Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council

Samantha J Shippen FCG, FSLCC, CMC
Locum Clerk to the Council

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11th May 2025

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend the Annual Meeting of the Council which will be held in the Council Chambers, 6 Goatbeck Terrace, Langley Moor, Durham, DH7 8JJ, on Friday 16th May 2025, at 6.30 p.m.

Mrs S J Shippen FCG, FSLCC, CMC
Locum Clerk to the Council

A G E N D A

1. **Election of Chair for 2025/26 –** to elect the Chair for the 2025/26 Municipal year, following which the newly elected Chair will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and may make a short acceptance speech.
2. **Election of Vice- Chair for 2025/26 –** to elect the Vice-Chair for the 2025/26 Municipal year.
3. **Apologies for Absence –** to consider for approval.
4. **Declarations of Acceptance of Office –** to consider whether to approve that any declarations not yet made may be made before or at a future meeting; if so to approve the date of such meeting in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 s83 4c.
5. **Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations** – to consider any declarations by councillors in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 or the Council's Code of Conduct for approval.
6. **Representatives to Outside Bodies –** to appoint representatives to the following:-
   a) **County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC)** including Larger Councils Forum – 3 representatives including the Clerk;
   b) **National Association of Councillors** – 2 representatives;
   c) **Mid-Durham Parish Councils Committee -** 3 representatives plus the Clerk *this may change to be in line with the Crook, Mid Durham & Willington Local Network area;
   d) **Brandon Table Tennis Club –** 1 representative;
   e) **Brandon Carrside Youth & Community Project –** 2 representatives.
7. **Committees & Working Groups –** to consider the report regarding Committees & Working Groups (attached).
8. **Subscriptions –** to approve the subscriptions for 2025/26 to the following representative bodies:
   a) **County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC)**
   b) **Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)**
   c) **National Association of Councillors (NAC)**
   d) **The National Allotment Society (NAS)**
   e) **The Open Spaces Society,**
9. **Chair's Allowance –** to confirm the Chair's Allowance at £1,513 as per budget.
10. **Bank Signatories –** to confirm the bank signatories for the Council's accounts with The Cooperative Bank and the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

11. **General Power of Competence –** to confirm the Council's eligibility under the Power for the electoral term.
12. **Calendar of Meetings 2025/26 –** to approve the calendar of meetings for 2025/26 (attached).
13. **Standing Orders Review –** to consider the draft Standing Orders (attached).
14. **Financial Regulations Review –** to consider the draft Financial Regulations (attached).
15. **Minutes of the previous meeting** – to consider for approval the minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2025 (attached).
16. **Public Participation –** to receive any questions or representations from members of the public.
17. **Presentation of Donations –** Chair to present donations to:
    a) St Cuthbert's Hospice - £600
    b) Esh Winning Residents' Association for Funday - £500.
18. **Brandon Carrside –** to consider report (to follow).
19. **Planning Applications** – to consider any response to applications received between 15th April 2025 and 9th May 2025 (attached).
20. **Invoices for payment –** to consider invoices for approval (attached).
21. **Donations – (attached) –**
    to consider request deferred from April
    a) **Browney Residents' Association** - Attendance of Browney Lodge Banner at Durham Miners Gala.
    to consider the following additional request
    b) **Ushaw Moor Action Group** – provision of food bags for families in and around Ushaw Moor.
22. **Councillor Training Report –** to receive the report of Councillors D Bell, J Grantham & P Stoddart regarding their attendance at the NAC Local Government Finance Training Course. (attached)
23. **Council Emails & Devices –** to consider the report (attached).
24. **Browney Residents' Association –** to consider the following requests:
    a) Website – request to be added to the Community Information section;
    b) Distribution of Dog Poo Bags at the Fair Exchange Community Garden in Browney.
25. **Councillor Training –** to consider booking councillor training with the National Association of Councillors on Roles & Responsibilities, Effective meetings and decision making and Equality & Diversity (attached).
26. **Council Business Plan –** to consider the preparation of a business plan for the council (attached).
27. **Clerk to the Council –** to receive details of the new Clerk to the Council (attached).
28. **Co-operative Bank Complaint Resolution –** to receive details of the resolved complaint with the Co-operative Bank (attached).

AGENDA ITEM 7

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Committees and Working Groups

16th May 2025

1. **PURPOSE –** Council to consider review of Committees and Working Groups; setting of Terms of Reference; and appointment of Members, Chairs and Vice Chairs of those agreed.

2. **Background**

Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council currently has the following Standing Committees:

- Allotment Committee
- Finance Committee
- Complaints under Members Code of Conduct Committee
- Complaints Committee
- Personnel Committee

The following Working Groups are also in existence:

- Community Highways Worker Working Group
- Disabled Access Working Group
- Newsletter Working Group

At the Annual Meeting of the Council it would be expected that a council would review the terms of reference, delegations and membership of committees, sub-committees and working groups (accepting that there could be no delegation to working groups). However, there are no written Terms of Reference although Committees are currently exercising unwritten delegation of authority.

Clearly this leaves the Council at risk and is required to be rectified.

Additionally, the Locum Clerk has received a request from Councillor J Chapman on behalf of the Green, Independent and Liberal Democrat councillors to propose the Council establishes a new Committee, called the "Environment and Planning Committee" to fill a major gap in Council discussion and decision-making and with the specific brief of exploring the desirability of developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

3. **Proposals**

The Council's current committees and working groups should be reviewed taking into account their focus and current relevance.

Allotment Committee – draft terms of reference and delegation proposals have been prepared in the attached Scheme of Delegation & Terms of Reference.

Finance Committee - draft terms of reference and delegation proposals have been prepared in the attached Scheme of Delegation & Terms of Reference.

Complaints under Members Code of Conduct Committee - As the Council has no legitimate role in dealing with complaints under the Members Code of Conduct which, by law, is the role of the Monitoring Officer at Durham County Council; it is suggested that this Committee is disbanded.

Complaints Committee - The Council has a Complaints Committee which meets ad hoc. It does not however, have an Appeals Committee to deal with any appeals of employees. It is therefore suggested that the Complaints Committee is replaced with an Appeals Committee which would have both a role for employees and also could hear any complaints not able to be resolved by the Clerk under point 2 of the Council's Complaints Procedure.
Draft terms of reference and delegation proposals have been prepared in the attached Scheme of Delegation & Terms of Reference for an Appeals Committee.

Personnel Committee - draft terms of reference and delegation proposals have been prepared in the attached Scheme of Delegation & Terms of Reference.

Environment & Planning Committee – Council should firstly consider whether to agree the establishment of the proposed Committee. If agreed, direction should be given to the Locum Clerk to draft suitable terms of reference for consideration.

Community Highways Worker Working Group - draft terms of reference have been prepared in the attached Scheme of Delegation & Terms of Reference.

Disabled Access Working Group – a review of council electronic files suggests that the working group has not met for some time, possibly 20 years. Therefore it is suggested that the working group is disbanded.

Newsletter Working Group - a review of council electronic files suggests that the last newsletter was produced in December 2019. Therefore, it is suggested that the working group is disbanded until such time as a newsletter is re-commenced.

4. **RECOMMENDATION –** Council is recommended to consider the information and proposals within the report and decide whether to amend and/or adopt them for implementation and appoint members to the various committees and working groups.

Agenda Item 7

COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

AND

SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Relating to the Proceedings and Business

FOR THE

PARISH COUNCIL
OF

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES

MAY 2025

Approved by Council: Date/Minute reference

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INTRODUCTION

The Scheme of Delegation covers such matters as have been delegated in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 s101 to Committees and Sub-Committees.

The Terms of Reference cover Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups established by the Council.

A. CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

1. The Clerk to the Council is designated and authorised to act as **Proper Officer** for the purposes of all relevant sections of the Local Government Act 1972 and any other statute requiring the designation of a Proper Officer.

2. In addition to any delegations arising from Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Job Description, the Clerk to the Council will be authorised to:

   i. Sign on behalf of the Council any document necessary to give effect to any decision of the Council.

   ii. Institute and appear in any legal proceedings authorised by the Council.

   iii. Appear or make representation to any tribunal or public inquiry into any matter which the Council has an interest.

   iv. Alter the date or time of a council or committee meeting if required, but before doing so, shall consult the Chair of the Council/committee concerned about the need for the change and about alternative dates and times.

   v. Manage the Council's allotments, land and other assets.

   vi. Authorise and manage the installation of publicly requested benches, trees, floral displays or items.

   vii. Authorise and manage the use of village greens and open spaces within council policy.

   viii. Prepare statements for the press where the known policy of the council exists.

   ix. Incur expenditure up to a maximum of £5,000.

   x. Incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to procure services, carry out any repair, replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £10,000 exclusive of VAT. The Clerk shall report the action to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.

   xi. Authorise the payment of staff wages in line with council policy.

   xii. Take proceedings or other steps as may be necessary to enforce and recover any debt owing or other obligation due to the Council.

   xiii. Carry out duties in accordance with the Financial Regulations of Horden Parish Council and the approved Audit and Accounting regulations.

   xiv. Negotiate and authorise the rents and fees for persons using the facilities provided by the council, other than standard charges agreed by the council, including free use of facilities, where required.

xv. Manage staff, including discipline and grievance matters up to and including issuing final written warnings.

xvi. Approve and authorise reasonable overtime as required.

xvii. Approve and authorise annual leave entitlement and other absence as appropriate.

xviii. Recruit staff, including temporary, when required.

xix. Act on behalf of the Council in cases of urgency or emergency. Any such action is to be reported to the next meeting of the Council and the relevant committee or sub-committee. The Chair of the Council or Chair of the appropriate Committee will be informed as soon as practically possible of any action taken by the Clerk.

xx. Action such other matters as may be determined by Council or Committee from time to time.

B. RFO

1. Act as the Responsible Financial Officer for the purposes of any statute requiring the designation of a Responsible Financial Officer. Local Government Act 1972 s151.

