

## **RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES:** of the Monthly Meeting held on 24 March 2025

**PRESENT:** Councillors A Cooper (In the Chair), J Ceiriog-Hughes, Mrs A Cooper, G Lee, Ms L Lloyd, Mrs S Partridge, Ms M Revell, D Rogers, Mrs C Stevens and P Warren

**In attendance:** Mrs C Ward (Clerk of the Council) and Ms R Costan (Deputy Clerk of the Council)

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### **62/25      CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING**

In the absence of Councillor Bennett, Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Cooper, Chaired the Meeting.

### **63/25      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Allen (Holiday), Bennett (Personal), Mrs Broomfield (Holiday), Broomfield (Holiday), Mrs Gregory (previously approved Leave of Absence) and Grevett (Holiday). These apologies were accepted by the Council.

### **64/25      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Rogers declared a personal interest in Minute 72/25 (Minute 27/25 of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting - 24 March 2025 refers). He remained in the Meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor Mrs Partridge declared a personal interest in Minute 74/25 (Minute 6/25(b) of the Leisure and Amenities Committee Meeting - 3 March 2025 refers). She remained in the Meeting during consideration of this item but took no part in the discussion and vote thereon.

Councillor Mrs Cooper declared a personal interest in Minute 92/25. She remained in the Meeting during consideration of this item and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

### **65/25      MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting held on 24 February 2025 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **66/25      SUSSEX POLICE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Sergeant West and PCSO Raju.

#### **(a)      Matters Arising**

The Clerk referred to Minute 40/25(a) and said that apart from some anti-social behaviour incidents on the Woodlands Recreation Ground on the Youth Club Session evenings and minor vandalism to a gate and side fencing panel on the boundary of The Woodlands Centre, she had nothing of any significance to report.

Councillor Lee reported that the January crime figures were now available on the Sussex Police Website, and PCSO Raju had advised him that, so far in the current month, there had again been somewhere in the region of 70 crimes. Councillor Lee then referred particularly to the fact that there had been 20 hoax calls, with no burglaries reported so far in March.

He then referred to the recent Arun District Council Briefing on Illegal Encampments by Travellers and said that he was of the opinion that the procedures laid down by Government were somewhat fluid.

The Council NOTED this information and the Chairman thanked Councillor Lee for his Report.

The Vice-Chairman then reported that there was a small group of Travellers forming an illegal encampment on land at the Goring Gap. He said that he understood that this group had been moved on from Shoreham. He said that he understood that the Police had been in attendance earlier in the day. He also advised the Council that the Police and Crime Commissioner had requested a rapid response from the Police this year in respect of any illegal encampments across the County.

The Council NOTED this information.

**(b) Arun All Parishes Meeting - 18 March 2025**

The Clerk advised that she had attended the above Meeting, hosted by Inspector Ross Wickings.

She said that Inspector Wickings had provided an overview of the Police Operation Nationally and Locally as follows:-

**Forcewide**

- Not a lot of change
- MPT Review - Awaiting recommendations due in April - Hoping to have some updates on the vision, way forward, etc., by next Meeting
- Engagement App - Gone Live - Will be able to look at where engagement was and was not being done correctly - This App would be used by Police and was an 'In-facing App'
- Chief Constable had made decision to designate PCSOs with powers to issue Community Protection Warnings shortly - Of great use as could lead to swifter issue of Community Protection Orders and Arrests - Good news

**Divisionally**

- Recently received notification of break-ins to two Fire Stations - Power Tools and Heavy Equipment stolen - Police looking into this - Setting out divisional plan, doing extra patrols etc. - Would urge members of the public to report any incidents of suspicious behaviour in the vicinity of Fire Stations - Both break-ins at On-Call Stations

**Locally**

- Op Sonar in Littlehampton - Still ongoing - Major Operation
- Yapton/Barnham - Recent increase in Anti-Social Behaviour/Shoplifting incidents at Co-op Store
- New Sergeant identified to replace outgoing Sergeant - Local with ties to Bognor Regis
- New PC appointed - Just waiting for them to start in Bognor
- One PC in Littlehampton had now returned to work
- New PCSOs appointed and being tutored - Some to replace leavers and some additional
- Mobile Engagement Unit - Still ongoing - Slight delay in production of Unit - Meeting in April in this connection - Hoping to have more information on how it would work after Meeting.

Council representatives then raised questions/issues including:-

- Grave concern by businesses in Bognor regarding volatile situation and hostile situation being faced on a daily basis mainly due to Street Living/Homeless Individuals - A number of these individuals had been evicted from HMOs in the Town
- Lee Matthews, Arun Anti-Social Behaviour Team, advised that HMOs in Bognor had clients from other Local Authority areas - Once evicted from HMOs they tended not to return to originating areas - Major problem and very difficult situation, as the number of individuals living on the streets was increasing - Any concerns regarding anti-social behaviour etc., needed to be reported

- Littlehampton Town Council Clerk asked for an outline on the staffing position for Littlehampton area at the present time:-  
 1 Vacant Post  
 1 PCSO on Maternity Leave  
 1 PCSO about to go on Maternity Leave  
 3 PC Posts all filled  
 1 Sergeant (Temporary Sergeant Georgia Hudson)
- Traveller Briefing held by Arun District Council on 3 March 2025 for District Councillors - Slides to be sent out to all Parish and Town Councils - not for public dissemination
- Dax O'Connor - Arun District Council - District Council would be launching a Survey of 10-18 year olds on 'Personal Safety' on 31 March 2025 - Would be grateful if Parish and Town Councils could advertise and encourage young people to respond to the Survey.

The Council NOTED this information.

## 67/25 DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ms Edwards and Gunner.

Councillors Mrs Cooper, in her capacity as a District Councillor, then reported on Arun District Council matters as follows:-

- *Planning Policy Committee - Local Plan delayed till 2028*
- *Full Council Budget Meeting:-*
  - *Local Councillors tabled an amendment aiming to use unallocated contingency to allocate £75K to a Hardship Fund to assist those struggling with the new de-pooled community charges*  
  
*This was voted down*
  - *The next amendment was to double the existing year's revenue amount for flooding and coastal erosion to £35K, with a second part to the amendment to set up a fund of £100K to help struggling businesses in the area in light of the new burdens which will be faced as a result of increased business rates and NI increases - To be financed by the unused government NI grant of £98K and the balance from unallocated contingencies*  
  
*This was also voted down*
  - *The prepared budget raising Council Tax to 2.99% was then passed by the administration*
- *Housing and Wellbeing Committee - Report brought forward to set up a hardship fund of £50K for tenants affected by the de-pooled community charges. This was increased to £75K by an amendment*
- *Operationally, repairs and complaints had had a dip in performance, and the Committee received reassurance that measures were now in place to monitor and improve performance going forward*
- *Housing and Wellbeing Strategy now produced - Awaiting action plan which will be reported back to Committee*

- *She reported that concerns were raised by Councillor Gunner at the Safer Arun Partnership Meeting, that the ability to scrutinise the Police was not due on the Agenda until March 2026, which was not acceptable. The Housing and Wellbeing Manager took this away to look at bringing this forward and would report back to next Meeting with an update.*

## **68/25      COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Councillor Mrs Cooper reported on County Council issues as follows:-

- *Recent Full Council passed two Motions as follows:-*
  - *That the relevant Cabinet Member, along with the Leader of the Council, should lobby Government to request that the care sector, charities and hospices had exemption from the National Insurance increases*
  - *That the Leader and relevant Cabinet Member should write to the Secretary of State for Education expressing support for the Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Cass Review in full and asking the Secretary of State to advise the timeline through which the delayed guidance for Schools supporting gender questioning children would be tabled in 2025. Also, to ask the Leader to carry out a review of WSCC policies and practices to ensure they aligned with both the principles of the Cass Review and guidance when published.*

The Council NOTED the above information and the Vice-Chairman thanked Councillor Mrs Cooper for her Report.

## **69/25      CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk said that she had nothing to report at the present time.

## **70/25      CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Clerk reported on the Chairman's official representation and attendance at Meetings, Events and Functions since the last Monthly Meeting as follows:-

- Stepping Stones Group Meeting - Guest Speaker - 20 March 2025

The Council NOTED this information.

## **71/25      PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Council NOTED the Report of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 24 February 2025.

*(Prior to consideration of the following item Councillor Rogers had declared a personal interest, in his capacity as a Trustee of Littlehampton District Lions Club - Minute 27/25 refers)*

## **72/25      FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The Council received the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 24 March 2025. (Verbal Report from the Chairman of the Committee).

The Council RESOLVED that the Recommendations contained in the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 24 March 2025 be APPROVED.



## **73/25      ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE**

The Council received the Report of the Allotments Committee Meeting held on 3 March 2025.

The Council RESOLVED that the Report of the Allotments Committee Meeting held on 3 March 2025 be APPROVED.

*(Prior to consideration of the following item Councillor Mrs Partridge had declared a personal interest, as her son was a major sponsor of the Rustington Football Club - Minute 6/25(b) refers)*

## **74/25      LEISURE AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE**

The Council received the Report of the Leisure and Amenities Committee Meeting held on 3 March 2025.

Councillor Mrs Cooper, in her capacity as Chairman of the Committee, then reported further on Minute 6/25(b).

She said that subsequent to the Meeting, it had been calculated that the Football Club had spent about £1,000.00 on Youth Football Matches during the current Season.

Taking this into account she then asked the Council to consider an amendment to the above Minute in respect of point (c) in the Recommendation, so that it read as follows:-

Rustington Football Club be encouraged to seek alternative grounds for its Youth Football Matches that cannot be accommodated either at the Woodlands Recreation Ground or the Woodland Park Sportsfield, with the Council awarding a grant of £1,000.00 towards the pitch hiring fees at alternative sites for the 2025/2026 Season.

Following a further discussion, the Council APPROVED the above amendment, and also AGREED that consideration should be given to continuing with this grant on an annual basis, once the benefit of the financial support to the Club's Youth Football Section could be assessed, towards the end of the 2025/2026 Season, and that this should also form part of the aforementioned Recommendation.

The Council RESOLVED that the Report of the Leisure and Amenities Committee Meeting held on 3 March 2025 be APPROVED, subject to the above amendments.

## **75/25      ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Council considered a Report from the Clerk of the Council regarding the Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit Arrangements for the preceding year.

The Council RESOLVED that the Report be APPROVED as the Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit Arrangements for the preceding year. A copy of the Report is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

Councillor Warren said that the personnel involved with the financial operation should be congratulated on their unceasing hard work and efforts in this regard. His sentiments were echoed by the Council.

## **76/25      STANDING ORDERS**

The Clerk advised the Council that further amendments had now been made to its current Standing Orders in accordance with the 2018 Revised National Association of Local Councils' Model Standing Orders.

She said that the amendments were mostly updated versions of specific Standing Orders, which did not adversely affect or alter the previously approved Standing Orders.

Following a brief discussion, the Council RESOLVED that the amended Standing Orders, as presented, be APPROVED and ADOPTED.

A copy of the Standing Orders is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

#### **77/25        FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Clerk referred to Minute 41/22 and said that she had previously circulated a copy of the National Association of Local Councils Financial Regulations (England).

She said that the document had been revamped to incorporate all of the essential procedures and financial regulations that Councils were required to implement to ensure that they managed their finances effectively and transparently. As the amendments had been fairly significant, it had not been possible to amend the Council's current Financial Regulations, and she was hoping that the Council would be happy to, once again, adopt the NALC Financial Regulations for the foreseeable future. She said that these had been amended, where necessary and permissible, to meet the Council's own requirements and to fall in line with the specifics of the existing Financial Regulations.

Following a further discussion, the Council RESOLVED that the National Association of Local Councils Financial Regulations (England), as presented and amended, be ADOPTED.

A copy of these Financial Regulations is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

#### **78/25        2025/2026 BUDGET**

The Council NOTED the receipt of the Council's approved Budget for 2025/2026, copies of which had been previously circulated to all Members.

#### **79/25        INVESTMENT POLICY**

The Council reviewed its Investment Policy as presented, and RESOLVED to take no further action in respect of any amendments to this Policy at the present time. A copy of the Policy is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

#### **80/25        ANNUAL RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Council reviewed the updated Risk Assessment Procedures as presented, and subsequently RESOLVED unanimously to take no action in respect of any further amendments to the procedures. A copy of these procedures is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

#### **81/25        HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY**

The Council reviewed the updated Council's Health and Safety Policy as presented, and RESOLVED to take no action in respect of any further amendments to this Policy at the present time. A copy of the Policy is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

#### **82/25        FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME 2009**

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The Council reviewed the Council's updated Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Model Publication Scheme as presented, and RESOLVED to take no further action in respect of any other amendments at the present time. A copy of the Model Publication Scheme is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

## **83/25      COUNCIL POLICIES**

The Clerk said that she had previously circulated the following draft Policies for the Council to adopt:-

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Grievance Policy

Following a brief discussion, the Council RESOLVED to adopt the aforementioned Policies as presented. A copy of each Policy is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

## **84/25      ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PARISH MEETING - 10 APRIL 2025**

The Clerk referred to Minute 48/25 and said that West Sussex Divisional Commander, Chief Superintendent, Stu Hale, had accepted the Council's Invitation to attend the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting as the Guest Speaker.

She said that he would be making a brief Presentation on Policing Nationally, and across Sussex, together with the current work of the Arun Neighbourhood Policing Team. She said that she was due to speak with Chief Superintendent Hale prior to the Meeting on 31 March 2025, and asked Members to submit any issues that they might like him to address by 28 March 2025, and she would advise him accordingly.

The Council was pleased to NOTE this information.

## **85/25      THE WOODLANDS CENTRE - PROPOSED MAJOR REDESIGN AND REFURBISHMENT PROJECT**

The Clerk referred to Minute 49/25 and said that the Council's Architects, Studio Scott Taylor, had now received the Revised Cost Plan for Phase One of the Project from Baqus, the Quantity Surveyors and, would now be meeting with the Working Party to run through the document on 27 March 2025.

She said that she hoped to be able to present a Report from the Working Party with its recommendations and details of the Revised Cost Plan for the Council's final approval to move forward with the Project at the next Monthly Meeting.

## **86/25      80TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY - 8 MAY 2025**

The Clerk referred to Minute 50/25 and said that arrangements were underway for the Concert on 10 May 2025, and the start time for the Public Talk at the Museum had been confirmed for 2.00 pm on 7 May 2025, with the Heritage Association's Village Walk taking place on 9 May 2025.

She said that she had nothing further to report as far as the Blind Veterans Beacon Lighting Event was concerned at the present time.

She then referred to the reading of the Proclamation and advised that this was being read by Town Cryers across the Country, but instead of the Chairman delivering it as was the case for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman would be laying a wreath at the War Memorial at 9.00 am on 8 May 2025, when the flag was being raised, and not at 9.00 pm as had previously been advised.

The Council NOTED this information.

## **87/25      RUSTINGTON IN-BLOOM COMMITTEE**

The Clerk referred to Minute 299/24 and said that the recently enhanced Committee had met on 17 March 2025, with Councillors Mrs Allen, Bennett, Mrs Broomfield, Lee, Mrs Partridge and Mrs Stevens in attendance, and had agreed the following:-

- The Committee should be renamed 'Growing Rustington' - A Vision for the Future
- The Officers appointed be:-
 

|                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Chairman                     | Councillor Gary Lee           |
| Secretary                    | Mike Warrington               |
| Treasurer                    | Mrs Rose Probert              |
| Communications/Media Officer | Councillor Mrs Claire Stevens |
- The Constitution and Vision should be revised and agreed at the next Meeting
- A Table should be booked at the Annual Street Fayre on 12 July 2025 to raise public awareness of the newly formed/relaunched Group and its Vision, as well as encouraging more individuals to join
- The date of the next Meeting to be Wednesday 30 April 2025 at 6.30 pm.

The Council was pleased to NOTE this information.

## **88/25      FARMER'S MARKET IN RUSTINGTON**

The Clerk reported that she had previously circulated an email proposal received from the Cat Burglar Dough Co. in Littlehampton for a Farmers' Market to be held on the first Sunday of each month from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm, made up of independent food, produce and craft producers from a ten mile radius of Rustington. She said that the proposed location would be Churchill Parade, (west end of parking area in front of shops to be closed to vehicles from Iceland to Harriets, temporarily closing 17 car parking spaces and two disabled spaces but would allow a spacious and safe area to hold the market whilst minimizing the impact on the Shops). Sunday had been chosen to minimize impact on local businesses as many were closed on Sundays.

She said that the Cat Burglar Dough Co. were planning to run the Market in conjunction with The Great Little Farmer's Market CIC.

She then advised the Council that the Deputy Clerk had visited the Market referred to in the email correspondence in Billingshurst.

The Deputy Clerk said that she had met with the Market Manager who had appeared very keen to potentially bring the Artisan Market to Rustington. She explained that the Market featured a wide range of stalls comprising of local crafts, foods and goods and that on the day of the visit there had been 21 artisan businesses showcasing and selling their products. She added that the Market Manager had confirmed that she would not include stalls within the Rustington Market, should it be progressed, that would potentially conflict with those businesses in the Village who operated on Sundays e.g. a coffee stall.

The Clerk concluded by reporting that she had contacted Store Property, as the major Freeholder of the businesses in Rustington, who had advised that as they did not own the land, they could not really comment, but hoped that it would be welcomed by all, and if they had any feedback going forward, they would advise the Council accordingly.

Following a further discussion, the Council RESOLVED to support the aforementioned proposal for a Farmers Market to be held on the first Sunday of each month from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm, along the western stretch of Churchill Parade, made up of independent food, produce and craft producers from a ten mile radius of Rustington. It was further AGREED that the Organisers should be asked if the Council could forward any feedback it felt was necessary to be shared and discussed with them going forward.

**89/25      OFFICE OF ALISON GRIFFITHS MP**

The Clerk referred to Minute 19/25 and said that she had previously circulated an email received from Ben Sewell, together with a Summary Notes and Actions from the Meeting held with Mrs Griffiths on 28 February 2025.

The Council NOTED this information.

**90/25      ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL - ONEPLANET TOOL FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS IN ARUN**

The Chairman referred to Minute 52/25 and said that the Clerk had previously circulated a further email received from Jonathan Letendrie, Project Support Officer, Climate Change, in this regard.

The Council NOTED this information.

**91/25      ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL - DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION**

The Clerk referred to Minute 53/25 and reported that she had previously circulated an email received from Dawn Hudd, Chief Executive of Arun District Council in this regard.

The Council NOTED this information.

She said that she had also previously circulated the Council's draft response to the Sussex and Brighton Devolution Consultation.

Following a brief discussion, the Council RESOLVED that the Council's draft response, as presented, should be APPROVED for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

*(Prior to consideration of the following item, Councillor Mrs Cooper had declared a personal interest as a Member of the County Council's Appeals Panel)*

**92/25      WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL - DRAFT POST-16 AND POST-19 TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT 2025-2026 ACADEMIC YEAR**

The Council considered an email received from the Children Young People and Learning Coordinator, once again requesting views about the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement.

The Clerk reported that in addition, the Consultation into the proposed introduction of a travel assistance policy for Post-19 year-olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan aimed to recognise SEND Post-19 learners as adults in education and identify necessary transport needs in line with Department for Education Guidance.

She said that the aim of this Consultation was to:-

- Check that the Draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement and Draft Travel assistance policy for Post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan related information was complete, clear and accurate
- Seek the views of young adults, parents and other interested parties on the proposed Travel assistance policy for Post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

The Clerk said that the Consultation period was up to 25 April 2025.

Following a brief discussion, the Council RESOLVED that no further action should be taken in respect of the aforementioned Consultation.

**93/25**

**WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL - ADVANCE NOTICE - HAVE YOUR SAY ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN WEST SUSSEX**

The Clerk said that she had previously circulated an email received from the Chair of the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and the Director of Public Health in this regard.

She said that the email was giving advance notice of a public Consultation about the proposed five-year West Sussex Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030, which was running from 24 March to 27 April 2025. The proposed Strategy set out the main plan to improve people's health and wellbeing.

She said that as soon as the Consultation Document was received, she would forward it on to all Members for consideration.

Councillor Mrs Cooper, in her capacity as a West Sussex County Councillor, implored all Members to respond to this most important Consultation, which seemed to have missed the demographics of the Arun District/South Coast.

Following a brief discussion, the Council AGREED that all Members should respond to this Consultation on an individual basis, but that no further action should be taken by the Council as a whole in this regard.

**94/25**

**COUNCILLORS' SURGERY - 8 MARCH 2025 AND FUTURE SURGERIES**

Councillor Rogers reported on his attendance at the Councillors' Surgery on 8 March 2025, along with Councillors Mrs Cooper (County, District and Parish), Ms Revell and Arun District Councillor Gunner.

He said that there had been a reasonable number of visitors to the Surgery, with many of the issues raised being similar to those raised at previous Surgeries. He said that he had a couple of issues to raise with the Clerk outside of the Meeting.

The Council NOTED this information.

Councillor Cooper then referred to the possibility of holding mid-week Surgeries in addition to, or alternating with, the Quarterly Saturday Surgeries.

Following a brief discussion, the Council AGREED that Councillor Cooper's suggestion should be included on the Agenda for consideration at the next Meeting.

Councillors Mrs Cooper, Ms Revell and Rogers then requested that the timing of future Surgeries should be changed from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm to 10.00 am to 12.00 noon as, from experience, there were normally no visitors in the last 30 minutes of each Surgery.

The Council NOTED this request and AGREED that in future, the Quarterly Surgeries at the Library should be held from 10.00 am to 12.00 noon.

**95/25**

**RE-LAUNCH OF ARUN DEMENTIA ALLIANCE**

Councillor Ms Lloyd advised the Council that the Arun Dementia Alliance was being re-launched. She said that Angmering Parish Council had expressed its interest in the Organisation, and she would like to forward the information on the Alliance to all Members.

The Council NOTED this information and AGREED that Councillor Ms Lloyd should circulate any information that she had on the Alliance and its work.

