



STONEHOUSE TOWN COUNCIL

To Members of the Town Business Committee

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Committee to be held on Monday 8th April 2024 at 7pm at the Stonehouse Town Hall/Library, Queens road, Stonehouse, GL10 2QA

Committee Members:

Councillors: John Callinan (Committee Vice Chair), Keith Creighton, Mike Davis (Committee Chair), Carol Kambites, Madelaine Maraboli-Roman, Gary Powell, Wendy Thomson and Theresa Watt

All residents of the Parish are welcome to attend and a period of up to 15 minutes will be set aside at the beginning of the meeting for members of the public to raise questions.

Carlos Novoth

Town Clerk

3rd April 2024

Attendees are reminded that the Proceedings of this meeting may be filmed, photographed or recorded.

A G E N D A

B/688 To receive apologies

B/689 To receive Declarations of Interest

B/690 To approve the minutes of the Business Committee meeting held on 4th March '24

B/691 To receive the latest budget position

B/692 To approve the latest payments list

B/693 To receive the following updates on the programmed High street car park and public conveniences

- Impact of changes to parking restrictions
- Resurfacing and re-lining
- Public Convenience improvements

B/694 To receive an update on the council's investment accounts and consider alternative options

B/695 To recommend for town council approval the council's Financial Risk Assessment

B/696 To recommend for town council approval the updated council policies:

- Financial Regulations
- Standing Orders
- Complaints Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

B/697 To receive updates from the following working groups:

1. Climate Change Action Forum
2. Oldends Lane Development
3. Support Stonehouse
4. Youth
5. Policy
6. Internal Audit Panel

B/698 To note the date of the next meeting - Monday 3rd June 2024

Notes on Agenda items, Business Committee Monday 8th April 2024

B/690 BC Minutes	Draft minutes attached
B/691 Budget report	Report attached
B/692 Payment list	Payment list attached
B/693 Car Park	<p>New Parking Restrictions - Analysis of Stonehouse Car Park Consultation</p> <p><u>Business Staff:</u> Fourteen responses</p> <p>Most respondents support changes. However, repeated concerns re long stay spaces occupied by rail commuters with a suggestion that 23 hr max time limit favours commuters. Several respondents suggested a re-introduction of some parking charges to free up spaces, and one proposes parking permits for Stonehouse workers.</p> <p><u>Non-Business:</u> Twenty-seven responses</p> <p>Generally, supports changes but again multiple concerns about spaces occupied for long periods by rail commuters. Repeated suggestions that charges be re-introduced – both to free up space and generate an income - and that both current 4hr and 23 hr time periods are too long. A maximum of 2 or 3hrs free parking suggested by four respondents. Another proposal for permits for Stonehouse workers and one for permits for Stonehouse High Street residents.</p> <p>Some concerns of overflow parking into surrounding residential streets.</p> <p>Resurfacing and re-lining</p> <p>Stroud District Council (SDC) recently made an announcement that it will be resurfacing and re-lining the High street car park in Stonehouse – this work is planned for the 2024/25 financial year. Officers have been in discussion with SDC and have identified other issues that require improvement such as lighting, boundary maintenance etc. These have been taken on board and will be considered.</p> <p>Public Convenience improvements</p> <p>Stroud District Council (SDC) has also been asked to improve the external cleanliness and maintenance of the public conveniences. Minor improvements to the inside of the toilets are also being considered such as replacing air vents and blanking plates that have gone rusty, steam cleaning the floor surfaces etc. These are considered to provide quick easy wins to radically improve the toilets and encourage visitors to view them more positively</p>
B/694 Investments	<p>In February 2023, Council transferred a large amount of funds from its Lloyds account to CCLA. Since then, the council's Barclays and Nat West accounts have been closed or about to be (Nat West).</p> <p>As at 29th February 2024, CCLA held £645,255.49 of the council's investment portfolio. The remaining reserves are held with the Cambridge, Nationwide and Melton Building Societies and, Charity and Lloyds banks. Access to the council's investments at these institutions has proven to be difficult in recent years.</p> <p>Several recent failed attempts have been made to access the council's accounts at two of these institutions. One resulted in a clear breach of GDPR. In light of this and the ongoing difficulties experienced by Cllrs and Officers in securing helpful information on investments and changing signatories, Officers believe it would be prudent to review the council's investments as a whole.</p>
B/695 Financial risk review	See attached document
B/696 Policies	See attached Policies



**Minutes of a Town Business Committee
held on Monday 4th March '24 at 7.00pm
at the Town Hall**

Present: Councillors, John Callinan (Committee Vice Chair), Keith Creighton, Mike Davis (Committee Chair), Carol Kambites, Madelaine Maraboli-Roman, Wendy Thomson, Theresa Watt

In Attendance: Carlos Novoth (Clerk)

Attendees were reminded that the Proceedings of the meeting could be filmed, photographed or recorded.

There were no members of the public in attendance

B/662 To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Gary Powell

B/663 To receive Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

B/664 To approve the minutes of the Business Committee meeting held on 5th February '24

Committee APPROVED the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting

B/665 To receive the latest budget position

An unexpected income from the owners of the Telecoms mast at Oldends Lane was received.

Committee NOTED the latest budget report totalling 'Actual Net' Income of £411,198.91; Total Actual Net Expenditure of £317,069.69 and Reserve movement of £25,827.35

B/666 To approve the latest payments list

A concern was raised in relation to the invoice presented to the town council for a total cost of £90 for electrical works; it was suggested that the invoice should have provided more detail than it had - the Clerk was asked to enquire further as to the work undertaken, and if satisfied, to make payment.

Committee APPROVED the payment list totalling £25,574.78

B/667 To receive the minutes of the latest Trustees meeting of Stonehouse Community Association

It was noted that the minutes presented were not the latest ones but related to the meeting of Tuesday 11th December '23
Committee received and **NOTED** the minutes.

B/668 To recommend for full council approval Stonehouse Town Football Club's new lease agreement.

Committee received the draft lease. There were concerns about the level of detail on certain issues in relation to the draft lease in addition to the fact that the club had, despite formal recommendations, not sought legal advice. Committee **DEFERRED** recommending approval of the lease until the concerns were addressed.

B/669 To receive the results of the tender evaluations and recommend for full council approval the award of the council's grounds maintenance contract to the successful contractor.

The Clerk presented Committee with an overview of the work undertaken by the Chairs of Environment and Business Committees and the Clerk in evaluating the five Tenders and provided an explanation of the scoring criteria and evaluation outcomes. The evaluation team recommended 'Tenderer One' to be awarded the contract as detailed in the support papers presented at the meeting.

Committee **RECOMMENDS** town council approve the award of the 4 year Grounds Maintenance Contract to Tenderer one.

B/670 To recommend for council approval the following policies:

- **Grant Policy**

It was suggested that all future policies have their formats standardized with page numbers etc. The Chair stated the revised policy had only minor changes. It was agreed that a 3rd bullet point would be added to the 'How do I apply' section to read 'For further advice contact Stonehouse Town Council'. It was also suggested that when reviewing the policy, it should be accompanied by the application form.

Committee **RECOMMENDED** the updated Grant Policy for approval

- **Risk Management Policy**

Committee **RECOMMENDED** the updated Risk Management Policy for approval

- **Health and Safety Policy**

Committee **RECOMMENDED** the updated Health and Safety Policy for approval

- **Code of Conduct**

Committee **RECOMMENDED** the updated County wide Code of Conduct for approval

- **Investment Strategy**

- Committee **RECOMMENDED** the updated the investment Strategy for approval

B/671 To approve The Door's latest funding proposal for March 2024

Committee **APPROVED** the funding proposal for £750.

B/672 To approve the recruitment of a short-term replacement for the Business

Support Officer during her time on maternity leave.

The Clerk explained that the previous replacement for this position had sought a more advantageous post elsewhere and had resigned from his temporary post.

