reviewed.</p> <p>Financial regulations checked independently at each internal audit visit.</p> <p>Authorisations for on-line banking are carried out independent of Officer creating payment. Where cheques used these require 2 signatories. Officers accessing the bank have their own key fobs and separation of duties exist.</p>	Procedures proved to be satisfactory over many years.
Grants Received	Grants are applied for against specific projects.	L	Grant applications are prepared by the Town Clerk and approved by the Council. The Town Clerk checks progress and reports back when the application result is determined. Grants normally have conditions of use attached, these being checked and monitored by the Clerk.	The application process determines the procedure to be followed if at variance from the financial regulations.

		L	Rents and discounts are agreed by Council. There are situations that the Council has agreed whereby the Town Clerk can apply discretion in certain cases.	Existing procedures work well and part of management/internal audit review process.
Achieving Best Value	Multiple quotes for larger projects.	L	The finance regulations dictate when multiple quotes/tenders etc. are required. All projects over £25,000 have to be advertised on a national Contracts portal. For significant spend projects contracts awarded through sealed bid tenders. Professional contractors used to project manage the contractor. Project specification produced for significant tenders as part of the tender process.	Existing procedures reviewed annually as a minimum in addition to work carried out at each internal audit visit.
	Project overspend	M	Each significant project carries a risk of overspend or other eventualities and variation. The governance arrangements in place allow delegation to the Town Clerk in certain cases. The Council is kept up to date as required as the project develops.	Review procedures after each project is carried out.

Resources	Adequacy to deliver	M	Discuss fully the level of resources required and if they are available.	Ongoing monitoring
Reserves	Inadequate reserves and safeguarding reserves for intended purpose	L L L	<p>A General Reserve Fund and Earmarked Reserve Fund, only where applicable, have been established. Capital Projects that are being saved for are to be identified as such in the earmarked reserves and with an unrestricted contingency fund.</p> <p>Funds are transferred to support capital works and any additions to the fund are approved at the start of the financial year.</p> <p>Proposal for the use of any fund is subject to a resolution by the Full Council as per the Standing Orders.</p>	<p>This should, where appropriate, include an agreed allocation of funding each budget year when the budget is set.</p> <p>Develop an Asset Management Plan to include life-span analysis and renewal & improvement of Town Council assets. Ensure an allocation of reserves in an earmarked budget for this purpose or include an amount within the budget to resource this.</p>

Election costs	Risk of unexpected election.	L	Council budgets now allow for planned elections. County Council Elections office advice sought annually on potential election costs. Level of reserves are adequate to meet such costs.	Current practice is to budget for a full set of elections every 4 years. Reserves would be used to meet other election costs if necessary.
VAT	Reclaiming/recharging	L	Requirements set out in the financial regulations. VAT claims are made on a quarterly basis.	Existing procedures checked at each internal audit as well as annually by external audit. The cash book is reconciled to a second system used to claim VAT using the Tax Digital portal.
Investments	Failure to have a policy and its implementation.	H	Strategy in place along with regular monitoring.	Annual review of policy or earlier if required.
Borrowing	Not approved within guidelines.	L	Full council approval would be required. No borrowing arrangements in place but covered within Financial Regulations, Department of Housing, Communities and Local	Annual review of policy or earlier if required.

			Government guidelines in addition to NALC guidelines.	
Insurance	Failure to meet needs and requirements.	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>M</p>	<p>Reviewed annually prior to policy renewal. All associated liability covered. Policy updated as new assets added. Employee cover adequate and current.</p> <p>Assets reviewed on an annual basis along insurance considerations. Not all assets are insured after committee consideration. Specialist brokers used to assist the council with their needs.</p> <p>Separate dedicated and specific policy for Town Events.</p>	<p>Insurance brokers used to assist the Council in meeting their responsibilities.</p> <p>Assets are part of the AGAR process.</p> <p>Reviewed annually by insurance broker and TC/DTC along with Events Co-ordinator.</p>
Annual Return	Non-Completion and not submitted within time limits.	L	Annual Return is completed and submitted to the Internal Auditor for checking. Approved by the Governance Committee then Council where signed before sending to the External Auditor within time limit.	Existing procedures adequate.

Council Records – paper	Loss through fire of theft. Computer Failure	L M	Electronic records held on computer. Regular back-ups taken, stored on/off site.	Adequacy of back-ups monitored independently by the council’s IT support.
STAFFING				
Salaries	Salaries incorrect, wrong hourly rate or hours worked. Wrong deductions of NI or Tax, Unpaid Tax	L L	Contracts of employment are in place and outline each officer’s salary. The budget is prepared and checked by another officer for correctness. The salary for each officer is checked by Northumberland County Council who process the payments. Salary budgets are prepared for the Governance Committee which allows further monitoring to take place. Additional salary/expenses forms need to be signed by the Town/Deputy Clerk. The Council prepare salary budgets for the County Council which are monitored. The County Council are	Existing procedures checked monthly as well as at internal audit visits.