The Clerk reminded Members that she had previously circulated notification, via a BBC News Article, of the Santander announcement that it would be closing 95 Branches across the United Kingdom, of which one was the Rustington Branch. She said that, to date, apart from a circular letter addressed to the Samuel Wickens Centre confirming that the Branch would be closing on 5 August 2025, no official notification had been received as had been the case for the four other High Street Banks when they had advised of their Rustington Branch closures.

Following a detailed discussion, the Council RESOLVED that a letter, recording the Council's extreme concern at the announcement of the closure of the last Bank for the residents of Rustington and visitors to the Village, should be sent to Mike Regnier, the Chief Executive Officer of Santander UK, along similar lines to that sent to NatWest when it made its closure announcement in April 2024.

The Council also AGREED that a representation should be made to Cash Access UK to request that consideration be given to opening a Banking Hub in Rustington and, at the same time, to express the Council's extreme concern at the loss of another ATM as a result of the Santander Branch closure, with a further request for additional ATMs to be introduced in the Village, so as to provide members of the public with easy and convenient access to cash withdrawal facilities.

In this regard, Councillor Cooper advised the Council that he had spoken on BBC Radio Sussex following the closure announcement and had referred, particularly, to the adverse effect it would have on small businesses and vulnerable people, who would no longer have any access to 'face to face' banking services locally.

He also advised that Alison Griffiths, MP, had also raised her concerns on behalf of her constituents regarding the closure announcement of both the Rustington and Bognor Regis Branches' and the possibility of Banking Hubs being opened, during Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons. He said that the Prime Minister had responded by saying that he would ask the appropriate Minister to contact her further in this regard.

The Council NOTED this information.

**ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL - WEST SUSSEX LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
REORGANISATION INTERIM SUBMISSION**

The Clerk reminded the Council that she had previously circulated an email received from the Communications Manager, together with associated information, confirming that the West Sussex Councils' Local Government Reorganisation Interim Submission had been sent.

The Council NOTED this information.

A copy of the Submission and the agreed Press Release is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

**DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS CIRCULATED**

The Council NOTED the following Documents and Publications previously circulated for Members' information:-

- (a) Arun District Council - News Release - 13 March 2025, 14 March 2025 and 18 March 2025
- (b) BRTA Newsletter No. 60 - March-April 2025
- (c) British Heart Foundation - Spring into action with The Circuit Newsletter
- (d) CAGNE - March Bulletin
- (e) Carers Support West Sussex - Latest News - 24 February 2025
- (f) Carers Support - Latest News - 24 March 2025
- (g) Chestnut Tree House - Mrs Ward, will you be part of our future?

- (h) Chestnut Tree House - How Zoe found the strength to tell her story
- (i) CPRE - Campaigns Update - March 2025
- (j) East Preston Parish Council News - 27 February 2025, 6 March 2025, 13 March 2025 and 20 March 2025
- (k) Hidden Disabilities Sunflower - Sunflower Members: Upcoming free webinars
- (l) National Association of Local Councils - Chief Executive's Bulletin - 27 February 2025, 6 March 2025, 13 March 2025 and 20 March 2025
- (m) RHS Communities - Wild About Gardens is back for 2025
- (n) RHS Communities - Pollinators, peat-free & planting ideas
- (o) St Barnabas House - Mrs Ward, will you be part of our future?
- (p) St Barnabas House - Read Nigel's story
- (q) West Sussex County Council - Highways, Transport and Planning - News and Updates - 25 February 2025 and 5 March 2025
- (r) West Sussex County Council - News Release - 24 February 2025, 3 March 2025 x2, 6 March 2025, 11 March 2025 x2, 12 March 2025, 17 March 2025, 18 March 2025 x3, 19 March 2025, 20 March 2025 and 24 March 2025
- (s) West Sussex County Council - Residents's eNewsletter: Food Waste Action Week
- (t) West Sussex County Council - Residents's eNewsletter - Future of local government in Sussex, breast cancer screening, jobs news, and more!

99/25

**DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED**

- (a) CPRE Sussex - Sussex Review - Spring 2025
- (b) St Barnabas House - Life - Spring 2025

**There being no further business the Meeting concluded at 8.45 pm.**

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....

***There were no questions received either preceding, or at, the Meeting for consideration during the Public Question Time, held prior to the commencement of the formal proceedings.***



**RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL - 24 MARCH 2025**

**Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit Arrangements**

1. Members are reminded that an Annual Review of the effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit has to be undertaken as part of the external Audit. Confirmation that such a Review has taken place is required as part of the Annual Report - Annual Governance Statement.
2. The role of the Internal Auditor is to provide an independent and objective opinion on the Council's risk management, control and governance by evaluating their effectiveness.
3. The Council's Internal Auditors have, again, over the past twelve months, carried out the end of year Audit for the financial year 2023/2024, and also the Interim Audit for the current financial year, 2024/2025 (copies attached). A copy of April Skies Accounting Terms of Reference and Audit Plan used for the Internal Audit is also attached for Members' information.
4. The end of year Audit, for the 2024/2025 financial year, will be carried out on 17 June 2025, following the completion of the Council's final accounts. The Internal Auditor's Report in this regard will be placed before the Council for consideration as soon as practicably possible following its receipt.
5. In accordance with the above, I would suggest that the Council, once again, considers the aforementioned Reports to review the effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit procedure over the past twelve months.
6. From these Reports, it is evident that the appointed Internal Auditor provides a most professional service, comprehensively recording and documenting all of the Council's accounting systems and internal controls. Any issues requiring review, improvement or updating, have been highlighted and, wherever possible addressed, with the aim of improving the systems currently in place.
7. The Internal Auditor's findings can also reassure the Council that its financial controls are all in order and continue to be independently monitored on a regular basis.
8. I would, therefore, recommend that the Council, once it has considered the attached documents, approves this Report as its Annual Review of the Internal Audit's effectiveness over the past twelve months.

10 March 2025

Clerk of the Council

Caroline Harris

Rustington Parish Council

27 May 2024

Dear Caroline

### Rustington Parish Council

#### Final Audit Report

The internal audit for the 23-24 financial year is now complete. I am pleased to be able to report that I have signed off the internal audit section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for with one comment:

| Ref | Internal Audit Control Objective        | Reason I have not signed off that the Council is compliant   |
|-----|---|--|
| M   | Arrangements for Inspection of Accounts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Inspection period too long in 22-23</li><li>- Inspection notice same date as meeting where AGAR was approved</li></ul> |

#### **Box 4 on the Annual Governance Statement should also be marked as “NO”**

As stated in the engagement letter, the scope of our work is limited to completing the audit testing and enquiries we deem necessary to complete Section 4 of the Annual Report for Local Councils in England. We do not provide assurance over or accept responsibility for areas of work not included in this scope, unless specifically agreed with the Council during the financial year.

In providing internal audit services we are not conducting a financial statement audit in accordance with standards and guidelines issued by the Audit Practices Board and our procedures are not designed to provide assurance over the reliability and quality of your financial statements and management information – that is the job of external audit.

We are required by the Annual Internal Audit Report included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to review controls in place at the Council against predefined control assertions. These control assertions are set out below, together with the results of my internal audit work for 23-24. Recommendations are set out at Appendix A. I set out a schedule of tests not completed at this audit at Appendix B, these tests are not relevant to this Council.

The audit was carried out in two stages. The interim audit was carried out on 1 November, this concentrated on in year financial transactions and governance controls. The final audit was completed remotely on 24 May and concentrated on the statement of accounts and balance sheet.

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### **A: Books of Account**

#### **Interim Audit**

The Council uses the Sage 50 system for accounting and payroll. I have tested the brought forward balances on Sage at 1.4.23 against the audited prior year annual return and can confirm these have been brought forward correctly. Box 7 on the audited accounts for 22-23 was £485,928. This agrees to the period 0 balance sheet on Sage.

Reconciliations tested were up to date at the time of the audit. The cashbook was also up to date, and referencing on Sage was sufficiently detailed to enable me to locate supporting documentation.

The Council's most recent VAT return was for the three months to the end of June 2023. VAT of £12,213 was reclaimed, this was paid in to the Council's bank account on 11 August 2023. I checked that balances in the return could be agreed to schedules produced from the accounting system. The next VAT claim, for the period of July to September 2023 is being worked on at present and is due to be submitted by mid-November.

The Council is currently working through proposals to carry out refurbishment of the Woodland Centre. I understand that this will require a PWLB loan. I remind the Council to ensure that VAT advice is sought before the project commences, to ensure most efficient VAT accounting arrangements are put in place. The RFO confirmed that this will be followed up with the Parkinson Partnership.

#### **Final Audit**

The accounting statements have been agreed back to year end reports produced from the Sage accounting system – AGAR has been agreed to the P&L report and box 7 agrees to the balance sheet. There is a minor anomaly in the profit and loss report. A line described as "unused nominal codes" appears in the report. I discussed this with the RFO, and confirmed this is transfers between reserves. It has correctly been excluded from the income and expenditure account for 23-24. It is recommended that this line is removed from the profit and loss account and is instead moved to balance sheet reporting.

There is a £1 rounding error in box 1 for 23-24 accounts – this has been reported to the RFO for correction.

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I confirmed that the VAT return for period January to March 24 has been completed and submitted to HMRC. This has a SAGE generated submitted date stamp of 30 April. VAT of £13,886 was reclaimed. VAT reclaimed has been agreed to a schedule of transactions on the Sage VAT report for quarter 4 23-24.

The Council reviewed my interim audit report at the November meeting of F&GP Committee. – minute 90/23. Minutes show proper consideration of points raised.

### **B: Financial Regulations & Payments**

#### **Interim Audit**

Financial Regulations and Standing Orders were reviewed at Governance and Audit Committee in February 2022. The Rustington documents are based on NALC templates. (Minute 40/22 for standing orders, Minute 41/22 for Financial Regulations.). Both documents are now over a year old and should be reviewed in the next 6 months and approved at a Full Council meeting.

The Council has a well ordered process for making payments to suppliers. Invoices are sent into the office, these are collated with purchase orders and goods received notes by the finance team. Invoices are checked by the RFO, then loaded on to Sage and coded to an appropriate nominal ledger code. Twice a month a payment batch report is prepared on Sage. This is sent to the Chairman / Vice Chairman and Clerk for approval to pay. Once the batch is approved, the payments are loaded on to the Council's bank account by the RFO, payments are then approved at bank by a second signatory ( Clerk or councillor) . Payments are reported to Council meetings and this is minuted.

I selected a sample of 10 transactions from the cashbook for the period April to September 2022. I was able to confirm for all transactions that:

- Transactions could be agreed back to invoice
- Clerk and councillor had certified the invoice as ready for payment
- Invoice included in a payment run document, payment set up at bank by RFO and authorised by Clerk or councillor, in line with financial regulation requirements
- VAT accounting correct
- Expenditure appropriate for the Council
- Where appropriate, goods received note in place to confirm goods were delivered to the Council.

I note that the Council has made changes to the payment process. A second signatory ( Clerk or Councillor) authorises payments at bank after they have been set up by the RFO. Additional councillor signatories are also being set up to ensure adequate contingency arrangements are in place in case of absence.

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I remind the Council to follow financial regulations closely when letting contracts for the Woodland Centre Project. This includes advertising all contracts over £25K on the Contract Finder website.

### **Final Audit**

Non pay expenditure per box 6 to the accounts amounted to £ 515,091 up from £500,392 in 22-23 .

The Clerk confirmed that the Council has received the new template financial regulations from NALC. I recommend that the Council redrafts its financial regulations to reflect changes in this template before tender process for works at the Woodland Centre proceed.

I tested 6 further payments from months 8-12 and confirmed the following:

- Payment per cash book agreed to invoice
- Expenditure appropriate for this council
- Invoice signed off by Clerk and 1 councillor on face of invoice
- VAT accounting correct

The RFO confirmed that payments are approved at bank by one of 2 signatories ( Clerk and one councillor) It is recommended that more councillors are set up as bank signatories, and are encouraged to authorise payments periodically, to ensure adequate back up is in place should existing signatories be unavailable.

### **C: Risk Management & Insurance** **Interim Audit**

I will review the risk assessment at my year end audit. I remind the Council to ensure that the risk assessment is discussed at a meeting of Full Council before 31 March and that this review is minuted.

The Council is insured with Hiscox, arranged by Gallaghers on a standard local government policy . I have seen the insurance policy; insurance was in date " continuous cover from 1.10.23 until the policy is cancelled". Fidelity insurance is set at £550,000. Whilst this may appear too low, given the cash and investment holdings at the Council, the Council has obtained guidance from the brokers confirming that this level of insurance is sufficient. This is because much of the Council's cash is held in difficult to access deposit accounts. This has been considered by the Council at the meeting in May 23. The risk was properly considered and the Council resolved not to increase insurance cover. I recommend that this is recorded in the risk register, together with the mitigating controls set out in Council minutes.

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Asset cover appeared consistent with the asset register. 6  
buildings are insured, at an insurance value of £4.1m. Other  
significant areas of insurance coverage include:

- Street Furniture insured at £338K
- Playground Equipment insured at £184K

The Woodland Centre and Youth and Community Building were last revalued in 2019. It may be sensible to consider obtaining a professional valuation of these 2 buildings, as the insurer may significantly reduce payouts if a valuation less than 3 years old is not in place.

The Council has separate cyber insurance with OSR. This was in place at the time of my audit, with renewal due in November 23.

I confirmed that back up of data on the Sage system is taken around twice a week. This is stored in the Y drive on the Council network. The IT provider has confirmed in an email dated 1 November that this drive is included in the Council's data back-up routines, and that the back up has been tested and documented

I confirmed that the most recent internal audit report was properly considered by Councillors at the June meeting of Full Council and an appropriate minute recorded (minute 164/23).

### **Final Audit**

The risk register and risk management strategy was considered at the March meeting of Full Council (minute 71/24). I have reviewed the risk assessment and it appears sufficient for a council of this size. There is evidence of update in year.

## **D. Budget, Precept & Reserves**

### **Interim Audit**

The Council is in the process of preparing the budgets for 24-5. The RFO has shared the budget timetable with me. The draft budgets are being reviewed by committees at present. Precept and budget is due to be approved at Full Council in December. There is a backup meeting at the end of January 2023. All precepting authority deadlines should therefore be met.

I have confirmed that regular budget monitoring reports are issued to all councillors and to Finance and General Purpose Committee. I have reviewed files and confirmed that reports were issued for October, so I am satisfied budget monitoring is occurring regularly. I reviewed the report for the year to 17 October 2023. The report is comprehensive, giving analysis by nominal centre on a departmental basis. I reviewed the budget, there were no material overspends at this point. The RFO now produces a short narrative report to be added to the budget monitoring booklet to set out key messages and explain any significant variances.

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### **Final Audit**

Reserves at 31 March 2024 were £523,846 (22-23 £485,928).

Earmarked reserves amounted to £274,756 at balance sheet date. These are set out below

#### *Included in General Fund Balance:*

|                                      |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Grant Funding (AirS)                 | 2,470.00   |
| Chaucery Memorial                    | 1,810.71   |
| Building Improvement Fund - W.Centre | 18,400.00  |
| CIL Funding                          | 2,975.00   |
| Opportunity Purchases Fund           | 1,494.46   |
| Equipment Renewal Reserve            | 3,097.66   |
| Museum Reserve                       | 2,787.53   |
| Capital Reserve Projects (1)         | 100,000.00 |
| Capital Reserve Projects (2)         | 115,100.30 |
| Section 106 Funding Account          | 26,620.36  |

General reserves at year end were £249K. This represents 32% of precept, which is at the lower point of recommended levels set out in the NALC Practitioners' Guide. ( minimum recommended general reserve balance is 25% of net revenue expenditure). I also note that the Council has very small earmarked reserves for asset maintenance, given the size of the asset base at this Council. The Council should keep a watching brief on the level of the general reserve to ensure it does not reduce below this level, and should ensure that adequate reserves are set aside for maintenance of the extensive asset base .

It is recommended that the Council considers reserves balances in detail at least once a year ( before the precept is set) and that this review is recorded as a separate minute.

The budget and precept for 24-25 were approved at the Full Council meeting on 11 January 2024 – minute **10/24 (a) & (b)**, following recommendations made by the F&GP Committee. A precept of £786,000 was set.

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### **E: Income** **Interim Audit**

The Council obtains income from a number of sources beyond the annual precept. These include:

- Room Hire and Functions - Woodland Centre / Youth Centre / Samuel Wickens Centre
- Sponsored flower beds
- Allotments
- Sports pitches

I confirmed fees and charges for 23-24 had been properly approved at meetings of the Council

- Sports Pitches – Leisure and Amenities November 2022
- Woodlands Centre - Leisure and Amenities November 2022

Invoices for hall bookings are generated from the Hallmaster system. This is a diary based a diary system, which is uploaded periodically into Sage – invoices are produced from this data. I tested a sample of credits recorded on the ledger for the first 6 months of the financial year. I tested

- sage entry to invoice raised
- checked invoice was raised at the correct rate, as approved by Council
- checked invoice to booking period as recorded on Hallmaster
- I also tested a payment from Rustington Social Club to lease records. The lease is currently being updated.

I was able to confirm correct invoicing for all transactions audited.

I reviewed the Council's debtors ledger. At the time of my audit debts outstanding were £3.2K. Debts appear well managed.

The Council has reduced the numbers of payments made by customers by cheque or cash – bank transfer is sought in the majority of cases.

### **Final Audit**

Precept per box 2 to the accounts was £759,000 (22-23 £690,000). This has been agreed to third party documentation provided by external audit.

Income per box 3 to the accounts was £188,424 (22-23 £184,744).

I reviewed a four further income credits from the final four months of the financial year, amounting to £33K.



For transactions selected I was able to agree income back to invoice, and from there to appropriate supporting documentation

- Remittance notice from district council
- Minute of council regarding contribution from company towards information centre
- Confirmation from insurance company of claim settlement

### **F. Petty Cash**

Petty cash is held at the office, museum and information centre. Books and receipts are brought into the office every month. Year end balance was £107. There is evidence of a year end count on the petty cash books,

### **G. Payroll**

#### **Final Audits**

Staff costs per box 4 to the accounts were £394,414 (22-23 £365,644).

Payroll is processed in house using the Sage payroll application. The Assistant Clerk/Bookkeeper sets up the payroll each month for members of staff, and posts changes such as approved overtime to the payroll. Payroll is then run by RFO and reviewed by the Clerk. Once this has been approved, payments are set up on the bank account. Payroll is reviewed by councillor signatories who sign off the payroll and approve the bank payments.

I tested pay for 3 members of staff from the February 2024 payroll. I was able to agree cashbook to approved payroll, and from there I agreed gross pay to appropriate JNC payscales.

At the final audit I checked that box 4 to the accounts only includes transactions relating to the employment of staff – salaries / payroll taxes and pensions.

### **H. Assets and Investments**

#### **Final Audit**

Fixed assets per box 9 to the accounts were £ 3,086,790 - revised (22-23 £3,092,101).

The initial draft of the asset register was not correct and could not be agreed to the balance recorded in the AGAR. The RFO rechecked the asset register and a revised schedule was produced.

I have agreed the balance in the accounts back to the revised asset register. The asset register appears complete and to record assets at cost or proxy cost, as required by regulations, with sufficient detail to locate all assets listed.

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The RFO supplied a schedule of movements on the fixed asset register to explain the year on year movement. Additions have been added to the asset register at cost and a schedule of deleted items has been provided.

It is recommended that the asset register is validated in 24-5 to check that all assets listed are still in place and usable. Councillors may wish to assist in this process.

### **I: Bank Reconciliations**

#### **Interim Audit**

Reconciliations for all bank accounts are carried out regularly and in accordance with regulations. This is clearly evidenced in the Council's bank reconciliation file. The July 2023 bank reconciliation was tested in detail. I confirmed the following.

- The face of the bank statements had been signed off by the reviewing councillor, Councillor Warren
- All balances on the bank reconciliation were agreed back to bank statements / cashbooks
- Arithmetic checked for accuracy
- I confirmed that the bank reconciliations are reported to councillors in the monthly accounts for payment report.

The September bank reconciliation was being prepared at the time of my audit, ready for review by Councillor Warren.

The Council has an investment policy in place, as required for any council with cash and investment assets in excess of £100K. This has not been reviewed since 2020. The Policy should be reviewed annually, as set out in section 4 of the Investment Policy.

At the end of October 2023, the Council held £275K in a deposit bank account, which paid an interest rate of 1.35%. Consideration should be given to moving monies to accounts paying a better rate of interest, for example the Council holds a 35 day account paying 3%. Other options may be available in the market place.

Given changing rates of returns on bank and deposit accounts at present, it is recommended that the Council reviews its investment policy and deposit accounts annually to ensure that rates of return are maximised.

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### **Final Audit**

Borrowings per box 10 to the accounts were £nil (21-22 £ nil)

Cash per box 8 to the accounts was £587,440 (22-23 £548,731)

I reperformed the year end bank reconciliation. I agreed all balances in the bank reconciliation back to the accounting system reports and to bank statements. The year end bank reconciliation was found to be accurate and evidence of review on both the reconciliation and the bank statements was provided by a councillor.

I have two comments:

- The Councillor only viewed sage accounting balances on 2 accounts when reviewing year end bank balances. It is a requirement of financial regulations that the bank balance should be checked against the accounting system when the bank reconciliation is checked. The relevant sage report should be produced as part of the bank reconciliation, and this should be signed off alongside the bank statements
- The Council has too many bank accounts. Bank accounts should be reviewed, and monies transferred to better performing deposit accounts – earmarked reserves should then be used to keep monies set aside for specific purposes.

### **J. Year-end accounts**

Rustington PC has produced accounts on an accruals basis, this is required as income / expenditure is above £200k. A reconciliation between Box 7-8 of the accounts has been prepared, for external audit review, and creditor and debtor listings support this reconciliation. There is also a variance analysis in place for review by external audit.