Committee **RESOLVED** to advertise the new vacancy this week (w/c 4th March) and to conduct interviews during w/c 11th March - HR Sub Committee to manage the recruitment process with a view to taking a recommendation to FTC on the 18th March.

B/673 To receive updates from the following working groups:

1. **Climate Change Action Forum** - a meeting is to be held with Bridge Café re hosting the proposed new 'e' bikes
2. **Oldends Lane Development** - Detailed sewer diagrams have now been produced and will be discussed with STFC on Thursday 7th March. The power to the sewer pump will also need to be discussed and detailed
2. **Support Stonehouse** - Leaflets have been produced for the Warm Space and social contact initiative which will need volunteer help to distribute to key areas of the community
3. **Youth** - the next meeting with the Door is scheduled for 22nd March
5. **Policy** - the policy team continue to work on the policy revision schedule
6. **Internal Audit Panel** - the next audit will take place in April for the fourth quarter

B/674 To note the date of the next meeting - Monday 8th April 2024

Committee NOTED the date of the next meeting

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Business Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

		2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
INCOME						
Town Business Committee						
100	Precept	£373,973.21	£0.00	£373,973.00	-£0.21	0.00%
105	Newsletter Advertising	£100.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£100.00	-100.00%
120	Feed-in Tariff from Town Hall	£800.00	£0.00	£829.87	£29.87	3.73%
125	Stonehouse Town FC lease	£600.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£600.00	-100.00%
126	STFC Water Recharge	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
127	STFC Electric Recharge	£0.00	£0.00	£1,822.06	£1,822.06	100.00%
130	Athletics Field Lease	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
135	Phone Mast on Land	£7,000.00	£0.00	£5,998.12	-£1,001.88	-14.31%
140	Building Lease at OEL	£637.00	£0.00	£1,273.04	£636.04	99.85%
145	Magpies Social Club	£3,150.00	£0.00	£3,150.00	£0.00	0.00%
150	Community Centre Lease	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	£0.00	0.00%
155	OEL Pitch Hire	£2,000.00	£0.00	£870.00	-£1,130.00	-56.50%
160	Misc Income	£500.00	£0.00	£1,803.28	£1,303.28	260.66%
170	Investments Interest	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
171	Bank Interest - Lloyds Bank	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£200.00	-100.00%
172	Bank Interest - Charity A/C	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£200.00	-100.00%
173	Bank Interest - Natwest	£200.00	£0.00	£1,717.03	£1,517.03	758.52%
174	Bank interest - Cambridge BS	£200.00	£0.00	£2,073.88	£1,873.88	936.94%
175	Town Hall/Library Recharges	£3,700.00	£0.00	£1,684.83	-£2,015.17	-54.46%
176	Bank Interest - Nationwide	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£200.00	-100.00%
177	Bank Interest - Melton Building Society	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Business Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

	2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
178 CCLA Interest	£0.00	£0.00	£16,421.48	£16,421.48	100.00%
Total Town Business Committee	£393,960.21	£0.00	£412,116.59	£18,156.38	4.61%
EXPENDITURE					
Town Business Committee					
1000 Salaries					
1000/1 Contracted staff	£180,000.00	£0.00	£179,353.09	£646.91	-0.36%
1000/2 Locum	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
1000/3 Short term contracted staff	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
1000 Total	£180,000.00	£0.00	£179,353.09	£646.91	-0.36%
1010 Training & Recruitment					
1010/1 Contracted Staff	£4,000.00	£0.00	£2,833.00	£1,167.00	-29.18%
1010/2 Councillors	£1,000.00	£0.00	£127.68	£872.32	-87.23%
1010 Total	£5,000.00	£0.00	£2,960.68	£2,039.32	-40.79%
1020 Health & Safety	£2,500.00	£0.00	£583.41	£1,916.59	-76.66%
1030 Professional Fees	£8,000.00	£0.00	£4,412.40	£3,587.60	-44.85%
1040 IT support					
1040/1 General	£6,750.00	£0.00	£6,299.23	£450.77	-6.68%
1040/2 Website	£1,000.00	£0.00	£1,478.47	£-478.47	47.85%
1040/3 Newsletter	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
1040/4 Phones	£1,500.00	£0.00	£464.96	£1,035.04	-69.00%
1040/5 Printing	£0.00	£0.00	£640.95	£-640.95	100.00%
1040 Total	£9,250.00	£0.00	£8,883.61	£366.39	-3.96%
1050 Office Equipment Renewals	£500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£500.00	-100.00%

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Business Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

	2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
1060 Grants					
1060/1 One-Offs	£10,000.00	£5,000.00	£24,136.00	-£9,136.00	91.36%
1060/2 Long-Term	£5,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	-100.00%
1060 Total	£15,000.00	£5,000.00	£24,136.00	-£4,136.00	27.57%
1070 Town Hall/Library Shared Costs					
1070/1 Rates	£4,500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£4,500.00	-100.00%
1070/2 Water	£700.00	£0.00	£800.38	-£100.38	14.34%
1070/3 Electric	£3,000.00	£0.00	£2,770.49	£229.51	-7.65%
1070/4 Gas	£4,000.00	£0.00	£2,068.07	£1,931.93	-48.30%
1070/5 Interior Maintenance (reactive)	£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,000.00	-100.00%
1070/6 Interior Maintenance (programmed)	£1,000.00	£0.00	£584.28	£415.72	-41.57%
1070/7 Waste Collection	£300.00	£0.00	£85.84	£214.16	-71.39%
1070/8 Security	£0.00	£0.00	£650.00	-£650.00	100.00%
1070 Total	£14,500.00	£0.00	£6,959.06	£7,540.94	-52.01%
1080 Town Hall/Library STC costs					
1080/1 Exterior Maintenance/Cleaning	£1,000.00	£0.00	£150.00	£850.00	-85.00%
1080/2 Interior Cleaning	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,954.31	-£454.31	30.29%
1080 Total	£2,500.00	£0.00	£2,104.31	£395.69	-15.83%
1090 Admin Expenses					
1090/1 Paper	£250.00	£0.00	£127.25	£122.75	-49.10%
1090/2 Other	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,534.36	-£534.36	26.72%
1090/3 Printing and Delivery of Newsletters	£1,500.00	£0.00	£3,120.00	-£1,620.00	108.00%

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Business Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

	2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
1090 Total	£3,750.00	£0.00	£5,781.61	-£2,031.61	54.18%
1100 Mayor's Charity & Expenses	£300.00	£0.00	£66.48	£233.52	-77.84%
1110 Travel Costs/Staff & Councillors	£400.00	£0.00	£0.00	£400.00	-100.00%
1120 Election Costs	£0.00	£8,924.35	£8,924.35	£0.00	0.00%
1130 Civic/Remembrance Parades	£180.00	£0.00	£0.00	£180.00	-100.00%
1140 Pavilion Overheads					
1140/1 Rates	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
1140/2 Water	£600.00	£0.00	£1,167.33	-£567.33	94.56%
1140/3 Electric	£8,300.00	£0.00	£5,905.56	£2,394.44	-28.85%
1140/4 Cleaning	£1,000.00	£0.00	£327.87	£672.13	-67.21%
1140/5 Maintenance (reactive)	£3,000.00	£0.00	£1,466.02	£1,533.98	-51.13%
1140/6 Maintenance (programmed)	£1,000.00	£11,604.00	£11,745.41	£858.59	-85.86%
1140/7 Waste Collection	£900.00	£0.00	£312.16	£587.84	-65.32%
1140/8 Security	£200.00	£0.00	£526.50	-£326.50	163.25%
1140/9 Septic Tank	£700.00	£0.00	£480.00	£220.00	-31.43%
1140 Total	£15,700.00	£11,604.00	£21,930.85	£5,373.15	-34.22%
1150 Workshop Overheads					
1150/1 Water	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
1150/2 Electric	£300.00	£0.00	£0.00	£300.00	-100.00%
1150/3 Maintenance (Reactive)	£300.00	£0.00	£780.27	-£480.27	160.09%
1150/4 Maintenance (programmed)	£2,000.00	£0.00	£233.24	£1,766.76	-88.34%
1150/5 Waste Collection	£2,000.00	£0.00	£974.46	£1,025.54	-51.28%
1150/6 Security	£0.00	£0.00	£210.86	-£210.86	100.00%

