

## **Carbrooke Parish Council**

### **Financial Regulations**

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## **1. General**

- 1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the conduct of financial management by the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council. The Financial Regulations must be observed in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2. The Council is responsible in law for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that the Council has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk and the prevention of fraud and corruption.
- 1.3. The Council's accounting control systems must include measures:
  - for the timely production of accounts;
  - that provide for the safe and efficient safeguarding of public money;
  - to prevent and detect inaccuracy and fraud; and
  - identifying the duties of officers.
- 1.4. These Financial Regulations demonstrate how the Council meets these responsibilities and requirements.
- 1.5. At least once a year, prior to approving the Annual Governance Statement, the Council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control which shall be in accordance with proper practices.
- 1.6. A breach of these Regulations by an employee is gross misconduct.
- 1.7. Members of the Council are expected to follow the instructions within these Regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow instructions within these Regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.8. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office to be appointed by the council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO for this Council and these regulations will apply accordingly.
- 1.9. 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 accounting control systems;
  - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
  - maintains the accounting records of the Council up to date in accordance with proper practices;

- assists the Council to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources; and
  - produces financial management information as required by the Council.
- 1.10. The accounting records determined by the RFO shall be sufficient to show and explain the Council's transactions and to enable the RFO to ensure that any income and expenditure account and statement of balances, or record of receipts and payments and additional information, as the case may be, or management information prepared for the council from time to time comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.11. The accounting records determined by the RFO shall in particular contain:
- entries from day to day of all sums of money received and expended by the Council and the matters to which the income and expenditure or receipts and payments account relate;
  - a record of the assets and liabilities of the Council; and
  - wherever relevant, a record of the Council's income and expenditure in relation to claims made, or to be made, for any contribution, grant or subsidy.
- 1.12. The accounting control systems determined by the RFO shall include:
- procedures to ensure that the financial transactions of the Council are recorded as soon as reasonably practicable and as accurately and reasonably as possible;
  - procedures to enable the prevention and detection of inaccuracies and fraud and the ability to reconstruct any lost records;
  - identification of the duties of officers dealing with financial transactions and division of responsibilities of those officers in relation to significant transactions;
  - procedures to ensure that uncollectable amounts, including any bad debts are not submitted to the Council for approval to be written off except with the approval of the RFO and that the approvals are shown in the accounting records; and
  - measures to ensure that risk is properly managed.
- 1.13. The Council is not empowered by these Regulations or otherwise to delegate certain specified decisions. In particular any decision regarding:
- setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);
  - approving accounting statements;
  - approving an annual governance statement;

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<sup>1</sup> Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011/817

- borrowing;
  - writing off bad debts;
  - declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and
  - addressing recommendations in any report from the internal or external auditors,
- shall be a matter for the full Council only.

1.14. In addition, the Council must:

- determine and keep under regular review the bank mandate for all Council bank accounts;
- approve any grant or a single commitment in excess of £2,500; and
- in respect of the annual salary for any employee have regard to recommendations about annual salaries of employees made by any relevant committee in accordance with its terms of reference.

1.15. In these Financial Regulations, references to the Accounts and Audit Regulations or ‘the regulations’ shall mean the regulations issued under the provisions of section 27 of the Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation, and then in force unless otherwise specified.

In these Financial Regulations the term ‘proper practice’ or ‘proper practices’ shall refer to guidance issued in *Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - a Practitioners’ Guide (England)* issued by the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG), available from the websites of NALC and the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

## **2. Accounting and Audit (Internal and External)**

- 2.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, appropriate guidance and proper practices.
- 2.2. The Council has appointed an Internal Control Officer (ICO) to monitor progress against objectives, financial systems and procedures, and budgetary control. The ICO submits three reports to the Council. The ICO verifies bank reconciliations for all accounts produced by the RFO. The ICO signs the reconciliations and the original bank statements as evidence of verification.
- 2.3. The RFO shall complete the annual statement of accounts, annual report, and any related documents of the Council contained in the Annual Return (as specified in proper practices) as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and having certified the accounts shall submit them and report thereon to the Council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