2. In addition to any delegations arising from Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, Job Description and any requirements arising from the Accounts & Audit Regulations and "proper practices" framework, the RFO will be authorised to:

    i. Carry out duties in accordance with the Financial Regulations of Horden Parish Council and the legislation and approved Audit and Accounting regulations in place at any time.

    ii. Incur expenditure up to a maximum of £5,000.

    iii. Incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to procure services, carry out any repair, replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £10,000 exclusive of VAT. The Clerk shall report the action to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.

    iv. Prepare VAT reclaim on behalf of the council.

    v. Issue invoices on behalf of the council.

C. ASSISTANT CLERK

1. Act in line with any delegations arising from Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Job Description.

2. Act as Proper Officer in the absence of the Clerk.

3. Act as RFO in the absence of the RFO.

D. ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE

Number of Councillors

The total number of councillors on the Committee shall be set at 8. Substitutions shall be allowed.

Quorum: 1/3 of members but not less than 3

Notice requirement: at least 3 clear days

Meeting Frequency: quarterly

Public participation: yes.

Officers: Clerk to the Council or Assistant Clerk where appropriate.

Terms of Reference

The Committee will:

i. Review and oversee all matter related to allotments, garage and grazing sites.

ii. Review terms and conditions of tenancy.

iii. Ensure the council complies with all legislative requirements relating to the administration of allotments, garage and grazing sites.

iv. Undertake reviews of fees applicable.

v. Oversee the development and implementation of improvement plans for recommendation to Council in the business planning and budgeting processes.

vi. Make recommendations to the Council regarding expenditure on projects where appropriate.

vii. Refer requests for expenditure above budget allocation to the Council for consideration.

Delegation(s)

i. To incur expenditure in accordance with Financial Regulations and agreed budget in order to progress agreed projects and works.

Summary

The Committee has delegated responsibility except when required as above to make recommendations to Full Council. Spending authority is limited to within agreed budget for specific previously agreed projects.

E. FINANCE COMMITTEE

Number of Councillors

The total number of councillors on the Committee shall be set at 13. Substitutions shall be allowed.

Quorum: 1/3 of members but not less than 3

Notice requirement: at least 3 clear days

Meeting Frequency: quarterly

Public participation: yes.

Officers: Clerk to the Council or RFO where appropriate.

Terms of Reference

The Committee will:

i. Review and oversee all financial reporting with the exception of the approval of the Annual Accounting Statement, final annual budget & precept.

ii. Review reports of the Internal Auditor; acknowledging that the year end report **must** be presented to Council.

iii. Ensure the council complies with all legislative requirements relating to the "proper practices" as set out in the SAPPP Practitioners' Guide.

iv. Undertake internal control reviews.

v. Make recommendations to the Council regarding draft budget requirements.

vi. Make recommendations to the Council regarding expenditure on projects where appropriate.

vii. Refer requests for expenditure above budget allocation to the Council for consideration.

Delegation(s)

ii. To incur expenditure in accordance with Financial Regulations and agreed budget in order to progress agreed projects and works.

Summary

The Committee has delegated responsibility except when required as above to make recommendations to Full Council. Spending authority is limited to within agreed budget for specific previously agreed projects.

F. APPEALS COMMITTEE

Number of Councillors: The total number of councillors on the panel shall be set at 5. These councillors will not be members of the Personnel Committee at the same time. Any councillor not appointed to the Committee or the Personnel Committee may act as substitute at the request of a committee member.

Quorum: 1/3 of members but not less than 3

Notice requirement: at least 3 clear days

Meeting Frequency: as and when required

Public participation: no.

Officers: Clerk to the Council where appropriate.

Terms of Reference

The panel will consider any appeal made under council policies/procedures including those relating to employee grievance or disciplinary outcomes.

Delegation(s)

i. To uphold or dismiss any complaints/appeals referred to the panel.

ii. Convene any disciplinary or grievance appeal as a re-hearing of facts if the grounds for appeal make it appropriate to do so.

iii. Vary any disciplinary sanction however any increase in disciplinary penalty is precluded from consideration.

iv. Vary any grievance outcome however any variance that would be more detrimental to the appellant is precluded from consideration.

v. Make recommendations to officers or the Personnel Committee if appropriate.

Summary

The panel has decision making responsibility with any decision made being final and concludes the Council's internal appeals, disciplinary and grievance procedures.

G. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Number of Councillors

The total number of councillors on the Committee shall be set at 7. No substitutions shall be allowed.

Quorum: 1/3 of members but not less than 3

Notice requirement: at least 3 clear days

Meeting Frequency: quarterly

Public participation: no.

Substitution allowed: no

Officers: Clerk to the Council where appropriate.

Terms of Reference

The Committee will:

i. Review staffing structure and employment levels and where required make recommendations to the Council to efficiently discharge the work required of the Council and to review workloads periodically.

ii. Review terms and conditions of employment.

iii. Act as a recruitment for senior officers, grievance, disciplinary and attendance/ill health panels.

iv. Review health and safety at work for all Council employees and to put into place effective measures to safeguard their health and safety at work.

v. Ensure the council complies with all legislative requirements relating to the employment of staff.

vi. Undertake reviews of working practices and procedures of the Council as a whole when so requested to make recommendations to Council including relevant human resources policies where applicable.

vii. Recognise the need for, and benefits of, Member and staff training and positively initiate and react to appropriate opportunities within the context of overall budget resources.

viii. Oversee the development and implementation of training plans for both Members and employees.

ix. Make recommendations to the Council regarding expenditure on projects where appropriate.

x. Refer requests for expenditure above budget allocation to the Council for consideration.

Delegation(s)

iii. To incur expenditure in accordance with Financial Regulations and agreed budget in order to progress agreed projects and works.

iv. Make decisions in relation to termination of employment on matters relating to disciplinary and attendance/ill health procedures.

Summary

The Committee has delegated responsibility except when required as above to make recommendations to Full Council. In the event of grievance & dismissal decisions which shall not be reported to Council until such time as appeal periods have expired. Spending authority is limited to within agreed budget for specific previously agreed projects.

H. COMMUNITY HIGHWAYS WORKER WORKING GROUP

Number of Councillors: The total number of councillors on the Working Group shall be set at 7. Any councillor not appointed to the Committee may act as substitute at the request of a committee member. In addition relevant officers of Durham County Council will be members.

Quorum: 1/3 of members but not less than 3

Notice requirement: none

Meeting Frequency: quarterly

Public participation: no

Officers: Clerk to the Council, Community Highways Worker, DCC officers.

Terms of Reference:

The Committee will:

i. Oversee the tasks and progress specific to the Community Highways Worker agreed by the Council.

ii. Report to the Council on progress made on projects undertaken.

iii. Consider the short, medium and long term costs associated with the tasks.

iv. Make recommendations to Full Council regarding expenditure on projects proposed.

v. Ensure the risk management process of the work allocated.

vi. Make recommendations to Council in relation to work undertaken.

Delegation(s).

None – not appicable

Summary

The Working Group has no operational decision making responsibility decision making responsibility rests with the Council.

Agenda Item 12

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS TO BE HELD

6 GOATBECK TERRACE, LANGLEY MOOR, DURHAM FOR THE YEAR 2025/2026

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Held on the 3rd Friday of each month, at 6.30pm, excluding August when the Parish Council is in recess.

Friday 16th May 2025 Annual Meeting of the Council
Friday 20th June 2025
Friday 18th July 2025
August 2025 - NO Meeting
Friday 19th September 2025
Friday 17th October 2025
Friday 21st November 2025
Friday 19th December 2025
Friday 16th January 2026 Precept setting
Friday 20th February 2026
Friday 20th March 2026
Friday 17th April 2026

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (Meeting of Electors)

Venue and time to be arranged.

FINANCE MEETING

Held at 7pm, on the following dates:

Wednesday 11th June 2025
Wednesday 3rd September 2025
Wednesday 3rd December 2025 (an additional meeting may be held in January 2026 to review budget)
Wednesday 4th March 2026

ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE

Held at 10am, on the following dates:

Tuesday 1st July 2025
Tuesday 7th October 2025
Tuesday 13th January 2026
Tuesday 5th April 2026

AGENDA ITEM 13

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Standing Orders Review

16th May 2025

1. **PURPOSE –** Council to consider review of Standing Orders for adoption.

2. **Background**

NALC (the National Association of Local Councils) issues Model Standing Orders to member councils based upon legislation, regulations and best practice.

The Model is regularly revised and when issued to member councils, should be compared with their own Standing Orders. The latest Model was issued in March 2025.

Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council Standing Orders are based upon a very old Model and although the date indicates they have been reviewed annually, they are not based on current best practice.

Generally, when carrying out a review, officers would use a tracked change to indicate where alterations are proposed. In this instance, this method has not been used as the documents are very different.

In the model there are parts where there are choices to be made and inserted in brackets, also the Locum Clerk has added a few words which are recommended for inclusion; where these changes have been made, they have been highlighted in yellow. Where a highlight is in blue, these are taken from the Council's existing Standing Orders. These highlighted items will be subject to approval at the meeting.

3. **Other matters for consideration**

The Council's current Standing Orders has a number of locally specific items, details of which are discussed below along with a narrative regarding inclusion or exclusion in the new draft. It is the role of the Council to determine whether to agree with the Locum Clerk's determination.

B&BPC SO 39 – indicates that the Council has a seal, Council is requested to confirm this is the case, as the Locum Clerk has not been give the seal for safe keeping. The current draft presumes a seal does not exist but can be altered.

B&BPC SO 40 – determines the Standing Committees which is unnecessary as the Council sets its Committees annually at the Annual Meeting of the Council. This has not been carried forward to the new draft.

B&BPC SO41 – allocates ex-officio status on committees to the Chair and Vice-Chair which is an outdated practice.

B&BPC SO67 – covers public questions and reflects the Public Involvement at Parish Meetings Policy, last reviewed in November 2022. The SO and Policy are restrictive, requiring 2 days notice in writing to be given of questions; and generally restricts public time to 10 minutes. **Council is recommended to dispose of this requirement, suspend the policy and request a policy review** the SO has not been carried over.