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Business Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

	2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
1150 Total	£4,600.00	£0.00	£2,198.83	£2,401.17	-52.20%
1160 Equipment & Vehicle Costs					
1160/1 Equipment and Vehicle costs	£1,000.00	£0.00	£1,768.39	-£768.39	76.84%
1160/2 Maintenance	£1,000.00	£0.00	£715.07	£284.93	-28.49%
1160/3 Fuel	£1,000.00	£0.00	£561.50	£438.50	-43.85%
1160/4 Tax	£200.00	£0.00	£320.00	-£120.00	60.00%
1160/5 MOT/Service	£600.00	£0.00	£59.54	£540.46	-90.08%
1160 Total	£3,800.00	£0.00	£3,424.50	£375.50	-9.88%
1170 Youth Centre Workers	£54,000.00	£0.00	£55,625.11	-£1,625.11	3.01%
1180 Youth Centre Overheads					
1180/1 Rates	£1,400.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,400.00	-100.00%
1180/2 Water	£300.00	£0.00	£2.61	£297.39	-99.13%
1180/3 Electric	£3,000.00	£0.00	£1,696.94	£1,303.06	-43.44%
1180/4 Cleaning	£1,000.00	£0.00	£983.00	£17.00	-1.70%
1180/5 Maintenance (reactive)	£2,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	-100.00%
1180/6 Maintenance (programmed)	£1,500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	-100.00%
1180/7 Waste collection	£700.00	£0.00	£109.44	£590.56	-84.37%
1180/8 Security	£500.00	£0.00	£1,211.55	-£711.55	142.31%
1180/9 IT costs	£500.00	£0.00	£797.26	-£297.26	59.45%
1180 Total	£10,900.00	£0.00	£4,800.80	£6,099.20	-55.96%
1200 Subscriptions	£3,500.00	£0.00	£2,665.96	£834.04	-23.83%
1210 Insurances					
1210/1 Public/Employee Liability	£7,000.00	£0.00	£6,239.18	£760.82	-10.87%

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Business Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

	2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
1210/2 Buildings	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
1210/3 Vehicle	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
1210 Total	£7,000.00	£0.00	£6,239.18	£760.82	-10.87%
1220 Project Planning & Delivery	£0.00	£299.00	£299.00	£0.00	0.00%
1230 Climate Change	£5,000.00	£0.00	£4,690.00	£310.00	-6.20%
Total Town Business Committee	£346,380.00	£25,827.35	£346,039.23	£26,168.12	-7.55%

Stonehouse Town Council

Expenditure transactions - approval list

Start of year 01/04/23

Supplier totals will include confidential items

No	Payment Reference	Gross	Heading	Invoice date	Details	Invoice
3651		£98.40	1180/4	25/03/24	All Done and Dusted - March 2024 - Pod cleaning	
		£98.40			All Done and Dusted - Total	
3665		£194.92	1180/9	09/03/24	BT - Internet - Pod - 4th Quarter	0563
		£194.92			BT - Total	
3677		£144.00	1010/1	15/03/24	Carlos Novoth - Expenses - FILCA Course	2050171
		£144.00			Carlos Novoth - Total	
3633		£60.00	1140/5	12/12/23	Clarian Property Services - Leak in Pavilion	46
		£60.00			Clarian Property Services - Total	
3669		£38.84	1140/5	19/03/24	Dougfield Plumbers Supplies - Pavilion - Tank Repair - float valve, washer and plastic float	037003661596
		£38.84			Dougfield Plumbers Supplies - Total	
3645		£16.80	1080/1	28/03/24	Easy Window Cleaning - March 2024 - TH	19955
		£16.80			Easy Window Cleaning - Total	
3672		£98.40	1030	21/03/24	Edge IT Systems Ltd - March 2024 - Data Import	37722
		£98.40			Edge IT Systems Ltd - Total	
3666		£30.00	1010/1	31/03/24	GAPTC - Training - Crisis Comms - CN	372
		£30.00			GAPTC - Total	
3634		£18,190.80	1190/3	19/03/24	GB Sport & Leisure - Laburnum Park - replacement of new swings, tiles and wet pour	14661
3668		£804.00	1010/1	12/03/24	GB Sport & Leisure - Training - Playground Inspection Course & Registration Fee - RH	29038
3670		£498.96	1190/3	06/02/24	GB Sport & Leisure - Meadow Park - Replacement baby swings x 3	14418
		£19,493.76			GB Sport & Leisure - Total	
3647		£165.94	1080/2	25/03/24	Gloucestershire County Council - March 2024 - TH Cleaning	1800749557
		£165.94			Gloucestershire County Council - Total	
3675		£282.00	2010/4	25/03/24	Gordon Ellis & Co - Basket Liner	212156
		£282.00			Gordon Ellis & Co - Total	
3631		£420.00	1010/1	14/03/24	Greenway Training - Chainsaw Training - 2 day course - RH	202405888

Signature

Date

Signature

Stonehouse Town Council

Expenditure transactions - approval list

Start of year 01/04/23

Supplier totals will include confidential items

No	Payment Reference	Gross	Heading	Invoice date	Details	Invoice
3632		£264.00	1010/1	14/03/24	Greenway Training - Brushcutter and strimmer operator course - RH	2024/05887
		£684.00			Greenway Training - Total	
3648		£100.00	1150/5	25/03/24	Grundon Waste Management Ltd - March 2024 - Waste - Workshop	
		£100.00			Grundon Waste Management Ltd - Total	
3678		£36.00	2050/1	26/03/24	Home Farm Trust - Refund for overpayment for Stonehouse Goodwill 2023 - paid twice 14/11 & 15/03 see TN441	
		£36.00			Home Farm Trust - Total	
3630		£4.28	1090/2	29/02/24	Hurns Hardware - Key cylinder	3962
		£4.28			Hurns Hardware - Total	
3635		£260.39	1040/1	31/03/24	Jireh Solutions Ltd - March 2024 - Contract	29324
3636		£300.00	1040/1	25/03/24	Jireh Solutions Ltd - March 2024 - additional	
		£560.39			Jireh Solutions Ltd - Total	
3637		£100.00	1040/2	25/03/24	Jo Mew Creative - March 2024 - Website management	
		£100.00			Jo Mew Creative - Total	
3649		£100.00	1160/3	25/03/24	John Stayte Services Ltd - March 2024 - Fuel	
		£100.00			John Stayte Services Ltd - Total	
3646		£11.50	1090/2	25/03/24	Lloyds Bank - Bank Charges	
		£11.50			Lloyds Bank - Total	
3673		£429.00	1090/3	22/03/24	MDL Kelex - Stonehouse News - Spring Edition	19125
3676		£36.00	1140/6	27/03/24	MDL Kelex - Sewer Construction A2 Plans	19180
		£465.00			MDL Kelex - Total	
3639		£18.00	1040/5	25/03/24	Prolific Solutions (South West) Ltd - March 2024 - Printer TH	10388
		£18.00			Prolific Solutions (South West) Ltd - Total	
3671		£132.00	1010/1	21/03/24	Sanctus Training - Training - First Aid - DM	9847
		£132.00			Sanctus Training - Total	
3606		£46.12	1020	29/02/24	Seton - Eyewash pod and refills	9303729358