- 2.4. The Council shall ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records, and of its system of internal control in accordance with proper practices. Any officer or member of the Council shall make available such documents and records as appear to the Council to be 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 for that purpose.
- 2.5. The internal auditor shall be appointed by and shall carry out the work in relation to internal controls required by the Council in accordance with proper practices.
- 2.6. The internal auditor shall:
- be competent and independent of the financial operations of the Council;
  - report to Council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual written report during each financial year;
  - to demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, be free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
  - have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council.
- 2.7. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:
- perform any operational duties for the Council;
  - initiate or approve accounting 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.
- 2.8. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as is described in proper practices.
- 2.9. 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 statements of account required by Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 2.10. The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

### **3. Annual Estimates (Budget) and Forward Planning**

- 3.1. The RFO must each year, by no later than December, prepare detailed estimates of all receipts and payments including the use of reserves and all sources of funding for the following financial year in the form of a budget to be considered by the Council.
- 3.2. The Council shall fix the Precept (council tax requirement), and relevant basic amount of council tax to be levied for the ensuing financial year not later than by the end of January each

year. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority and shall supply each member with a copy of the approved annual budget.

- 3.3. The approved annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.
- 3.4. The Council's Budget Sub Committee shall prepare a budget in accordance with the following timetable
  - Prepare a draft budget for the following year at its meeting in October
  - Prepare a final budget for the following year for consideration and approval by no later than its meeting in January.
  - Prepare the Precept for agreement and signing on behalf of the Council by the date required by Breckland Council.

#### **4. Budgetary Control and Authority to Spend**

- 4.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget.
- 4.2. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the Council, having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate.
- 4.3. The RFO regularly provides the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each heading of the Budget, comparing actual expenditure to budgeted expenditure. These statements are prepared at least quarterly.
- 4.4. The clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council after consultation with the Chairman, or in his absence the Vice Chairman, which it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £500. The clerk shall report such action to the Chairman as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.5. No expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.
- 4.6. All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations relating to contracts.

#### **5. Banking Arrangements and Authorisation of Payments**

- 5.1. The Council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council. They shall be regularly reviewed for safety and efficiency.
- 5.2. The RFO shall prepare a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting and, together with the relevant invoices, present the schedule to Council. The Council shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself shall authorise payment by a resolution of the Council.

- 5.3. Two members of the Council shall make online payments/sign cheques drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule referred to in paragraph 5.2.
- 5.4. To indicate agreement of the details shown on its online payments/the cheques the signatories shall initial the invoice or other documentation, and in the case of cheque payments, the cheque counterfoil.

## **6. Payment of Accounts**

- 6.1. All payments shall be effected by online banking, cheques or other order drawn on the Council's bankers.
- 6.2. All invoices shall be examined, verified and certified by the RFO. The RFO shall satisfy himself that the work, goods or services to which the invoice relates shall have been received, carried out, examined and approved.
- 6.3. All payments shall be effected by online banking/cheque or other instructions to the Council's bankers, or otherwise, in accordance with a resolution of Council. (Payments from the Council's accounts with Barclays Bank, Lloyds Bank and the Unity Trust Bank will be made as part of an internet banking facility and will be authorised by two signatories.)
- 6.4. Cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule as presented to the Council shall be signed by two members of the Council in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment. If a member who is also a bank signatory has declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, or has any other interest, in the matter in respect of which the payment is being made, that councillor shall be required to consider Standing Orders, and thereby determine whether it is appropriate and / or permissible to be a signatory to the transaction in question.
- 6.5. To indicate agreement of the details shown on the cheque or order for payment with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall each also initial the cheque counterfoil.
- 6.6. Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at a Council meeting (including immediately before or after such a meeting). Any signatures obtained away from such meetings shall be reported to the Council at the next convenient meeting.
- 6.7. The Council will not maintain any form of cash float. All cash received must be banked intact. Any payments made in cash by the Clerk/RFO (for example for postage or minor stationery items) shall be refunded on a regular basis, at least quarterly.