### **L: Exercise of Public Rights - Inspection of Accounts**

External audit raised the following points in the 22-23 audit certificate

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## 2 External auditor report 2022/23

Except for the matters reported below on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with the Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The inspection period for the exercise of electors' rights was set for 31 working days which is more than the mandatory 30 working days as set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Paragraph 14(1). Although this is considered to be a minor technical breach, given more than the standard amount of time was provided for, in future the Council should ensure it provides the precise public inspection period. We would anticipate the Council taking this into account when it completes Assertion 4 on its 2023/4 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

It was noted on review that the announcement of the Notice of Public Rights was on the same day as the approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. Regulation 12 – 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 set out the order required to be followed when approving, announcing, and publishing the Return and related documents in order to satisfy the Public Rights requirements. The Return must be approved prior to the Notice being published. To be able to demonstrate this, proper practice requires that the Notice is published no sooner than the day following the approval meeting and the Public Rights period commences no sooner than the next working day after that.

The Council should ensure it responds to these points in the 23-24 financial year . I cannot sign off that the Council has met the requirements of this control objective. The Council should also mark box 4 on the Annual Governance Statement as "NO".

**L: : The Authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant transparency code requirements**

### **Final Audit**

Yes, the Council meets the requirement of the Code by publishing information on the Council website, mainly on the Financial Transparency page. I checked that the following information was up to date at the time of the interim audit:

- Payments data – published to end of April 2024
- Grants information - up to date for 23-24

### **N: Publication requirements 22-23 AGAR**

The Council has published the Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the external audit certificate on the Council website. The Conclusion of Audit Certificate was published 26 September 2023 before the statutory deadline of 30 September. The external auditors issued their audit certificate on 30 August. The Council has met its obligations in this area. The Council was informed of the outcome of the audit at the meeting on 25 September 2023 ( minute 232/23).

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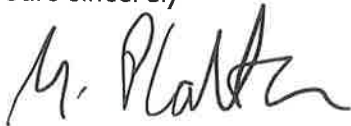
**0. Trusteeship**

The Council disclosed that it was not a sole trustee for a trust fund in the 22-23 AGAR. The RFO confirms this is still the case.

I attach my invoice for your consideration together with the internal audit report from the AGAR. Please note there is a small additional charge to cover the cost of auditing the corrected asset register.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help with the audit. I look forward to working with you again next year, in the meantime please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Yours sincerely



Mike Platten CPFA

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#### Matters Arising Interim Audit

| Matter Arising   | Recommendation  | Council Response |
|--|---|------------------|
| I remind the Council to follow financial regulations closely when letting contracts for the Woodland Centre Project.           | This includes advertising all contracts over £25K on the Contract Finder website.   |                  |
| Woodlands Centre Project.  | I remind the Council to ensure that VAT advice is sought before the project commences, to ensure most efficient VAT accounting arrangements are put in place. The RFO confirmed that this will be followed up with the Parkinson Partnership. |                  |
| Fidelity insurance is set at £550K. The risk was properly considered and the Council resolved not to increase insurance cover. | I recommend that this is recorded in the risk register, together with the mitigating controls set out in Council minutes.   |                  |
| The Woodland Centre and Youth and Community Building were last revalued in 2019.   | It may be sensible to consider obtaining a professional valuation of these 2 buildings, as the insurer may significantly reduce payouts if a valuation less than 3 years old is not in place  |                  |
| At the end of October 2023, the Council held £275K in a deposit bank account, which paid an interest rate of 1.35%.            | Consideration should be given to moving monies to accounts paying a better rate of interest, for example the Council holds a 35 day account paying 3%. Other  |                  |

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|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   | options may be available in the market place  |  |
| The Council has an investment policy in place, as required for any council with cash and investment assets in excess of £100K. This has not been reviewed since 2020. | The Policy should be reviewed annually, as set out in section 4 of the Investment Policy.   |  |
| Exercise of Public Rights - Inspection of Accounts  | . I cannot sign off that the Council has met the requirements of this control objective. The Council should also mark box 4 on the Annual Governance Statement as "NO". |  |

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### Matters Arising Final Audit

| Matter Arising   | Recommendation   | Council Response   |
|--|--|--|
| There is a minor anomaly in the profit and loss report. A line described as "unused nominal codes" appears in the report   | It is recommended that this line is removed from the profit and loss account and is instead moved to balance sheet reporting.  | Accounts package has been updated with this change   |
| The RFO confirmed that payments are approved at bank by one of 2 signatories ( Clerk and one councillor)   | It is recommended that more councillors are set up as bank signatories, and are encouraged to authorise payments periodically, to ensure adequate back up is in place should existing signatories be unavailable.                | In hand  |
| General reserves at year end were £249K. This represents 32% of precept, which is at the lower point of recommended levels set out in the NALC Practitioners' Guide. I also note that the Council has very small earmarked reserves for asset maintenance, given the size of the asset base at this Council. | The Council should keep a watching brief on the level of the general reserve to ensure it does not reduce below this level, and should ensure that adequate reserves are set aside for maintenance of the extensive asset base . | To be considered when the Council's budgets are revised and the precept is set for the new financial year beginning 1 April 2025 |
| Council review of reserve balances   | It is recommended that the Council considers reserves balances in detail at least once a year ( before the precept is set) and that this review is recorded as a separate minute.  | To be considered in September, prior to the Council's budgets being revised  |
| The Councillor only viewed sage accounting balances on 2 accounts when reviewing   | The relevant sage report should be produced as part of the bank reconciliation, and  |  |

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# April Skies

## Accounting

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| year end bank balances. It is a requirement of financial regulations that the bank balance should be checked against the accounting system when the bank reconciliation is checked. | this should be signed off alongside the bank statements  | Accounts package has been updated to reconcile all bank accounts  |
| The Council has too many bank accounts. .   | Bank accounts should be reviewed, and monies transferred to better performing deposit accounts – earmarked reserves should then be used to keep monies set aside for specific purposes | To be reviewed when funds set aside for The Woodlands Centre refurbishments have been depleted.<br>S106 funding must have a separate a/c as per the Deed of Agreement |
| Fixed Asset Register  | It is recommended that the asset register is validated in 24-5 to check that all assets listed are still in place and usable. Councillors may wish to assist in this process.          | Process started in 2023/24 and will continue this financial year.   |

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## APPENDIX B

### Internal Audit Control Objectives – Marked as not covered

| Control Objective | Area for Audit                          | Why this has not been audited                 |
|-------------------|---|---|
| K                 | Exemption from limited assurance review | Council had limited assurance review in 22-23 |
| 0                 | Trusteeship                             | No Trusts                                     |

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Caroline Harris

Rustington Parish Council

20 January 2025

Dear Caroline

**Rustington Parish Council**

**Interim Internal Audit 24-25**

Following the interim audit completed on 20 January, I attach my report for consideration by the Council. This was the first of two audits I intend to carry out to support my opinion on the 24-25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). I covered the following at this visit:

- Review of opening balances and reporting of 23-24 audit opinion
- Follow up previous recommendations
- Testing of expenditure first 9 months of financial year
- Testing of income – first 9 months of financial year
- Risk management and insurance
- Budget monitoring
- Arrangements for inspection of accounts
- Bank reconciliations.

I am pleased to report that overall Council has successfully maintained a satisfactory system of financial control. Recommendations for improvement are set out at Appendix A.

The Council will need to mark box 7 on the Annual Governance Statement for 24-25 as “No”, because of recommendations raised by external audit. Whilst I believe the external audit reporting to be excessive, this must be done to avoid further comment. Details are set out in section N of this report.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all members to support and inform them when they are considering the Authority’s approval of the annual governance statement. I am required by Section 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to review controls in place at the Council against predefined control assertions. These control assertions are set out below, together with the results of testing carried out at the interim audit.

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### **A: Books of Account**

#### **Interim Audit**

The Council uses the Sage 50 system for accounting and payroll. I have tested the brought forward balances on Sage at 1.4.24 against the audited prior year annual return and can confirm these have been brought forward correctly. Box 7 on the audited accounts for 23-24 was £523,846. This agrees to the period 0 balance sheet on Sage at 1.4.24.

Reconciliations tested were up to date at the time of the audit. The cashbook was also up to date, and referencing on Sage was sufficiently detailed to enable me to locate supporting documentation.

The Council's most recent VAT return was for the three months to the end of September 2024. VAT of £8,603 was reclaimed, this was paid in to the Council's bank account on 12 November 2024. I checked that balances in the return could be agreed to schedules produced from the accounting system. VAT outstanding was agreed to the balance sheet at 30.9.24, so I am satisfied that the VAT control account is fairly stated. The next VAT claim, for the period of October to December 2024 is being worked on at present and is due to be submitted by mid-February.

### **B: Financial Regulations & Payments**

#### **Interim Audit**

Financial Regulations and Standing Orders were last reviewed at Governance and Audit Committee in February 2022. The Rustington documents are based on NALC templates. (Minute 40/22 for standing orders, Minute 41/22 for Financial Regulations.). Financial Regulations are now out of date, and do not incorporate changes made to the NALC template in April 2024. The Council has identified inconsistencies between NALC template standing orders and financial regulations, and has contacted the County Association. This should be followed up, and the financial regulations review completed before the end of the financial year.

The Council has a well ordered process for making payments to suppliers. Invoices are sent into the office, these are collated with purchase orders and goods received notes by the finance team. Invoices are checked by the RFO, then loaded on to Sage and coded to an appropriate nominal ledger code. Twice a month a payment batch report is prepared on Sage. This is sent to the Chairman / Vice Chairman and Clerk for approval to pay. Once the batch is approved, the payments are loaded on to the Council's bank account by the RFO, payments are then approved at bank by a second signatory ( Clerk or councillor) . Payments are reported to Council meetings and this is minuted.

I selected a sample of 10 transactions from the cashbook for the period April to December 2024. I was able to confirm for all transactions that:

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- Transactions could be agreed back to invoice
- Clerk and councillor had certified the invoice as ready for payment
- Invoice included in a payment run document, payment set up at bank by RFO and authorised by Clerk or councillor, in line with financial regulation requirements
- VAT accounting correct
- Expenditure appropriate for the Council

I note that additional councillor signatories are have now been set up, four councillors plus Clerk have been set up to ensure adequate contingency arrangements are in place in case of absence. 2 signatories are required to authorise all payments.

The Council is still working on proposals for the Woodland Centre Project. I remind the Council to follow financial regulations closely when letting contracts. This includes advertising all contracts over £25K on the Contract Finder website.

### **C: Risk Management & Insurance**

#### **Interim Audit**

I will review the risk assessment at my year end audit. I remind the Council to ensure that the risk assessment is discussed at a meeting of Full Council before 31 March and that this review is minuted.

The Council is insured with Hiscox, arranged by Gallaghers on a standard local government policy . I have seen the insurance policy; insurance was in date “ continuous cover from 1.10.24 until the policy is cancelled”.

Asset cover appeared consistent with the asset register. 6 buildings are insured, at an insurance value of £5.9 million . Asset coverage is set out below.

| Item description        | Excess | Amount Insured |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Total Buildings         | £250   | £5,883,846     |
| Gates and fences        | £250   | £35,108        |
| Fixed outside equipment | £250   | £56,562        |
| Street furniture        | £250   | £366,998       |
| War memorials           | £250   | £55,620        |
| Playground equipment    | £250   | £190,083       |
| Sports surfaces         | £250   | £27,944        |
| Other surfaces          | £250   | £0             |
| Rent receivable         | £250   | £0             |

Buildings were last revalued for insurance purposes in 2023. This is in date per the terms of the insurance policy.

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The Council has separate cyber insurance with Coalition. This was in place at the time of my audit, with renewal due in November 2025.

I confirmed that back up of data on the Sage system is taken around twice a week. This is stored in the Y drive on the Council network. The IT provider has confirmed in a recent email that this drive is included in the Council's data back-up routines, and that the back up is tested every three months.

I confirmed that the most recent internal audit report was properly considered by Councillors at the June meeting of Full Council and an appropriate minute recorded ( minute 160/24).

### **D. Budget, Precept & Reserves**

#### **Interim Audit**

The Council is the process of finalising the budget and precept for 25-26. Finance Committee approved the budget in December, with Full Council approval due at meeting on 27 January. I will review the formal approval at my year end audit.

I have confirmed that regular budget monitoring reports are issued to all councillors and to Finance Committee. I have reviewed minutes and a monthly report was delivered to the November 24 meeting of the committee. A detailed report is produced from the accounting system, together with a short explanation of any variances within the budget report. I am satisfied budget monitoring is occurring regularly as required by Financial Regulations.

### **E: Income**

#### **Interim Audit**

The Council obtains income from a number of sources beyond the annual precept. These include:

- Room Hire and Functions - Woodland Centre / Youth Centre / Samuel Wickens Centre
- Sponsored flower beds
- Allotments
- Sports pitches

I confirmed fees and charges for 24-25 had been properly approved at meetings of the Council. Invoices for hall bookings are generated from the Hallmaster system. This is a diary based system, which is uploaded periodically into Sage – invoices are produced from this data. I tested a sample of credits recorded on the ledger for the first 9 months of the financial year. I tested

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- sage entry to invoice raised
- checked invoice was raised at the correct rate, as approved by Council
- checked invoice to booking period as recorded on Hallmaster
- I also tested a bank interest payment from CCLA. There was a small difference between the amount credited from CCLA and the value of the credit recorded on the monthly statement – the RFO has contacted CCLA about this.

I reviewed the Council's debtors ledger. At the time of my audit debts outstanding were £77K. The balance was high due to recent invoices raised to Store Property and Arun DC. Debts over 60 days were £2,099, one debt with Rustington Sports and Social is 99% of this balance. This is being followed up by the RFO. The sundry debtors ledger is well managed.

### **F. Petty Cash**

Year end test

### **G. Payroll**

Year end test

### **H. Assets and Investments**

Year end test

### **I: Bank Reconciliations**

#### **Interim Audit**

Reconciliations for all bank accounts are carried out regularly and in accordance with regulations. This is clearly evidenced in the Council's bank reconciliation file and within minutes of the Finance Committee. The December 2024 bank reconciliation was tested in detail. I confirmed the following.

- The bank statements and the bank reconciliation had been signed off as checked by the reviewing councillor, Councillor Warren
- All balances on the bank reconciliation were agreed back to bank statements / cashbooks
- Arithmetic checked for accuracy
- I confirmed that the bank reconciliations are reported to councillors in the monthly accounts for payment report.

The Council has an investment policy in place, as required for any council with cash and investment assets in excess of £100K. This has not been reviewed since 2020. The policy should be reviewed annually, as set out in section 4 of the Investment Policy. This should be actioned before the end of the financial year, and the Council should look to improve returns on cash holdings where possible.

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## J. Year-end accounts

Year end test

## L: Exercise of Public Rights - Inspection of Accounts

Inspection periods for 23-24 AGAR were set as follows

| Inspection - Key date                           | 23-24 Actual        |
|---|---------------------|
| Accounts approved at Full Council               | 20 June             |
| Date Inspection Notice Issued and how published | 25 June – website   |
| Inspection period begins                        | 26 June             |
| Inspection period ends                          | 6 August            |
| Correct length                                  | Yes 30 working days |

All regulatory requirements were met.

**L: The Authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant transparency code requirements**

### Interim Audit

Yes, the Council meets the requirement of the Code by publishing information on the Council website, mainly on the Financial Transparency page. I checked that the following information was up to date at the time of the interim audit:

- Payments data – published to end of December 2024
- CIL Report for 23/24 – published on the website

## N: Publication requirements 23-4 AGAR

The Council has published the Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the external audit certificate on the Council website. The Conclusion of Audit Certificate was published 24 September 2024 before the statutory deadline of 30 September. The external auditors issued their audit certificate on 29 August. The Council has met its obligations in this area. The Council was informed of the outcome of the audit at the meeting on 23 September 2024( minute 226/24).

The external auditors qualified the audit certificate – see below

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# April Skies

## Accounting

Box 11a was not initially completed on Section 2 Accounting Statements when the form was submitted. The form was resubmitted with a 'No' answer to Box 11a which was in line with our expectation. Whilst this was amended with no further concerns, this issue was also raised on the prior year's External Audit Report and hence this issue was not appropriately actioned. The Council therefore should have answered 'No' to Assertion 7 of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return which relates to taking appropriate action on matters reported from internal and external audit.

I consider this to be an excessive response from the external auditor, for a minor omission by the Council. However, given that the omission occurred in 24-25, for completeness the Council should mark assertion 7 as "NO" in 24-25

### 0. Trusteeship

The Council disclosed that it was not a sole trustee for a trust fund in the 23-24 AGAR. The RFO confirms this is still the case.

I attach my invoice for your consideration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help with the audit, and I will be in touch in February to make plans for year end

Yours sincerely



Mike Platten CPFA

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### Appendix A

#### Matters Arising Interim Audit

| Matter Arising   | Recommendation  | Council Response  |
|--|---|---|
| Financial Regulations are now out of date, and do not incorporate changes made to the NALC template in April 2024. The Council has identified inconsistencies between NALC template standing orders and financial regulations, and has contacted the County Association. | This should be followed up, and the Financial Regulations review completed before the end of the financial year.  | NALC have completely rewritten this and it cannot be easily compared to the previously adopted Financial Regulations. It is being reviewed and will be on the Council's March Agenda for consideration. |
| I also tested a bank interest payment from CCLA. There was a small difference between the amount credited from CCLA and the value of the credit recorded on the monthly statement  | The RFO has contacted CCLA about this.  | CCLA were contacted on the day of the Internal Audit and a revised Statement has been received.   |
| The Council has an investment policy in place, as required for any council with cash and investment assets in excess of £100K. This has not been reviewed since 2020.  | The policy should be reviewed annually, as set out in section 4 of the Investment Policy. This should be actioned before the end of the financial year, and the Council should look to improve returns on cash holdings where possible. | This Policy will be on the Council's March Agenda for consideration.  |

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# April Skies Accounting

| Control Objective   | Category of Work   | documents required   |
|---|--|--|
| General   | Minutes  | Please ensure minutes are up to date on website before my audit, I read them in order to gain an understanding of what is happening at the Council   |
|   | Update   | Please let me have a brief outline of any major issues at the Council I should be aware of ( short paragraph by email). I am interested in major projects,PWLB applications, issues around finances etc  |
| A Appropriate books of account have been kept properly throughout the year  | check opening balance sheet  | Opening balance sheet from accounting system or opening cashbook and bank statement ( period 0 balance sheet if you use RBS Omega or Alpha)  |
|   | Proper report of audit reports to members  | Minutes showing internal and external audit reports have been reported to members  |
|   | mid year balance sheet   | Please let me have a copy of balance sheet at most recent month end if you are able to do this   |
|   | VAT  | Most recent vat return and supporting financial reports  |
| B The Council's financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for. | Expenditure testing  | Cashbook for full financial year to date<br><br>I will select a sample of transactions - I will then need to see invoices / payment approval at council meeting / screen print of approval at bank / purchase order  |
|   | Tenders and quotes   | For any expenditure items over £5k - detail of quotes obtained and approval to spend by Council  |
|   | Governance Documents   | Details of meeting at which financial regs and standing orders were last updated   |
|   | Debit Credit Cards   | What are monthly and transaction limits. Have these been approved by Council and do bank limits agree to approved limits. Where are cards stored and who reviews statements and evidences review   |
| C The Council assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these                              | Insurance  | Current insurance policy and details of review of assets to ensure proper insurance level  |
|   | IT back up   | Confirm computer back up has been tested and documented  |
|   | Effectiveness of Internal Control - required by Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regs 2015 | Does the Council carry out a review of the effectiveness of internal control annually? When was this last completed and reviewed at Council? ( Pages 9 and 10 of the Practitioners' Guide are useful here)   |
|   | Risk assessment process  | Risk assessment for 24-25 - I need to check arrangements are in place to get this approved at Full Council before 31 March. I don't actually need to see the risk assessment if it has not been approved yet, but I need to check arrangements are in place for the 24-25 review |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| D The annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate | 23-24 Budget                           | Outline plans for budget and precept setting and key dates for approval of final budgets in Jan / feb  |
|  | Budget v Actuals reporting in year     | Q2 budget report for members plus budget v actual reports from finance system  |
|  |  | Evidence of reserves being considered in budget setting and monitoring   |
| E Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.                   | fees and charges                       | Minutes of council meeting showing approval of fees and charges for 24-25  |
|  | Income transactions                    | Cashbook for year to date - I will select a sample from this for verification  |
|  | Debtor Accounts                        | Details of any debts outstanding at date of audit - debtors ledger or similar supporting documentation for any grants / receipts above £500  |
| F Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.                          |  | Any petty cash - if so details of last count   |
| G Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.            | test staff paid correct rate of pay    | August payroll - I want to see payroll summary for month so I can agree to ledger. I also want to see payslips for all staff. I will want to test gross pay per payslip back to approved rate of pay for the officer ( usually annual pay award letter or part 2 minute of Council meeting) . I will also check staff sampled have a written contract<br>August payroll - agree payments to HMRC and pension bodies back to payroll summary<br><br>Log into HRMC portal and confirm council is up to date with payments to HMRC<br>Confirmation the Council is up to date with RTI submission to HMRC, |
| H Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.  | year end                               | Discuss process for asset register update in course of 24-25   |
| I Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.  | Bank reconciliation                    | Most recent bank reconciliation with evidence of review by Councillors . I want to see reconciliation, bank statements and evidence of review for all bank accounts<br>Does the Council have an investment policy where cash holdings exceed £100K ?<br>When was this last reviewed by Council and how is compliance with the policy monitored   |
| J Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis   | year end                               | Receipts and payments only possible if income / expenditure below £200K  |
| L - compliance with transparency code for Councils under £25K and over £200K   | website                                | Small councils ( under £25K) website reporting of AGAR and inspection rights . Large Councils ( over £200K ) Full Transparency Code compliance.  |
| M Inspection - Council met responsibilities to allow public inspection of the accounts   | Inspection regulations followed        | Please send me the inspection of accounts notice for 23-24 accounts  |
| N - publication 2022 Agar  | website reporting of audited 22-23AGAR | Conclusion of audit and accounts / governance statement and external audit certificate on website  |
| O Trust funds (including charitable) The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.  | check statutory documents completed    | Confirm charity commission submissions up to date . Confirm separate charity accounting and meetings - only if applicable.   |



**MODEL STANDING ORDERS  
2018 (ENGLAND)  
UPDATED APRIL 2022**

**REVISED AND ADOPTED BY  
RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL  
ON  
24 MARCH 2025**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This is version two of Model Standing Orders 2018 (England) updated on April 2022. Update to Model Standing Order 18 only.