	and NI contributions to Inland Revenue.		responsible for forwarding on deductions made.	
Expense Claims	Fraud or incorrect claims.	L	Expenses must be approved. Mileage claims paid on completion of claim form and receipts provided where appropriate. Mileage claim rates match those recommended by NALC.	Ongoing review. All forms checked by the TC/DTC.
Workplace Pension Scheme	Scheme not administered correctly	L	The Council agreed to use the NEST scheme. NEST is a public corporation accountable to Parliament through the DWP.	Employee pension deductions are made through the County Council and NEST are aware of the monthly payments to be made by the Council. Internal monitoring as well as regular internal audit checks take place.
General	Loss of key staff or long-term illness, resignation, or misconduct.	M	Staff structure in place to allow business continuity in the short/medium term and after these external resources, e.g. NCC, would need to be brought in. Various options available –	Ongoing review

	Health and Safety training requirements.	L	additional hours for existing staff, NALC or short-term recruitment. Training resources and budget available. Any new risks identified considered immediately. Safety guide issued.	Ongoing review
	Task specific training needed.	L	Carried out as and when identified.	Ongoing via appraisal
	Compliance with employment law.	L	Guidance offered by NALC, County Council and ACAS.	
	Working out of the office.	L	The office board must be marked up re whereabouts and estimated time of return. Staff have mobile phones. Guidelines in place in addition to difficult situations.	Office staff monitor
ASSET AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT				
Assets	Loss or damage	L	Annual review of assets undertaken. Current programme is identified on a weekly monitoring	Inspections undertaken as well as adequacy of such

	Risk of damage or injury to third parties.		chart which shows all assets are covered in a balanced/necessary frequency. Third party organisations are used on a weekly/annual basis. There is a feature on the web site for problems to be identified. Signs are added to assets to show the provider of the asset.	at regular project meetings.
Asset Management	Premises or other assets being closed or unavailable for use by the Council or community due to poor or dangerous condition.	L	An asset plan has been produced and reserves in place such that assets can be replaced at the end of their natural life. Play areas are refurbished on an approx. 20-year basis. Repairs to assets are more or less immediately. Council offices rented and in a building shared with the landlord. CCTV in various locations throughout the town to help ensure safeguarding of assets and for public safety etc.	Asset management inventory and plan.
Recreation Areas Management of Allotment Sites	Services provided by the Associations not in	L		Officers programme review work.

	<p>accordance with the agreement</p> <p>MUGA Play Areas x 17</p>	L	<p>Regular monitoring takes place. Detailed and specific checklists are maintained for each site.</p> <p>Council staff as well as County Council staff along with an external company to carry out an independent assessment of play areas on an annual basis. Individual/specific assessment sheets are used for each.</p>	<p>Officers carrying out inspections are adequately qualified and their certificates are updated in accordance with statutory review period.</p>
Notice Boards	<p>Risk of damage or injury to third parties. Location suitability.</p>	L	<p>Notice board located at Market Place and 2 at Newsham. All covered by insurance policy.</p>	<p>Adequate inspections undertaken by both Officers and Councillors.</p>
Trees	<p>Trees or branches posing a safety problem to the public where unrestrictive right of access available.</p>	L	<p>Currently the Council only have trees on their land i.e. certain allotment sites, or bordering land they maintain. Generally any trees within the Town, on highways or public space, are the responsibility of the County Council. Previously a quarterly inspection of trees. Trained Officers from the County Council involved regarding expertise as required for problem areas.</p>	<p>Ongoing review.</p>

			Should the Council receive communication on this matter then this would be forwarded to NCC to discuss/receive guidance next steps.	
GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL MATTERS				
Standing Orders	Breach of Standing Orders	<p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Standing Orders are formally adopted and all Council Members are issued with a copy</p> <p>Where it is considered that Standing Orders have been breached, written advice is sought and presented to Council. If any breach is proven, then Council decisions taken will be revisited and subject to review.</p>	<p>Regular review of Standing Orders.</p> <p>Additional training or whatever else is agreed that is needed.</p> <p>The Council's Standing Orders follow the model recommended by NALC.</p>
Legal Powers	Illegal activity or decision making.	L	<p>All decisions within the powers of the Council to be either resolved and minuted at Council meetings or in line with governance arrangements.</p> <p>Clerk to ensure appropriate powers are available.</p>	Decision made forms part of the minutes.