B&BPC SO 75 – requires that a resolution permanently to add, vary or revoke a Standing Order shall when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council. Although this is no longer in the NALC Model, the Locum Clerk suggests retention of this provision as it allows time to consider change to the Council's principal rules.

B&BPC SO77 – Allocation to Wards -

1) That each ward shall determine how the money precepted from the Council Tax and allocated to the wards shall be spent. The full Council shall ultimately approve the expenditure.

2) That all Parish Councillors elected to that ward shall be consulted on all expenditure of that ward before approval by full Council.

3) That any individual, organisation or named community group applying to the Parish Council for funds must supply accounts and statements for a full twelve months prior to the application. Only one donation in any twelve months may be made to any organisation or named community group (excluding the annual Christmas donations). Support will only be given for projects and activities which contribute to the well-being of residents within the Parish area.

4) That a sum of not more than £500* per ward be given in cash or spent on goods for any organisation with the exception of charitable organisations and under special circumstances approved by the Council or from the Council's Community Fund.

5) That applications made by individuals be considered only after further information is requested from the organisation, sports club or school of which the individual is a member. If agreed, the donation would be given to the organisation, sports club or school on behalf of the individual/s.

* Amended by Council 9.6.2004 Minute No.64

This standing order appears to also cover donations which are already included in the Grant Awarding Policy, which is due for review. **Council is recommended to not include this in Standing Orders, but to include ward budget allocations in either the Grant Awarding Policy or a separate policy covering the use of ward budgets.**

4. RECOMMENDATION – Council is recommended to pass a resolution:

1. to permanently revoke the Council's existing Standing Orders;
2. to add the draft Standing Orders subject to any amendments agreed in the meeting;
3. and shall when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council

Standing Orders

Based upon the NALC Model 2025

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INTRODUCTION

This is an update to Model Standing Orders 14 and 18.

HOW TO USE MODEL STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

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

For convenience, the word "councillor" is used in model standing orders and, unless the context suggests otherwise, includes a non-councillor with or without voting rights. Model standing orders use gender-neutral language (e.g. "Chair").

1. RULES OF DEBATE AT MEETINGS

a Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the chair of the meeting.

b A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.

c A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the chair of the meeting as withdrawn unless it is moved by another Member.

d If a motion (including an amendment) has been seconded, it may be withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.

e An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.

f If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion (as amended) becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.

g An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the chair of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the chair.

h A councillor may move an amendment to their own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.

i If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the chair of the meeting.

j Subject to standing order 1(k), only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the chair of the meeting.

k One or more amendments may be discussed together if the chair of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.

l A councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.

m The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.

n Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply either at the end of debate on the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.

o Unless permitted by the chair of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:

i. to speak on an amendment moved by another councillor;

ii. to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since they last spoke;

iii. to make a point of order;

iv. to give a personal explanation; or

v. to exercise a right of reply.

p During the debate on a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A councillor raising a point of order shall identify the standing order which they considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting they are concerned by.

q A point of order shall be decided by the chair of the meeting and their decision shall be final.

r When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:

i. to amend the motion;

ii. to proceed to the next business;

iii. to adjourn the debate;

iv. to put the motion to a vote;

v. to ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;

vi. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;

vii. to exclude the public and press;

viii. to adjourn the meeting; or

ix. to suspend particular standing order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory or legal requirements.

s Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the chair of the meeting shall be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived their right of reply.

t Excluding motions moved under standing order 1(r), the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the chair of the meeting.

2. DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

a No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the chair of the

meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.

b If person(s) disregard the request of the chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.

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

3. MEETINGS GENERALLY

Full Council meetings
Committee meetings
Sub-committee meetings

a **Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.**

b **The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.**

c **The minimum three clear days' public notice for a meeting does not include the day on which the notice was issued or the day of the meeting**.

d **Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.**

e Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

f The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(e) shall not exceed 10 minutes unless directed by the chair of the meeting.

g Subject to standing order 3(f), a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.

h In accordance with standing order 3(e), a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.

i [A person shall stand when requesting to speak and when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort)] OR [A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort)]. The chair of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.

j A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the chair of the meeting.

k Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.

l **Subject to standing order 3(m), a person who attends a meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To "report" means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting proceedings, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later or to report or to provide oral or written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.**

m **A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.**

n **The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.**

o **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chair of the Council may in their absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chair of the Council (if there is one).**

p **The Chair of the Council, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chair of the Council (if there is one) if present, shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, a councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.**

q **Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors and non-councillors with voting rights present and voting.**

r **The chair of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise their**

casting vote whether or not they gave an original vote.

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

s **Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor present and voting gave their vote for or against that question.** Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.

t The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:

i. the time and place of the meeting;

ii. the names of councillors who are present and the names of councillors who have notified their absence;

iii. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;

iv. the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;

v. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;

vi. if there was a public participation session; and

vii. the resolutions made.

u **A councillor or a non-councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on their right to participate and vote on that matter.**

v **No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three.**

See standing order 4d(viii) for the quorum of a committee or sub-committee meeting.

w **If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted** and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting.

x A meeting shall not exceed a period of 3 hours.

4. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

a **Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.**

b **The members of a committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Council.**

c **Unless the Council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.**

d The Council may appoint standing committees or other committees as may be necessary, and:

i. shall determine their terms of reference;

ii. shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee up until the date of the next annual meeting of the Council;

iii. shall permit a committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;

iv. shall, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c), appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee;

v. may, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c), appoint and determine the terms of office of the substitute members to a committee whose role is to replace the ordinary members at a meeting of a committee if the ordinary members of the committee confirm to the Proper Officer 1 day before the meeting that they are unable to attend;

vi. shall, after it has appointed the members of a ~~standing~~ committee, appoint the chair of the ~~standing~~ committee;

~~vii. shall permit a committee other than a standing committee, to appoint its own chair at the first meeting of the committee;~~

viii. shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee which, in both cases, shall be no less than three;

ix. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee;

x. shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meetings of a sub-committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, required for the meetings of a sub-committee;

xi. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and

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

5. ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS

a **In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the councillors elected take office.**

b **In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council decides.**

c **If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6pm.**

d **In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council decides.**

e **The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the Council shall be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council.**

f **The Chair of the Council, unless they has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until their successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.**

g **The Vice-Chair of the Council unless they resign or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chair of the Council at the next annual meeting of the Council.**

h **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, they shall preside at the annual meeting until a successor Chair of the Council has been elected. The current Chair of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council but shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**

i **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, they shall preside at the annual meeting until a new Chair of the Council has been elected. they may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council and shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**

j Following the election of the Chair of the Council and Vice-Chair of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:

i. **In an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council of their acceptance of office form unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date;**

ii. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council;

iii. Receipt of the minutes of the last meeting of a committee;

iv. Consideration of the recommendations made by a committee;

v. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;

vi. Review of the terms of reference for committees;

vii. Appointment of members to existing committees;

viii. Appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing order 4;

ix. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;

x. Review of arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies and businesses.

xi. Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back;

xii. In an election year, to make arrangements with a view to the Council becoming eligible to exercise the general power of competence in the future;

xiii. Review of inventory of land and other assets including buildings and office equipment;

xiv. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks;

xv. Review of the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies;

xvi. Review of the Council's complaints procedure;

xvii. Review of the Council's policies, procedures and practices in respect of its obligations under freedom of information and data protection legislation (*see also standing orders 11, 20 and 21*);

xviii. Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media;

xix. Review of the Council's employment policies and procedures;

xx. Review of the Council's expenditure incurred under s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the general power of competence.

xxi. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

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

a **The Chair of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.**

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

c The chair of a committee or a sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or the sub-committee at any time.

d If the chair of a committee [or a sub-committee] does not call an extraordinary meeting within 7 days of having been requested to do so by 2 members of the committee or the sub-committe, any 2 members of the committee or the sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or a sub-committee.

7. PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS

a A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 7 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.

b When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 7(a) has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further six months.

8. VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS

Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chair of the meeting.

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

a A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting for which it is tabled and in any event shall relate to the performance of the Council's statutory functions, powers and obligations or an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.

b No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least 7 clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.

c The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 9(b), correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.

d If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 9(b) is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it, so that it can be understood, in writing, to the Proper Officer at least 7 clear days before the meeting.

e If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the chair of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.

f The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.

g Motions received shall be recorded and numbered in the order that they are received.

h Motions rejected shall be recorded with an explanation by the Proper Officer of the reason for rejection.

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

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

i. to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;

ii. to move to a vote;

iii. to defer consideration of a motion;

iv. to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;

v. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;

vi. to change the order of business on the agenda;

vii. to proceed to the next business on the agenda;

viii. to require a written report;

ix. to appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members;

x. to extend the time limits for speaking;

xi. to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest;

xii. to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public;

xiii. to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;

xiv. to temporarily suspend the meeting;

xv. to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory or legal requirements);

xvi. to adjourn the meeting; or

xvii. to close the meeting.

11. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION

See also standing order 20.