Signature

Signature

Date

Stonehouse Town Council

Expenditure transactions - approval list

Start of year 01/04/23

Supplier totals will include confidential items

No	Payment Reference	Gross	Heading	Invoice date	Details	Invoice
		£46.12			Seton - Total	
3652		£2,478.00	1190/1	25/03/24	T W Hawkins & Sons - Contract mowing - March 2024	
		£2,478.00			T W Hawkins & Sons - Total	
3653		£468.00	1190/6	25/03/24	Ubico Limited - March 2024 - Dog/litter bin collection	
		£468.00			Ubico Limited - Total	
3638		£8.40	1040/4	25/03/24	Voipfone - March 2024 - Answerphone - paid dd	1014361547
		£8.40			Voipfone - Total	
3027		£276.23	1140/2	31/03/23	WaterPlus - Pavilion account in debit by £276.63. Complaint ongoing - COMPLAINT RESOLVED - monies owed since complaint resolved in aug 22	
3640		£100.00	1070/2	25/03/24	WaterPlus - March 2024 - Water - TH	
3641		£94.23	1140/2	25/03/24	WaterPlus - March 2024 - Water - Pavilion	015272851
3667		£2.61	1180/2	14/03/24	WaterPlus - March 2024 - Water - Pod	05166257
		£473.07			WaterPlus - Total	
3674		£324.57	1020	25/03/24	Workwear Express Ltd - 4 x Trousers 6 x Polos 2 x Sweatshirts + embroidery - PC & RH	1812764
		£324.57			Workwear Express Ltd - Total	
3642		£100.00	1070/3	25/03/24	YU Energy - March 2024 - Electricity - Library	
3643		£400.00	1070/4	25/03/24	YU Energy - March 2024 - Gas - TH	
3644		£250.00	1070/3	25/03/24	YU Energy - March 2024 - Electricity - TH	
3650		£250.00	1180/3	25/03/24	YU Energy - March 2024 - Electricity - Pod	
3664		£3,232.25	1140/3	28/03/24	YU Energy - November 2023 - March 2024 - Electricity - Pavilion - predicted costs based on 22/23 charges	
		£4,232.25			YU Energy - Total	
		£16,059.54			Confidential	
Total		£46,924.18				

Signature

Date

Signature



STONEHOUSE

TOWN COUNCIL

FINACIAL RISK ASSESSMENT – April 2024

The Council is required to review risk annually. The following is a list of recommendations for approval:

Service Area	Risk	Control	Risk	Impact	Score	Comments
Insurance	Current insurance cover includes: Public Liability £10M Employers Liability 10m Officials Indemnity £500K Legal Expenses £100K Business Interruption £100K Total Buildings - £2.02M Gates and fences £47k Fixed outside equipment £3.5k War Memorials £105k Office Contents £26K	Current insurance levels as detailed. Insurance cover is through 'Came and Co' Insurance – agreement in force from the 1 st June 2023 to 31st May 2024	1	3	3	Council needs to agree new insurance policy for the period 1 st June 2024 to 31 st May 2025
Payroll	Loss of data	Outsourced to PATA. At risk if service provider business fails but data could be	1	3	3	Council has resourced PATA's services for the 2024/25 financial

	Fraud	restored from the Council's Cloud based IT storage. Quarterly internal control checks undertaken and reported to Committee and Town Council. Annual check also made by internal auditor	1	2	2	year
Staff	Loss of personnel	General reserves in case of temporary staff needs Improved management of and communications with staff to ensure good retention. The Council offers reasonable terms and conditions. Need to build in further resilience to staffing	2	2	4	The Council has undergone significant staff disruption which has culminated in the need to recruit four new staff members providing increased resilience and ability to help undertake project work – regular 1-1s and team meetings held in addition to day to day communications
	Covid impact	Risk assessment undertaken on existing staff arrangements in line with Government Guidance. Can be reapplied as and when necessary	1	3	3	
Administration	Management of Finance	'Edge' finance software provides a closed system that is fully auditable. It supports improved budget controls. Adequate up to date training is provided to staff. Accounts audited internally each quarter Accounts and payment lists reported each month to Business Committee and Full Council	1	3	3	

	Policy non compliance	The Policy register is up to date and reviewed in line with Council agreed frequencies by the Member led Policy Review working group	1	2	2	
Allotments	Non compliance with Management agreement	Management agreement details discussed with allotment association annually	1	2	2	
Data	Security breach	Data stored off site on cloud system. Now protected by remote monitoring and updating of computer company – ‘JIREH’ – information is further backed up. Data Protection Policy has been adopted and will be regularly reviewed.	1	3	3	In 2024, Council agreed a long term service agreement with Jireh to provide IT services
	Legal Documents becoming lost	Safe custody for title documents/legal agreements currently in the Town Hall in fire proof cabinet - Title Nos. on Asset Register.	2	3	6	Off-site storage provision to be considered
Parks	Play Equipment becoming redundant or unfit for use	Weekly visual checks and quarterly detailed checks carried out in addition to annual review by ROSPA Council staff trained to undertake nterim inspections	1	3	3	Recently employed additional grounds staff provides increased resilience and ensures that regular checks and repairs are undertaken
	Unmanaged trees	Tree Strategy in place – full list and location of trees now in place. Regular annual inspection undertaken	2	3	6	It is noted that although trees may be regularly inspected by qualified personnel, this does not ensure they will not fail
Precept	Illegal Expenditure	Council has its General Power of Competence, the power of first resort.	1	3	3	

		Business Committee and Full council oversee all payments made through its authorisation process				
	Late payment or over exposure at year end	Ensure adequate general reserve for 3-6 months in addition to substantial Earmarked Reserves. Late payment is limited due to current authorisation opportunities and use of 'Edge'	1	2	2	
Accounting	Non-compliance	Ensure adequate training, Systems, audits and adequate staff levels. Resilience on 'Edge' Finance in place – system very intuitive	1	2	2	
	Late returns	HMRC vat claims programmed each quarter – GAPTC advises in detail on end of year process - subscription to GAPTC maintained	1	2	2	
	Inaccuracy	Internal control checks made of the council's accounts and payments and these are reported to Council. Processes reported on by Annual Internal Auditor and through internal control checks	1	1	1	Minor inputting errors on use of Edge picked up during the year – staff familiarity with system now limits the errors
Contracts	Ensure value for money	Financial Regs are regularly reviewed and applied	2	1	2	
	Need to advertise contracts	Contracts over £25,000 to be advertised on the council and public contract finance website. Expected annual contract costs reviewed for large scale work/services	1	3	3	Contracts secured without advertisement can be legally challenged

Health and Safety	Non Compliance with health and safety regulations	Health and safety documents currently in review . Significant changes made to working equipment and practices to reduce risk New staff encouraged to take cautionary approach to all work – no time bound requirements. Regular communications with office staff and arrangements in place to help deal with unusual events ie heat, severe cold etc	1	3	3	
Buildings	Deterioration, over – expenditure and under utilisation	All buildings currently checked for general condition on a regular basis mainly by grounds staff. Issues reported to the town hall and actioned.	2	1	2	
Finance	Cash deposits at risk in bank	Currently use CCLA for large proportion of the council's investments thereby reducing risk. Other investments currently being considered for review.	1	3	3	Need to review non CCLA investments due to external fraudulent attempts to access accounts
	Access to investments (Council's exposure with its operating account)	Officers trying to access information in relation to the council's accounts. The council's ever changing circumstances has made this difficult.	1	2	2	Dealing with Banks and Building Societies has been a major problem. Consideration should be given to moving further investments in to CCLA
		Cashflow secured by keeping treasury	1	3	3	

	Lack of liquid funds/cashflow	account topped up through CCLA – top up arrangement made very easy	1	3	3	
	External Funding – non-compliance with grant conditions	Ensure criteria from grant awarding body is strictly followed	1	2	2	
	Loss of income i.e. rent and	Ensure adequate scrutiny is applied to accounts and spending	1	3	3	
	Compliance with Pension regulations	Ensure regular contact with leaseholders and bodys renting facilities Re-declaration made by the council every three years as required by Pensions Regulator and at onset of new staff arrivals	2	2	4	

Last Review: 15th May 2023 (TC3055)

Next Review: May 2024



STONEHOUSE TOWN COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS 2022

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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. Financial Regulations are one of the Council's three governing policy documents providing procedural guidance for members and officers. Financial Regulations must be observed in conjunction with the Council's standing orders¹ and any individual financial regulations relating to contracts.