Member Conduct	Members fail to behave in accordance with Code of Conduct	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>The Code of Conduct is adopted by the Council at the Annual Meeting each year, all members are provided with a copy.</p> <p>Council members can attend training on Code of Conduct and Behaviour in Public Office.</p> <p>All Council members sign a declaration of office which includes the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Council members and members of the public are advised that Code of Conduct complaints should be made to the Monitoring Officer (Northumberland County Council). As a result, sanctions for any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct are independently determined.</p>	<p>Councillors reminded of their responsibility both on the agenda and at the start of each meeting.</p> <p>Any good practice guides or policies received from NALC are immediately circulated to members and where appropriate these documents are put up to Council for adoption.</p>
Members Interests	Conflict of Interests and Register of Interests.	<p>L</p>	<p>Standing Orders require declaration of interests at each Council meeting by members. Register of Members Interest in the public domain and should be reviewed regularly by Councillors.</p>	<p>Existing procedures are adequate. Members reminded to review their entry.</p>

			Clerk responsible for ensuring new Councillors register their interests.	
Agendas, minutes and significant reports	Accuracy and legal	L	<p>Officer reports have a minimum of 1 other officer in the vetting process after the author.</p> <p>Minutes and agenda are produced by the Clerk to defined standards and adhere to legal requirements. Minutes are drafted as soon as possible after each meeting by the Committee Clerk. These are checked by the Town and/or Deputy Clerk before being sent to the Chair responsible for that committee/Council. Once approved these would be forwarded to all members and approved and signed at the next Council/Committee meeting.</p> <p>Minutes and agenda are displayed according to the legal requirements as a minimum. Council meetings managed by a Chair. Council decisions are disseminated for officers and report back as to progress at the next meeting.</p>	Annual review of adequacy.

Council Meetings	Council Meetings not quorate or minuted properly	L	All Meetings and Minutes properly advertised on Council website as required. Attendance recorded as part of minutes to evidence quorum.	Independently reviewed within the office prior to sending to the Chair and after signing off the agenda and minutes process.
Meeting Location	Adequate provision and H&S checked	L H L	Full Council, Committee and Sub Committee meetings held mainly in the Council Chamber within the council offices. These buildings assessed above. Where difficulties arise due to disrespectful behaviour from members of the public, procedures are in place to allow the business of the Council to continue. In the eventuality of requiring On-line Visual meetings then suitable arrangements are in place.	Regular reviews undertaken. If another venue had to be used it would be e.g. a community centre. Committee Chairs outline prior to the meeting commencing the expectations of the public in their contribution/non-contribution to the meeting and the outcome if they do not comply.

Safety of staff, councillors and visitors	Unsafe building and surroundings	L	The staff mainly work in offices on the first floor of a 3-floor building. External access as well as to the offices is by a key fob. CCTV is in place and a fire exit is at the rear of the general office. A signing in procedure is in place. A policy is in place to ensure a minimum of 2 staff are in the office, there can be lone working subject to adherence to the lone working policy.	Health and safety policy reviewed annually as a minimum.
Poor reputation of the Council	The work of the Council is not understood leading to negative feedback from parishioners and dissatisfaction with the way services are carried out.	L L	Regular use of communication channels including website and newsletters to explain the Council's activities. Use of social media. All documents used for this purpose are independently checked prior to issue. Public and press welcome to attend Council meetings. All decisions taken in public domain and reported transparently without bias. Except for items of a private and confidential nature.	Ongoing review and feedback. Expected practice.

		L	Adoption of a social media and Email policy.	Council members encouraged to share official Town Council posts rather than individual posts or comments regarding Council decisions. Where individual posts are made/intended to be made and where there is doubt about the content advice should be taken from officers. In addition, where a post is made and it comes the attention that the post is factually incorrect then this shall be corrected as soon as it is pointed out to the individual member.
		M	Where controversial or contentious decisions are taken, Town Clerk as directed to issue PR as a matter of priority.	Council members to inform Town Clerk of any negativity on social media and for

		L	Seek to foster good working relationships with local reporters.	any suitable response be formulated. Council employ external company with experience in the media.
Poor stakeholder relationships	Perceived or real breakdown in communications between tiers of Local Government or between the Council and other public providers.	L	Council to understand the services provided by others and to discuss areas of joint interest periodically. The Council to respond to consultations to put its point of view across adequately.	Ongoing review and feedback.
Partnership Agreement with Northumberland County Council	Failure to deliver the requirements of the agreement.	L	Weekly/monthly monitoring in place by both Councils at office/member level.	Regular review process. Partnership Working Group and Partnership Board are in place and meet on a regular basis. Any outputs are reported to all members through the Environment Committee and Council.

Lack of vision	An over-emphasis on the management and operation of Council services may lead to a poor performance with regard to forward planning which may prevent partnerships being formed with other public and private supplier or even the loss of grants.	M	The Council to review its Plan and stance on planning proposals and to proactively develop a Neighbourhood type Plan so that a vision of the future is always available. Involvement in appropriate groups to both promote and improve the Town in line with the Council's objectives e.g. the Town Forum. Plan reviewed regularly and community engagement for feedback.	Review regularly and underway.
Lack of training or time to undertake the role of the Council	Inadequate knowledge or specialist ability may lead to poor decisions.	L	Adequate training budget available. Encourage training for Councillors and staff.	Maintain a training record and review annually. Staff appraisal.
Data Protection	General Data Protection Data protection rules not followed.	L	Town Clerk registered for data protection and reviewed annually. Governance Committee receive update reports as and when necessary.	General Data Protection Regulations followed and updated as required. Updates notified through NALC and ICO.
Freedom of Information	Policy availability	L	FoI Policy available in the public domain. Policy reviewed annually.	Information reports produced prior to the Governance committee.