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

b **The Council shall have in place, and keep under review, policies for the retention and safe destruction of all information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. The Council's retention policy shall confirm the period for which information (including personal data) shall be retained or if this is not possible the criteria used to determine that period (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980).**

c **The agenda, papers that support the agenda and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential information or personal data without legal justification.**

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

12. DRAFT MINUTES

Full Council meetings ●
Committee meetings ●
Sub-committee meetings ●

a If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on councillors with the agenda to attend the meeting at which they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read.

b There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes shall be moved in accordance with standing order 10(a)(i).

c The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the chair of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.

d If the chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, they shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:

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

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

13. CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS

See also standing order 3(u).

a All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council.

b Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which they had the interest.

c Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which they have another interest if so required by the Council's code of conduct. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which they had the interest.

d **Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer** as soon as possible before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.

e A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made [by the Proper Officer] OR [by a meeting of the Council, or committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required] and that decision is final.

f A dispensation request shall confirm:

i. the description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;

ii. whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;

iii. the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and

iv. an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.

g Subject to standing orders 13(d) and (f), a dispensation request shall be considered [by the Proper Officer before the meeting or, if this is not possible, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required] OR [at the beginning of the meeting of the Council, or committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required].

h A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 13(e) if having regard to all relevant circumstances any of the following apply:

i. without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the meeting transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business;

ii. granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area; or

iii. it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

14. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

a **Upon notification by the Principal Council that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against them. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.**

15. PROPER OFFICER

a The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the Council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.

b The Proper Officer shall:

i. **at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee** or a sub-committee**,**

- **serve on councillors by delivery or post at their residences or by email authenticated in such manner as the Proper Officer thinks fit, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda (provided the councillor has consented to service by email), and**

- **Provide, in a conspicuous place, public notice of the time, place and agenda (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council convened by councillors is signed by them).**

See standing order 3(b) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 3(c) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a committee;

ii. subject to standing order 9, include on the agenda all motions in the order

received unless a councillor has given written notice at least 7 days before the meeting confirming their withdrawal of it;

iii. convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Chair of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in their office;

iv. **facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors;**

v. **receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities;**

vi. hold acceptance of office forms from councillors;

vii. hold a copy of every councillor's register of interests;

viii. assist with responding to requests made under freedom of information legislation and rights exercisable under data protection legislation, in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures;

ix. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;

x. assist in the organisation of, storage of, access to, security of and destruction of information held by the Council in paper and electronic form subject to the requirements of data protection and freedom of information legislation and other legitimate requirements (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980);

xi. arrange for legal deeds to be executed;
(*see also standing order 23);*

xii. arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with its financial regulations;

xiii. record every planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response to the local planning authority in an electronic list for such purpose;

xiv. refer a planning application received by the Council to the Chair or in their absence the Vice-Chair of the Council within two working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of the Council;

xv. manage access to information about the Council via the publication scheme.

16. RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

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

17. ACCOUNTS AND ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

a "Proper practices" in standing orders refer to the most recent version of "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners' Guide".

b All payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the Council's financial regulations.

c The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each councillor as soon as practicable after 30 June, 30 September and 31 December in each year a statement to summarise:

i. the Council's income and expenditure for each quarter;

ii. the Council's aggregate income and expenditure for the year to date;

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

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

d As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:

i. each councillor with a statement summarising the Council's income and expenditure for the last quarter and the year to date for information; and

ii. to the Council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 2 of the annual governance and accountability return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.

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

18. FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND PROCUREMENT

a. The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:

i. the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;

ii. the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council;

iii. the work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually;

iv. the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the Council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and

v. whether contracts with an estimated value below £30,000 due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.

b. Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually for fitness of purpose.

c. 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. tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;

iv. tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least ~~one~~ two councillors after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed;

v. tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.

d. Neither the Council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.

e. **Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Government from time to time, the Council must consider whether the contract is subject to the requirements of the current procurement legislation and, if so, the Council must comply with procurement rules. NALC's procurement guidance contains further details.**

19. HANDLING STAFF MATTERS

a A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of the Personnel committee is subject to standing order 11.

b Subject to the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Clerk shall notify the chair of the Personnel committee if they are not available, the vice-chair of the Personnel committee of absence occasioned by illness or other reason and that person shall report such absence to the Personnel committee at its next meeting.

c A Sub-Committee of 3 shall upon a resolution conduct a review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Clerk. The reviews and appraisal shall be reported in writing and are subject to approval by resolution by the Personnel committee.

d Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Clerk shall contact the chair of the Personnel committeeor in their absence, the vice-chair of the Personnel committee in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Personnel committee.

e Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by the Clerk relates to the chair or vice-chair of the Personnel committee, this shall be communicated to another member of the Personnel committee, which shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Personnel committee.

f Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat as confidential the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters.

g In accordance with standing order 11(a), persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing order 19(f).

20. RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

See also standing order 21.

a **In accordance with freedom of information legislation, the Council shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme and respond to requests for information held by the Council.**

b. **The Council, shall publish information in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015**.

21. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION

(Below is not an exclusive list).

See also standing order 11.

a The Council may appoint a Data Protection Officer.

b **The Council shall have policies and procedures in place to respond to an individual exercising statutory rights concerning their personal data.**

c **The Council shall have a written policy in place for responding to and managing a personal data breach.**

d **The Council shall keep a record of all personal data breaches comprising the facts relating to the personal data breach, its effects and the remedial action taken.**

e **The Council shall ensure that information communicated in its privacy notice(s) is in an easily accessible and available form and kept up to date.**

f **The Council shall maintain a written record of its processing activities.**

22. RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS/MEDIA

Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

23. EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS

See also standing orders 15(b)(xii) and (xvii).

a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.

b **Subject to standing order 23(a), any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

The above is applicable to a Council without a common seal.

24. COMMUNICATING UNITARY COUNCILLORS

a Upon request, an invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the Unitary Council representing the area of the Council.

25. RESTRICTIONS ON COUNCILLOR ACTIVITIES

a. Unless duly authorised no councillor shall:

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

ii. issue orders, instructions or directions.

26. STANDING ORDERS GENERALLY

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

b A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice by at least 7 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9. Or prepared by the Proper Officer following regular review.

c A resolution permanently to add, vary or revoke a Standing Order shall when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

d The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible, following delivery of their declaration of acceptance of office or following review.

e The decision of the chair of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

AGENDA ITEM 14

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Regulations Review

16th May 2025

1. **PURPOSE –** Council to consider review of Financial Regulations for adoption.

2. **Background**

NALC (the National Association of Local Councils) issues Model Financial Regulations to member councils based upon legislation, regulations and best practice.

The Model is regularly revised and when issued to member councils, should be compared with their own Financial Regulations. The latest Model was issued in March 2025.

Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council Financial Regulations are based upon an older Model and they were agreed to be reviewed in September 2024 by referral to a Special Finance Committee, which was not carried out.

Generally, when carrying out a review, officers would use a tracked change to indicate where alterations are proposed. In this instance, this method has not been used as the documents are very different.

In the model there are parts where there are choices to be made and inserted in brackets, also the Locum Clerk has added a few words which are recommended for inclusion; where these changes have been made, they have been highlighted in yellow. These highlighted items will be subject to approval at the meeting.

3. **RECOMMENDATION –** Council is recommended to consider the draft Financial Regulations for approval subject to any amendments agreed in the meeting;

Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council

Financial Regulations

Based upon the NALC Model 2025

These Financial Regulations are based upon a template which was produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in March 2025 for the purpose of its member councils and county associations. Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this document are correct at time of publication. NALC cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions and changes to information subsequent to publication.

Bold text indicates legal requirements, which a council cannot change or suspend.

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on [enter date].

1. General

1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.

1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.

1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.

1.4. In these Financial Regulations:

- 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.
- "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
- "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
- 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
- *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) and published by NALC in England.
- 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
- 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.

1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO;

- acts under the policy direction of the council;
- administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
- determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
- ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
- ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
- seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
- produces financial management information as required by the council.

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

- **setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);**
- **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**

- **approving accounting statements;**
- **approving an annual governance statement;**
- **borrowing;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors**

1.7. In addition, the council shall:

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

2. Risk management and internal control

2.1. **The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.**

2.2. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.

2.4. **At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.**

2.5. **The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:**

- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
- **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
- **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
- **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
- **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
- **ensure division of responsibilities.**

2.6. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the Finance Committee.

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

3. Accounts and audit

3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.2. **The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonable accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**

- **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
- **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;**

3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

3.4. The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.5. **The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices**.

3.6. **Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit** and shall, as directed by the council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.

3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by the council and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.

3.8. The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:

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

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

- perform any operational duties for the council;

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

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

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

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

4. Budget and precept

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

4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the Personnel Committee at least annually by the end of November for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the Personnel Committee. The RFO will inform committees of any salary implications before they consider their draft budgets.

4.3. No later than November each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year along with a forecast for the following three financial years, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.

4.4. Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward (by placing them in an earmarked reserve) with the formal approval of the full council.

4.5. Each committee shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the council's finance committee not later than the end of November each year.

4.6. The draft budget {with any committee proposals and three-year forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the finance committee and a recommendation made to the council.

4.7. Having considered the proposed budget and three-year forecast, the council shall determine its council tax requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a

precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.

4.8. **Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.**

4.9. The RFO shall **issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February** and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.

4.10. The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.

4.11. Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by the council or relevant committee.

5. Procurement

5.1. **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.

5.2. The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes, unless using the General Power of Competence.

5.3. Every contract shall comply with the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.

5.4. **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulations 2024 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**

5.5. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.12) obtain prices as follows:

5.6. For contracts estimated to exceed £30,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers agreed by the council OR advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.

5.7. **For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation regarding the publication of invitations and notices.**

5.8. For contracts greater than £3,000 excluding VAT the Clerk shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes;

5.9. where the value is between £500 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.

5.10. For smaller purchases, the clerk shall seek to achieve value for money.

5.11. **Contracts must not be split to avoid compliance with these rules.**

5.12. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:

i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;

ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;

iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;

iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.

5.13. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the council or relevant committee. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.

5.14. The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

5.15. Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:

- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items below £5000 excluding VAT.
- the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council or Chair of the appropriate committee, for any items below £7,000 excluding VAT.
- a duly delegated committee of the council for all items of expenditure within their delegated budgets for items under £7,000 excluding VAT
- in respect of grants, a duly authorised committee within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council.
- the council for all items over £7,000;

Such authorisation must be supported by a minute (in the case of council or committee decisions) or other auditable evidence trail.

5.16. No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order or make any contract on behalf of the council.

5.17. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget for that type of expenditure other than by resolution of the council or a duly delegated committee acting within its Terms of Reference except in an emergency.

5.18. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £7,000 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.

5.19. No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless the council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.

5.20. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £250 excluding VAT unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.

5.21. Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the RFO.

6. Banking and payments

6.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The council has resolved to bank with the Cooperative Bank and the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund. The arrangements shall be reviewed annually for security and efficiency.

6.2. The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the council's bank.

6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the council before being certified by the RFO. Where the certification of invoices is done as a batch, this shall include a statement by the RFO that all invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO.