### **How to use model standing orders**

Standing orders are the written rules of a local council. Standing orders are essential to regulate the proceedings of a meeting. A council may also use standing orders to confirm or refer to various internal organisational and administrative arrangements. The standing orders of a council are not the same as the policies of a council but standing orders may refer to them.

Local councils operate within a wide statutory framework. NALC model standing orders incorporate and reference many statutory requirements to which councils are subject. It is not possible for the model standing orders to contain or reference all the statutory or legal requirements which apply to local councils. For example, it is not practical for model standing orders to document all obligations under data protection legislation. The statutory requirements to which a council is subject apply whether or not they are incorporated in a council's standing orders.

The model standing orders do not include model financial regulations. Financial regulations are standing orders to regulate and control the financial affairs and accounting procedures of a local council. The financial regulations, as opposed to the standing orders of a council, include most of the requirements relevant to the council's Responsible Financial Officer. Model financial regulations are available to councils in membership of NALC.

### **Drafting notes**

Model standing orders that are in bold type contain legal and statutory requirements. It is recommended that councils adopt them without changing them or their meaning. Model standing orders not in bold are designed to help councils operate effectively but they do not contain statutory requirements so they may be adopted as drafted or amended to suit a council's needs. It is NALC's view that all model standing orders will generally be suitable for councils.

For convenience, the word "councillor" is used in model standing orders and, unless the context suggests otherwise, includes a non-councillor with or without voting rights.

A model standing order that includes brackets like this '( )' requires information to be inserted by a council. A model standing order that includes brackets like this '[ ]' and the term 'OR' provides alternative options for a council to choose from when determining standing orders.

## **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 chairman 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 chairman 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 chairman of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the chairman.
- h A councillor may move an amendment to their own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be 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 chairman 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 chairman of the meeting.
- k One or more amendments may be discussed together if the chairman 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 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 chairman 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 they last spoke;
  - iii. to make a point of order;
  - iv. to give a personal explanation; or
  - 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 they consider has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting they are concerned by.
- q A point of order shall be decided by the chairman of the meeting and their 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; or
  - 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 chairman 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 their 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 three minutes without the consent of the chairman 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 chairman of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- b If person(s) disregard the request of the chairman of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chairman 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 chairman 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 three 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 three 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**
- 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 15 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- g Subject to standing order 3(f), a member of the public shall not speak for more than three minutes.

- 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 chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- i A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort)]. The chairman of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.
- j A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the chairman of the meeting.
- k Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairman 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 permission.**
- 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 Chairman of the Council may in their absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chairman of the Council (if there is one).**
- p **The Chairman of the Council, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chairman is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chairman of the Council (if there is one) if present, shall preside. If both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman 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 with voting rights present and voting.**
- r **The chairman 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 their**

- **casting vote whether or not they gave an original vote.**  
*See standing orders 5(h) and (i) for the different rules that apply in the election of the Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting of the Council.*
- s **Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. 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 their 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. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
  - iv. the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
  - v. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
  - vi. if there was a public participation session; and
  - vii. the resolutions made.
- u **A councillor or a non-councillor 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 their right to participate and vote on that matter.**
- v **No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three.**  
*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 two and a half hours.

#### **4. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

- a Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.**
- b The members of a committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Council.**
- c Unless the Council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.**
- d The Council may appoint standing committees or other committees as may be necessary, and:
  - i. shall determine their terms of reference;
  - ii. shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee up until the date of the next annual meeting of the Council;
  - iii. shall permit a committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;
  - iv. shall, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c), appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee;
  - v. may, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c), appoint and determine the terms of office of the substitute members to a committee whose role is to replace the ordinary members at a meeting of a committee if the ordinary members of the committee confirm to the Proper Officer good time before the meeting that they are unable to attend;
  - vi. shall, after it has appointed the members of a standing committee, appoint the chairman of the standing committee;
  - vii. shall permit a committee other than a standing committee, to appoint its own chairman at the first meeting of the committee;
  - viii. 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 three;
  - ix. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee;
  - x. shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meetings of a sub-committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, required for the meetings of a sub-committee;
  - xi. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and

xii. may dissolve a committee or a sub-committee.

## **5. 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 the 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 6pm.
- d In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three 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 Chairman and Vice-Chairman (if there is one) of the Council.
- f The Chairman of the Council, unless they have resigned or become disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until their successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.
- g The Vice-Chairman of the Council, if there is one, unless they have resigned or become disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chairman of the Council at the next annual meeting of the Council.
- h In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, they shall preside at the annual meeting until a successor Chairman of the Council has been elected. The current Chairman of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman 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 Chairman of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, they shall preside at the annual meeting until a new Chairman of the Council has been elected. They may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of the Council and shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
- j Following the election of the Chairman of the Council and Vice-Chairman (if there is one) of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
  - i. In an election year, delivery by the Chairman 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 Chairman of the Council of their

**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;
- 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 4;
- ix. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
- x. Review of 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 buildings 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 procedure;
- 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.

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

- a The Chairman of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council at any time.
- b If the Chairman of the Council does not call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within seven 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.
- c The chairman 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 chairman of a committee [or a sub-committee] does not call an extraordinary meeting within seven days of having been requested to do so by six members of the committee [or three members of the sub-committee], any six members of the committee [or three members of the sub-committee] may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee [or a sub-committee].

**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 six 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 a 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 chairman of the meeting.

**9. MOTIONS FOR A MEETING THAT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE TO BE 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 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



seven 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) is 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 five 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 chairman of the 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;
  - 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 at 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 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; or
- 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.**
- 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 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 chairman of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- d If the chairman of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, they shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:  
  

“The chairman 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 their view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.”
- e **If the Council’s gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is higher) does not exceed £25,000, it shall publish draft minutes on a website which is publicly accessible and free of charge not later than one month after the meeting has taken place.**
- f Subject to the 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.

### 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 they 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 they has a disclosable pecuniary interest. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which they had the interest.
- c Unless they 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 they has another interest if so required by the Council's code of conduct. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which 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] 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;
  - iii. the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and
  - iv. an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- g Subject to standing orders 13(d) and (f), a dispensation request shall be considered by the Proper Officer before the meeting or, if this is not possible, 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; or**
  - iii. **it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.**

#### **14. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS**

- a Upon notification by the District or Unitary 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 Chairman of Council of this fact, and the Chairman 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 the District or Unitary 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 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 three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee or a sub-committee,**
  - **serve on councillors by delivery or post at their residences 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), and**
  - **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 them).**

*See standing order 3(b) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 3(c) 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 seven days before the meeting confirming their withdrawal of it;
- iii. **convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Chairman of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in their office;**
- iv. **facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors;**
- v. **receive and retain copies of byelaws 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 and rights exercisable under data protection legislation, in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures;
- ix. liaise, as appropriate, with the Council's Data Protection Officer (if there is one);

- 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 to the local planning authority in the Planning Committee Minutes for such purpose;
- xv. refer a planning application received by the Council to the Chairman or in their absence the Vice-Chairman of the Council Planning 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 the Planning Committee;
- xvi. manage access to information about the Council via the publication scheme; and
- 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 "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 a monthly basis a statement to summarise:
  - i. the Council's receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for

each month;

ii. the Council's aggregate receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for the year to date;

iii. the balances held at the end of the month being reported and

which includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends.

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 last quarter and the year to date for information; and

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 statements 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 to 31 March. A completed draft annual governance and accountability return shall be presented to 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; and

v. whether contracts with an estimated value below **£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.

- c. **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 proposes to use an existing list of approved suppliers (framework agreement).**
- d. 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 specification (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 on the Council's own website 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 one councillor after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed;
  - vi. tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
- e. 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. **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.**

## **19. HANDLING STAFF MATTERS**

- a A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee OR the Personnel Sub-Committee is subject to standing order 11.

- b The chairman of Council or in their absence, the vice-chairman shall upon a resolution conduct a review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Clerk of the Council. The reviews and appraisal shall be reported in writing and are subject to approval by resolution by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- c Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Council's most senior member of staff (or other members of staff) shall contact the chairman of the Council or in their absence, the vice-chairman of the Council in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- d Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by the Clerk of the Council relates to the chairman or vice-chairman of the Council, this shall be communicated to the chairman, or in his absence, the vice-chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, which shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- e 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.
- f In accordance with standing order 11(a), persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing order 19(e).

## **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.**
- b **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 not an exclusive list). *See also standing order 11*

- a The Council may appoint a Data Protection Officer.
- b **The Council shall have policies and procedures in place to respond to an individual exercising statutory rights concerning 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 effects 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 activities.**

## **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 in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

## **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, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

## **24. COMMUNICATING WITH DISTRICT AND COUNTY OR UNITARY COUNCILLORS**

- a An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the District and County Council OR Unitary Council representing the area of the Council.
- b Unless the Council determines otherwise, a copy of each letter sent to the District and County Council OR Unitary Council shall be sent to the ward councillor(s) representing the area of the Council.

## **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; or
  - ii. issue orders, instructions or directions.

## **26. STANDING ORDERS GENERALLY**

- a 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.

- b 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 two councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9.
- c The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible.
- d The decision of the chairman of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

# **RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS [ENGLAND]**

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 24 March 2025.

## 1. General

- 1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council. They are one of the Council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.4. In these Financial Regulations:
  - 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified;
  - "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place;
  - "Authorise" refers to a decision by the Council, or a Committee or an Officer, to allow something to happen;
  - 'Proper practices' means those set out in *the Practitioners' Guide*;
  - *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England or Governance and Accountability for Local Councils in Wales - A Practitioners' Guide jointly published by One Voice Wales and the Society of Local Council Clerks in Wales;
  - 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the Council cannot change;
  - 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the Council to its Members and Staff.
- 1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the Council. The RFO:
  - acts under the policy direction of the Council;
  - administers the Council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
  - determines on behalf of the Council its accounting records and control systems;
  - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
  - ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;

- seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of Council resources; and
- produces financial management information as required by the Council.

**1.6. The Council must not delegate any decision regarding:**

- **setting the final budget or the precept (Council Tax Requirement);**
- **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**
- **approving accounting statements;**
- **approving an annual governance statement;**
- **borrowing;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors.**

**1.7. In addition, the Council shall:**

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all Council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or single commitment in excess of £5,000.

**2. Risk Management and Internal Control**

- 2.1. The Council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.**
- 2.2. The Clerk with the Deputy Clerk and RFO shall prepare, for approval by the Council, a risk assessment covering all activities of the Council. This assessment and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.
- 2.3. At least once a year, the Council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.**
- 2.4. **The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:**
- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
  - **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
  - **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
  - **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
  - **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
  - **ensure division of responsibilities.**
- 2.5. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a Member other than the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, shall be



appointed to verify bank reconciliations for all accounts produced by the RFO. The Member shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements, or similar document, as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

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

### **3. Accounts and Audit**

- 3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.2. **The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the Council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonable accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**
- **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the Council and the matters to which they relate;**
  - **a record of the assets and liabilities of the Council.**
- 3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- 3.4. The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the Council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them, with any related documents, to the Council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.5. **The Council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.**
- 3.6. **Any officer or Member of the Council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit** and shall, as directed by the Council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the Council considers necessary.
- 3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by the Council and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.

3.8. The Council shall ensure that the internal auditor:

- is competent and independent of the financial operations of the Council;
- reports to the Council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
- can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
- has no involvement in the management or control of the Council.

3.9. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:

- perform any operational duties for the Council;
- initiate or approve accounting transactions;
- provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
- direct the activities of any Council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.

3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as described in the Practitioners Guide.

3.11. The RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the accounts, including the opportunity to inspect the accounts, books, and vouchers and display or publish any notices and documents required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.12. The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all Councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

#### **4. Budget and Precept**

4.1. **Before setting a precept, the Council must calculate its Council Tax Requirement for each financial year by preparing and approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.**

4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the Council annually for the following financial year.

4.3. No later than January each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all receipts and payments/income and expenditure for the following financial year, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.

4.4. Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be

carried forward by placing them in an earmarked reserve with the formal approval of the full Council.

- 4.5. Each Committee shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the Finance and General Purposes Committee no later than the end of December each year.
- 4.6. The draft budget, with any Committee proposals, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and a recommendation made to the Council.
- 4.7. Having considered the proposed budget, the Council shall determine its Council Tax Requirement by setting a budget. The Council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.
- 4.8. **Any Member with Council Tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.**
- 4.9. The RFO shall **issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February** and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.
- 4.10. The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.
- 4.11. Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by the Council.

## **5. Procurement**

- 5.1. **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.
- 5.2. Every contract shall comply with the Council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.3. **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulations 2024 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.4. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the Council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.11) obtain prices as follows:

- 5.5. For contracts estimated to exceed £30,000 including VAT, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk or RFO shall advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.
- 5.6. **For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the Council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation regarding the publication of invitations and notices.**
- 5.7. For contracts less than £30,000 including VAT the Clerk, Deputy Clerk or RFO shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes.
- 5.8. Where the value is between £5,000 and £9,999 excluding VAT, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk or RFO shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.
- 5.9. For smaller purchases, the Clerk Deputy Clerk or RFO shall seek to achieve value for money.
- 5.10. **Contracts must not be split to avoid compliance with these rules.**
- 5.11. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:
- i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;
  - ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
  - iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;
  - iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.
- 5.12. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the Council. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.
- 5.13. The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- 5.14. Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:
- the Clerk, Deputy Clerk or RFO, under delegated authority, for any items below £1,000 excluding VAT;
  - the Clerk, Deputy Clerk or RFO, in consultation with the Chair of the Council or Chair of the appropriate Committee, for any items between £1,001 and £2,500 excluding VAT;
  - a duly delegated Committee of the Council for all items of expenditure within their delegated budgets for items between £2,501 and £4,999 excluding VAT;

- in respect of grants, a duly authorised Committee within any limits set by Council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the Council;
- the Council for all items over £5,000.

Such authorisation must be supported by a Minute in the case of Council or Committee decisions or other auditable evidence trail.

- 5.15. No individual Member, or informal Group of Members may issue an official order unless instructed to do so in advance by a Resolution of the Council or make any contract on behalf of the Council.
- 5.16. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget for that type of expenditure other than by Resolution of the Council or a duly delegated Committee acting within its Terms of Reference except in an emergency.
- 5.17. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of Council services or to public safety on Council premises, the Clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £10,000 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 5.18. No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.
- 5.19. Wherever possible, an official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £250 excluding VAT unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.
- 5.20. Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the RFO.

## **6. Banking and Payments**

- 6.1. The Council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and authorised by the Council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a Committee. The Council has resolved to bank with National Westminster Bank.
- 6.2. The Council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the Council's bank.
- 6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the

work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the Council before being certified by the RFO. Where the certification of invoices is done as a batch, this shall include a statement by the RFO that all invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO.

- 6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.
- 6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking/cheque, in accordance with a resolution of the Council, unless the Council resolves to use a different payment method.
- 6.6. For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (such as Salaries, PAYE, National Insurance, pension contributions, rent, rates, regular maintenance contracts and similar items), which the Finance and General Purposes Committee may authorise in advance for the year.
- 6.7. A copy of this schedule of regular payments shall be signed by two Members on each and every occasion when payment is made - to reduce the risk of duplicate payments.
- 6.8. A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for information only.
- 6.9. The Clerk, Deputy Clerk and RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments only in the following circumstances:
  - i. any payments of up to £1,000 excluding VAT, within an agreed budget;
  - ii. payments between £1,001 and £2,000 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of Council services or to public safety on Council premises;
  - iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 (or to comply with contractual terms), where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of the Council, where the Clerk and RFO certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee;
  - iv. fund transfers within the Council's banking arrangements up to the sum of £100,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The only exception where a transfer may exceed the sum of £100,000 will be upon receipt of the Precept. All transfers are signed off by the Clerk, Chairman or Vice-Chairman and another Authorised Signatory or in their absence two other Authorised Signatories.

- 6.10. The RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation (retrospective), forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting, together with the relevant invoices, to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Committee shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall (retrospectively) authorise payment by resolution. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the Minutes of that meeting.

## **7. Electronic Payments**

- 7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the Council shall identify a number of Councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. The Clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.
- 7.2. All authorised signatories shall have access to view the Council's bank accounts online.
- 7.3. No employee or Councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the Council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the Council or a duly delegated Committee.
- 7.4. The Service Administrator shall set up all items due for payment online. A list of payments for approval shall be sent by email to two authorised signatories, with an explanation/overview of payments being made.
- 7.5. In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator an authorised signatory shall set up any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.
- 7.6. Evidence shall be retained showing which Members approved the payment online.
- 7.7. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting and appended to the Minutes.
- 7.8. With the approval of the Finance and General Purposes Committee in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are signed/approved online by two authorised Members.
- 7.9. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of the Finance and General Purposes Committee provided that each payment is approved online by one authorised bank signatory, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee at the next Meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the Council as part of the periodic review of the Financial Regulations.
- 7.10. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by the Clerk or the RFO. This is a potential area for fraud

and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers periodically.

- 7.11. Members and Officers shall ensure that any computer used for the Council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.
- 7.12. Remembered password facilities, other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification, should not be used on any computer used for Council banking.

## **8. Cheque Payments**

- 8.1. Cheques or orders for payment over £200 in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two Members.
- 8.2. A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.
- 8.3. To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.
- 8.4. Cheques or orders for payment, over £200 shall not normally be presented for signature other than at, or immediately before or after a Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting. Any signatures obtained away from Council Meetings shall be reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee at the next convenient Meeting.
- 8.5. An Imprest Account shall also be maintained at the bank with a monthly limit of £3,000 and cheques, not exceeding £200 each, shall be signed by the Clerk of the Council, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee or in their absence other Authorised Signatories. These Accounts will be replenished on a monthly basis from the appropriate Current Account.

## **9. Payment Cards**

- 9.1. Any debit card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and the RFO and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by the Council or Finance and General Purposes Committee in writing before any order is placed.
- 9.2. A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the Council or the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to the Council or the Finance and General Purposes Committee and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and/or RFO.
- 9.3. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the Council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, RFO, Senior Members of Personnel and Leisure and Amenities Officer and any balance shall be paid in full each month.



- 9.4. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used except for expenses of up to £250 including VAT.

## **10. Petty Cash**

- 10.1. The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of £250 and may provide petty cash to Officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses.
- a) Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept, along with receipts to substantiate every payment
  - b) Cash income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations
  - c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately on any schedule of payments presented for approval.

## **11. Payment of Salaries and Allowances**

- 11.1. **As an employer, the Council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**
- 11.2. **Councillor allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.**
- 11.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the Council, or a duly delegated Committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the Council.
- 11.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.
- 11.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.
- 11.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook.
- 11.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the Council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full Council.
- 11.8. Before employing interim staff, the Council must consider a full business case.

## **12. Loans and Investments**

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

## **13. Income**

- 13.1. The collection of all sums due to the Council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 13.2. The Council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report by the Clerk or Deputy Clerk. The RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the Council.
- 13.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the Council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The Council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.
- 13.4. All sums received on behalf of the Council shall be deposited intact with the Council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt is entered into an Income Book together with the paying-in slip or other record.
- 13.5. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the Council.

- 13.6. The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the Council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.
- 13.7. Where significant sums of cash are regularly received by the Council, the RFO shall ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation or some form of control record such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken for the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.
- 13.8. 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. Payments Under contracts for Building or Other Construction Works**

- 14.1. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.
- 14.2. Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Council and the Clerk or Deputy Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the Council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

#### **15. Stores and Equipment**

- 15.1. The officer in charge of each section shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment in that section.
- 15.2. Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.
- 15.3. Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.
- 15.4. The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.

#### **16. Assets, Properties and Estates**

- 16.1. The Clerk or Deputy Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the Council.
- 16.2. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the Council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

- 16.3. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.
- 16.4. No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to Council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate where required by law).

No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £1,000. In each case a written report shall be provided to Council with a full business case.

## **17. Insurance**

- 17.1. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the Council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the Council's review of risk management.
- 17.2. The Clerk or Deputy Clerk shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 17.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to the Council at the next available Meeting. The RFO shall negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers in consultation with the Clerk or Deputy Clerk.
- 17.4. All appropriate Members and employees of the Council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined annually by the Council, or duly delegated Committee.

## **18. Charities**

- 18.1. Where the Council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Clerk or Deputy Clerk and RFO shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial reports made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk or Deputy Clerk and RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.

## **19. Suspension and Revision of Financial Regulations**

- 19.1. The Council shall review these Financial Regulations from time to time and following any change of Clerk or RFO. The Clerk or RFO shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the Council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.
- 19.2. The Council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant Meeting of Council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all Members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the Council to act unlawfully.
- 19.3. The Council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

## **Appendix 1 - Tender Process**

- 1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the proper officer shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.
- 2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the proper officer in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the Council.
- 3) Where a postal process is used, 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. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the proper officer in the presence of at least one Member of Council.
- 4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the Council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
- 5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order Number 8 a to f, and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the Council, or duly delegated Committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the Council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.

## **INVESTMENT POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This policy sets out the treasury management procedures for the monitoring of the cash flow and banking arrangements of Rustington Parish Council.
- 1.2 Authority reference is to the Council's Financial Regulations.
- 1.3 The Local Government Act 2003 Section 12 provides the power to invest (a) for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment or (b) for the purpose of the prudent management of its financial affairs. Section 15(1) of the Act requires a local authority to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 1.4 The Council acknowledges its duty of care to the community and the prudent investment of funds.

### **2. OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 The Council's priorities are, in the following ranking order:
  - (i) The security of capital to minimise the risk of losses
  - (ii) The liquidity of investments to meet the cash flow needs of the Council
  - (iii) Maximising income within the framework of the national economic situation.
- 2.2 The Council will aim to achieve a high rate of return on investments commensurate with adequate safeguards of security and liquidity.