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

STANDING ORDERS

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1. RULES OF DEBATE AT MEETINGS

- a) Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting.
- b) A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.
- c) A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the Chair of the meeting as withdrawn.
- d) If a motion (including an amendment) has been seconded, it may be withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- e) An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.
- f) If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion (as amended), becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.
- g) An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the Chair of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the Chair.
- h) A Councillor may move an amendment to his own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be given with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.

- i) If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the Chair of the meeting.
- j) Subject to Standing Order 1(k), only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the Chair of the meeting.
- k) One or more amendments may be discussed together if the Chair of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- l) A Councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- m) The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.
- n) Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply either at the end of the debate on the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- o) Unless permitted by the Chair of the meeting, a Councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:
 - i. To speak on an amendment moved by another Councillor.
 - ii. To move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since he last spoke.
 - iii. To make a point of order.
 - iv. To give a personal explanation.
 - v. To exercise a right of reply.
- p) During the debate on a motion, a Councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the Councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A Councillor raising a point of order shall identify the Standing Order which he considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting he is concerned by.
- q) A point of order shall be decided by the Chair of the meeting and his decision shall be final.

- r) When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:
- i. To amend the motion.
 - ii. To proceed to the next business.
 - iii. To adjourn the debate.
 - iv. To put the motion to a vote.
 - v. To ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting.
 - vi. To refer a motion to a Committee or Sub-Committee for consideration.
 - vii. To exclude the public and press.
 - viii. To adjourn the meeting.
 - ix. To suspend particular Standing Order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory, statutory or legal requirements.
- s) Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the Chair of the meeting shall be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived his right of reply.
- t) Excluding motions moved under Standing Order 1(r), the contributions or speeches by a Councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the Chair of the meeting.

2. DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

- a) No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this Standing Order is ignored the Chair of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- b) If person(s) disregard the request of the Chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any Councillor or the Chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.

- c) If a resolution made under Standing Order 2(b) is ignored, the Chair of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

3. MEETINGS GENERALLY

- Full Council Meetings
 - Committee Meetings
 - Sub-Committee Meetings
- a) Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.
- b) The minimum 3 clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.
- c) The minimum 3 clear days public notice for a meeting does not include the day on which the notice was issued or the day of the meeting unless the meeting is convened at shorter notice e.g. an important planning issue.
- d) Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.
- e) Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.
- f) The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with Standing Order 3(e) shall not exceed 20 minutes unless directed by the Chair of the meeting.
- g) Subject to Standing Order 3(f), a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes on a specific item.
- h) In accordance with Standing Order 3(e), a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The

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Chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given following the meeting.

- i) The Chair of the meeting will acknowledge this accordingly.
- j) A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the Chair of the meeting.
- k) Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the Chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- l) Subject to Standing Order 3(m), a person who attends a meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To "report" means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting proceedings, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later, or to report or to provide oral or written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.
- m) A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without advance permission of the meeting.
- n) The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.
- o) Subject to Standing Orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chair of the Committee/Council may in his absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chair of the Committee/Council.
- p) The Chair of the Committee/Council, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chair of the Committee/Council if present, shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, a Councillor as chosen by the Councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.
- q) Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the Councillors and non-Councillors (if applicable) with voting rights present and voting.

- r) The Chair of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his casting vote whether or not he gave an original vote.

See Standing Orders 5(h) and (i) for the different rules that apply in the election of the Chair of the Council at the annual meeting of the Council.

- s) Voting on a question may be by a show of hands if this is required. At the request of a Councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.
- t) The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:
- i. The time and place of the meeting.
 - ii. The names of Councillors who are present and the names of Councillors who are absent.
 - iii. The ~~names~~ job title and name of organisation they represent of any non-members of the Committee or Sub Committee who have been specifically invited to attend to provide expert or specialist knowledge.
 - iv. Interests that have been declared by Councillors and non-members with voting rights.
 - v. The grant of dispensations (if any) to Councillors and non-Councillors.
 - vi. Whether a Councillor or non-Councillor left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered.
 - vii. If there was a public participation session.
 - viii. The resolutions made.
- u) A Councillor or a non-Councillor (if applicable) with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's Code of Conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on ~~his~~ his/her/-their right to participate and vote on that matter. Subject to the conditions of Standing Order 45(b).

- v) No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Committee are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than 4 for a Committee or 3 for a Sub Committee.

See Standing Order 4d (viii) for the quorum of a Committee or Sub-Committee meeting.

- w) If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting.
- x) A meeting shall not exceed a period of 1.5 hours unless there is a motion agreed to extend the meeting by a further 30 minutes.

4. ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS

- a) In an election year, the Annual Meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which Councillors elected take office.
- b) In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council decides.
- c) If no other time is fixed, the Annual Meeting of the Council shall take place at 6.30 p.m.
- d) In addition to the Annual Meeting of the Council, at least 3 other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council decides.
- e) The first business conducted at the Annual Meeting of the Council shall be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council.
- f) The Chair of the Council, unless he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the Annual Meeting until his successor is elected at the next Annual Meeting of the Council.
- g) The Vice-Chair of the Council, unless he resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chair of the Council at the next Annual Meeting of the Council.
- h) In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the

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Annual Meeting until a successor Chair of the Council has been elected. The current Chair of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council but shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

- i) In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the Annual Meeting until a new Chair of the Council has been elected. He may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council and shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
- j) Following the election of the Chair of the Council and Vice-Chair of the Council at the Annual Meeting, the business shall include:
 - i. In an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council and Councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council of his acceptance of office form unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date.
 - ii. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council.
 - iii. Receipt of the minutes of the last meeting of a Committee.
 - iv. Consideration of the recommendations made by a Committee where it has been necessary to refer a matter to Full Council.
 - v. Review of delegation arrangements to Committees, Sub-Committees, staff and other Local Authorities.
 - vi. Review of the terms of reference for Committees.
 - vii. Appointment of members to existing Committees.
 - viii. Appointment of any new Committees in accordance with Standing Order ~~45~~.
 - ix. Review and adoption of appropriate Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
 - x. Review of all appropriate arrangements (including legal agreements) with other Local Authorities, not-for-profit bodies and businesses.

- xi. Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back.
- xii. In an election year, to make arrangements with a view to the Council becoming eligible to exercise the general power of competence in the future.
- xiii. Review of inventory of land and other assets including building and office equipment.
- xiv. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks.
- xv. Review of the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies.
- xvi. Review of the Council's complaints procedures.
- xvii. Review of the Council's policies, procedures and practices in respect of its obligations under freedom of information and data protection legislation (*see also Standing Orders 11, 20 and 21*)
- xviii. Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media.
- xix. Review of the Council's employment policies and procedures.
- xx. Review of the Council's expenditure incurred under s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the general power of competence.
- xxi. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

45. COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES

- a) The Council may appoint standing Committees or other Sub committees in accordance with the Council's latest Scheme of Governance-Delegation and:
 - i. Shall determine their terms of reference and members.
 - ii. Shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a Standing Committee and a Sub Committee up until the date of the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

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- iii. Shall permit a Committee, or Sub Committee ~~e.g. such as a special meeting,~~ to determine the time and date of ~~that special~~ its meetings.
 - iv. Shall, after it has appointed the members of a Standing Committee or Sub Committee, appoint the Chairs of the Standing or Sub Committee.
 - v. Shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a Committee and a Sub Committee which in both cases shall be no less than:
 - Full Council – one third
 - Committees – one third
 - Sub Committees -one third
 - vi. Shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a Committee.
 - vii. Shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meeting of a Sub Committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, for the meetings of a Sub Committee.
 - viii. Shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a Sub Committee that they are permitted to attend.
 - ix. May dissolve a Committee or a Sub Committee.
- b) Unless the Council determines otherwise, a Committee or Sub Committee may invite a Council member who has a specific interest in an agenda item, but who is not a member of that Committee or Sub Committee, or a member of the public to attend a meeting of the Committee or Sub Committee to provide specialist or expert advice and knowledge of a specific area within the Committee's or Sub Committee's terms of reference. Any such Council member, or member of the public should declare any pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the specific topic for which their advice is being sought. They will not have voting rights.
- c) Advisory Working Groups
- i. The Council may determine to establish and advisory working group, either in its own right or at the request of a Standing Committee or Sub Committees to advise the Council or any of its Committees or Sub Committees on any areas within their respective terms of reference. In urgent circumstances the Council's Chair's Group can agree to establish an advisory working group subject to informing approval of the Council at its next meeting.

- ii. The terms of reference of any advisory working group will be determined by the Council, or Chair's Group in urgent circumstances.
- iii. An advisory working group will be time limited and will be dissolved when it has finished its final report.
- iv. All advisory working groups shall be appointed by the Council and may include any Councillor or a member of the Council who has a special interest, or any member of the public who has special knowledge or expertise relating to the terms of reference of the working group.
- v. All members of an advisory group must declare any pecuniary interests relating to the topic under consideration.
- vi. An advisory working group cannot make any binding decisions, but will make recommendations for consideration to the Council, or relevant Committee or Sub Committee.
- vii. Any recommendations made by an advisory working group which relate to a change in Council policy or with significant financial implications must be referred to the Council's Governance Committee for its views before any decisions are made by the Council in relation to such recommendations.
- viii. Unless agreed by the Council, recommendations from an advisory working group which are endorsed by a relevant Standing Committee or Sub Committee must be referred to the Council for its consideration and approval.
- ix. Meetings of advisory working groups shall not be open to the public or subject to the statutory requirements as to notice of meetings. The working group will set the dates and times of its own meetings and agendas.

5-6. EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

- a) The Chair of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.
- b) If the Chair of the Council does not call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within 7 days of having been requested in writing to do so by two Councillors, any two Councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council. The public notice giving the time, place and agenda for such a meeting shall be signed by the two Councillors.