6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.

6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking/cheque, in accordance with a resolution of the council or duly delegated committee or a delegated decision by an officer, unless the council resolves to use a different payment method.

6.6. For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (such as Salaries, PAYE, National Insurance, pension contributions, rent, rates, regular maintenance contracts and similar items), which the council or a duly delegated committee may authorise in advance for the year.

6.7. A copy of this schedule of regular payments shall be signed by two members on each and every occasion when payment is made - to reduce the risk of duplicate payments.

6.8. A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate meeting of the council or Finance Committee for information only.

6.9. The Clerk and RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments in the following circumstances:

i. any payments of up to £5000 excluding VAT, within an agreed budget.

ii. payments of up to £7,000 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises.

iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 or to comply with contractual terms, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of the council, where the Clerk 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.

iv. Fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £10,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council or finance committee.

6.10. The RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the agenda for the meeting, together with the relevant invoices, to the council or finance committee. The council or committee shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall authorise payment by resolution. The authorised schedule shall be initialled immediately below the last item by the person chairing the meeting or members approved at the meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting.

7. Electronic payments

7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. The Clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.

7.2. All authorised signatories shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online.

7.3. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.

7.4. The Service Administrator shall set up all items due for payment online. A list of payments for approval, together with copies of the relevant invoices, shall be sent by email to two authorised signatories.

7.5. In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator an authorised signatory shall set up any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.

7.6. Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment using the online banking system.

7.7. Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment online.

7.8. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next council meeting.

7.9. With the approval of the council in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are signed/approved online by two authorised members. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed at least every two years.

7.10. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of the council provided that each payment is approved online by two authorised bank signatories, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to the council at the next meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.

7.11. If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are signed or approved online by two members, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by the council at least every two years.

7.12. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by two of the Clerk and a member. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.

7.13. Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.

7.14. Remembered password facilities other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

8. Cheque payments

8.1. Cheques or orders for payment in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two members.

8.2. A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.

8.3. To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.

8.4. Any signatures obtained away from council meetings shall be reported to the council at the next convenient meeting.

9. Payment cards

9.1. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk unless specifically agreed otherwise and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed.

9.2. A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the council. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to the council and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of the council.

9.3. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and any balance shall be paid in full each month.

9.4. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used except for expenses of up to £250 including VAT, incurred in accordance with council policy.

10. Petty Cash

10.1. The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float/imprest account of £250 and may provide petty cash to officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses.

a) Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept, along with receipts to substantiate every payment.

b) Cash income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.

c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately on any schedule of payments presented for approval.

11. Payment of salaries and allowances

11.1. **As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**

11.2. **Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.**

11.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or a duly delegated committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council or relevant committee.

11.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.

11.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.

11.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar

month reported in the cashbook. Payroll reports will be reviewed by the personnel committee to ensure that the correct payments have been made.

11.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.

11.8. Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

12. Loans and investments

12.1. Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.

12.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.

12.3. The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

12.4. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.

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

12.6. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

13. Income

13.1. The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.

13.2. The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk. The RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.

13.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.

13.4. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.

13.5. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.

13.6. The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.

13.7. Where significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the RFO shall ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control record such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken for the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works

14.1. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.

14.2. Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

15. Stores and equipment

15.1. Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.

15.2. Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.

15.3. The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.

16. Assets, properties and estates

16.1. The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.

16.2. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

16.3. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

16.4. No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case

(including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate where required by law).

16.5. No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £500. In each case a written report shall be provided to council with a full business case.

17. Insurance

17.1. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the council's review of risk management.

17.2. The Clerk shall give prompt notification of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.

17.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to the council at the next available meeting. The RFO shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers.

17.4. All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined annually by the council, or duly delegated committee.

18. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations

18.1. The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of clerk or RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.

18.2. The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.

18.3. The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 1 - Tender process

1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.
2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.
3) Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.
4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order [insert reference of the council's relevant standing order] and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
6) Where the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.

Agenda Item 15

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 6, GOATBECK TERRACE, LANGLEY MOOR, DURHAM, DH7 8JJ ON FRIDAY 25th APRIL 2025 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT:
Councillor F Bonner (Chair)
Councillors D Bell, A Bonner, L Catterson, J Chapman, P Elmer, J Grantham, D Hindmarch, J Jamieson, S Leckenby, G Moore, B Nelson, S Nelson, D Simpson, B Sims, P Stoddart and C Wharton.

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs S J Shippen – Locum Clerk and four members of the public.

184. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Clegg, L Clegg and J Turnbull.

RESOLVED: To **APPROVE** the apologies.

185. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Declarations of interest were received from the following:
Item 5 – Councillor J Grantham Brandon Carrside - Committee Member;
Item 5 – Councillor S Leckenby - Brandon Carrside - Committee Member;
Item 9b - Councillor D Simpson - Trustee of Esh Winning Residents' Association.

RESOLVED: To **RECEIVE** the declarations of interest.

186. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no representations from the public.

187. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21st MARCH 2025

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

188. BRANDON CARRSIDE YOUTH AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

A written report from Brandon Carrside Youth and Community Project was circulated to Council.

RESOLVED: To **RECEIVE** the report.

189. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Planning application lists relevant to the parish between 10th March 2025 and 13th April were considered.

DM/25/00539	Brandon Pharmacy	Relocate entrance way furth north on the same elevation. Brandon Pharmacy, Manchester House, 35 Commercial Street, Brandon, Durham, DH7 8PL
DM/25/00658/FPA	Carole Morgan	First floor forward extension and single storey rear extension. 7 Elder Close, Ushaw Moor, Durham, DH7 7RS.
DM/25/00670/FPA	Willmott Dixon (on behalf of the	Full planning application for the demolition of existing buildings (EFAA and EFAD) and

	Department of Education)	re-development of Durham Academy, to deliver a new school building with associated landscaping works and internal refurbishment works to retained buildings.
DM/25/00762/FPA	Barratt Homes and Trustee Owners	Hybrid application comprising full planning permission for the construction of 140 dwellings, primary site access and associated SuDS and landscaping; and outline planning permission with all matters reserved for the construction of up to 260 dwellings, secondary access, local centre incorporating retail (up to 4,000 sqft) (Use Class E) and mini-mobility hub, and associated SuDS and landscaping. Land at Red Barns, Brandon, Durham, DH7 8DA
DM/25/00242/FPA	Woodlands Nursery School	Single storey nursery extension. Woodlands Day Nursery, 2 Artemis Court, St Johns Road, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Meadowfield, Durham, DH7 8XQ
DM/25/00793/TPO	Acton Lodge	Removal of clump of 12 Norway spruce trees protruding from northern edge of compartment – TPO-PN1-325. Acton Lodge, Acton Road, Esh Winning, Durham, DH7 9PN
DM/25/00909/FPA	Mr Craig Coates	Two storey pitched roof rear extension. Re-site existing sun room from rear to gable, new pavement crossing and car parking space to front, new windows to bathroom and en-suite. 54 Brancepeth View, Brandon, Durham, DH7 8TT

RESOLVED:

1. to convene a task and finish Working Party, consisting of any Member wishing to take part, to meet on Tuesday 29th April 2025 to consider comments from Councillors and formulate a series of points in respect of application DM/25/00762/FPA and submit a report to the Clerk. Further, to **DELEGATE** authority to the Locum Clerk to submit comments on behalf of the Council to the Planning Authority;
2. to raise no objection to any of the remaining applications.

190. CIVIC FUNCTIONS

RESOLVED: To **NOTE** there were no functions attended by Chair/Vice Chair.

191. INVOICES FOR PAYMENT

Authorisation was requested to pay accounts for £17,547.62, additional list of £25,351.80 plus travel expenses of £124.90.

RESOLVED: To authorise payment of the accounts amounting to £43,024.32 to be checked and verified by Councillors D Bell and P Stoddart.

192. DONATIONS

Council considered requests for donations:

a) **St Cuthbert's Hospice Durham**
RESOLVED: to award a donation of £600 being £100 per ward.

b) **Esh Winning Residents' Association – Annual Funday**
RESOLVED: to award a donation of £500 from Esh Winning ward budget.

c) **Browney Residents' Association – Attendance of Browney Lodge Banner at Durham Miners Gala.**
RESOLVED: DEFER the consideration to a future meeting and request a breakdown of the £3,200 cost estimate.

193. BRANCEPETH PARISH COUNCIL DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
Council considered whether to make any written representations.

RESOLVED: that the information be **RECEIVED.**

194. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION – WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE DEFINITIVE MAP OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY SLEIGHTHOLME MOOR ROAD/TRACK (REF: 4/17/057)
Council considered any response.

RESOLVED: that the information be **RECEIVED.**

195. OPEN SPACES SOCIETY – MEMBERSHIP
Council considered renewal of membership at a cost of £45.

RESOLVED: that the membership renewal be **APPROVED**.

196. ICO ANNUAL DATA PROTECTION FEE
Council considered approval of annual fee payment by Direct Debit, which would save £5 per year.

RESOLVED: that payment by Direct Debit be **APPROVED** and signed by Councillors D Bell and P Stoddart.

197. VE DAY CELEBRATIONS
Council considred the report circulated.

a) **St John's Hall Meadowfield**
RESOLVED: to approve the payment for refreshments at a cost of up to £50 Meadowfield ward budget

b) **Browney Residents' Association**
RESOLVED: to **APPROVE** request. SEE Notes

198. BROWNEY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION – BROWNEY LODGE BANNER
Council considered the request as detailed in the report circulated.

RESOLVED: that Council
1. **NOTED** the grass cutting contractor's willingness to adjust his schedule;
2. **APPROVE** the request for use of the Village Green;
3. **AGREE** a letter is produced in respect of parking on the Green to be delivered to local residents prior to the event.
4. **ADVISE** the Residents' Association to check the terror threat level.

199. <u>EAST COAST MAIN LINE REINFORCEMENT PROJECT – BROWNEY CURVE</u>
Council received the project completion update.

RESOLVED: to **NOTE** the information.