### **3. INVESTMENTS**

- 3.1 All investment and deposits will be with UK registered Banks or Building Societies.
- 3.2 All investments, deposits and interest will be in £ sterling.
- 3.3 All investments of money under the control of the Council shall be in the name of Rustington Parish Council.
- 3.4 Investments for current expenditure will be on instant access deposit accounts with a daily feeder to the current account.
- 3.5 Investments not required for current expenditure i.e. the general reserve may be placed on longer term deposits of up to two years.
- 3.6 Investments not required for current expenditure i.e. earmarked reserves may be placed on medium term deposits not exceeding one year.

- 3.7 In order to spread the financial risk to a minimum, investments will be made with a minimum of two financial institutions.
- 3.8 The credit ratings of the institutions will be a minimum of 'A' and these will be monitored regularly.
- 3.9 The management of this Policy will be by the Clerk and Finance Manager (RFO) and reported to each Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting.

#### **4. REVIEW**

- 4.1 This Policy will be reviewed by the Full Council on an annual basis. Any variation to the policy will be submitted to the Council for approval.

*(Adopted March 2020)*  
*(Revised November 2023)*  
*(Reviewed March 2025)*



## RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL RISK ASSESSMENT

*Risk Assessment is a systematic general examination of working conditions, workplace activities and environmental factors that will enable the employer to identify any and all potential risks inherent in the workplace or its practices. Based on a recorded assessment the employer should then take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practicably possible. Making sure that all employees are made aware of the results of the risk assessment.*

*This document has been produced to enable the Parish 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 plan was followed:-*

- 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.

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

| Subject | Risk(s) Identified   | H/M/L | Management/Control of Risk Overview  | Review/Assess/Revise   |
|---------|--|-------|--|--|
| Precept | <p>Adequacy of Precept in order for the Council to carry out its Statutory Duties</p> <p>Requirements not submitted to the District Council</p> <p>Amount not received by the District Council</p> | L     | <p>The Finance and General Purposes Committee reviews the Precept requirement annually and makes recommendations to the Council at the January Meeting. The Council reviews the presented Budget update information, including actual position and projected position to year end and estimated figures for the next financial year. With this information the Council then agrees the amounts set for the specific Budget headings for the following year, the total of which is resolved to be the Precept amount to be requested from Arun District Council (ADC). This figure is submitted by the Clerk in a letter of request to ADC. The Clerk informs the Council when the monies are received (at the end of April and September). The money is recorded in the Monthly Report to Council, detailing all Income and Expenditure.</p> | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Review when necessary.</p> |

|                          |   |   |  |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Financial Records</b> | Inadequate Records<br>Financial Irregularities        | L | The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements. These Regulations are provided by the National Association of Local Councils and were most recently revised and adopted by the Council on 28 February 2022.<br><br>New Financial Regulations to be approved by the Council on 24 March 2025 | Existing procedures adequate. The Finance and General Purposes Committee reviews the Financial Regulations when necessary and make recommendations to Full Council. NALC have updated the Model Financial Regulations and these will be placed before Full Council for consideration on 24 March 2025. |
| <b>Bank and Banking</b>  | Inadequate checks<br>Bank Mistakes<br>Loss<br>Charges | L | The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements for banking, cheques and reconciliation of accounts. The RFO reconciles the bank accounts once a month. The RFO reviews the Council's banking arrangements regularly. Accounts are annually reviewed by internal and external audit.         | Existing procedures adequate. Review the Financial Regulations and bank signatory list when necessary, especially after an Annual Meeting and an Election.<br><br>Monitor the bank statements monthly.   |
| <b>Cash</b>              | Loss through theft or dishonesty                      | L | The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements. Cash received is banked on a regular basis. The Council's Insurance Policy has a Fidelity Guarantee.  | Existing procedures adequate.<br><br>Review the Financial Regulations when necessary.<br><br>Ensure Fidelity Insurance is adequate.  |

|   |   |            |  |   |
|---|---|------------|--|---|
| <b>Reporting and Auditing</b>                           | Information Communication<br><br>Compliance   | L<br><br>M | Monthly reconciliation prepared by RFO. A Budget monitoring statement is prepared monthly by the RFO and presented to Full Council. A full list of payments and receipts are provided at the Finance and General Purposes Meeting and the financial records (including a breakdown of the receipts and payments). The bank balances are presented each month and checked against the bank statement, by a Member of the Committee, on a quarterly basis. Council should regularly audit internally to comply with the Fidelity Guarantee. The Council undertakes an Annual Review of the Effectiveness of its Internal Audit Arrangements. There is a Bi-Annual Internal Audit the outcome of which is reported to Full Council. | Existing communication and auditing procedures adequate.                              |
| <b>Direct Costs<br/>Overhead<br/>Expenses<br/>Debts</b> | Goods not supplied but billed<br><br>Incorrect invoicing<br><br>Cheque payable incorrect<br><br>Unpaid invoices | L          | The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements. The RFO prepares a schedule of payments requiring authorisation and presents the schedule together with the relevant invoices to the Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, or two other Authorised Signatories, to review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied themselves shall authorise payment. The schedule forms part of the Agenda for the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting and the Committee retrospectively approves the payments.  | Existing procedures adequate.<br><br>Review the Financial Regulations when necessary. |
| <b>Grants and support - payable</b>                     | Power to pay<br><br>Authorisation of Council to pay   | L          | All such expenditure goes through the required Council process for approval, minuted and listed accordingly if a payment is made using S137 Powers of Expenditure.   | Existing procedures adequate.   |

|                                     |                            |   |   |  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Grants - receivable</b>          | Receipt of Grants/Precept  | L | The Parish Council receives the Precept from the District Council annually paid in two instalments. Receipt is reported to the Council at the next Full Council Meeting within the Financial Monthly Report. Any one off grants would come with their own terms and conditions to adhere to.  | Existing procedures adequate.  |
| <b>Charges - Rentals payable</b>    | Payments of leases/rentals | L | Samuel Wickens Centre - rent paid to Store Property on an annual basis. Woodland Park Sportsfield - rent paid quarterly to West Sussex County Council.  | Existing procedures adequate.  |
| <b>Charges - Rentals receivable</b> | Receipt of rent            | L | Room hire - Hirers pay in advance of date of booking. Sport's pitches - the RFO invoices Clubs for use of pitches as and when the pitches are used.   | Existing procedures adequate.<br><br>Review agreement and fees annually. |
|                                     | Insurance implication      | M | Clubs/Organisations are covered by their own insurance.   | Ensure payments received.  |
| <b>Best Value Accountability</b>    | Work awarded incorrectly   | L | As per Financial Regulations normal Parish Council practice would be to seek, if possible, more than one quotation for any substantial work required to be undertaken or goods. For major contract services, formal competitive tenders would be sought. If a problem is encountered with a contract the Clerk would investigate the situation, check the quotation/tender, research the problem and report to Council. | Existing procedures adequate.  |
|                                     | Overspend on services      | M |   | Review Financial Regulations regularly.                                  |

|                                      |   |             |  |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|--|---|
| <b>Salaries and associated costs</b> | Salary paid incorrectly<br>Wrong hours paid<br>Wrong rate paid<br>False employee<br>Wrong deductions of Tax<br>Unpaid contributions to the Inland Revenue | L           | <p>The Parish Council authorises the recruitment of all employees at Council Meetings. The Clerk is also authorised to recruit employees and report back to Full Council asap. Salary rates are assessed annually by the Council and applied on 1st April each year.</p> <p>Salary is paid by BACS each month (in 12 equal instalments) for a set number of hours and reported to the Council. Income tax is calculated using SAGE Payroll and paid monthly. All Personnel keep a record of hours worked which are checked by the Deputy Clerk and the RFO. All Personnel have a Contract of Employment and Job Description.</p> | Existing appointment and payment system is adequate.  |
| <b>Employees</b>                     | Fraud by staff<br>Health & Safety   | L<br>L      | <p>Requirements of Fidelity Guarantee Insurance adhered to with regards to fraud. All Employees to be given adequate training and safety equipment to be able to perform their roles. Health &amp; Safety Policy reviewed annually.</p>  | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Monitor Health &amp; Safety requirements and insurance requirements annually.</p>   |
| <b>Clerk</b>                         | Loss of Clerk<br>Health & Safety<br>Fraud   | L<br>L<br>L | <p>The Clerk has a notice period in their Contract of Employment enabling time for recruitment.</p> <p>The Clerk should be provided with relevant training, reference books, access to assistance and legal advice required to undertake the role.</p> <p>The requirements of the Fidelity Guarantee Insurance to be adhered to with regards to Fraud.</p>   | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Purchase reference books where necessary. Membership of CALC (County Association of Local Councils). Monitor working conditions, safety requirements and insurance annually.</p> <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> |
| <b>Councillor Allowances</b>         | Councillors over-paid<br>Income Tax deduction   | L           | <p>The Chairman has a budgeted annual allowance that is used as necessary for sundry items. Expenses are monitored to ensure the Budget is not exceeded and expenditure reported monthly to the Council. Allowances are paid to all elected Parish Councillors on a quarterly basis, using SAGE Payroll.</p>   | Existing procedures adequate.   |

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>Election Costs</b> | Risk of Election Cost     | L/M | Risk is higher in an election year. When an election is due the Clerk will obtain an estimate of costs from the District Council for a full election and an uncontested election. There are no measures which can be adopted to minimise the risk of having a contested election as this is a democratic process and should not be stifled. Election costs are paid retrospectively to the District Council in the following financial year and a adequate budget is set. | Existing procedures adequate. |
| <b>VAT</b>            | Re-claiming/charging      | L   | The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements.  | Existing procedures adequate. |
| <b>Annual Return</b>  | Submit within time limits | L   | The Council's Annual Return is completed and submitted online to to the External Auditors appointed by the Small Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) within the prescribed time frame by the RFO. The Annual Return is completed and signed by the Council, submitted to the Internal Auditor for completion and signing then checked and sent on to the External Auditor within time limit.   | Existing procedures adequate. |

| ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT  |  |                            |   |   |
|--|--|----------------------------|---|---|
| Subject  | Risk(s) Identified   | H/M/L                      | Management/Control of Risk  | Review/Assess/Revise  |
| <b>Business Continuity</b>   | Risk of Council not being able to continue its business due to an unexpected or tragic circumstance  | L                          | <p>All files and recent records are kept on site at the Parish Council Offices, 34 Woodlands Avenue. All electronic files are backed up to the Council's Server on a daily basis. Paper copies of Meeting Minutes are kept in a fire proof safe on site. In the event of the Clerk being indisposed, the Deputy Clerk and Chairman to contact the CALC for advice.</p> <p>The Senior Management Team are able to work from home to facilitate the continuation of Council Services should the Offices be closed for an unexpected reason.</p> | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Review when necessary.</p> <p>Working from Home Policy in place</p> |
| <b>Legal Powers</b>  | Illegal activity or payments   | L                          | All activity and payments within the Powers of the Parish Council to be resolved and minuted at Full Council. Clerk to hold or complete training and achieve CiLCA qualification. Clerk clarifies position on any new proposal. Legal advice is sought via CALC where necessary.  | Existing procedures adequate.   |
| <b>Minutes</b><br><b>Agendas</b><br><b>Notices</b><br><b>Statutory Documents</b> | <p>Accuracy and Legality - Non-compliance with statutory requirements</p> <p>Business Conduct</p> <p>Proper and timely reporting via the Minutes</p> | <p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p> | <p>Minutes and Agendas are produced in the prescribed method by the Clerk and adhere to the Legal Requirements.</p> <p>Business conducted at all Council Meetings should be managed by the Chairman.</p> <p>Minutes are approved and signed at the next Committee or Council Meeting. Minutes and Agendas are displayed according to the legal requirements. Both are available to the public via the Parish Council website or from the Clerk.</p> <p>Agendas are displayed on Parish Noticeboards.</p>                                      | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Members to adhere to the Code of Conduct.</p>                       |

|   |   |             |   |  |
|---|---|-------------|---|--|
| <b>Council Records<br/>- Paper</b>      | Loss through:-<br>Theft<br>Fire<br>Damage   | L<br>M<br>L | The Parish Council records are stored at the Woodlands Centre site. Records include current correspondence, minute books, bank statements, insurance etc. Recent materials are kept in metal filing cabinets (not fire proof) and older more historical records are stored in the loft of The Woodlands Centre building. Minute books and Leases/Deeds are kept within a fire proof safe on site as well as at the County Records Office. | Damage (apart from fire) and theft is unlikely and so provision is deemed adequate.  |
| <b>Council Records<br/>- Electronic</b> | Loss through:-<br>Theft<br>Fire<br>Damage<br>Corruption of Computer<br>Unauthorised Use | L           | The Parish Council's electronic records are stored on a Council Server. Back-ups of the files are made at regular intervals. All PC's are protected by anti-virus software. Access is restricted through use of controlled passwords. Updates to computers advised by IT Provider. Only approved software is used. The Parish Council ensures that only a reputable Broadband provider is used.   | Damage (apart from fire) and theft is unlikely and so provision is deemed adequate.  |
| <b>Insurance</b>                        | Adequacy<br><br>Cost<br><br>Compliance<br><br>Fidelity Guarantee                        | L           | An annual review is undertaken (before the time of policy renewal) of all insurance arrangements in place. Employers and Employee Liability Insurance are a necessity and must be paid for. Ensure compliance measures are in place. Ensure Fidelity checks are in place. Price comparisons are undertaken for Best Value.  | Existing procedures adequate. Review of insurance provision annually. Fidelity Guarantee Insurance - This is set at £550K, less than traditionally prescribed amount e.g. 50% of the Precept plus reserves, but due to money being in tied accounts and hard to access, this was deemed acceptable by the Insurers (following consultation) as the £550k represented actual "at risk" funds.<br><br>The option to increase the level of cover to £916,846.00 was considered by the Council at the meeting 20 May 24. The risk was properly discussed and considered and the Council resolved not to increase insurance cover -see Minute 135/24. |



|                                   |  |   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Data Protection</b>            | <p>Policy Provision</p> <p>Breach of Confidentiality</p> <p>Breach of Data Protection Principles</p> | L | <p>The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). There is a formal procedure for dealing with Confidential Data. The Council has a published Privacy Notice. The Data Protection Policy was adopted on 23 July 2018. Staff have received training in Data Protection. Members and Personnel received GDPR refresher training in 2023.</p> | <p>Ensure annual renewal of Registration and compliance with GDPR.</p>   |
| <b>Freedom of Information Act</b> | <p>Failure to comply with the Act</p>  | L | <p>The Council has a Model Publication Scheme for Local Councils in place. The Council is able, if it chooses, to request a fee for any information supplied to cover the cost of consumables and Officer time.</p>   | <p>Monitor and report any impacts of requests made under the Act.</p> <p>Publication Scheme last reviewed 25 March 2024.</p> |
| <b>Meeting Location</b>           | <p>Adequacy</p> <p>Health &amp; Safety including Lone Working</p>                                    | L | <p>The Parish Council Meetings are held at the Council Offices in Woodlands Avenue. The premises and facilities are considered to be adequate for the Clerk, Councillors and Public who attend from Health &amp; Safety and comfort aspects. The Health &amp; Safety Policy is reviewed on an annual basis.</p>   | <p>Existing location adequate.</p>   |

| ASSETS   |   |                                |   |   |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Subject  | Risk(s) Identified  | H/M/L                          | Management/Control of Risk  | Review/Assess/Revise  |
| <b>Community Buildings:-</b><br><br><b>Woodlands Centre</b><br><br><b>Samuel Wickens Centre</b><br><br><b>Youth Centre</b> | Loss or Damage/Vandalism<br><br>Risk/Damage to third party(ies)/property including injury, trips, slips and falls<br><br>Failure to obtain necessary Licences e.g. PRS<br><br>Inadequate Budget Provision | L                              | An Asset Register is kept up to date and insurance is held at the appropriate level for all items. Regular checks are made of all equipment and buildings by Parish Council Personnel. Inspections/Testing include:<br>-Annual PAT Testing<br>-Annual Heating Installation Check<br>-Fire Alarm and Emergency Lighting System checked quarterly<br>-First Aid Boxes checked and re-stocked weekly as required<br>-Annual Fire Risk Assessment<br>-Regular buildings check e.g. lighting, fire doors, emergency phone etc.<br>-Weekly Fire Alarm testing.<br>PRS Licence renewed Annually for all sites. Responsibility of Hirers is clearly defined in the Hall Hire Agreement. Anticipated costs are adequately provided for within the Budgetary process. All hire charges are reviewed annually. | Existing procedures adequate.<br>Review insurance requirements annually.  |
| <b>Play Area and MUGA (Basketball Court) and Outdoor Fitness Equipment</b>   | Loss or Damage/Vandalism<br><br>Risk/Damage to third party(ies) - personal injury<br><br>Inadequate insurance cover<br><br>Inadequate Maintenance Records   | L/M<br><br>L<br><br>L<br><br>L | An Asset Register is kept up to date and insurance is held at the appropriate level for all items. Daily Checks are made by Parish Council personnel. Any vandalism is recorded and reported to Sussex Police. Play Area is locked overnight. Monthly Play Area inspection completed by Local Authority. Annual Play Area Inspection completed by The Play Inspection Company. All reports are filed and any actions form part of a Works programme. Replacement of MUGA and Outdoor Fitness Equipment scheduled for 2024 completed Spring 2025.  | Existing procedure adequate.<br><br>Maintain liaison with Police and ASB Team.<br><br>Review insurance requirements annually. |

|                   |   |     |   |   |
|-------------------|---|-----|---|---|
| <b>Allotments</b> | Inadequate insurance cover                | L   | Insurance requirements are reviewed annually.   | Existing procedures adequate.<br>The Allotments Committee meets three times per year. |
|                   | Vandalism                                 | L/M | Sites are visited regularly and Parish Council personnel respond promptly to any complaints of vandalism.   |   |
|                   | Vermin                                    | L   | Tenancy Agreement outlines standards of cleanliness for the sites. Contract held with the District Council's preferred Contractor to carry out monthly vermin inspections of all sites. Complaints from plot holders dealt with promptly. |   |
|                   | Inaccurate/out of date Allotment Register | L   | Allotment Register maintained electronically, using specialised Allotment Management Software, and all amendments are promptly recorded. Agreements are completed and signed prior to occupation.   |   |
|                   | Untidy Plots                              | L   | Plots are inspected on a monthly basis.   |   |
|                   | Failure to collect Rents                  | L   | Proper records of income received and maintained are kept. Renewal procedure is established and in place.   |   |
|                   | Failure to review Rents                   | L   | Rents are reviewed on an annual basis with costs confirmed one year in advance.   |   |
|                   | Unoccupied plots/loss of income           | L   | Waiting List is maintained. How to apply for an Allotment detailed on the Parish Council website as well as articles in the Parish Newsletter and on Facebook.  |   |

|                     |   |   |   |  |
|---------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Museum</b>       | Temperature, Humidity Controls and Museum Pests | L | Data Loggers in store room and main gallery - these are monitored regularly for humidity and temperature readings.  | Review insurance requirements annually. Existing procedures adequate.  |
|                     | Inadequate insurance cover                      | L | Insurance requirements are reviewed annually.   | Review required for storage of Collection at The Woodlands Centre.<br>NB new racking installed in 2023 and objects being rationalised for possible disposal.<br>Archeology Collection being-relocated to Fishbourne Roman Palace Stores - Fishbourne Roman Palace have £10M PLI and £5M ELI. |
|                     | Museum ineligible for external funding          | L | Museum to maintain Accreditation status to improve eligibility for external funding.  |  |
|                     | Inadequately trained staff                      | L | Museum staff training reviewed annually via the Appraisal process. Specialist training sought through the Museum's Association and the Sussex Museum's Group.   |  |
|                     | Accidental damage to the Collection             | L | Team trained in handling objects. Items on display are monitored by CCTV and checked regularly. Items stored safely within storage areas with adequate protection.  |  |
|                     | Natural Disasters - flooding, fire              | L | Emergency Plan is in place and salvage kit kept on site.  |  |
|                     | Data Protection issues                          | L | All consent/loan forms are retained on file only for as long as is needed.  |  |
|                     | Security of Collection                          | L | CCTV in galleries and a locking up procedure is in place. Adequate insurance in place.  |  |
| <b>Noticeboards</b> | Risk/Damage/Injury to third parties             | L | The Parish Council has a variety of noticeboards placed across the Village which are listed on the Asset Register. All locations have approval by relevant parties and insurance cover. They are inspected regularly and any repairs/maintenance brought to the attention of the Clerk. | Existing procedures adequate.  |
|                     | Roadside safety                                 |   |   |  |

|  |  |   |  |   |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Public Seats</b>  | <p>Risk/Damage/Injury to third parties</p> <p>Roadside safety</p>  | L   | <p>The Parish Council has a variety of public seats placed across the Village. All locations have approval by relevant parties and insurance cover. They are inspected regularly and any repairs/maintenance brought to the attention of the Clerk. Arrangements are in place to remove any dangerous street furniture.</p>  | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Full audit of all public seats to be undertaken by Summer 2025.</p> |
| <b>Woodlands Recreation Ground and Woodland Park Sportsfield</b> | <p>Loss or Damage/Vandalism</p> <p>Risk/Damage to third party(ies) - personal injury</p> <p>Inadequate insurance cover</p> <p>Loss of Grounds Maintenance Contractor</p> <p>Inadequate maintenance of Parish Council owned machinery</p> <p>Lone Working</p> | <p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p> | <p>An Asset Register is kept up to date and insurance is held at the appropriate level for all items.</p> <p>Daily Checks are made by Parish Council personnel. Any vandalism is recorded and reported to Sussex Police.</p> <p>Grounds Maintenance is undertaken by an external contractor.</p> <p>Should the contractor be unable to fulfill their duties the Parish Council Leisure and Amenities Officer would undertake works in the interim.</p> <p>Parish Council machinery is routinely maintained.</p> <p>There is a named point of contact for any individual working alone. The individual must carry a mobile phone. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that all those working alone are properly instructed, especially with First Aid training. Personal Protective Equipment supplied.</p> | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p>  |

|                       |  |     |   |  |
|-----------------------|--|-----|---|--|
| <b>Shelters</b>       | <p>Loss or Damage/Vandalism</p> <p>Risk/Damage to third party(ies) - personal injury</p> <p>Inadequate insurance cover</p> <p>Lone Working</p> | L   | <p>The Parish Council has 15 Bus Shelters and one Beach Shelter within the Parish which are listed on the Asset Register. All locations have approval by relevant parties and insurance cover. They are inspected regularly and any repairs/maintenance brought to the attention of the Clerk. There is a named point of contact for any individual working alone. The individual must carry a mobile phone. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that all those working alone are properly instructed, especially with First Aid training. Personal Protective Equipment supplied.</p>  | Existing procedures adequate.  |
| <b>Public Toilets</b> | <p>Loss or Damage/Vandalism</p> <p>Risk/Damage to third party(ies) - personal injury</p> <p>Inadequate insurance cover</p> <p>Lone Working</p> | L/M | <p>The Parish Council holds responsibility for 4 Public Toilet facilities within the Parish which are all listed on the Asset Register. All have sufficient insurance cover. They are inspected regularly and any repairs/maintenance brought to the attention of the Clerk by the external contractor Biffa as part of the District Council's Cleansing Services Contract. They are locked overnight. There is a named point of contact for any individual working alone. The individual must carry a mobile phone. The Contractor, Biffa, is responsible for ensuring that all those working alone are properly instructed. Personal Protective Equipment supplied.</p> | <p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>New Toilet Cleansing Contract commenced from 1 April 2023.</p> <p><del>The Public Toilet Facility located at The Street will re-open as a Changing Places Unit in Spring 2024.</del></p> |
| <b>Civic Regalia</b>  | Theft/Loss or Damage   | L   | Insurance is in place and reviewed annually.  | Existing procedures adequate.  |

| COUNCILLORS' PROPRIETY |                               |       |   |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|---|-------------------------------|
| Subject                | Risk(s) Identified            | H/M/L | Management/Control of Risk  | Review/Assess/Revise          |
| Members<br>Interests   | Conflict of Interest          | L     | Declarations of Interest recorded at all Council Meetings.  | Existing procedures adequate. |
|                        | Register of Members Interests | L     | Register of Members' Interests forms reviewed annually. Councillors notify the Clerk of any changes throughout the year. Can be viewed on the Parish Council Website. |                               |



## **RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 2 (3) OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ETC. ACT 1974**

#### **PART I - INTRODUCTION**

This document has been compiled to provide information and guidance to all employees on this Council's Health and Safety Policy and organisational arrangements for implementation of that Policy. In addition, there may be Codes of Practice for certain working areas within the Council's control.