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- c) The Chair of a Committee or a Sub-Committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Committee or the Sub-Committee at any time.
- d) If the Chair of a Committee, or a Sub-Committee does not call an extraordinary meeting within 7 days of having been requested to do so by two members of the Committee or the Sub-Committee, any two members of the Committee or the Sub-Committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee.

6-7. PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS

- a) A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 5 Councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with Standing Order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a Committee or Sub-Committee.
- b) When a motion moved pursuant to Standing Order 7(a) has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further six months.

8. VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS

- a) Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken.

This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the Chair of the meeting.

9. MOTIONS FOR A MEETING THAT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE TO GIVEN TO THE PROPER OFFICER

- a) A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting for which it is tabled and in any event shall relate to the performance of the

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Council's statutory functions, powers and obligations or an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.

- b) No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least 7 clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.
- c) The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with Standing Order 9(b), correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.
- d) If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with Standing order 9(b) it not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it, so that it can be understood, in writing, to the Proper Officer at least 7 clear days before the meeting.
- e) If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the Chair of forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the Councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.
- f) The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.
- g) Motions received shall be recorded and numbered in the order that they are received.
- h) Motions rejected shall be recorded with an explanation by the Proper Officer of the reason for rejection.

10. MOTIONS AT A MEETING THAT DO NOT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE

- a) The following motions may be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer:

- i. To correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting.

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- ii. To move to a vote.
- iii. To defer consideration of a motion.
- iv. To refer a motion to a particular Committee or Sub-Committee.
- v. To appoint a person to preside a meeting.
- vi. To change the order of business on the agenda.
- vii. To proceed to the next business on the agenda.
- viii. To require a written report.
- ix. To appoint a Committee or Sub-Committee and their members.
- x. To extend the time limits for speaking.
- xi. To exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest.
- xii. To not hear further from a Councillor or a member of the public.
- xiii. To exclude a Councillor or a member of the public for disorderly conduct.
- xiv. To temporarily suspend the meeting.
- xv. To suspend a particular Standing Order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory or legal requirements).
- xvi. To adjourn the meeting.
- xvii. To close the meeting.

11. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION

See also Standing Order 20

- a) The Council shall have in place and keep under review, technical and organisational measures to keep secure information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. Such arrangements shall include deciding who has access to personal data and encryption of personal data.

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- b) The Council shall have in place, and keep under review, policies for the retention and safe destruction of all information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. The Council's retention policy shall confirm the period for which information (including personal data) shall be retained or if this is not possible the criteria used to determine that period (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980).
- c) The agenda, papers that support the agenda and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential information or personal data without legal justification.
- d) Councillors, staff, the Council's contractors and agents shall not disclose confidential information or personal data without legal justification.

12. DRAFT MINUTES

Full Council Meetings
Committee Meetings
Sub-Committee Meetings

- a) If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on Councillors with the agenda to attend the meeting at which they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read.
- b) There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to be correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes shall be moved in accordance with Standing Order 10(a) (i).
- c) The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the Chair of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- d) If the Chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect.

"The Chair of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of the () held on (date) in respect of () were a correct record but his view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings."

- e) Subject to publication of draft minutes in accordance with Standing Order 12(e) and Standing Order 20(a) and following a resolution which confirms the accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, the draft minutes or recordings of the meeting for which approved minutes exist shall be destroyed in line with the Retention Policy.

13. CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS

See also Standing Order 3(u)

- a) All Councillors and non-Councillors with voting rights shall observe the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.
- b) Unless ~~he~~~~he/her/-they~~ ~~has~~~~have~~ been granted a dispensation, a Councillor or non-Councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which ~~he~~~~he/-she~~ ~~they~~ ~~has~~~~have~~ a disclosable pecuniary interest. ~~He~~~~He/she~~ ~~they~~ may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which ~~he~~~~they~~ had the interest.
- c) Unless ~~he~~~~he/she/-they~~ ~~has~~~~have~~ been granted a dispensation, a Councillor or non-Councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which ~~he~~~~he/she/they~~ has another interest if so required by the Council's Code of Conduct. ~~He~~~~He/she/they~~ may return to the meeting after it has ~~consider~~~~considered~~ the matter in which ~~he~~~~he/she/they~~ had the interest.
- d) Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer as soon as possible before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.
- e) A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by a meeting of the Council, or Committee or Sub-Committee for which the dispensation is ~~required~~~~required~~, and that decision is final.
- f) A dispensation request shall confirm:
 - i. The description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates.
 - ii. Whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote.

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- iii. The date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought.
 - iv. An explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- g) Subject to Standing Orders 13(d) and (f) a dispensation request shall be at the beginning of the meeting of the Council, or Committee or Sub-Committee for which the dispensation is required.
- h) A dispensation may be granted in accordance with Standing Order 13(e) if having regard to all relevant circumstances any of the following apply:
- i. Without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the meeting transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business.
 - ii. Granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area.
 - iii. It is otherwise appropriate to grant a ~~dispensation~~dispensation.

14. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

- a) Upon notification by Northumberland County Council that it is dealing with a complaint that a Councillor or non-Councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's Code of Conduct, the Proper Officer shall, subject to Standing Order 11, report this to the Council.
- b) Where the notification in Standing Order 14(a) relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chair of the Council of this fact, and the Chair shall nominate another staff member to assume the duties of the Proper Officer in relation to the complaint until it has been determined and the Council has agreed what action, if any, to take in accordance with Standing Order 14(d).
- c) The Council may:
- i. Provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to investigate the complaint or is a legal requirement.

- ii. Seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter.
- d) Upon notification by Northumberland County Council that a Councillor or non-Councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's Code of Conduct, the Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.

15. PROPER OFFICER

- a) The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the Town Clerk or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the Council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.
- b) The Proper Officer shall:
 - i. At least 7 days, and no later than 3 clear days before a meeting of the Council, a Committee or a Sub-~~Committee~~ Committee:
 - Serve on Councillors by delivery of post at their residence or by email authenticated in such manner as the Proper Officer thinks fit, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda (provided the Councillor has consented to service by email).
 - Provide, in a conspicuous place, public notice of the time, place and agenda (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council convened by Councillors is signed by ~~the Proper Officer~~ the Proper Officer).

See Standing Order 3(b) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a Full Council and Standing Order 39c) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a Committee.
 - ii. Subject to Standing Order 9, include on the agenda all motions in the order received unless a Councillor has given written notice at least 7 days before the meeting confirming his withdrawal of it.
 - iii. Convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Chair of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in ~~his~~ his/her/their office.

- iv. Facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors.
- v. Receive and retain copies of bylaws made by other local authorities.
- vi. Hold acceptance of office forms from Councillors.
- vii. Hold a copy of every Councillor's Register of Interests.
- viii. Assist with responding to requests made under Freedom of Information legislation, in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures.
- ix. Liaise, as appropriate, with the Council's Data Protection Officer.
- x. Receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary.
- xi. Assist in the organisation of, storage of, access to, security of and destruction of information held by the Council in paper and electronic form subject to the requirements of data protection and Freedom of Information legislation and other legitimate requirements (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980).
- xii. Arrange for legal deeds to be executed.
See also Standing order 23
- xiii. Arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with its Financial Regulations.
- xiv. Record every Planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response on major applications to the local planning authority in a record for such purpose.
- xv. Refer a planning application received by the Council to the Chair of the Community Development Committee or in his absence the Vice-Chair or Chair of Planning and Development Sub-Committee) within two working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of Council or otherwise delegated powers would be used.

- xvi. Manage access to information about the Council via the publication scheme.
- xvii. Retain custody of the seal of the Council (if there is one) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.

See also Standing Order 23

16. RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

- a) The Council shall appoint appropriate staff member(s) to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Officer is absent.

17. ACCOUNTS AND ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

- a) ~~a)~~ "Proper practices" in Standing Orders refer to the most recent version of "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners' Guide."
- b) All payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and Paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the Council's Financial Regulations.
- c) The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each Councillor on an agreed minimum basis in line with the meetings of the Governance Committee, the appropriate financial information necessary.
 - i. The Council's aggregate receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for the year to date.
 - ii. The updated balances held at the end of the period being reported, including a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends.

Each Committee also receives their appropriate financial information.

- d) As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:
 - i. Each Councillor with a statement summarising the Council's receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for the year to date for information.

- ii. To the Council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 2 of the annual governance and accountability return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- e) The year-end accounting statement shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and apply the form of accounts determined by the Council (receipts and payments, or income and expenditure) for the year 31 March. A completed draft annual governance and accountability return shall be presented to the Governance Committee and all Councillors at least 14 days prior to anticipated approval by the Council. The annual governance and accountability return of the Council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to the Council for consideration and formal approval before 30 June.

18. FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND PROCUREMENT

- a) The Council shall consider and approve Financial Regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:
 - i. The keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls.
 - ii. The assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council.
 - iii. The work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually.
 - iv. The inspection and copying by Councillors and local electors of the Council's accounts and/or orders of payments.
 - v. Whether contracts with an estimated value below ~~£50,000~~ **£30,000** due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.
- b) Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually for fitness of purpose.

~~e)~~ A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £30,000 but less than the relevant thresholds referred to in standing order 18(f) is subject to the "light touch" arrangements under Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 unless it

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proposes to use an existing list of approved suppliers (framework agreement).