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.

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. Deliberate or willful breach of these regulations by an employee may give rise to disciplinary proceedings.

1.7. Members of 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;

¹ Model Standing Orders for Councils (2018 Edition) is available from NALC (©NALC 2018)

- 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.

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;
- 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 £5,000; and
- in respect of the annual salary for any employee have regard to recommendations about annual salaries of employees made by the 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. On a regular basis, at least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair or a bank signatory 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 verification. This activity shall on conclusion be reported, including any exceptions, to and noted by the Council or Business Committee.

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 November, 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 relevant committees and the Council.

3.2. The Council shall consider annual budget proposals in relation to the Council's three year forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments including recommendations for the use of reserves and sources of funding and update the forecast accordingly.

3.3. 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.

3.4. The approved annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

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. This authority is to be determined by:

- the Council for all items over £5,000;
- a duly delegated committee of the Council for items up to £5,000; or
- the Clerk, in conjunction with Chair of Council or Chair of the appropriate committee, for any items below £1000.

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chair.

Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

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, or duly delegated committee. During the budget year and with the approval of 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 ('virement').

4.3. Unspent provisions in the revenue or capital budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year.

4.4. The salary budgets are to be reviewed at least annually in October for the following financial year and such review shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of Council or relevant committee. The RFO will inform committees of any changes impacting on their budget requirement for the coming year in good time.

4.5. In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, the Clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the Clerk's judgement 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 £3,000. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

4.6. No expenditure shall be authorised 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.

4.7. All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.

4.8. The RFO shall regularly provide the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget. These statements are to be prepared at least at the end of each financial quarter and shall show explanations of material variances. For this purpose "material" shall be in excess of 15% of the budget.

4.9. Changes in earmarked reserves shall be approved by Council as part of the budgetary control process.

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; banking arrangements may not be delegated to a committee. 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 (Cllrs will have the opportunity to look at all invoices detailed on the payment schedule/list by electronic means on request, through the council offices), present the schedule to Council or Business Committee. The Council or Committee shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself shall authorise payment by a resolution of the Council or Business Committee. The approved schedule shall be ruled off and initialled by the Chair of the Meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting at which payment was authorised. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of a contract of employment) may be summarised to remove public access to any personal information.

5.3. All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the RFO to confirm that the work, goods or services to which each invoice relates has been received, carried out, examined and represents expenditure previously approved by the Council.

5.4. The RFO shall examine invoices for arithmetical accuracy and analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The RFO shall take all steps to pay all invoices submitted, and which are in order, at the next available Council or Business Committee meeting.

5.5. The RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise the payment of items only in the following circumstances:

a) If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, and the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of Council or Business Committee, where the RFO certifies that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council or Business Committee;

b) An expenditure item authorised under 5.6 below (continuing contracts and obligations including materials and regular maintenance) provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council or Business Committee; or

c) fund transfers within the Council's banking and investment arrangements up to the sum of £50,000 subject to the requirements of CCLA, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council or Business Committee. Authorisation of transfer greater than £50,000 shall be determined by the RFO in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of Council and reported back

5.6. For each financial year the RFO shall draw up a list of due payments which arise on a regular basis as the result of a continuing contract, statutory duty, or obligation (such as but not exclusively) Salaries, PAYE and NI, Superannuation Fund and regular maintenance contracts and the like for which Council may authorise payment for the year provided that the requirements of regulation 4.1 (Budgetary Controls) are adhered to.

5.7. A record of regular payments made under 5.6 above shall be drawn up and be signed by two members on each and every occasion when payment is authorised - thus controlling the risk of duplicated payments being authorised and / or made.

5.8. In respect of grants a duly authorised committee shall approve expenditure within any limits set by Council and in accordance with any policy statement approved by Council. Any Revenue or Capital Grant in excess of £5,000 shall before payment, be subject to ratification by resolution of the Council.

5.9. Members are subject to the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the Council and shall comply with the Code and Standing Orders when a decision to authorise or instruct payment is made in respect of a matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary or other interest, unless a dispensation has been granted.

5.10. The Council will aim to rotate the duties of members in these Regulations so that onerous duties are shared out as evenly as possible over time.

5.11. Any changes in the recorded details of suppliers, such as bank account records, shall be approved in writing by a member.

6. Instructions for the making of payments

6.1. The Council will make safe and efficient arrangements for the making of its payments.

6.2. Following authorisation under Financial Regulation 5 above, the Council, a duly delegated committee or, if so delegated, the Clerk or RFO shall give instruction that a payment shall be made.

6.3. All payments shall be affected in accordance with a resolution of Council or duly delegated authority.

6.4. All payments shall be made by BACS or CHAPS methods provided that the instructions for each payment are signed, or otherwise evidenced, by two authorised bank signatories, are retained and any payments are reported to Council as made. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the Council at least every two years.

6.5. If thought appropriate by the Council, payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone and water) and any National Non-Domestic Rates may be made by variable direct debit provided that the instructions are signed by two members and any payments are reported to Council as made. The approval of the use of a variable direct debit shall be renewed by resolution of the Council at least every two years.

6.6. If thought appropriate by the Council, payment for certain items (principally salaries) may be made by banker's standing order or electronic transfer provided that the instructions are signed, or otherwise evidenced by two members, are retained and any payments are reported to Council as made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be renewed by resolution of the Council at least every two years.

6.7. Cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule as presented to Council or Business Committee shall be signed by two members of Council and countersigned by the RFO or authorised Officer in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment. A member who is a bank signatory, having a connection by virtue of family or business relationships with the beneficiary of a payment, should not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to the payment in question.

6.8. 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.

6.9. Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at a Council or Business Committee meeting (including immediately before or after such a meeting). Any signatures obtained away from such meetings shall be reported to the Council or Business Committee at the next convenient meeting.

6.10. If thought appropriate by the Council payment for certain items may be made by internet banking transfer provided evidence is retained showing which members approved the payment.

6.11. Where a computer requires use of a personal identification number (PIN) or other password(s), for access to the Council's records on that computer, a note shall be made of the PIN and Passwords and shall be handed to and retained by the Chair of Council in a sealed dated envelope. This envelope may not be opened other than in the presence of two other councillors. After the envelope has been opened, in any circumstances, the PIN and / or passwords shall be changed as soon as practicable. The fact that the sealed envelope has been opened, in whatever circumstances, shall be reported to all members immediately and formally to the next available meeting of the Council. This will not be required for a member's personal computer used only for remote authorisation of bank payments.

6.12. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the working of the Council or its bank accounts, to any person not authorised in writing by the Council or a duly delegated committee.

6.13. Regular back-up copies of the records on any computer shall be made and shall be stored securely away from the computer in question, and preferably off site.

6.14. The Council, and any members using computers for the Council's financial business, shall ensure that anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software with automatic updates, together with a high level of security, is used.

6.15. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate approved by the Council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts. The bank mandate will state clearly the amounts of payments that can be instructed by the use of the Service Administrator alone, or by the Service Administrator with a stated number of approvals.

6.16. Access to any internet banking accounts will be directly to the access page (which may be saved under "favourites"), and not through a search engine or e-mail link. Remembered or saved passwords facilities must not be used on any computer used for council banking work. Breach of this Regulation will be treated as a very serious matter under these regulations.

6.17. Changes to account details for suppliers, which are used for internet banking may only be changed on written hard copy notification by the supplier and supported by hard copy authority for change signed by the RFO. A programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed.