The meeting closed at 6.55pm

Signed …….

Date ……..

Agenda Item 19

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Week ending 20th April 2025

DM/25/01032/FPA	Mr Daniel Selby	Single storey flat roof extension to the rear of the property. Enlargement of existing front porch. New doors to rear kitchen wall and internal structural alterations within the property. Station House, Station Road, Meadowfield, Durham, DH7 8NF.
DM/25/00984/CEU	Mr Jonathan Bell	Residential domestic garden as part curtilage. Honey Pot Cottage, Newhouse Road, Esh Winning, Durham, DH7 9LG.

Week ending 27th April 2025

DM/25/01083/FPA	Miller Homes	Erection of 158 homes with associated landscaping and infrastructure. Land to the south of Cockhouse Lane, Ushaw Moor, DH7 7PN

Week ending 4 May 2025

There were no planning applications for week ending 4th May 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 20

Payee	Date	Description	Payment Method	Amount	Date taken to Council	Decision
British Gas	02/05/2025	Electric - Parish	DD	£ 63.32		
Cllr David Bell	28/04/2025	Travel expenses NALC Conference	BACS (PAID)	£ 68.60	25/04/2025	Approved
Cllr John Grantham	25/04/2025	Travel expenses NALC Conference	BACS (PAID)	£ 56.30	25/04/2025	Approved
Cllr Philip Stoddart	01/05/2025	Travel expenses NALC Conference	CHQ	£ 41.90		
Core People INV00447729	02/05/2025	Admin - Parish	BACS	£ 451.44		
Core People INV00447918	09/05/2025	Admin - Parish	BACS	£ 451.44		
County Durham Association of Local Councils	30/04/2025	Good Councillor Guides	BACS	£ 88.00		
DU Clean	03/04/2025	Parish Office cleaning	BACS	£ 266.00		
Durham County Council 301456141	01/05/2025	Rent of land - Waterhouses Grazing	BACS	£ 75.00		
Durham County Council 253188676	08/05/2025	Man Club football pitch hire	BACS	£ 144.00		
E On Next	01/05/2025	xmas tree electric - Meadowfield	DD	£ 17.64		
Open Spaces Society	11/02/2025	Membership fee	BACS (PAID)	£ 45.00		
Staples	01/05/2025	Stationery	BACS	£ 90.18		
The National Association of Councillors	30/04/2025	Membership fees	BACS	£ 478.80		
UKOS	28/04/2025	Shredding	BACS	£ 65.52		
Ushaw Moor Action Group	06/05/2025	Hut hire x2 hours	BACS	£ 22.00		
Ward Bros	30/04/2025	Skips - Durham Road & Low Browney	BACS	£ 552.00		
Wave	25/04/2025	Water Langley Grove Allots	CHQ	£ 45.55		
Wave	25/04/2025	Water Folds Close Allots	CHQ	£ 45.76		
TOTAL				**£ 3,068.45**		
		less previously approved		**£ 2,524.13**		

AGENDA ITEM 21

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Donation Requests

16th May 2025

1. PURPOSE – Council to consider grant requests under the Council's Grant Awarding Policy.

2. BACKGROUND

The Council's Grant Awarding Policy reviewed on 18th October 2024 Min 81e states:

- Any individual, organisation or named community group applying to the Parish Council for funds must supply accounts statements for a full twelve months prior to the application. A recent bank statement can also be provided.

- Only one donation in any twelve months may be made to any individual organisation or named community group (excluding the annual Christmas donations) unless decided otherwise at the discretion of Members.

- Support will only be given for projects and activities which contribute to the well-being of residents within the Parish area. Applications received from organisations lying outside the Parish area will only be considered if the work of the organisation benefits the Parish and its residents.

- That a sum of not more than £500 per ward be given in cash or spent on goods for any organisation with the exception of charitable organisations and under special circumstances approved by the Council. This limit does not apply to the Council's Community Fund.

- Applications made by individuals will be considered only after further information is requested from the organisation, sports club or school of which the individual is a member. If agreed, the donation would be given to the organisation, sports club or school on behalf of the individual/s.

3. REQUESTS RECEIVED FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 **Browney Residents' Association – Browney Lodge Banner – Miners Gala 2025**

A request was received to contribute towards the cost of approx £3200 overall to attend the Durham Miners' Gala 2025. This was considered at the Council Meeting held on 25th April 2025, where Council requested a breakdown of the costs making up the £3,200.

Additional information has been received which states:
"*I have discussed this with the committee and they are very reluctant to share the fee of the band as it was asked to be kept confidential by the band and we are aware that some councillors are involved with other local banner groups.*

The £3200 does however cover the band fee, breakfast for the band, transport for the band, transport for residents, donation to Man Club for carrying the banner, a donation to The Browney for opening early and hosting us all for breakfast and a proportion of our annual public liability insurance.

We hope this suffices."

Both accounts and bank statements have been received and will be provided as background documents for councillors to examine.

Browney Residents' Association had a donation of £300 in October 2024 for the Community Garden.

3.2 **Ushaw Moor Action Group –**
Av request has been received to fund food bags for families. A copy is attached to the report.

Both accounts and bank statements have been received and will be provided as background documents for councillors to examine.

Ushaw Moor Action Group received a donation of £500 in June 2024 for a Summer Fair.

4. RECOMMENDATION – Council is recommended to consider the donations in accordance with Council Policy.

USHAW MOOR
ACTION GROUP
MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

To: Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council

From: Ushaw Moor Action Group (UMAG)
Registered Charity No.: 115 7340
The Hut,
21 Chestnut Grove,
Ushaw Moor,
Durham
DH7 7LJ

ushawmooractiongroup@gmail.com
https://umag.org.uk/

Date: 23rd April 2025

Funding Request

Dear Parish Council.

I am writing on behalf of Ushaw moor Action Group regarding food bags for families in and around Ushaw Moor.
We give food bags out throughout the year by requests from organisations we work with and also requests from individuals, over the last 12 months 135 bags were given out.

Every year we take over the distribution of food bags when the schools shut for their 6 weeks summer break, we have no criteria and people only have to request a bag.
Bags are usually given out on a Wednesday morning from 10-12pm.

Any donation we receive will be used to buy fresh produce, i.e. fruit, milk and bread etc!

Any donation will be gladly received.

Kind regards
Rebecca Watt (Secretary)
Ushaw Moor Action Group

National Association of Councillors
Local Government Finance

Held @ The Royal Hotel, Scarborough
11th 12th & 13th April 2025

Attendees for Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council:

Councillors D. Bell, Phil Stodard, John Grantham

Friday 11th April

Introduction and welcome from the Regional Chair Graeme Huntley and the General Secretary Brian Nelson.

Welcome to the delegates and introduction to the weekends conference, both wished the delegates a constructive and interesting time they were here and looked forward to a productive conference, however there were some slight alterations to announce.

Session 1 – Speaker: Brian Nelson - NAC

The general secretary gave an overview of Local Government Finance and spoke about the difficulties faced by all councillors with a duty to set budgets in the current difficult financial restraints. Delegates then asked questions regarding the general process.

Saturday 1st March

Session 2 –

Speaker: Cllr Martin Gannon – Leader Gateshead MBC

Local Government Budgets and setting the Precept Questions

Martin introduced himself and explained that both he and the General Secretary had started their political journey at the same time, 41 years ago in 1984.

Finance has always been an issue for local government and at present it is not a good picture, and real challenges are facing all councils.

How did we get here?

After being elected in 1984 I have seen how things have changed, we must recognise that we as local politicians of whatever political hue are normally judged by whichever government is in power at Westminster.

Gateshead council along with many others must provide services to the people be it looking after footpaths, grass cutting, getting bins emptied these are all necessities however the single biggest cost and the thing that takes approximately 75% of our budget is Adult Social Care [ASC]

We have a rapidly ageing population and as such local government is at the centre of everything to try and make peoples lives better.

How is it financed?

Local government financing in the UK is a complex system, but here's the main sources:

1. **Government Grants**: These are funds provided by the central government to support local services. They include:
    - **Revenue Support Grant (RSG)**: A general grant to help councils fund their services.
    - **Specific Grants**: Targeted funding for particular services, such as education or social care.
2. **Council Tax**: This is a property tax levied on residential properties. The amount depends on the property's valuation band and the local council's rate. It contributes significantly to local budgets and is often adjusted annually.
3. **Business Rates**: A property tax on business premises. Local councils retain a portion of these rates, while the rest goes to the central government for redistribution.
4. **Fees and Charges**: Councils can charge for certain services, like parking, planning applications, or leisure facilities.
5. **Borrowing and Reserves**: Councils can borrow money for capital projects (like building schools or roads) but cannot borrow for day-to-day expenses. They may also use reserves built up from previous underspending.

Things evolved over time, not a lot happened between Elizabethan times and up until the corporation acts during the reign of Queen Victoria, where 'rates' were introduced.

In the UK, "rates" were a system of local taxation based on property values. They were used to fund local government services and were levied on both residential and commercial properties.

- **Origins**: Rates date back to the Poor Law Act of 1601, which introduced property-based taxation to support local services.
- **Assessment**: Properties were assessed for their rental value, and rates were calculated as a percentage of this value.
- **Usage**: The revenue from rates was used to fund local services such as education, waste management, and infrastructure.
- **Abolition**: Domestic rates were abolished in 1990 and replaced by the Community Charge (poll tax), which was later replaced by Council Tax in 1993.

The Community Charge or 'Poll Tax'

The poll tax, officially known as the **Community Charge**, was a controversial system of local taxation introduced in the UK by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's government.

- **Origins**: The tax replaced domestic rates, which were based on property values, with a flat-rate tax per adult. It was first implemented in Scotland in 1989 and later in England and Wales in 1990.
- **Controversy**: The tax was criticized for being regressive, as it placed a disproportionate burden on lower-income individuals. This led to widespread protests, including the infamous **Poll Tax Riots** in Trafalgar Square on March 31, 1990.
- **Political Impact**: The backlash against the poll tax significantly contributed to Thatcher's resignation in November 1990. Her successor, John Major, announced its abolition.
- **Replacement**: In 1993, the poll tax was replaced by **Council Tax**, which is based on property value bands and considered more equitable.