~~A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £25,000 but less than the relevant thresholds in Standing Order 18(f) is subject to Regulation 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which include a requirement on the Council to advertise the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder website regardless of what other means it uses to advertise the opportunity unless it proposes to use an existing list of approved suppliers (framework agreement).~~

e)c) Subject to additional requirements in the financial regulations of the Council, the tender process for contracts for the supply of goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall include, as a minimum, the following steps:

- i. A specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall be drawn up.
- ii. An invitation to tender shall be drawn up to confirm (i) the Council's specifications (ii) the time, date and address for the submission of tenders (iii) the date of the Council's written response to the tender and (iv) the prohibition on prospective contractors contacting Councillors or staff to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process.
- iii. The invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper and in any other manner that is appropriate.
- iv. Tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer.
- v. Tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least 4 Councillors after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed.
- vi. Where (v) referred to previously is not feasible e.g. because of restrictions and guidelines in place because of Covid, or some similar situation, that Tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of 1 Councillor, as well as an Officer recording the details submitted. This will take place after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed and that this process will be shown via Zoom, or equivalent, to the required number of Councillors as given in 19c (v). Should further Government guidelines not allow this option, 18c (vii),

then as the safety of Members and staff is paramount other suitable alternative arrangements will be introduced.

e)d) Neither the Council, nor a Committee or a Sub-Committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.

~~f)e) f) Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time, the Council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016 apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the Council must comply with procurement rules. NALC's procurement guidance contains further details. A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £181,302 for a public service or supply contract or in excess of £4,551,413 for a public works contract (or other thresholds determined by the European Commission every two years and published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)) shall comply with the relevant procurement procedures and other requirements in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which include advertising the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder website and in OJEU.~~

~~g) A public contract in connection with the supply of gas, heat, electricity, drinking water, transport services, or postal services to the public; or the provision of a port or airport; or the exploration for or extraction of gas, oil or solid fuel with an estimated value in excess of £363,424 for a supply, services or design contract; or in excess of £4,551,413 for a works contract; or £820,370 for a social and other specific services contract (or other thresholds determined by the European Commission every two years and published in OJEU) shall comply with the relevant procurement procedures and other requirements in the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016.~~

19. HANDLING STAFF MATTERS

a) A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of the Governance Committee is subject to Standing Order 11.

b) Alongside the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Town Clerk shall notify the Chair of the Governance Committee, or, if he is not available, the Vice-Chair, of any potential ~~long-term~~long-term absence occasioned by illness or other reason and that person

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shall also report such absence to the Governance Committee at its next meeting.

- c) The Chair of the Governance Committee or in ~~his~~-his/her/their absence, the Vice-Chair shall conduct a review of the performance and annual Appraisal of the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk. The reviews and Appraisals of remaining staff shall be carried out by the Town Clerk.
- d) Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Council's Town Clerk shall contact the Chair of the Governance Committee, or in his absence, the Vice-Chair in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Complaints and Grievance Sub-Committee.
- e) Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by a member of staff relates to the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Governance Committee this shall be communicated to another member of the Governance Committee which shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Governance Committee.
- f) Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat as confidential the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters.
- g) In accordance with Standing Order 11(a), persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in Standing Order 19(f).

20. RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

See also Standing Order 21.

- a) In accordance with Freedom of Information legislation, the Council shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme and respond to requests for information held by the Council. The Council shall publish information in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015.

21. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION

(Below is an exhaustive list)

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See also Standing Order 11

- a) The Council appoint a Data Protection Officer.
- b) The Council shall have policies and procedures in place to respond to an individual exercising statutory rights concerning ~~his~~ his/her/their personal data.
- c) The Council shall have a written policy in place for responding to and managing a personal data breach.
- d) The Council shall keep a record of all personal data breaches comprising the facts relating to the personal data breach, its effect and the remedial action taken.
- e) The Council shall ensure that information communicated in its privacy notice(s) is in an easily accessible and available form and kept up to date.
- ~~f)~~ The Council shall maintain a written record of its processing aActivities.

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22. RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS/MEDIA

- a) Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its Councillors or staff shall be handled by the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Mayor and appropriate Chairs.

23. EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS

See also Standing Orders 15(b) (xii) and (xvii)

- a) A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.
- b) Subject to Standing Order 23(a), any two Councillors may sign (normally the Mayor and Chairperson of the appropriate Committee), on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.

24. COMMUNICATION WITH NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

- a) Where necessary an invitation to attend a meeting of the Council, in agreement with the Chair of the appropriate Committee, shall be

sent, together with the agenda, to the ward Councillor(s) representing the County Council where a relevant situation exists.

25. RESTRICTIONS ON COUNCILLOR ACTIVITIES

a) Unless duly authorised no Councillor shall:

i. Inspect any land and/or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect.

~~ii. Issue orders, instructions or directions-~~

~~ii.~~

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26. STANDING ORDERS GENERALLY

a) ~~All or part of a Standing Order, except on that incorporates mandatory, statutory or legal requirements, may be suspended by resolution in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda for a meeting.~~

b) All or part of a Standing Order, except one that incorporates mandatory, statutory or legal requirements, may be suspended by resolution in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda for a meeting.

c) A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the Council's Standing Orders, except one that incorporates mandatory, statutory or legal requirements, shall be proposed by a special Motion, the written notice by at least 2 Councillors to be given to the Proper Officer with Standing Order 9.

d) The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's Standing Orders to a Councillor as soon as possible.

e) The decision of the Chair of a meeting as to the application of Standing Orders at the meeting shall be final.