6.18. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the RFO or authorised officer and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £1,000 unless authorised by Council or Business Committee in writing before any order is placed.

6.19 The council will not maintain any form of cash float. All cash received must be banked intact. Any payments made in cash by the 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.

7.3. No changes shall be made to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the Council.

7.4. Each and every payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a separate confidential record (confidential cash book). This confidential record is not open to inspection or review (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or otherwise) other than:

- a) by any councillor who can demonstrate a need to know;
- b) by the internal auditor;
- c) by the external auditor; or
- d) by any person authorised under Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation.

7.5. The total of such payments in each calendar month shall be reported with all other payments as made as may be required under these Financial Regulations, to ensure that only payments due for the period have actually been paid.

7.6. An effective system of personal performance management should be maintained for the senior officers.

7.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a clear business case and reported to the Council. Termination payments shall only be authorised by Council.

7.8. Before employing interim staff, the Council must consider a full business case.

8. Loans and investments

8.1. All borrowings shall be affected in the name of the Council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be approved by Council as to terms and purpose. The application for borrowing approval, and subsequent arrangements for the loan shall only be approved by full Council.

8.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State/Welsh Assembly Government (such as Hire Purchase or Leasing of tangible assets) shall be subject to approval by the full Council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to Council in respect of value for money for the proposed transaction.

8.3. The Council will arrange with the Council's banks and investment providers for the sending of a copy of each statement of account to the Chair of the council at the same time as one is issued to the RFO.

8.4. 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.

8.5. The Council shall consider the need for an Investment Strategy and Policy which, if drawn up, shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.

8.6. All investments of money under the control of the Council shall be in the name of the Council.

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

8.8. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, or branch, shall be made in accordance with Regulation 5 (Authorisation of payments) and Regulation 6 (Instructions for payments).

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 Clerk.

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.

9.10. Any income arising which 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 (see also Regulation 16 below).

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 legal professionals acting in disputes;
- 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 and RFO shall act after consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair 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 the Council intends to procure or award a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract as defined by The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("the Regulations") which is valued at £25,000 or more, the Council shall comply with the relevant requirements of the Regulations².

c) The full requirements of The Regulations, as applicable, shall be followed in respect of the tendering and award of a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract which exceed thresholds in The Regulations set by the Public Contracts Directive 2014/24/EU (which may change from time to time)³.

d) 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.

e) Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases. The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post. Each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract.

f) All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of Council.

g) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Orders and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.

h) When it is to enter into a contract of less than £25,000 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 or RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £3,000 and above £300 the Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10.3 above shall apply.

i) The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

j) Should it occur that 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, provided that the specification does not change, 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.

² The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website to advertise contract opportunities, set out the procedures to be followed in awarding new contracts and to publicise the award of new contracts

³ Thresholds currently applicable are:

a) For public supply and public service contracts 209,000 Euros (£181,302)

b) For public works contracts 5,225,000 Euros (£4,551,413)

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 by 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. 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, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed £250.

14.3. No real property (interests in land) shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a report in writing 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).

14.4. No real property (interests in land) shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the full Council. In each case a report in writing 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).

14.5. Subject only to the limit set in Regulation 14.2 above, no tangible moveable property shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the full Council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to Council with a full business case.

14.6. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

15. Insurance

15.1. Following the annual risk assessment (per Regulation 17), the RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers.

15.2. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the Council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.

15.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to Council at the next available meeting.

15.4. 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.

16. Charities

16.1. Where the Council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the 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 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. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the Council 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 shall be 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.

18.2. The Council may, by resolution of the Council 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 drawn up and presented in advance to all members of Council.

Reviewed and Adopted: 15th May '23 (Minute No: TC3046)

Next Review: May 2024



STONEHOUSE TOWN COUNCIL

Standing Orders

Date Adopted: 15th May 2023 (TC3046)
Review Date: 2024

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Text in bold is required by statute.

The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Council will be the Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively.

The Proper Officer will be the Town Clerk.

These Standing Orders should be read in conjunction with all relevant policies/documents produced by the Council

- 1 Conduct of formal meetings of the Council, committees and sub-committees.
 - a Meetings will not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.
 - b The minimum 3 clear days' notice of a Full Council 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, a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.
 - c The minimum 3 clear days *for public notice* of a committee 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 will be open to members of 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 will be by a resolution which will give reasons for the public's exclusion.
 - e Subject to Standing Order 1(d) above, members of the public are welcome to make representations and a part of the agenda will be allocated for this purpose. The period of time designated for public participation will not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the Chair. Meetings can be suspended by resolution to involve the public at any time.
 - f Questions from the public may be answered at a later date at the discretion of the Chair.
 - g A summary record of public participation at a meeting will be included in the minutes of the meeting.
 - h Only one person is to speak at a time and will direct their comments to the Chair. If more than one person wishes to speak, the Chair will direct the order of speaking.
 - i **Subject to standing order 11 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.**
 - j A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.
 - k The press shall be provided reasonable facilities for reporting all or part of a

meeting at which they are entitled to be present.

- l **Subject to Standing Orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chair may in their absence be done by, to or before the Deputy-Chair.**
- m **The Chair, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Deputy-Chair, if present, will preside. If both the Chair and the Deputy-Chair are absent from a meeting, a Councillor as chosen by the Councillors present at the meeting will preside at the meeting.**
- n **Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting will be decided by a majority of the Councillors and non-councillors with voting rights present and voting.**
- o **The Chair of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise their casting vote whether or not they gave an original vote.**
- p **Unless Standing Orders provide otherwise, voting on any question will be by a show of hands. At the request of a Councillor, the voting on any question will be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave their vote for or against that question. Such a request will be made before the vote is taken.**
- q **The minutes of a meeting will record the names of councillors present at the beginning of the meeting or when they arrive afterwards and/or leave before the end, interests declared, dispensations granted, withdrawals due to declared interests, and resolutions made.**
- r **A councillor or 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.**
- s **No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one third of the whole number of members of the Council or Committee are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than 3. Deferring an item will always be considered if fewer than half the total number of councillors on the Council or Committee is present.**
- t **If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business will be transacted.**
- u **A meeting will not exceed 2.5 hours unless a motion is passed to suspend this Standing Order.**

2 Annual Council Meetings and Ordinary Meetings

- a In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council will be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the new councillors elected take office.
- b In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council will be held on such day in May as the Council may direct.
- c If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council will take place at 6pm.
- d In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least 3 other ordinary meetings will be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council directs.
- e **The election of the Chair of Council (Chair – also known as the Mayor) and Deputy Chair of Council will be the first business completed at the annual meeting of the Council.**
- f The Chair, unless they have resigned or become disqualified, will continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until their successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.
- g The Deputy Chair, unless they resign or become disqualified, will hold office until immediately after the election of the Chair at the next annual meeting of the Council.
- h Neither the Chair nor the Deputy Chair may hold the same office for more than 4 consecutive years but may stand for re-election after a further 4 years has elapsed.
- i In an election year, if the current Chair has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, they will preside at the meeting until a successor has been elected. The current Chair will not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair but must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
- j In an election year, if the current Chair has been re-elected as a member of the Council, they will preside at the meeting until a new Chair has been elected. They may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair and must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
- k Following the election of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Council at the annual meeting of the Council, the order of business will be as follows:
 - i. **In an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office form unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Chair and Deputy Chair 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. Resolving whether to review or approve the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the composition of committees
 - iv. Receiving nominations for and appointment of councillors to committees
 - v. Confirmation of S137 of the Local Government Act 1972 expenditure level or the general power of competence.
- L The dates, times and place of ordinary meetings of the Council and committees for the

year ahead will be agreed at the last Council meeting of the calendar year.