#### **PART II - STATEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

- 1.1 It is the policy of this Council to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, plant, equipment and systems of work for all our employees, volunteers and visitors, and to provide such information, training and supervision as they need for this purpose. The Council accepts its responsibility for the health and safety of other people who may be affected by its activities. Safety is of paramount importance to the Council and is taken seriously.
- 1.2 The allocation of duties for safety matters and the particular arrangements which the Council will make to implement the Policy are set out below.
- 1.3 The Policy will be kept up to date and reviewed on an annual basis.

#### **PART III - THE ORGANISATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **1. Overall Responsibility**

The Clerk of the Council, has overall and final responsibility for ensuring:-

- (a) the provision and implementation of the Health and Safety Policy
- (b) advising the Council on all matters relating to Health and Safety and Welfare
- (c) reporting areas which are unsatisfactory and/or require remedial action; and
- (d) its annual review.

##### **2. Delegated Responsibilities within the Council**

- 2.1 The Caretaker, Managers and Administrative Officers/Assistants, to whom the second line health and safety supervision within The Woodlands Centre, Youth Centre, Samuel Wickens Centre and Museum has been delegated, will be responsible to the Clerk of the Council for the day to day supervision within their defined area of responsibility and, in particular, for:-
  - (a) establishing, in consultation with the Clerk of the Council, safe systems of work and procedures for carrying out the Council's Health and Safety Policy incorporating any Regulations, approved Codes of Practice and other relevant Legislation



- (b) to ensure that safe working procedures and safe systems of work are implemented by staff in all of the Council's properties, and that a safe working environment is provided for them
- (c) ensuring that any such staff under their control, receive adequate training, information and supervision to maintain safe standards

2.2 In addition, the Leisure and Amenities Officer will, as far as the Council's external facilities are concerned, be responsible for:-

- (a) maintaining safe working practices in order to achieve maximum safety
- (b) ensuring adequate safety supervision and training where required, in particular, where young and inexperienced workers are concerned
- (c) ensuring that all safety rules are observed and that protective clothing and equipment is worn or used where required
- (d) ensuring that all machinery and equipment is properly maintained and safe to use and that guards are in position
- (e) ensuring that all machinery and equipment is properly secured when not in use

2.3 All employees have the responsibility to co-operate with the object of achieving a healthy and safe workplace and to take reasonable care of themselves and others.

2.4 All Council employees are required to:-

- (a) make themselves familiar with and conform to the Council's Health and Safety Policy
- (b) observe safety rules at all times
- (c) where required, wear protective clothing and use appropriate safety devices provided
- (d) report to their immediate Line Manager all accidents, injuries to persons and damage to vehicles, plant and equipment
- (e) know the location of first aid facilities. Grounds/External Personnel are expected to carry a First Aid box in their vehicles at all times
- (f) report all safety hazards as a matter of urgency to their immediate Line Manager
- (g) know what to do in the case of fire or other emergency and the location of fire fighting equipment
- (h) maintain good housekeeping at all times
- (i) observe safe standards of behaviour and dress. Grounds/External Personnel are expected to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided
- (j) not enter into any kind of horseplay or practical joking

- 2.5 It is the policy of this Council that all employees shall receive training in all safety aspects of their occupation, and courses shall be held for this purpose.
- 2.6 It shall be the duty of staff to carry out a visual safety inspection of plant and equipment prior to using such machinery.
- 2.7 It shall be the responsibility of all Parish Council Personnel to ensure that all accidents are comprehensively reported in writing to the Clerk of the Council who, in turn, will issue instructions to ensure that these do not continue and, where appropriate, make recommendations to the Finance and General Purposes Committee or the Leisure and Amenities Committee on accident prevention.
- 2.8 It shall be the responsibility of the Youth Centre, Museum and Samuel Wickens Centre Caretaker, the Leisure and Amenities Officer, the Council Office's Administrative Officers (The Woodlands Centre) and the Samuel Wickens Centre Administrative Assistants to monitor the maintenance of all plant and equipment.

#### **PART IV - GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS**

##### **1. First Aid**

- 1.1 First Aid boxes are located at various locations in each of the Council's properties. The Council Office's Administrative Officers are responsible for carrying out periodical checks to ensure the contents are adequately maintained in The Woodlands Centre and the Council Offices.
- 1.2 First Aid boxes are also located at the Leisure and Amenities Officer's Accommodation, Woodlands Centre Recreation Ground. A First Aid box is also provided on the Council's vehicles. The Leisure and Amenities Officer is responsible for carrying out periodic checks to ensure the contents are adequately maintained.
- 1.3 First Aid boxes are also located in the kitchen and in the Norfolk Lounge at the Youth Centre. The Caretaker is responsible for carrying out periodical checks to ensure the contents are adequately maintained.
- 1.4 First Aid boxes are also located in the Reception Area and in the Community Hall Kitchen at the Samuel Wickens Centre. The Centre's Administrative Assistants, in conjunction with the Caretaker, are responsible for carrying out periodical checks to ensure the contents are adequately maintained.
- 1.5 A First Aid box is also located in the Museum Office. The Caretaker is responsible for carrying out periodical checks to ensure the contents are adequately maintained.

##### **2. Defibrillators**

- 2.1 Defibrillators, affixed to external walls, are located as follows:-

- The Woodlands Centre
- The Samuel Wickens Centre
- Churchill Car Park Public Toilets (behind Iceland and The Factory Shop)
- The Quill (Woodlands Avenue)
- Southern end of Sea Avenue (affixed to a resident's garden wall)
- Beach Shelter (Junction of Sea Road/Sea Lane)

- Pavilion Terrace building (facing the sea) (Blind Veterans UK, Broadmark Lane/Beach)

Volunteer Community First Responders (Mrs Sally Holmes) carry out periodic checks to ensure the Defibrillators are in correct working order.

### **3. Accidents, Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences**

- 3.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Clerk of the Council to ensure that all incidents are recorded in the Accident Book and to report those Injuries, Diseases and other Dangerous Occurrences to the Health and Safety Executive on the appropriate form.
- 3.2 Accident Books are located in the Council Offices, at the Samuel Wickens Centre and the Museum. Accident Books for Hirers' use are located in all Halls/Rooms at The Woodlands Centre, Youth Centre and in the Community Hall at the Samuel Wickens Centre. Any such instances should always be reported to the Clerk of the Council as soon as practicably possible.

## **FIRE SAFETY**

### **4. Escape Route**

- 4.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Council Office's Administrative Officers to ensure to the best of their ability, that the escape routes and passageways are kept clear in The Woodlands Centre.
- 4.2 It shall be the responsibility of the Caretaker to ensure to the best of their ability, that the escape routes and passage ways are kept clear in the Youth Centre.
- 4.3 It shall be the responsibility of the Museum Manager and Administrative Assistant to ensure to the best of their ability, that the escape routes and passage ways are kept clear in the Museum.
- 4.4 It shall be the responsibility of the Caretaker and the Samuel Wickens Centre Administrative Assistants to assure to the best of their ability, that the escape routes and passageways are kept clear in the Samuel Wickens Centre.

### **5. Fire Extinguishers, Fire Alarm System and Emergency Lighting**

- 5.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Clerk of the Council to organise annual inspections of all fire extinguishers on the Council's premises.
- 5.2 The maintenance Companies responsible for carrying out these inspections are:-

|                    |   |                          |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Fire Extinguishers | - | Marble M&E Group Limited |
| Fire Alarm System  | - | Marble M&E Group Limited |
| Emergency Lighting | - | Marble M&E Group Limited |

## **6. Advice and Consultancy**

The local Inspector's Office is located at:-  
Health and Safety Executive  
The Council Offices, Station Road East  
Oxted, Surrey RH8 0BT

The Incident Contact Centre's telephone number is:-  
0345 300 9923 (Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 5.00 pm)

The HSE may need to respond out of hours:-

- following a work-related death;
- following a serious incident where there have been multiple casualties;
- following an incident which has caused major disruption such as evacuation of people, closure of roads, large numbers of people going to hospital etc.

For any such incidents, the Duty Officer's contact number is:-  
0151 922 9235 (5.00 pm to 8.30 am)

The Health & Safety Executive's Website is - [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## **7. Training**

- 7.1 It shall be the duty of the Clerk of the Council to issue all newly appointed staff with a personal copy of the Rustington Parish Council's Health and Safety Policy and such supplements as are applicable to their duties and responsibilities.
- 7.2 It shall be the responsibility of the Clerk of the Council to ensure that all new manual staff receive adequate training in all safety aspects of their occupation and, in particular, the use of strimmers, mowers, hedge cutters and other dangerous machinery.

## **8. Contractors and Visitors**

- 8.1 Where contractors and sub-contractors are engaged by the Parish Council, they must maintain effective control of themselves and those working under them so as to ensure that they comply with their responsibilities and duties under the Health and Safety at Work Etc., Act 1974.
- 8.2 The Parish Council shall ensure that those not in employment of the Council, including the general public, are not exposed to risk to their safety or health when on the Council's premises.

**C A WARD**  
**Clerk of the Council**  
*(Reviewed March 2025)*



# **RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Freedom of Information Act**

### **Publication Scheme**

***(Adopted 24 November 2008)***

***Reviewed 24 March 2025***

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Freedom of Information Act**

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 grants to members of the public rights of access to all kinds of recorded information held by a wide range of public authorities. Information about the Act is available from the Information Commissioner's Office at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

### **Publication Scheme**

Under the Act every Public Authority is required to adopt and maintain a Publication Scheme. This Scheme provides the public with a structured listing of any information released and a commitment to make it available to all. The Scheme sets out how the Council intends to publish the different Classes of information it makes available and whether it needs to charge for providing the information.

### **Freedom of Information Requests and the Publication Scheme**

It is important to note that a publication Scheme simply sets out the information that is routinely available. Information that is not listed in the Information Available Guide of this document can still be requested and it will be made available unless it can be legitimately withheld. This can be done by making a written request to the Parish Clerk who will reply within 20 working days after receipt of the request.

### **The Council's Commitment to the Act**

The Council is committed to openness and accountability and already makes large amounts of information available to the public, through the website, via the telephone and by post. Should a personal visit be required to view information, an appointment will be necessary.

## **MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME**

This model publication Scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner. It may be adopted without modification by any public authority without further approval and will be valid until further notice.

This publication Scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The Scheme commits an authority:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below
- To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this Scheme
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this Scheme
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available
- To make this publication Scheme available to the public
- To publish any dataset held by the authority that has been requested, and any updated versions it holds unless the authority is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so; to publish the dataset, where reasonably practicable in an electronic form that is capable of re-use; and if any information in the dataset is a relevant copyright work and the public authority is the only owner, to make the information available for re-use under the terms of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015, if they apply, and otherwise under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act section 19.

The term “dataset” is defined in section 11(5) of the Freedom of Information Act. The term “relevant copyright work” is defined in section 19(8) of that Act.

### **Classes of information**

#### **Who we are and what we do**

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

#### **What we spend and how we spend it**

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

**What our priorities are and how we are doing**

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

**How we make decisions**

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

**Our policies and procedures**

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

**Lists and registers**

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

**The services we offer**

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure
- Information in draft form
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

**The method by which information published under this Scheme will be made available**

The authority will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this Scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capability of a public authority, information will be provided on a website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, a public authority will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this Scheme.



## **Charges which may be made for information published under this Scheme**

The purpose of this Scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information.

Charges may also be made for information provided under this Scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

Charges may also be made for making datasets (or parts of datasets) that are relevant copyright works available for re-use. These charges will be in accordance with the terms of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015, where they apply, or with regulations made under section 11B of the Freedom of Information Act, or with other statutory powers of the public authority.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

## **Written requests**

Information held by a public authority that is not published under this Scheme can be requested in writing (an email request is sufficient), when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Please note that should information requested and the cost of complying with a request that exceeds £450 (this is calculated on the basis of 18 hours work at £25 per hour) the Council is entitled to make a charge known as 'prescribed costs' which include the costs of locating the information, retrieving the information, extracting the information from a document containing it, informing you whether we hold the information and communicating the information to you prior to complying with your request. Alternatively, the Council may refuse the request.

You will be informed as early on in the process in writing if the request is likely to exceed £450 so that you have the option to adjust your request to bring it under the £450 limit. Where the cost of complying with the request does not exceed £450 the Council may only charge for disbursements which include photo-copying, printing, postage etc. You will be informed as early on in the process as possible if a charge is payable. Any charges must be paid prior to the information being sent. The requestor will have 60 days to pay the fees, failing which the request will be closed.

## Information available from Rustington Parish Council under the Model Publication Scheme

| Information to be published   | How the information can be obtained   | Cost                                  |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Class1 – Who we are and what we do</b><br><i>(Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts)</i><br><i>(Current information only)</i>   |   |                                       |
| About Rustington and The Parish Council   | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy                 |
| Membership List of Councillors  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk<br>Notice Boards<br>Community Buildings Notice Boards | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy<br>Free<br>Free |
| List of Committees  | Website   | Free                                  |
| Contact Details for Parish Clerk and Council Members  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk<br>Notice Boards                                      | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy<br>Free         |
| Location of main Council Office, Village Information Centre, Buildings and Land in ownership of the Parish Council and accessibility details  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy                 |
| Staffing Structure  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy                 |
| Staff Vacancies and Employment Opportunities  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk<br>Notice Boards<br>Community Buildings Notice Boards | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy<br>Free<br>Free |
| Parish Newsletter (issued quarterly)  | Website<br>Hard Copy (distributed to parishioners homes)                                  | Free<br>Free                          |
| <b>Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it</b><br><i>(Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit)</i><br><i>(Current and previous financial year as a minimum)</i> |   |                                       |
| Annual Return Form and Report by Auditor  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk<br>Notice Boards<br>Community Buildings Notice Boards | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy<br>Free<br>Free |
| Internal Auditor Reports to Council (twice yearly)  | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | £0.05 A4 copy                         |
| Finalised Budget  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy                 |
| Precept   | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy                 |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Financial Standing Orders and Regulations  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy   |
| Grants given and received  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | £0.05 A4 copy   |
| List of current Contracts awarded and value of Contract  | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | £0.05 A4 copy   |
| Members' Allowances and Expenses   | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy   |
| Community Hall Hire Charges  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | Free  |
| <b>Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing</b><br><i>(Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews)</i>  |  |   |
| Community Action Plan  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy   |
| Annual Report to Parish Meeting<br><i>(Current and previous year as a minimum)</i>   | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy   |
| <b>Class 4 – How we make decisions</b><br><i>(Decision making processes and records of decisions)</i><br><i>(Current and previous Council year as a minimum)</i>   |  |   |
| Timetable of Meetings (Council, any Committee/Sub-Committee Meetings and Parish Meetings)  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk<br>Notice Boards<br>Community Buildings Notice Board | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy<br>Free<br>Free                                       |
| Agendas of Meetings (as above)   | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk<br>Notice Boards                                     | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy<br>Free   |
| Minutes of Meetings (as above)<br><i>(This will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the Meeting)</i>   | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk  | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy   |
| Reports presented to Council Meetings –<br><i>(This will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the Meeting)</i>  | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | £0.05 A4 copy   |
| Responses to Consultation Papers   | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | £0.05 A4 copy   |
| Responses to Planning Applications   | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk   | £0.05 A4 copy   |
| <b>Class 5 – Our policies and procedures</b><br><i>(Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities) (Current information only)</i>  |  |   |
| Policies and procedures for the conduct of Council business, the provision of services and the employment of staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Code of Members' Conduct</li> <li>*Council's Standing Orders</li> <li>*Financial Regulations</li> <li>Grievance Policy</li> <li>Disciplinary Policy</li> <li>Compassionate Leave Policy</li> <li>Time Off for Dependants Policy</li> </ul> |  | Hard copies of all the documents listed are available at £0.05 per A4 copy. |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Freedom of Information Act Policy &amp; Publication Scheme</li> <li>• Equality and Diversity Policy</li> <li>• Dignity at Work Policy</li> <li>• Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety Policy</li> <li>• Staff Application Form</li> <li>• Hall Hire Agreement</li> <li>• *Schedule of Charges (for the publication of information)</li> <li>• Risk Assessment - Land, Buildings etc.</li> <li>• Playgrounds Inspection Reports</li> <li>• *Complaints Procedure Policy</li> <li>• Homeworking Policy</li> <li>• Investment Policy</li> <li>• Sickness &amp; Absence Management Policy</li> <li>• LGPS Employer Discretions Policy</li> <li>• Redeployment and Redundancy Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Social Media Policy</li> <li>• *Statement of Intent as to Community Engagement</li> <li>• Document Retention and Disposal Policy</li> <li>• Use of CCTV Policy</li> <li>• Website Policy &amp; Guidance</li> <li>• IT Communications &amp; Monitoring Policy</li> <li>• *Data Protection Policy</li> <li>• Information Security Policy</li> <li>• Information Security Incident Policy</li> <li>• *Guidance and Terms and Conditions of Use for Casual and Organised Activities at the Woodlands Recreation Ground</li> </ul> |  | NB *All items marked with an asterisk are also available, to be viewed, via the Parish Council website free of charge |
|--|--|---|

## **Class 6 – Lists and Registers**

*(Currently maintained lists and registers)*

|                                   |                                     |                       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Asset Register                    | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk            | £0.05 A4 copy         |
| Register of Members' Interests    | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk<br>Website | £0.05 A4 copy<br>Free |
| Register of gifts and hospitality | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk            | £0.05 A4 copy         |
| Allotments Register               | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk            | £0.05 A4 copy         |
| Contractors Listings              | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk            | £0.05 A4 copy         |
| Suppliers Listings                | Hard Copy - Parish Clerk            | £0.05 A4 copy         |

## **Class 7 – The services we offer**

*(Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses)*

*(Current information only)*

|   |                                     |                       |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Allotments  | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy |
| Community Centres                                 | Website                             | Free                  |
| Parks, Playing Fields and Recreational Facilities | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy |

|  |                                     |                       |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Seating, Litter Bins, Clocks, Memorials and Lighting | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy |
| Bus Shelters   | Website<br>Hard Copy - Parish Clerk | Free<br>£0.05 A4 copy |

**Contact details:-**

**Mrs Carole Ward**  
**Clerk of the Council, Council Offices,**  
**34 Woodlands Avenue, Rustington, West Sussex BN16 3HB**  
**Tel: 01903 786420**  
**Email: [caroleward@rustingtonpc.org](mailto:caroleward@rustingtonpc.org)**  
**Website: [www.rustingtonpc.org](http://www.rustingtonpc.org)**

**SCHEDULE OF CHARGES**

| <b>TYPE OF CHARGE</b>    | <b>DESCRIPTION</b>  | <b>BASIS OF CHARGE</b>                                      |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Disbursement cost</b> | Photocopying<br>A4 Black and White @<br>£0.05 per sheet             | Reasonable cost related<br>to actual cost                   |
|                          | Postage   | Actual cost of Royal Mail<br>standard 2 <sup>nd</sup> class |
| <b>Publications</b>      | £1.50 per copy per<br>pre published document<br>(maximum 30 sheets) | Reasonable cost related<br>to actual cost                   |



**RUSTINGTON  
PARISH COUNCIL**

**DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY**

**(Adopted 24 March 2025)**

## **DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY**

**Rustington Parish Council believes that Civility and Respect are important in the working environment, and expect all Rustington Parish Councillors, Officers and the public to be polite and courteous when working for, and with Rustington Parish Council.**

### **Purpose**

Rustington Parish Council is committed to creating a working environment where all Rustington Parish Council Personnel, Rustington Parish Councillors, Contractors and others who come into contact with us in the course of our work, are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy. We aim to create a workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying.