The council tax whilst thought to be more equitable unfortunately is far from it for example –

A Band D property in Westminter pays £450 per year

A Band D property in Gateshead pays £2,500 per year

Why is that?

The difference in council tax rates between Westminster and Gateshead can be attributed to several key factors:

1. **Business Rates and Revenue**: Westminster benefits from a high concentration of businesses, luxury hotels, and tourist attractions, which generate substantial income through business rates and other charges. This additional revenue reduces the reliance on council tax to fund local services.

2. **Population Density and Property Values**: Westminster has a dense population and high property values, which means the council can collect significant revenue even with lower council tax rates. Gateshead, with a smaller population and lower property values, relies more heavily on council tax to meet its budgetary needs.

3. **Service Demands**: Gateshead faces higher demands for social services due to socioeconomic factors, such as higher levels of poverty and unemployment. These services are costly and require greater funding, which is reflected in higher council tax rates.

4. **Local Government Policies**: Each council sets its own tax rates based on its budgetary requirements and priorities. Westminster's efficient revenue generation allows it to keep council tax rates low, while Gateshead's financial pressures necessitate higher rates.

The point of this shows the system is broken and its not fair but neither was, the rates, the poll tax and now the council tax.

The way things used to be perceived was quite simple –

Vote Conservative and get a low council tax and a poor service or

Vote Labour and get high a high council tax and a good service.

The year-on-year squeeze on local government finances is politically challenging since 2010 Gates head has lost somewhere in the region of £200 m per year, that's about £1k for every man, woman and child in Gateshead every year.

Reserves

People ask why not use the reserves, we have about £8m but once they are used, they are gone forever, it's just not sustainable.

Future

The reality is that one fifth of the UK population lives in the Southeast of England it also raises one fifth of the Gross Domestic Product [GDP] and the government now have introduced Mayors, something which Gateshead opposed as it gives to much power to one person over 2 million people.

England's 12 metro mayors are directly elected leaders who oversee combined authorities, which are groups of local councils working together on regional issues. Their role includes:

- **Transport & Infrastructure**: Managing public transport systems, roads, and major infrastructure projects.

- **Economic Development**: Attracting investment, supporting businesses, and driving job creation.
- **Housing & Planning**: Overseeing housing development and spatial planning for their regions.
- **Skills & Employment**: Developing training programs and improving job opportunities.
- **Public Services**: Coordinating services like policing, health, and environmental initiatives.

These mayors are supposed to provide strong local leadership, ensuring their regions have a clear voice in national decision-making however no one has any idea of how they will actually work in political practice.

So the questions is what is the future of Local Government finance?

The present system is broken and cannot be repaired as the growing number of councils who are facing bankruptcy shows us, the ongoing reduction in services like libraries and community centres, within 5 years 75% of council budgets will be spent on adult social care.

So what is the solution?

To be honest I don't know however the two ways I can see are –

1. The merging of authorities so services could be cheaper and more efficient with a population of around 500k as the optimum or
2. The government agree to increase funding from central government.

Martin then took questions around public transport and the rates system still in use in Northern Ireland.

The chair then thanked Martin for his contribution.

Session 3 – Speaker: Ken Wyatt – LGA Peer

Effective Audit

Ensuring Transparency and Accountability

Introduction
Effective audits are essential for the transparency and accountability of town and parish councils. They ensure that financial statements are accurate, public funds are managed responsibly, and any potential issues are identified and addressed promptly. Here, we outline the key steps involved in conducting effective audits for these local government bodies.

Preparation

1. Understanding Legislation: Auditors must be well-versed in the relevant legislation and regulations governing town and parish councils. This includes knowledge of the Local Government Act, the Accounts and Audit Regulations, and any other applicable legal frameworks.
2. Engagement Letter: An engagement letter should be issued to the council, outlining the scope, objectives, and timeline of the audit, as well as the responsibilities of both the auditor and the council.

Planning

1. Risk Assessment: Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement in the council's financial statements. This includes evaluating the council's internal control systems and understanding the local context and environment.
2. Audit Plan: Develop a detailed audit plan that includes the audit strategy, the nature and timing of audit procedures, and the allocation of resources. This plan should be tailored to address the identified risks.

Fieldwork

1. Data Collection: Collect relevant financial and non-financial data. This includes reviewing financial statements, bank reconciliations, budgetary controls, and other financial documentation.
2. Interviews and Observations: Conduct interviews with key personnel and observe council meetings and processes to gain a comprehensive understanding of the council's operations and controls.
3. Testing: Perform tests of controls and substantive procedures to gather sufficient and appropriate audit evidence. This may involve sampling transactions, verifying asset existence, and evaluating compliance with policies and procedures.

Reporting

1. Draft Report: Prepare a draft audit report summarizing the findings, including any identified misstatements, deficiencies, or areas for improvement. This report should be shared with the council for feedback and discussion.
2. Final Report: Issue the final audit report, incorporating any feedback from the council. This report should present a clear and objective assessment of the council's financial health and governance practices.
3. Management Letter: Alongside the audit report, provide a management letter that outlines specific recommendations for addressing any identified issues and enhancing the council's internal controls.

Follow-Up

1. Action Plan: Work with the council to develop an action plan for implementing the audit recommendations. This plan should include timelines, responsible persons, and specific steps to be taken.
2. Monitoring: Conduct periodic follow-up reviews to monitor the progress of the action plan and ensure that the recommendations are being effectively implemented.

Conclusion
Effective audits of town and parish councils are crucial for maintaining public trust and ensuring sound financial management. By following a structured and thorough audit process, auditors can help these councils achieve greater transparency, accountability, and efficiency in their operations.

Sunday 13th April

Session 4 – Cllr Anne Bonner – NAC Training Officer

Anne laid out some practical financial exercises with varying degrees of difficulty which delegates had to prioritise. Delegate then had to present the solutions and show why they had reached those conclusions. Of course there were different opinions which caused a good healthy debate.

Graeme thanked the delegates for attending and wished them a safe journey home.

Conference closed.

Councillor David Bell – NAC Delegate

2nd May 2025

AGENDA ITEM 23

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Council Emails and Devices

16th May 2025

1. **PURPOSE –** Council to agree a policy in relation to Acceptable Use of Computer, Internet & Email Facilities; and that only council issued email addresses will be used for electronic correspondence going forward .

2. **BACKGROUND**

The Council purchased electronic tablets and created .gov email addresses on a Microsoft 365 basic account in December 2024 for all councillors.

To date, not all councillors have collected or commenced use of the devices or emails, which are being paid a monthly cost.

A policy has been prepared in respect of Acceptable Use of Computer, Internet & Email Facilities and is attached to this report for adoption.

3. **USE OF EMAIL & DEVICES**

Whilst Council emails are not being used and councillors are using personal emails, this increases risk to the Council and leaves personal emails potentially subject to scrutiny under FOI and GDPR.

Devices have been purchased for use and are ready to be issued, all councillors should collect these as soon as possible from the Council Office.

4. **RECOMMENDATION –** Council is recommended to
   1. Approve the Acceptable Use of Computer, Internet & Email Facilities Policy;
   2. Agree that councillors collect electronic devices by 31st May 2025
   3. Agree that from 1 June 2025, only council issued email addresses will be used for electronic correspondence.

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Acceptable Use of Computer, Internet & Email Facilities Policy

1. Introduction

The Council recognises that email and internet are important information and communication systems which are used during the course of council business and the computer network is the central to the Council's data storage systems. This policy provides guidelines and procedures to protect users and the Council.

This policy applies to all staff members who have access to the Council's network, the internet via Council computers and email facilities via both Council computers and personal devices, such as private computers, phones or tablets.

The email policy and computer network policy applies to all councillors in their access to the Council's computer network and Council email addresses.

The email policy applies to any other individual who has access to a Council email address.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Data Protection Policy and Disciplinary Procedure.

Under the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts, internet and email usage reports and network documents may have to be disclosed when the Council responds to a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request; all users of Council ICT facilities must be aware of this.

Access to Council email, internet or ICT facilities will not be provided until this policy has been read and signed by the user, declaring an understanding of all the points within.

2. Internet usage

Staff members are encouraged to use the internet responsibly as part of their official and professional activities.

Information obtained via the internet and published in the name of the Council must be relevant and professional. A disclaimer must be stated where personal views are expressed.

The use of the internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material will not be tolerated and staff may be subject to disciplinary action. Councillors may be subject to a complaint to Durham County Council's Monitoring Officer.

The equipment, services and technology used to access the internet are the property of the Council. The Council reserves the right to monitor internet traffic and monitor and access data that is composed, sent or received through its online connections.

3. Unacceptable use of the internet

Unacceptable use of the internet by staff and members includes, but is not limited to:

- sending or posting discriminatory, harassing or threatening messages or images
- using computers to perpetrate any form of fraud, and/or software, film or music piracy
- obtaining, using or disclosing another staff member's password without authorisation

- sharing confidential material or proprietary information outside of the Council
- hacking into unauthorised websites
- sending or posting information that is defamatory to the Council, its services, councillors and/or members of the public
- introducing malicious software onto Council computers and/or jeopardising the security of the Council's electronic communication systems
- sending or posting chain letters, solicitations or advertisements not related to Council business or activities
- passing off personal views as those representing the Council
- accessing inappropriate internet sites, web pages or chat rooms

If a staff or member is unsure about what constitutes acceptable internet usage, then he/she should ask his/her line manager or The Clerk for further guidance and clarification

4. Email

Use of email is encouraged as it provides an efficient system of communication.

Email should be regarded as written paper documents for the purposes of production, use, retention and disclosure and can be called upon under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Personal information should be kept in accordance with the principles established in the General Data Protection Regulations and other relevant legislation.

All Council email accounts have a private password that should be kept confidential by the user/s of that account and not shared. The Council has administrative control over email accounts and can reset passwords and give access to email accounts, where needed.

The Council reserves the right to open any email file stored on the Council's computer system or the Council's email accounts.