3. Extraordinary Meetings

- a **The Chair may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.**
- b The Chair of a committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee at any time.
- c **If the Chair of Council or Chair of a committee does not call an extraordinary meeting within 7 days of having been requested to do so by two councillors, any two councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting. The statutory public notice giving the time, venue and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the two councillors.**

4. Matters that must be resolved by the whole Council

- a Agreeing, and reviewing annually, the Strategic Plan
- b Setting the precept demand
- c Agreeing to borrow money
- d Approving the end of year Accounts and approving submission of the Annual Return to the External Auditors
- e Incurring capital or revenue expenditure which is over and above the Council's approved budget
- f Adopting, amending or revoking Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and all Council policy documents.
- g Determining the remit of the Committees
- h Agreeing the dates of meetings of the Council and Committees
- i Filling of Councillor vacancies occurring on any outside bodies
- j Making, amending or revoking byelaws
- k Making of Orders under any statutory powers
- l Important matters of principle or policy which have been referred directly by Committees or the Town Clerk
- m Prosecution or defence in a court of law
- n Acquiring land and other significant assets and commissioning services of significant value.
- o Filling vacancies on the Council by co-option.

5. General Power of Competence

- a. Before exercising the general power of competence, Council must at each annual meeting of the Council resolve that it meets the statutory criteria.
- b. After the expiry of its preceding period of eligibility, the Council continues to be an eligible Council solely for the purpose of completing any activity undertaken in the exercise of the power which was not completed before the expiry of the Council's preceding period of eligibility.

6. Minutes

- a. Minutes, including any amendment to correct their accuracy will be confirmed by resolution and every page will be signed and dated by the Chair of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate. Every page will be numbered.
- b. There will be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy.
- c. Draft minutes of full Council and committee meetings will be made available to all councillors within 2 weeks of the meeting and before they are put on the public website.

7. Committees

- a. Every committee will have Terms of Reference agreed by the Council and will appoint their own Chair.
- b. **Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a subcommittee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.**
- c. **The members of a committee may include non councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the council.**
- d. **Unless the Council determines otherwise, all the members of any advisory committee and a subcommittee of the advisory committee may be non councillors.**
- e. Each committee will meet on at least five occasions each year.
- f. Councillors who are not members of a committee may participate in debate but will not be permitted to vote on business at that meeting.

8 Working Groups

- a. Council and committees may establish Working Groups comprising Councillors and, where appropriate, members of the public or members of staff.
- b. The remit, timescale and membership of a working group will be determined by

Council or the committee that established it.

- c Any Councillor with an interest in the remit of a working group may join it.

9 Proper Officer

- a The Council will appoint a Proper Officer (Town Clerk) who is responsible for ensuring that the Council conducts itself within the law.
- b The Council will appoint a Responsible Financial Officer.
- c A member of Staff will be nominated by the Council to undertake the role of the Proper Officer or the Responsible Financial Officer during her/his absence.
- d The Proper Officer shall:
 - i. **at least 3 clear days before a meeting of the Council, committee or sub-committee**
 - (1) **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, date, place and the agenda (provided the councillor has consented to service by email) and**
 - (2) **provide, in a conspicuous place, public notices 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) and publish electronically notice of the time and place and, as far as reasonably practicable, any documents related to the business to be transacted at the meeting, unless they refer to business which is likely to be considered private or their disclosure would be contrary to any enactment.**
 - ii. Subject to standing order 10, include on the agenda all motions received from councillors unless a councillor has given written notice at least 3 days before the meeting confirming withdrawal of their motion
 - iii. **Convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Chair on the occasion of a casual vacancy in this office**
 - iv. **Facilitate the inspection of the minute book by local government electors**
 - v. **Receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities**
 - vi. Provide a copy of the Council's Standing Orders to a Councillor upon delivery of their declaration of acceptance of office
 - vii. Provide objective advice on all matters

10 Motions

- a 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 Council's Proper Officer at least 5 clear days

before the meeting or unless it relates directly to an issue addressed by an existing motion on the agenda.

- b If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received is not clear in meaning, or is not supported by sufficient information or evidence, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it so that it can be understood to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 10a
- c If the wording or nature of a proposed motion is considered unlawful or improper, the Proper Officer will consult with the Chair of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the Councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion will be included in the agenda or rejected. Rejected motions will be recorded with the Proper Officer's explanation of the reason for rejection.
- d Motions in respect of the following matters may be moved without written notice:
 - i. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting
 - ii. to move to a vote
 - iii. to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting
 - iv. to correct an inaccuracy in the minutes of the previous meeting
 - v. to dispose of business, if any, remaining from the last meeting
 - vi. to alter the order of business on the agenda
 - vii. to proceed to the next business on the agenda
 - viii. to close or adjourn debate
 - ix. to refer by formal delegation a matter to a committee or to a sub-committee or an employee
 - x. to appoint a committee or sub-committee to consider a report and/or recommendations made by an employee, professional advisor, expert or consultant
 - xi. to move an amendment relevant to the original or substantive motion under consideration which will not have the effect of nullifying it
 - xii. to exclude the press and public for all or part of a meeting
 - xiii. to silence or exclude from the meeting a Councillor or a member of the public for disorderly conduct
 - xiv. to consider a motion of no confidence in the Chair of the meeting
 - xv. to suspend any Standing Order except those which are mandatory by law
 - xvi. to adjourn the meeting
- e A motion to add or vary or revoke one of more of the Council's Standing Orders, not mandatory by law, must be proposed by a special written motion bearing the names or at least two councillors.

11 Previous Resolutions

- a A resolution shall not be reversed within 6 months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 3 councillors to be given to the Clerk in accordance with standing order 10a, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a subcommittee.
- b When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 10a has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further 6 months.

12 Rules of Debate

- a The Chair will abide by the rules of debate and their decision is final.
- b A motion (including an amendment) will not be voted on unless it has been proposed and seconded.
- c Subject as above, a motion included in an agenda not moved may be treated as withdrawn
- d A motion (including an amendment) which has been seconded may be amended or withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- e The Chair will decide the order in which amendments are considered and dealt with.
- f Only one amendment will be moved at a time.
- g The mover of a motion or the mover of an amendment will have a right of reply.
- h During the debate of a motion, a Councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and if so, required by the Chair, the Councillor who was interrupted will stop speaking. A Councillor raising a point of order will identify the Standing Order which they consider has been breached or identify any irregularity.
- i A point of order will be decided by the Chair and their decision will be final.
- j When a motion is under debate no other motion will 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 silent or for them to leave the meeting
 - vi. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration
 - vii. to exclude the public and press
 - viii. to adjourn the meeting
 - ix. to suspend any Standing Order, except those which are mandatory
- j If a motion is not passed, a new motion that addresses the same issue as the original motion may be moved in accordance with standing order 10a

13 Disorderly Conduct

- a No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the Chair shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- b If the person(s) disregard the request of the Chair to moderate or improve their conduct, any Councillor or the Chair 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 in accordance with Standing Order 13b above, is ignored the Chair may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting.

This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

- d A Councillor in breach of any Standing Order may be removed from a committee or a sub-committee by a resolution of the Council.

14 Code of Conduct

- a All councillors will observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council at all times.
- b **Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Town Clerk as soon as possible before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required. The dispensation shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.**
- c **A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 14b 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.**
- d A decision to grant a dispensation will be made by the meeting of the Council, committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required, and such decision will be final.
- e Unless granted a dispensation, a councillor will withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest or as required by the Council's code of conduct.

15 Allegations of Breaches of the Code of Conduct

- a. All alleged breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant (District) Council Policy.
- b. **Upon notification by the District council that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the District Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him/her. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.**

16 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 to Council staff without the express permission of the Town Clerk.

17 Voting on Appointments to Committees, Sub-committees and Working Groups

- 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 will be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process will continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. Any tie will be settled by the Chair's casting vote.