In support of this objective, Rustington Parish Council has signed up to the Civility Pledge, as a commitment to civility and respect in our work, and politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Further information about the Civility and Respect Pledge is available [NALC](#) & [SLCC](#)

We recognise that there is a continuum where unaddressed issues have the potential to escalate and become larger, more complex issues and this policy sets out how concerns will be managed however the emphasis of this policy is on resolution and mediation where appropriate, rather than an adversarial process.

This document:

- explains how we will respond to complaints of bullying or harassment;
- ensures that we respond sensitively and promptly; and,
- supports our Personnel in ensuring their behaviour does not amount to bullying and/or harassment by giving examples.

### **Scope**

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by Clerks and all Personnel engaged to work at Rustington Parish Council. Should agency staff, or contractors have a complaint connected to their engagement with Rustington Parish Council this should be raised to the Clerk of the Council in the first instance. Should the complaint be about the Chairman of the Rustington Parish Council the complaint should be raised to the Clerk of the Council.

Agency staff, or contractors are equally expected to treat Rustington Parish Council colleagues, and other representatives and stakeholders with dignity and respect, and Rustington Parish Council may terminate the contract, without notice, where there are suspicions of harassment or bullying.

Complaints about other employment matters will be managed under Rustington Parish Council's Grievance Policy.

It is noted that the management of a situation may differ depending on who the allegations relate to (e.g. Personnel, Contractor, Rustington Parish Councillor), however, Rustington Parish Council will take appropriate action if any of its employees are bullied or harassed by employees, Rustington Parish Councillors, members of the public, suppliers or contractors.

### **The position on Bullying and Harassment**

All staff and Rustington Parish Council representatives are entitled to dignity, respect and courtesy within the workplace and to not experience any form of discrimination. Rustington Parish Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in our workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether harm is intended or not. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. You should also be aware that, if you have bullied or harassed someone (e.g. physical violence, harassment), in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

We expect all representatives of Rustington Parish Council to treat each other with respect and uphold the values of the Code of Conduct, Civility and Respect Pledge, Equality and Diversity Policy, and all other policies and procedures set by Rustington Parish Council.

We expect you to demonstrate respect by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. See the Grievance Policy for further details regarding the process. Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. While we will assume that all complaints of bullying and harassment are made in good faith, in the event that allegations are found to be malicious or vexatious the person raising the complaint may be subject to action under Rustington Parish Council's Disciplinary Procedure.



## Harassment

- Where a person is subject to uninvited conduct that violates their dignity, in connection with a protected characteristic
- Behaviour that creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment in relation to a protected characteristic

## Bullying

- Behaviour that leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. It does not need to be connected to a protected characteristic.

### What Type of Treatment amounts to Bullying or Harassment?

'Bullying' or 'harassment' are phrases that apply to treatment from one person (or a group of people) to another that is unwanted and that has the effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- The offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances e.g. promotion, access to training
- Threats for rejecting sexual advances
- Demeaning comments about a person's appearance
- Verbal abuse or offensive comments, including jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Unwanted nicknames, especially related to a person's age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- Lewd or suggestive comments or gestures
- Deliberate exclusion from conversations, work activities or social activities.
- Withholding information a person needs in order to do their job
- Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies or inappropriate birthday rituals
- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling

- Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property
- Display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person
- Isolation or non-cooperation at work
- Subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, whether directly and / or in front of others
- The use of obscene gestures
- Abusing a position of power

Bullying and harassment can occur through verbal and face to face interactions, but can also take place through sharing inappropriate or offensive content in writing or via email and other electronic communications and social media.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable and behaviour could be harassment when the person had no intention to offend. We all have the right to determine what offends us. Some behaviour will be clear to any reasonable person that it is likely to offend – for example sexual touching. Other examples may be less clear, however, you should be aware that harassment will occur if behaviour continues after the recipient has advised you that the behaviour is unacceptable to them.

Harassment can also occur where the unwanted behaviour relates to a perceived characteristic (such as offensive jokes or comments based on the assumption someone is gay, even if they are not) or due to their association with someone else (such as harassment related to their partner having a disability for example). See Rustington Parish Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

All Personnel must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity and should feel able to challenge behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.

It is important to recognise that bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. Constructive and fair feedback about your behaviour or performance from your manager or colleagues/Councillors is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routines, and should not be interpreted as anything different.

## **Victimisation**

Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e. you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and Rustington Parish Council will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

## **Reporting Concerns**

### **What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a member of the public or supplier (as opposed to a colleague)**

If you are being bullied or harassed by someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with your Line Manager in the first instance or, with the Clerk of the Council. Any such report will be taken seriously, and we will decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.

### **What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a Rustington Parish Councillor:**

If you are being bullied or harassed by a Rustington Parish Councillor, please raise this with the Clerk of the Council or Chairman of the Rustington Parish Council in the first instance. They will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you. There are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. The Informal Resolution is described below. Formal concerns regarding potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct must be investigated by the Monitoring Officer.

Rustington Parish Council will consider reasonable measures to protect your health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties or change of work location, not attending meetings with the person about whom the complaint has been made etc.

**What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to harassment or bullying:** If you witness such behaviour you should report the incident in confidence to the Clerk of the Council. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

**What you should do if you are being bullied or harassed by another member of staff:** If you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague or contractor, there are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. These are described below.

### Informal Resolution

If you are being bullied or harassed, you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to Rustington Parish

Council's Policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask the Clerk of the Council, your Line Manager or a colleague to put this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

If the above approach does not work or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by your own Line Manager, you should raise the issue with the Clerk of the Council. (If your concern relates to the Clerk, you should raise it with the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee). The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee will discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by telling the alleged perpetrator, without prejudicing the matter, that:

- there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a member of Rustington Parish Council Personnel
- such behaviour is contrary to our Policy
- for employees, the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence

It may be possible for this conversation to take place with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. The person dealing with it will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances we may be able to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The Clerk of the Council (or the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee) will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as extremely serious allegation or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step.

### Raising a Formal Complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about bullying and harassment through Rustington Parish Council's Grievance Procedure. You should raise your complaint to the Clerk of the Council or the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s) where they are employed.

The Clerk of the Council or the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee will appoint someone to investigate your complaint in line with the Grievance Policy. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s),

- The nature of the harassment or bullying,
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred,
- The names of any witnesses and
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally.

The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be told your name and the details of your grievance in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, we will consider whether it is appropriate to make temporary adjustments to working arrangements whilst the matter is being investigated.

Where your complaint relates to potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct, these will need to be investigated by the Monitoring Officer at Arun District Council. Rustington Parish Council will consider any adjustments to support you in your work and to manage the relationship with the Rustington Parish Councillor the allegations relate to, while the investigation proceeds.

Investigations will be carried out promptly (without unreasonable delay), sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. When carrying out any investigations, we will ensure that individuals' personal data is handled in accordance with the data protection policy.

Rustington Parish Council will consider how to protect your health and wellbeing whilst the investigation is taking place and discuss this with you. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the Investigator may want to meet with you to understand better your complaint (see the Grievance Policy for further information, and details of your right to be accompanied).

After the investigation, a Panel will meet with you to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation in accordance with the Grievance Procedure. At the meeting you may be accompanied by a fellow worker or a Trade Union Official.

Following the conclusion of the hearing the Panel will write to you to inform you of the decision and to notify you of your right to appeal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the decision. Your appeal will be heard under the appeal process that is described in the Grievance Procedure.

### **The use of the Disciplinary Procedure**

If at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our Disciplinary Procedure. We will keep you informed of the outcome.

*This is a non-contractual policy and procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.*



# **RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **DISCIPLINARY POLICY**

**(Adopted 24 March 2025)**

## **DISCIPLINARY POLICY**

### **Introduction**

- 1 This Policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>).
- 2 It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. [https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG\\_Guide\\_Feb\\_2019.pdf](https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf)
- 3 The Policy is designed to help Council Personnel improve unsatisfactory conduct and performance in their job. Wherever possible, the Council will try to resolve its concerns about Personnel' behaviour informally, without starting the formal procedure set out below.
- 4 The Policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 5 This Policy confirms:
  - Informal coaching and supervision will be considered, where appropriate, to improve conduct and/or attendance
  - The Council will fully investigate the facts of each case
  - The Council recognises that misconduct and unsatisfactory work performance are different issues. The Disciplinary Policy will also apply to work performance issues to ensure that all alleged instances of Personnel' underperformance are dealt with fairly and in a way that is consistent with required standards. However, the Disciplinary Policy will only be used when performance management proves ineffective. For more information see ACAS "Performance Management" at <https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6608>
  - Personnel will be informed in writing about the nature of the complaint against them and given the opportunity to state their case
  - Personnel will be provided, where appropriate, with written copies of evidence and relevant witness statements in advance of a Disciplinary Hearing
  - Personnel may be accompanied or represented by a companion - a workplace colleague, a Trade Union Representative or a Trade Union Official - at any investigatory, disciplinary or appeal meeting. The companion is permitted to address such meetings, to put the employee's case and confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining his/her case
  - The Council will give employees reasonable notice of any meetings in this procedure. Employees must make all reasonable efforts to attend. Failure to attend any meeting may result in it going ahead and a decision being taken. An employee who does not attend a meeting will be given the opportunity to be represented and to make written submissions

- If the employee's companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within 7 calendar days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date
- Any changes to specified time limits in the Council's procedure must be agreed by the employee and the Council
- Information about an employee's disciplinary matter will be restricted to those involved in the disciplinary process. A record of the reason for disciplinary action and the action taken by the Council is confidential to the employee. The employee's disciplinary records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the disciplinary procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition
- Personnel have the right to appeal against any disciplinary decision. The appeal decision is final
- If an employee who is already subject to the Council's Disciplinary Procedure raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after the completion of the Disciplinary Procedure
- Disciplinary action taken by the Council can include a written warning, final written warning or dismissal
- This procedure may be implemented at any stage if the employee's alleged misconduct warrants this
- Except for gross misconduct when an employee may be dismissed without notice, the Council will not dismiss an employee on the first occasion that it decides there has been misconduct
- If an employee is suspended following allegations of misconduct, it will be on full pay and only for such time as is necessary. Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction. The Council will write to the employee to confirm any period of suspension and the reasons for it,
- The Council may consider mediation at any stage of the disciplinary procedure where appropriate (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process that requires the consent of affected parties

### **Examples of Misconduct**

6 Misconduct is employee behaviour that can lead to the employer taking disciplinary action. The following list contains some examples of misconduct: The list is not exhaustive.

- unauthorised absence
- poor timekeeping
- misuse of the Council's resources and facilities including telephone, email and internet
- inappropriate behaviour
- refusal to follow reasonable instructions
- breach of Health and Safety rules.



## **Examples of Gross Misconduct**

- 7 Gross Misconduct is misconduct that is so serious that it is likely to lead to dismissal without Notice. The following list contains some examples of Gross Misconduct: The list is not exhaustive

- bullying, discrimination and harassment
- incapacity at work because of alcohol or drugs
- violent behaviour
- fraud or theft
- gross negligence
- gross insubordination
- serious breaches of council policies and procedures e.g. the Health and Safety Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy and any policies regarding the use of Information Technology
- serious and deliberate damage to property
- use of the Internet or Email to access pornographic, obscene or offensive material
- disclosure of confidential information.

## **Suspension**

- 8 If allegations of Gross Misconduct or Serious Misconduct are made, the council may suspend the employee while further investigations are carried out. Suspension will be on full pay. Suspension does not imply any determination of guilt or innocence, as it is merely a measure to enable further investigation.
- 9 While on suspension, the employee is required to be available during normal hours of work in the event that the Council needs to make contact. The employee must not contact or attempt to contact or influence anyone connected with the investigation in any way or to discuss this matter with any other employee or Councillor.
- 10 The employee must not attend work. The Council will make arrangements for the employee to access any information or documents required to respond to any allegations.

## **Examples of unsatisfactory work performance**

- 11 The following list contains some examples of unsatisfactory work performance: The list is not exhaustive.
- inadequate application of management instructions/office procedures
  - inadequate IT skills
  - unsatisfactory management of staff
  - unsatisfactory communication skills.

## **The Procedure**

- 12 Preliminary enquiries. The Council may make preliminary enquiries to establish the basic facts of what has happened in order to understand whether there may be a case to answer under the disciplinary procedure.
- 13 If the employee's manager believes there may be a disciplinary case to answer, the Council may initiate a more detailed investigation undertaken to establish the facts of a situation or to establish the perspective of others who may have witnessed misconduct.
- 14 Informal Procedures. Where minor concerns about conduct become apparent, it is the manager's responsibility to raise this with the employee and clarify the improvements required. A file note will be made and kept by the manager. The informal discussions are not part of the formal disciplinary procedure. If the conduct fails to improve, or if further matters of conduct become apparent, the manager may decide to formalise the discussions and invite the employee to a first stage disciplinary hearing.

## **Disciplinary Investigation**

- 15 A formal disciplinary investigation may sometimes be required to establish the facts and whether there is a disciplinary case to answer.
- 16 If a formal disciplinary investigation is required, the Clerk of the Council in conjunction with the Finance and General Purposes Committee will appoint an Investigator who will be responsible for undertaking a fact-finding exercise to collect all relevant information. The Investigator will be independent and will normally be a councillor. If the Finance and General Purposes Committee considers that there are no councillors who are independent (for example, because they all have direct involvement in the allegations about the employee), it will appoint someone from outside the Council. The Investigator will be appointed as soon as possible after the allegations have been made. The Finance and General Purposes Committee will inform the Investigator of the terms of reference of the investigation. The terms of reference should specify:
  - the allegations or events that the investigation is required to examine
  - whether a recommendation is required
  - how the findings should be presented. For example, an Investigator will often be required to present the findings in the form of a written report
  - who the findings should be reported to and who to contact for further direction if unexpected issues arise or advice is needed.
- 17 The Investigator will be asked to submit their findings usually within 35 Calendar days of appointment where possible. In cases of alleged unsatisfactory performance or of allegations of minor misconduct, the appointment of an Investigator may not be necessary and the Council may decide to commence disciplinary proceedings at the next stage - the disciplinary meeting (see paragraph 22).
- 18 The Finance and General Purposes Committee will notify the employee in writing of the alleged misconduct and details of the person undertaking the investigation. The employee may be asked to meet an Investigator as part of the disciplinary

investigation. The employee will be given sufficient notice of the meeting with the Investigator so that they have reasonable time to prepare for it. The letter will explain the investigatory process and that the meeting is part of that process. The employee will be provided with a copy of the Council's Disciplinary Policy. The Council will also inform the employee that when they meet with the Investigator, they will have the opportunity to comment on the allegations of misconduct.

- 19 Personnel may be accompanied or represented by a workplace colleague, a Trade Union Representative or a Trade Union Official at any investigatory meeting.
- 20 If there are other persons (e.g. Personnel, Councillors, members of the public or the Council's contractors) who can provide relevant information, the Investigator should try to obtain it from them in advance of the meeting with the employee.
- 21 The Investigator has no authority to take disciplinary action. Their role is to establish the facts of the case as quickly as possible and prepare a report that recommends to the Finance and General Purposes Committee whether or not disciplinary action should be considered under the Policy.
- 22 The Investigator's report will contain their recommendations and the findings on which they were based. They will recommend either:
  - the employee has no case to answer and there should be no further action under the Council's disciplinary procedure
  - the matter is not serious enough to justify further use of the disciplinary procedure and can be dealt with informally or
  - the employee has a case to answer and a formal hearing should be convened under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- 23 The Investigator will submit the report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee which will decide whether further action will be taken.
- 24 If the Council decides that it will not take disciplinary action, it may consider whether mediation would be appropriate in the circumstances.

### **The Disciplinary Meeting**

- 25 If the Finance and General Purposes Committee decides that there is a case to answer, it will appoint a Sub-Committee of 3 councillors, to formally hear the allegations. The Sub-Committee will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. The Investigator shall not sit on the Sub-Committee.
- 26 No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the Sub-Committee. The employee will be invited, in writing, to attend a disciplinary meeting. The Sub-Committee's letter will confirm the following:
  - the names of its Chairman and other two members
  - details of the alleged misconduct, its possible consequences and the employee's statutory right to be accompanied at the meeting

- a copy of the information provided to the sub-committee which may include the investigation report, supporting evidence and a copy of the Council's Disciplinary Policy
- the time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing so that they have sufficient time to prepare for it
- that witnesses may attend on the employee's and the Council's behalf and that both parties should inform each other of their witnesses' names at least 2 working days before the meeting
- that the employee may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a Trade Union Representative or a Trade Union Official

27 The purpose of the Disciplinary Meeting Hearing is for the allegations to be put to the employee and then for the employee to give their perspective. It will be conducted as follows:

- the Chairman will introduce the members of the Sub-Committee to the employee and explain the arrangements for the hearing
- the Chairman will set out the allegations and invite the Investigator to present the findings of the investigation report (if there has been a previous investigation)
- the Chairman will invite the employee to present their account
- the employee (or the companion) will set out their case and present evidence (including any witnesses and/or witness statements)
- any member of the Sub-Committee and the employee (or the companion) may question the Investigator and any witness
- the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up

28 The Chairman will provide the employee with the Sub-Committee's decision with reasons, in writing, within 7 calendar days of the meeting. The Chairman will also notify the employee of the right to appeal the decision.

29 The Disciplinary Meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be further investigated by the Sub-Committee.

### **Disciplinary Action**

30 If the Sub-Committee decides that there should be disciplinary action, it may be any of the following:

#### **First Written Warning**

31 If the employee's conduct has fallen beneath acceptable standards, a first written warning will be issued. A first written warning will set out:

- the reason for the written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action
- the employee's right of appeal

- that a note confirming the written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

#### Final Written Warning

- 32 If the offence is sufficiently serious, or if there is further misconduct or a failure to improve sufficiently during the currency of a prior warning, the employee will be given a final written warning. A final written warning will set out:
- the reason for the final written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
  - that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal
  - the employee's right of appeal
  - that a note confirming the final written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

#### Dismissal

- 33 The Council may dismiss:
- for Gross Misconduct
  - if there is no improvement within the specified time period, in the conduct which has been the subject of a final written warning
  - if another instance of misconduct has occurred and a final written warning has already been issued and remains in force.
- 34 The Council will consider very carefully a decision to dismiss. If an employee is dismissed, they will receive a written statement of the reasons for their dismissal, the date on which the employment will end and details of their right of appeal. If the Sub-Committee decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file. Action taken as a result of the disciplinary meeting will remain in force unless it is modified as a result of an appeal.

#### **The Appeal**

- 35 An employee who is the subject of disciplinary action will be notified of the right of appeal. Their written notice of appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving written notice of the disciplinary action and must specify the grounds for appeal.
- 36 The grounds for appeal include;
- a failure by the Council to follow its disciplinary Policy
  - the Sub-Committee's disciplinary decision was not supported by the evidence
  - the disciplinary action was too severe in the circumstances of the case
  - new evidence has come to light since the disciplinary meeting.

- 37 Where possible, the appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee who have not previously been involved in the case. This includes the Investigator. There may be insufficient members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the Appeal Panel will be a committee of 3 members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Appeal Panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.
- 38 The employee will be notified, in writing, within 14 calendar days of receipt of the notice of appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a Trade Union Representative or a Trade Union Official.
- 39 At the Appeal Meeting, the Chairman will:
- introduce the Panel members to the employee
  - explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the disciplinary decision
  - explain the action that the appeal Panel may take.
- 40 The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds for appeal.
- 41 The Chairman will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the Panel's reasons, in writing, usually within five working days of the appeal hearing.
- 42 The Appeal Panel may decide to uphold the disciplinary decision of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, substitute a less serious sanction or decide that no disciplinary action is necessary. If it decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file.
- 43 If an appeal against dismissal is upheld, the employee will be paid in full for the period from the date of dismissal and continuity of service will be preserved.
- 44 The Appeal Panel's decision is final.

Date of Council meeting: 24 March 2025

Supersedes: Disciplinary Procedure 30/05/2018

Policy effective from: 25 March 2025

Date for next review: 1 March 2026



**RUSTINGTON  
PARISH COUNCIL**

**EQUALITY & DIVERSITY  
POLICY**

**(Adopted 24 March 2025)**

**RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

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## **Our commitment**

The Council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination.

This policy is intended to assist the Council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

## **The law**

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

The Council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

## **Types of unlawful discrimination**

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they don't, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

### **Equal opportunities in employment**

The Council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

#### Recruitment

Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

#### Working practices

The Council will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the Council considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. The Council will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. The Council will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

#### Equal opportunities monitoring

The Council will monitor the ethnic, sex/gender and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

The Council treats personal data collected for reviewing equality and diversity in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the Council's privacy notices.

### **Dignity at work**

The Council has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

### **People not employed by the Council**

The Council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use the services provided by the Council.

You should report any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others to the Council who will take appropriate action.

### **Training and prevention**

The Council will raise awareness of equal opportunities to those likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.

The Council will raise awareness of all staff engaged to work at the Council to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the dignity at work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment.

We will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of staff. If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other local Parish Councils.

### **Your responsibilities**

Every employee is required to assist the Council to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the Council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

### **Grievances**

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use the Council's grievance procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy.

The Council will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

### **Monitoring and review**

This policy will be monitored periodically by the Council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law.