## **7. Payment of Salaries**

- 7.1. As an employer, the Council shall make arrangements to meet fully the statutory requirements placed on all employers by PAYE and National Insurance legislation. The payment of all salaries shall be made in accordance with payroll records and the rules of PAYE

and National Insurance currently operating, and salary rates shall be as agreed by Council, or duly delegated committee.

- 7.2. Payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be required to be made for tax, national insurance and pension contributions, or similar statutory or discretionary deductions must be made in accordance with the payroll records and on the appropriate dates stipulated in employment contracts, provided that each payment is reported to the next available Council meeting, as set out in these Regulations above.

## **8. Loans and Investments**

- 8.1. All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the Council and shall be for a set period in accordance with Council policy.
- 8.2. The Council shall consider the need for an Investment policy, which, if drawn up, shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any policy shall be reviewed at least annually.
- 8.3. All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the Council and shall be for a set period in accordance with Council policy.
- 8.4. All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the Council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be approved by the Council as to terms and purpose. The terms and conditions shall be reviewed at least annually.
- 8.5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

## **9. Income**

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



- 9.8. The RFO shall promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year end.
- 9.9. Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the Council, the RFO shall take such steps as are agreed by the Council to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

## **10. Orders for Work, Goods and Services**

- 10.1. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained.
- 10.2. Order books shall be controlled by the RFO.
- 10.3. All members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any de minimis provisions in Regulation 11.1 below.
- 10.4. A member may not issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the Council.
- 10.5. The RFO shall verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order, and in the case of new or infrequent purchases or payments, the RFO shall ensure that the statutory authority shall be reported to the meeting at which the order is approved so that the minutes can record the power being used.

## **11. Contracts**

- 11.1. Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:
- a. Every contract shall comply with these Financial Regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that this regulation need not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:
    - i. for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services;
    - ii. for specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants;
    - iii. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which consist of repairs to or parts for existing machinery or equipment or plant;
    - iv. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the Council;

- v. for additional audit work of the external auditor up to an estimated value of £500 (in excess of this sum the Clerk/RFO shall act after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of council); and
  - vi. for goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and / or are only sold at a fixed price.
- b. Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding £2,500 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk shall invite tenders from at least three firms to be taken from the appropriate approved list.
  - c. When applications are made to waive Financial Regulations relating to contracts to enable a price to be negotiated without competition the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the Council.
  - d. The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

## **12. Payments Under Contracts for Building or Other Construction Works**

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

## **13. Stores and Equipment**

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

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

- 14.1. The clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the Council. The RFO shall ensure a record is

maintained of all properties held by the Council, recording the location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

- 14.2. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, in conjunction with a Health and Safety inspection of assets.
- 14.3. No property shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible, movable property does not exceed £50.

## **15. Insurance**

- 15.1. Following the annual risk assessment (per Financial Regulation 17), the RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers.
- 15.2. The RFO shall give prompt notification to the Council of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 15.3. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the Council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.
- 15.4. The RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to Council at the next available meeting.
- 15.5. All appropriate members and employees of the Council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined by the Council, or duly delegated committee.

## **16. Charities**

- 16.1. Where the Council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the 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/RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing document.

## **17. Risk Management**

- 17.1. The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The RFO shall prepare, for approval by the Council, Risk Management policy statements in respect of all activities of the Council. The Council shall review risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements at least annually.
- 17.2. When considering any new activity, the RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council.

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

18.1. It is the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council from time to time. The clerk shall make arrangements to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the Council of any requirement for a consequential amendment to these Financial Regulations.

Approved June 2023. Reviewed without amendment February 2024.

Date of next review: February 2025, unless the law requires sooner.