18 Execution and Sealing of Legal Deeds

- a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.
- b **Subject to 18a any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer (Clerk) shall witness their signatures.**

19 Finance 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 **£25,000** 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 £25,000 but less than the relevant thresholds referred to in standing order 19(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 in a local newspaper and in any other manner that is appropriate;
 - iv. tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
 - v. tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least 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.**

20 Management of Information

- a **Information will be managed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policies.**
- b **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.**
- c **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 (egg the Limitation Act 1980).**

- d 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.
- e Councillors, staff, the Council's contractors and agents shall not disclose confidential information or personal data without legal justification.

21 Responsibilities to provide information

- a In accordance with freedom of information legislation, the Council shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme and respond to the request 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.

22 Responsibilities under Data Protection Legislation

- 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 his/her 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.

23 Liaison with District and County Councillors

- a An invitation to attend all meetings of the Council and its committees will be sent, together with the agenda and other papers as deemed appropriate by the Town Clerk, to Stonehouse's County and District Councillors.



COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Importance of Complaints

Complaints are valuable because they provide a chance to put things right if there has been an error, and to make sure that the same mistake is not repeated.

The Town Council seeks to deal with complaints in a positive manner to inform future actions of the Council.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is *'any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Town Council, its staff or anyone acting on behalf of the Council which affects an individual or group'*.

What the complaints procedure will deal with:-

The complaints procedure will deal with matters of maladministration, which is if the Town Council does something the wrong way, fails to do something it should do or does something it should not do. Some examples include:

- neglect or unjustified delay
- malice, bias, or unfair discrimination
- failure to provide advice or information when reasonably requested
- providing misleading or inaccurate advice
- unprofessional practice or conduct.

What the complaints procedure will not deal with:-

- complaints for which there is a legal remedy or where legal proceedings already exist.
- allegations of financial irregularity - see rights under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014
- internal complaints about employment matters - the Town Council operates alternative procedures to deal with grievances or disciplinary matters against staff.
- complaints about Councillors - alleged breaches of the code of conduct are dealt with by the district council
- complaints relating to the services of another Council (these complaints will be referred on to the relevant body)

Equal Opportunities

The Town Council is committed to equal opportunities. Complaints and feedback will be used to highlight any discriminatory practices, and to promote equality of opportunity. Complaints by members of the public of discrimination and/or harassment against the Town Council will be dealt with through the complaints procedure unless it is a complaint that should be dealt with through a statutory procedure.

Complaints Officer

The Complaints Officer for the Town Council is the Town Clerk. The Clerk's main duties are:

- the day-to-day operation and management of the procedure, including providing a reference point for staff queries on informal complaints.
- to oversee, and undertake where necessary, the investigation of formal complaints at the first stage, within the relevant time scales.
- to maintain a record of all complaints received including details of the nature of the complaint, action taken, outcome, and time taken to resolve.
- to identify improvement points arising from any complaints.
- to identify staff training issues.

Where a complaint relates to the Town Clerk, the complaint will be dealt with by the Town Mayor in line with the stages of procedure as detailed below.

Stages of Procedure

The stages of the procedure are designed to provide the complainant with a thorough and fair means of redress and to provide a framework for officers to work within. However, there may be occasions when a complainant makes an approach in a different manner and it is important that the procedure does not in itself become a barrier to effective communication.

Everyday problems, queries and comments

The Council receives queries, problems and comments as part of its day-to-day running, and they should not all be regarded as complaints. These are routine and expected and are generally resolved quickly and satisfactorily.

If someone is dissatisfied with the original service or response they received and wishes to take the matter further then the issue should be recognised as a complaint.

Informal Complaint

During the course of daily business, minor complaints may be made to officers about the services the Council provides. These will usually be dealt with by the relevant officer as appropriate. It is not appropriate for every complaint to be treated as a formal complaint. Every effort should be made to deal with these problems immediately, either by providing information, instigating the appropriate action or explaining a decision.

Formal Complaint (First Stage)

A person may wish to make a formal complaint directly, or may be unsatisfied with the outcome of an informal complaint and may wish to take the matter further. This complaint should be made in writing and will be recorded as a complaint and passed to the Town Clerk to investigate, or if about the Town Clerk, to the Town Mayor. The complainant will be notified of the outcome of their complaint in writing within 20 working days of the formal complaint being made. Where this time scale cannot be met, due to the nature of the complaint or resources, the complainant will be informed. Complaints will be treated as confidential unless the complainant confirms that they waive their right to confidentiality.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the response following an investigation, they should be informed of their right to take the matter further.

Review of Investigation and Complaint (Second Stage)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Town Clerk's response, (or Town Mayor's response if relating to the Town Clerk), they should be advised of their right to request, within 28 days of the Town Clerk's or Town Mayor's response, that the complaint be referred to a Complaints Panel consisting of 3 councillors which will review the complaint within 4 weeks of the request being made.

The complainant will be notified of the outcome in writing within 7 working days of the meeting taking place. Where this time scale cannot be met the complainant will be informed.

Appeals Panel

If the issue still remains unresolved, the complainant should be notified of their right to request, within 28 days of notification of the Complaints Panel outcome, that the matter be referred to a Complaints Appeals Panel consisting of 3 councillors not previously involved in the complaint.

The complainant will have the right to attend the meeting and make representation for a time that is at the discretion of the Chair, usually 5 minutes. There will be an opportunity for the complainant and councillors to ask questions. The complainant will be asked to leave during deliberation. The complainant will be advised when a decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be final.

The outcome of all formal complaints dealt with by the Appeals Panel will be advised to the Council at its next meeting in confidential session.

Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints

There will be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to pursue a complaint when it clearly has no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other process, whether through the courts or some other recognised procedure, should or has been taken.

These matters should be referred to the Town Clerk with a summary of the issues and of the attempts made to resolve the complaint. The Town Clerk may, in such circumstances, decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complainant, and inform the complainant so, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

Anonymous Complaints

The Council will not respond to this type of complaint.

Resolutions and Remedies

The aim in dealing with all complaints is to provide a remedy, a reasonable explanation or, if appropriate, an apology.

A record will be kept of all formal complaints and their outcomes, subject to Data Protection and confidentiality requirements.

Reviewed - 15 March 2021

(Minute No. TC2582)

Next Review - March 2024



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Stonehouse Town Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination. Our aim is to treat people with respect by making the Council an accessible, welcoming and inclusive organisation that respects the diversity of its staff, councillors, volunteers and members of the public.

Legal Responsibilities

This policy will adhere to the legal requirement as set out by the Equality Act 2010 which protects people from discrimination based on nine protected characteristics which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

This Policy provides a framework for making equality integral to the way we make decisions, provide services, recruit and support our employees, provide training and other developmental opportunities, work with other organisations and involve the public.

Equality and Diversity Commitments

We are committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons.
- Promoting a good and harmonious environment in which all are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of Intimidation or harassment is tolerated.
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice.
- Complying with this Equality & Diversity Policy and associated policies.
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action where appropriate.

Implementation

The Chair/Deputy Chair of Town Council and the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Business Committee have specific responsibility for effective implementation of this policy. In order to implement this policy the Council will:

- communicate the policy to Members by notifying existing and new Members.
- endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that the Council does not consciously or unconsciously discriminate in the selection or recruitment of applicants for co-option/election to the Council.

- ensure Stonehouse Town Council aims to put equality and diversity issues at the core of service delivery and staff management.
- incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices.
- ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of this policy.

Monitoring and review

All employees, councillors and volunteers must be made aware of this policy and take responsibility for promoting equality and diversity and challenging discrimination. Every effort will be made to ensure that the policy is effectively implemented. Any breaches of the policy on the part of staff will be considered as misconduct, and if by councillors, as breach of the code of conduct. This Equality & Diversity Policy will be reviewed every four years, and the effectiveness of its implementation reviewed at least annually.

Adopted by the Town Council

Last Reviewed: 11th October 2021 (TC2693)

Date: 2024



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Reviewed - 15 March 2021

(Minute No. TC2582)

Next Review - March 2024