Date of Council meeting: 24 March 2025

Supersedes: Equality & Diversity Policy March 2024

Policy effective from: 25 March 2025

Date for next review: 1 March 2026



# **RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **GRIEVANCE POLICY**

**(Adopted 24 March 2025)**

# RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL'S GRIEVANCE POLICY

## Introduction

1. This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>).
2. It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. ([https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG\\_Guide\\_Feb\\_2019.pdf](https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf) ).
3. It also takes into account relevant law affecting Councils.
4. It aims to encourage and maintain good relationships between the Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complaints about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
5. Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager.
6. This policy confirms:
  - employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a companion who can be a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official. This includes any meeting held with them to hear about, gather facts about, discuss, consider or resolve their grievance. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for their grievance/appeal and to confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining their case.
  - the Council will give employees reasonable notice of the date of the grievance/appeal meetings. Employees and their companions must make all reasonable efforts to attend. If the companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date
  - any changes to specified time limits must be agreed by the employee and the Council
  - an employee has the right to appeal against the decision about their grievance. The appeal decision is final
  - information about an employee's grievance will be restricted to those involved in the grievance process. A record of the reason for the grievance, its outcome and action taken is confidential to the employee. The employee's grievance records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

- audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition
- if an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after completion of the disciplinary procedure
- if a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if they raised the grievance in good faith
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the grievance procedure where appropriate, (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process which requires the consent of affected parties
- Employees can only use all stages of the grievance procedure if the complaint is not a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. Employees can use the informal stage of the council's grievance procedure (paragraph 4) to deal with all grievance issues, including a complaint about a councillor. Employees cannot use the formal stages of the council's grievance procedure for a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. If the complaint about the councillor is not resolved at the informal stage, the employee can contact the monitoring officer of Arun District Council who will inform the employee whether or not the complaint can be dealt with under the code of conduct. If it does not concern the code of conduct, the employee can make a formal complaint under the council's grievance procedure (see paragraph 5)
- the Council may engage external investigators, grievance or appeal panels for the purposes of the process.
- If the grievance is a code of conduct complaint against a councillor, the employee cannot proceed with it beyond the informal stage of the council's grievance procedure. However, whatever the complaint, the council has a duty of care to its employees. It must take all reasonable steps to ensure employees have a safe working environment, for example by undertaking risk assessments, by ensuring staff and councillors are properly trained and by protecting staff from bullying, harassment and all forms of discrimination
- If an employee considers that the grievance concerns their safety within the working environment, whether or not it also concerns a complaint against a councillor, the employee should raise these safety concerns with their line manager at the informal stage of the grievance procedure. The council will consider whether it should take further action in this matter in accordance with any of its employment policies (for example its health and safety policy or its dignity at work policy) and in accordance with the code of conduct regime

### **Informal Grievance Procedure**

7. The Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and as quickly as possible. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with their manager to see if an informal solution is possible. Both should try to resolve the matter at this stage. If the employee does not want to discuss the grievance with their manager (for example, because it concerns the manager), the employee should contact the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee or, if appropriate, another member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. If the

employee's complaint is about a councillor, it may be appropriate to involve that councillor at the informal stage. This will require both the employee's and the councillor's consent.

### **Formal Grievance Procedure**

8. If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally and the employee's complaint is not one that should be dealt with as a code of conduct complaint (see above), the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
9. The Finance and General Purposes Committee will appoint three members of the Personnel Sub-Committee, to form a Grievance Meeting Panel (GMP), to hear the grievance in the event that the grievance is raised by or relates to the Clerk. Where the grievance is not raised by or relates to the Clerk, the Finance and General Purposes Committee may appoint the Clerk to hear the Grievance. The GMP will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the GMP.

### **Investigation**

10. If the GMP decides that it is appropriate, (e.g. if the grievance is complex), it may appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation before the grievance meeting to establish the facts of the case. The investigator may be an appropriate employee, Councillor or external party. The investigation may include interviews (e.g. the employee submitting the grievance, other employees, councillors or members of the public).
11. The investigator will summarise their findings (usually within an investigation report) and present their findings to the GMP.

### **Notification**

12. Within 14 calendar days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance (this may be longer if there is an investigation), the employee will normally be asked, in writing, to attend a grievance meeting. The written notification will include the following:
  - the names of its Chairman and other members
  - the date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will normally be within 35 calendar days of when the Council received the grievance
  - the employee's right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
  - a copy of the Council's grievance policy
  - confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend (or submit witness statements) on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of their witnesses as soon as possible before the meeting
  - confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence in advance of the meeting, usually with at least two days' notice
  - findings of the investigation if there has been an investigation

- an invitation for the employee to request any adjustments to be made for the hearing (for example where a person has a health condition).

### **The Grievance Meeting**

13. At the grievance meeting:

- the Chairman will introduce the members of the GMP to the employee
- the employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and present the evidence
- the Chairman will ask the employee questions about the information presented and will want to understand what action do they want the Council to take
- any member of the GMP and the employee (or the companion) may question any witness
- the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up the case
- a grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the GMP.

14. The Chairman will provide the employee with the GMP's decision, in writing, usually within 7 calendar days of the meeting though may be longer e.g. where further investigations are required. The letter will notify the employee of the action, if any, that the Council will take and of the employee's right to appeal.

### **The Appeal**

15. If an employee decides that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved by the GMP, they may submit a written appeal to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. An appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving the GMP's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.

16. Appeals may be raised on a number of grounds, e.g.:

- a failure by the Council to follow its grievance policy
- the decision was not supported by the evidence
- the action proposed by the GMP was inadequate/inappropriate
- new evidence has come to light since the grievance meeting.

17. The appeal will be heard by an Appeal Panel of three members of the Personnel Sub-Committee who have not previously been involved in the case. There may be insufficient members of the Personnel Sub-Committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the Appeal Panel will be a committee of three Council members who may include members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Council may engage external parties if there are insufficient councillors to form the Appeal Panel. The Appeal Panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

18. The employee will be notified, in writing, usually within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will normally take place within 35 calendar days of the Council's receipt of the appeal. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.



19. At the appeal meeting, the Chairman will:
  - introduce the Appeal Panel members to the employee
  - explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the decision of the GMP
  - explain the action that the Appeal Panel may take.
20. The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of appeal.
21. The Chairman will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the Appeal Panel's reasons, in writing, and when they are likely to receive the letter. This may be within 14 calendar days of the appeal meeting however will be longer where further investigations are required.
22. The Appeal Panel may decide to uphold the decision of the GMP or substitute its own decision.
23. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

Date of Council meeting: 24 March 2025

Supersedes: Grievance Procedure May 2018

Policy effective from: 25 March 2025

Date for next review: 1 March 2026

**FOR RELEASE ON FRIDAY 21 MARCH**

**West Sussex Councils Submit Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation, Seek Clarity on Key Issues**

West Sussex councils have submitted their draft interim plan for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon, outlining their progress and seeking guidance on several critical issues to ensure a successful final submission in September 2025.

The interim plan, submitted by West Sussex Leaders and Chief Executives, emphasises the councils' commitment to devolution and a route map for creating unitary authorities that will deliver the best outcomes for citizens. The interim plan outlines potential options for new council structures. It also highlights the opportunity for public service reform and improved outcomes, particularly in areas such as homelessness prevention and social care.

The councils have also proposed how to address democratic representation, governance arrangements, and how new structures will support devolution ambitions. While acknowledging limited local engagement due to the tight timeline, they have committed to extensive consultation with local residents, businesses and wider stakeholders as proposals develop.

Indicative costs for preparing proposals and implementation have been provided, along with arrangements for inter-council cooperation and decision-making.

However, several key questions remain that require clarification from the government. Chief amongst these is the size and boundaries of potential new unitary authorities, particularly concerning any required expansion of Brighton & Hove. In addition, guidance is sought on how Crawley fits the unitarisation and devolution agenda given its strong economic links to Surrey. The councils are seeking clear guidelines on population size limits, funding, timelines, and the impact of the Devolution Bill.

"We are making good progress, but we need clarity on these issues to avoid costly delays and ensure we develop the most effective structures for our communities," said Michael Jones, Leader of Crawley Borough Council on behalf of the West Sussex Leaders. "We are committed to working collaboratively to create a shared evidence base and develop proposals that reflect the unique needs of our area."

"We are excited about the opportunities that LGR brings for public service reform and delivering significant improvements for local communities," Michael Jones added. "We are working diligently to ensure a smooth transition and a positive legacy for West Sussex."

The councils are seeking urgent answers to their questions from the government to maintain momentum and ensure a robust final submission in September.

**Contact:**

Samantha Sheppard, Crawley Borough Council  
samantha.sheppard@crawley.gov.uk

# West Sussex LGR Interim Submission

## 21 March 2025

Dear Minister,

We are writing to you as requested with an update on our interim plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in West Sussex.

We are pleased to be part of the priority programme for devolution and we are all committed to the opportunities which we believe that devolution will bring to the region. We are working closely together to develop plans which will maximise opportunities for growth as well as creating new unitaries which will offer the very best outcomes for our citizens. We are making good progress towards the planned September submission for which we are asking for some specific guidance to help us stay on that track.

You will note that these are options for the West Sussex footprint in line with the invitation letter you sent. We know from our discussions with Brighton and Hove that they are considering their options and while we acknowledge their need to make a decision as to what is best for the city, this does have a potentially material impact on West and/or East Sussex councils. Therefore, one of the questions we would like guidance on is whether Brighton & Hove will be compelled to grow or whether it can stay at its current size? Should Brighton & Hove stay the same size, there is an impact on the design of the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) and the need to have a balanced set of unitaries in order to have sensible representation.

The timing of any preference emerging from Brighton & Hove is critical to the pace at which West Sussex authorities can proceed and the shape of the proposal that will emerge. Representations are being made to ensure the implications of this dependency are understood whilst seeking to be respectful of Brighton & Hove's right to explore such options.

We would also note that Crawley is considering its options with respect to LGR in Surrey, something that we expect will be resolved by May 2025 but has meant that progress with options for West Sussex are dependent on this as well as the Brighton & Hove question. If Crawley is included in the Surrey submission then we will need guidance as to how this impacts our decision making and timetable.

We are keen to continue to engage with the department and the wider government and we look forward to your visit to the region where you will find out more about what makes Sussex so special.

Yours sincerely



Leader, Crawley Borough Council on behalf of all the West Sussex Leaders

## **West Sussex councils' interim plan submission for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

West Sussex is making good progress with LGR and there are a number of areas where greater clarity would be welcome in order to help refine options and build consensus. No single model has yet been agreed on and the councils are working together to create a shared evidence base in order to better inform the process of identifying, forming and then deciding on the possible configurations.

We have kept an open dialogue with other councils across the wider Sussex area. We are aware of the work that councils in East Sussex have undertaken and their proposal of a single unitary for their county. We also note the emerging position of Brighton & Hove to remain a smaller unitary either in its current form or with marginal changes. We will work with partners to develop a sensible whole Sussex solution for September.

### **a) Identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.**

We would emphasise our commitment to LGR and the belief in the opportunities it presents for redesigning services to meet current and future community needs. However, proceeding at the required pace necessitates greater clarity to avoid costly and unproductive work and potential errors. As local and central governments redistribute powers and responsibilities, this clarity becomes even more crucial. We urgently need answers to the following questions in order to expedite this process.

1. While the 500K population size guide is clearly stated, there have been indications of significant flexibility in this number and this has led to confusion on whether this guideline is still applicable. It is imperative that the Government sets out the upper and lower population limits of acceptable Unitary proposals and the criteria by which they will be judged. This is material for West Sussex discussions. At 900K population West Sussex would be one of largest single unitaries in the country and guidance is needed as to whether there are upper and/or lower limits on size.
2. The development work in West Sussex has assumed that each sovereign body needs to develop proposals which are in the best interests of the places that they represent and not impose on other areas. In order to make progress the West Sussex councils are working with a set of assumptions for planning purposes. These are not intended to be definitive, but allow progress to be made while other areas reach agreement about their preferences. These assumptions are:

- a. Any changes to Brighton & Hove's footprint would be marginal (i.e. ward rather than district level) and do not need to affect the development of proposals for West Sussex which are outlined below
  - b. East Sussex have a strong preference to create a unitary based on their current county footprint
3. In order to make effective use of resources and most importantly attempt to mitigate the huge uncertainty that staff and residents are experiencing, clarity is needed with respect to the different timelines for various policy agendas as these have material effects on both financial resilience and organisational design. Specifically:
  - a. When can more clarity about the nature of the funding review be available; will the September business case be predicated on the future financial landscape or the current one?
  - b. What are your expectations with respect to the design of the MCA and new unitaries and the implementation of the new planning regime? Can you confirm that there is clarity on this in order to confidently design and cost these services for September?
  - c. The Devolution Bill is assumed to have a significant impact on this process, if this is the case what is the risk of considerable work being carried before September and then having to be revisited because of the impacts of the Bill?
4. We believe that the creation of unitaries which reflect our communities could entail some changes to district and borough boundaries, to reflect local communities.
  - a. Can you reassure us that the boundary commission and yourselves will have the resources available to be able to support this more complex process if we include these changes in our September submission?
  - b. If yes, what level of boundary changes will be acceptable and deliverable?
  - c. If the answer is no, please advise on the implications of us including these changes in our submission
5. Can you confirm how funding will flow with respect to this preparatory phase and into the implementation phase, will it be made available directly to all participants in the process?

**b) Identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.**

The position in Sussex is made complex by the need to take account of the needs of neighbouring areas and for the final proposals to support devolution arrangements. There are two related matters, one a dependency, that needs to be addressed prior to the final options for West Sussex to emerge:

1. Any requirement from the Government for the footprint of Brighton & Hove to expand in such a way that could affect either West or East Sussex. It is noted that Brighton & Hove are undertaking in-borough consultation on such proposals, specifically an expansion eastward or westward along the coast, or northwards following A23 connectivity. The timing of any preference emerging from Brighton & Hove is critical to the pace at which West Sussex authorities can proceed and the shape of the proposal that will emerge. Representations are being made to ensure that the implications of this dependency are understood whilst seeking to be respectful of Brighton & Hove's right to explore such options.
2. How Crawley best fits both the unitarisation and devolution agendas given the economic links to the north and in particular Reigate and Banstead. This £13.2bn economic functioning area at the heart of the Gatwick Diamond would be divided into two separate MCAs if based on traditional county boundaries. Given Surrey is on a unique trajectory, with its LGR proposals due by May 2025 (shadow elections in 2026), it seems likely this matter will be resolved relatively quickly.

Given these factors, and the need for further development work on options, the Leaders of the authorities within West Sussex have agreed to reference generic options only for this submission:

- A large single unitary either based upon the existing county footprint, or an amended one should Crawley discussions with Surrey and/or Brighton and Hove's future plans crystallise
- Two smaller unitaries, the footprint of which are still being discussed. (We reserve the right to reconsider the number of unitaries being proposed depending on emerging guidance)



The councils have not yet started to model finances in any detail as the focus has been on narrowing the list of possible options. We would note however that we are concerned that financial resilience will be dependent on funding reform and cannot be delivered by local government reorganisation, while accepting that there will be some savings to be made.

**c) Include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.**

West Sussex councils are excited about the opportunity that unitarisation brings with respect to public service reform and delivering significant improvements for local communities. As proposals are developed the emphasis will be on:

- Improving outcomes with earlier intervention
- Deployment of technology to ensure that public services are more efficient, reflect public expectations and free up front line staff to work more effectively
- Strengthen community cohesion and sense of place

There is a significant opportunity to manage demand more effectively by shifting to a more preventative model. This does not necessarily reduce costs but will improve outcomes and avoid future costs, we anticipate this being a significant feature of our September submission. It's also fundamentally better for our residents for us to be shifting to a more 'upstream' model and working with people before their need becomes acute. We will be looking specifically at a number of areas in order to describe the potential of new delivery models to address need and reduce demand more effectively. The two main initial areas will be:

- The potential to accelerate and deepen work on homelessness prevention.
- The impact that more place based social care model could have when combined with the NHS shift to work in current district and borough footprints.

In the medium term, by harnessing economies of scale and implementing more efficient working practices, we expect local government reorganisation to provide opportunities to reduce operating costs, though this work has yet to be undertaken. It should be noted that based on recent reorganisations the savings realised have been a lot less than indicated in the PWC report on which the 500K figure in the white paper is based. Indeed, those authorities reorganised as recently as 2023, are experiencing significant financial challenges. The government will be aware that changes at the scale anticipated across the sector, will involve significant transition and harmonisation costs, which when added to the current financial challenges of the sector, is likely to mean costs will increase rather than reduce.

**d) Include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.**

The councils have not formed a view on this point but there is clear consensus on the need to preserve representation of place and create manageable workloads for both members and officers. The September proposals will outline how democratic representation and an inclusive approach to participation in public life is to be built into the future design and proposals will focus on strengthening local democracy. This is not simply the case for the unitary authorities but needs to be reflected in the design of the MCA and the 'strong leader' model of the mayor needs to be supported by strong representative democracy of place. Detailed work on this question will be included in the analysis work that will underpin the September business case submission. In order to progress this work guidance from the Boundary Commission would be welcome and we have referenced this in section (a).

Governance of the new council(s) will also be considered as part of the business case. West Sussex has both densely populated urban areas and sparsely populated rural ones, so arrangements will need to be tailored to reflect these local circumstances and to ensure that the new unitary council(s) remain sensitive to local characteristics and needs. This may include establishment of neighbourhood councils or committees and will be designed in partnership with existing structures such as Town and Parish councils who are important members of the local government fabric.

**e) Include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.**

The existing councils in West Sussex have strong relationships with each other and with other public sector partners. The footprint of our proposed MCA mirrors that of the PCC and ICB and this will provide a firm platform for work both on LGR and once the Mayor and MCA is in place.

While this work programme will need to be developed there are a number of clear opportunities to West Sussex in the devolution programme:

- The ability to join up transport arrangements and support travel to work patterns across bus and rail with a range of interventions:
  - Sussex wide plan for active and environmentally sustainable travel
  - Road / Bus links designed to work for residents
  - More effective lobbying to unlock investment in road infrastructure.

- A platform for more focused support for growth projects which deliver high quality jobs throughout Sussex, accelerating projects and sectors such as:
  - Development of the science and technology park in Mid Sussex
  - Unblocking planning restrictions which are inhibiting growth at Manor Royal in Crawley
  - Enhanced support for the vibrant digital and creative sector, including the highly successful gaming cluster
- With the anticipated development of strategic planning functions within the MCA, the unlocking of growth blockers such as water neutrality or flood defences in order to deliver housing and key infrastructure.
- Strategic economic growth opportunities linked to expansion of operations at Gatwick Airport following future decision on the current DCO
- The devolution of environmental powers to Sussex will help preserve and enhance the areas unique natural assets of the South Downs National Park and help further develop the Sussex Bay vision
- Attracting, retaining and upskilling more working age people. A better-balanced population will help us to deliver our productivity ambitions.

West Sussex as an area has an active network of third sector providers and local councils and can draw on the shared assets of Sussex as a whole which has three universities and the South Downs National Park Authority. Long term and mature relationships exist with all of them. We have a history of effective joint working with these partners on a range of projects. Senior leaders (politicians and officers) know each other well and have a shared commitment to work together. They are also well sighted on the issues facing Sussex and the City. This shared knowledge and commitment will help to ensure that unitary structures will complement those of the MCA and will enable the Mayor to focus quickly and effectively on the key issues for the area.

As options for unitary structures are developed, established relationships will be used to ensure none of this history of strong working for the benefit of local communities is lost; rather that it is leveraged still more effectively. In the event of Crawley moving into Surrey, this is something that will need close attention to ensure that we continue to make it work.

**f) Include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.**

Given the rapid timescale for the initial submission, we have been limited on the extent to which we can engage with local communities and stakeholders as there are a number of key outstanding issues to resolve as set out elsewhere in this letter.

Until we have a clearer idea of which geographic footprints are open to us, local engagement is challenging as we do not have enough clarity to set out the potential options coherently at this stage. We plan to seek the views of our residents and stakeholders as soon as possible through inclusive, transparent and meaningful consultation, to ensure that the voices of our community and stakeholders are genuinely heard and considered in the decision-making process.

We have of course worked hard to promote the MHCLG Devolution consultation across West Sussex, including engagement with Town and Parish Councils where they exist, residents, businesses and stakeholders. Included with these messages we have set out the background to Devolution and LGR and the process and timescales for West Sussex to submit our proposal as part of the Devolution Priority Programme.

We are also developing a communications and engagement framework which will be used by all of the West Sussex authorities as we move towards the September submission.

**g) Set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.**

The councils are preparing plans to set up an implementation team involving staff from all councils. Initially the councils have agreed to the release of £200,000 from their own resources to fund consultants and any associated work to draw up the business plan with an expectation that a further commitment of £800K will be needed in order to stand up a small, shared development team and commission research and other key elements of the business case. Beyond that, West Sussex councils seek government funding to cover the significant costs of developing the implementation plan and preparing for Vesting Day as well as the reimbursement of the £1m cost that is anticipated. These costs are a new burden arising from Government policy set out in the devolution white paper and proper funding is needed to ensure that all councils are able to participate in the process, not just those who have access to more discretionary resources. The reality of the asymmetry of financial pictures in place needs to be addressed with some councils being very close to a financial cliff edge and others being in a (relatively) better position.

At this early stage we have used examples from elsewhere to prepare estimates for implementation. These are early estimates and provide a low and high range that will evolve and change as more work is completed. We therefore estimate the cost of implementation to be in the region of £30m but this will clearly need to be properly

calculated when the final options are understood. Updated estimates will be provided in the final business plan to be submitted in September.

**h) Set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.**

The Leaders of all eight councils in West Sussex have responded to the letter from the Local Government Minister on 5 February 2025 by committing to work together to deliver the most effective outcome for the residents of the county. The group are conscious of their status as custodians of good and effective local government in West Sussex and determined to ensure that despite all of the challenges facing the sector currently, that the legacy of these changes is a positive one.

Initial work has been supported by the Chief Executives of the eight councils, with agreement to put in place some shared resource to help deliver a series of programme workstreams designed to help inform the business case and to prepare for the new unitary structures. The Leaders are meeting as a group on a fortnightly basis, with the chairing of the meeting rotating each time. All councils have been involved in the discussions around the creation of these workstreams and the leadership of them is distributed amongst the Chief Executives which is why the unlocking of support for the business case development process is essential to ensure attention is not drawn away from service delivery.

Whilst at this stage there are various views about what might represent the optimal outcome, there is a shared objective to ensure that evaluation and analysis is undertaken transparently and openly, and on the basis of a shared dataset accessible to all of the councils to inform their thinking. This will help ensure that decisions are based on the right information and that whatever the future structure of unitary local government, it has a foundation of good collaborative intent and constructive ways of working. Because some options would involve neighbouring Brighton & Hove City Council, there is a commitment to share methodology and data across the councils, as well as with East Sussex colleagues, and to align or at least cross reference options as they evolve.