Only Council email accounts must be used to conduct Council business. Personal email accounts should not be used for Council business due to potential data breaches, issues surrounding Freedom of Information or Subject Access Requests and general recommended good practice for local councils.

Care needs to be taken when registering Council email addresses on websites such as discussion forums, news groups, mailing lists, blogs etc to prevent email address being used for other purposes.

External networks, such as the internet, are not guaranteed to be secure and confidentiality cannot be assured when using these networks. Emails are generally open and transparent. Some emails may not be received or read, and they may be intercepted or disclosed by other people. Users must decide whether email is the best way to exchange confidential or sensitive information.

Care must be taken when addressing emails, particularly those including sensitive, confidential or restricted information, to avoid accidentally sending them to the wrong people. Particular care must be taken when Outlook auto-completes an email address.

Emails should not be auto-forwarded to any other account as this may result in confidential information being disclosed to unauthorised people. If needed, access can be given to email accounts for other users by the relevant Council officers with administrative powers for the Council's email accounts.

Email accounts must have an appropriate email signature and the relevant email disclaimer at the bottom of all emails written.

All Council business emails and documents sent by users are the property of the Council and not of any individual user.

Email distribution lists should not be created on individual email accounts; this is to ensure contact details are not out of date, prevent accidental sharing of contact details and to comply with data protection legislation. Data subjects have a right to 'be forgotten'; email addresses stored on individual email accounts will easily allow contact details to be inadvertently stored.

Council email address (or indeed internet or computer facilities) must not be used for:

- any political activities;
- commercial or personal profit-making purposes or other form of financial gain (e.g. in connection with any employment other than that associated with the Council);
- activities that lead to unauthorised expenditure for the Council (e.g. excessive printing or photocopying that is not Council business);
- activities that go against Council policies or standards;
- personal interest group activity outside of a user's role;
- activities that the may cause damage, disruption, fines, penalties or negative media attention for the Council;
- excessive email conversations that may be interpreted as misuse.

The following guidelines for email use should be observed by all staff members and councillors:

- use appropriate language to avoid unintentional misunderstandings
- respect the confidentiality of information contained within emails, even if encountered inadvertently
- check with the sender if there is any doubt regarding the authenticity of a message
- do not open any attachment unless certain of the authenticity of the sender
- only copy emails to others where appropriate and necessary
- emails which create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council must be sent by officers only, not councillors or other individuals
- emails must comply with common codes of courtesy, decency and privacy

5. Computer Equipment

Every user is given an individual log-on ID and password to log on to the Council's facilities, and where applicable, specific business applications, so they can access the ICT services.

Users must only use their own log-on ID and password when accessing the Council's ICT facilities; passwords must not be given to anyone else at all.

Users must assess any risks associated with using computer resources, removable media, internet or email to ensure it is the most appropriate tool to use.

All software used must be obtained through or approved by the Council's IT provider and have a valid licence where applicable.

In certain situations, the Council's IT provider may require access to a user's ICT equipment, with or without prior notice being given depending on the reason for access. This may be to audit, inspect, text, remove, repair or replace hardware, software or cabling, as well as for any other reasonable purpose.

Users must be vigilant when accessing the Council's network or information from public places (e.g. libraries, trains, open access computers at home etc) and/or overseas locations in order to reduce the risk of unauthorised disclosure or access.

ICT facilities, such as Office packages, internet and personal email, can be accessed for personal use providing this is done so either outside of the user's working hours or during a lunch break. Exceptions to this will need to be authorised by the user's line manager.

Personal use must not conflict with any Council policy or the user's obligations to the Council.

Users for personal use are reminded that any documents stored on the Council's network or email accounts are accessible by the Council and if they were found to contravene Council policy or legal requirements (e.g. copyright) may be permanently removed without prior permission from the user.

Memory sticks (and other removable data storage devices) must be used with extreme care to stop Council information being lost or disclosed. Confidential or sensitive information must not be transferred on to any removable data storage device.

Users are expected to look after the ICT equipment, software and log-on details so that they are safe and secure at all times.

6. Computer Network

Users accessing the network from Council offices will have automatic access once they have logged in to the Council facilities as per section 5 above.

Users must only use their own log-on ID and password when accessing systems; log-on ID and passwords must not be given to anyone else at all and must be stored securely.

Users must be vigilant when accessing the Council's network or information from public places (e.g. libraries, trains, open access computers at home etc) and/or overseas locations in order to reduce the risk of unauthorised disclosure or access.

Users have a general and legal requirement to maintain confidentiality of information and personal data (data protection and other legislations) that they come across on the Council network.

Documents from the Council network must not be shared with third parties unless an authorised instruction from a Council officer is given; councillors or staff members may not take it upon themselves to share information held by the Council without prior authorisation.

Councillors are given access to a specific information. Council officers will refrain from emailing documents, in particular those of sensitive or confidential nature, and instead will upload these documents to the network drive and inform Councillors that this is ready to be viewed.

The above includes exempt reports for Council or Committee meetings.

Users printing documents, in particular confidential documents, from the network must accept full responsibility for keeping the document safe and secure and disposing of it appropriately.

Recommended disposal of Council documents, particularly confidential, is via the shredder in the Council offices.

7. Reporting and sanctions

Users must report any loss, damage, breaches, suspicious activity or anything of a worrying nature surrounding Council ICT facilities to the Clerk or in their absence, the Assistant Clerk.

Advice on computer, email or network related issues should in the first instance be sought from the Clerk or in their absence, the Assistant Clerk or failing that, may be sought from the Council's IT Support. Councillors should note that advice can only be given on Council facilities i.e. we cannot provide advice on problems with a personally-owned computer but can provide support with network access or Council email issues.

If a councillor receives an email from a staff member which they believe is contrary to the guidance provided in this policy, it should be reported to the Clerk who will investigate the matter and may consider use of the Council's formal disciplinary procedure depending on the severity of the event.

If a staff member receives an email from another staff member which they believe is contrary to the guidance provided in this policy, it should be reported to the Clerk who will investigate the matter and may consider use of the Council's formal disciplinary procedure depending on the severity of the event.

If a staff member receives an email from a councillor which they believe is contrary to the guidance provided in this policy, the staff member may look to raise things informally with their line manager in the first instance but is entitled to consider use of the Council's Grievance Policy and/or report the issue through the procedures outlined in the Member's Code of Conduct.

If a staff member or councillors believes that there has been inappropriate use of any of the Council's ICT facilities (whether it be email, internet or computer network), this should be reported to the Clerk to investigate.

The Clerk holds the right to remove any individual's access immediately in the event of a breach of this policy, pending an investigation.

In the case of the Clerk wishing to report a suspected breach of this policy or being the staff member in question of a suspected breach, the Chairman should be informed in the first instance, who will work in consultation with the Chairman of Personnel to investigate any claim.

8. Declaration

I declare that I have read, understand and agree to comply with the above Acceptable Use of Computer, Internet & Email Facilities Policy. I understand that a failure to adhere to this Policy could result in my access being withdrawn and (where relevant) disciplinary action being sought or a Member's Code of Conduct complaint being submitted.

Signed: …….

Printed: ……

Dated: ……..

Agenda Item 25

National Association of Councillors

Council Offices, 6 Goatbeck Terrace
Langley Moor, Co. Durham, DH7 8JJ
Tel: 0191 378 9947
Mob : 07791574879
Email: generalsecretary@nationalassociationofcouncillors.org

The Clerk
Brandon and Byshottles Parish Council
6 Goatbeck Terrace
Langley Moor
Durham, DH7 8JJ

Dear Clerk

The National Association of Councillors would like to offer the following training to your members at a cost of £395 per session. Dates and times to suit Members.

Role and Responsibilities of Councillors

- Role of Councillor when attending Council
- Role of Councillor in the community
- Councillors and Staff
- Code of Conduct and Nolan Principles
- Members Protocol

Effective meetings and decision making

- What do we mean by effective meetings and decision making (including sub-committees and/or other meetings that Councillors attend on behalf of their Council
- What types of decisions do we need to make
- Councillors role in effective meetings and decision making
- Role of Chair in effective meetings and decision making

Equality and Diversity

- What do me mean by Equality and Diversity
- Stereotyping, labelling, prejudice and discrimination
- Appropriate language
- Appropriate behaviour
- Inequalities
- The Equality Act 2010
- Public Sector Equality Duty

Yours sincerely

Brian Nelson

General Secretary NAC

AGENDA ITEM 26

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Council Business Plan

16th May 2025

1. **PURPOSE –** Council to agree in principle that a business plan be created to support the future direction of the Council.

2. **BACKGROUND**

The Council Commissioned the Local Government Resource Centre (LGRC) to carry out a governance review in the summer of 2024.

LGRC reported in September 2024 with a series of recommendations, which the Clerk to the Council was directed to formulate into an Action Plan.

Although much progress has been made and some matters have been addressed, a range of recommendations will require adoption in the coming months.

With a new Clerk being appointed and following recent elections, the timing is ideal to commence a business planning process to support the direction of the Council over the coming electoral cycle.

An agreement in principle is sought at this stage. Subject to agreement, a more detailed proposal will be brough to Council at a future meeting.

3. **RECOMMENDATION –** Council is recommended to agree in principle the formation of a Council Business Plan and request officers bring an implementation proposal to a future meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 27

BRANDON & BYSHOTTLES PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council

16th May 2025

1. **PURPOSE –** Council to receive notification of The Clerk to the Council appointment.

2. **BACKGROUND**

The Council advertised the vacancy for Clerk to the Council in February 2025.

Following a thorough recruitment process overseen by the Personnel Committee with the support of LGRC Partner, Mrs Sam Shippen. The Appointment Panel, made a recommendation to the Personnel Committee and an offer of appointment was made in April, which was followed by taking up of references.

The new Clerk to the Council, Mrs Claire Dixon will take up post on Monday 2nd June 2025. Her appointment is made on a six month probation and is subject to achievement of the CiLCA qualification. The Personnel Committee has agreed mentoring support be given by LGRC.

Council should confirm that from 2nd June 2025, Claire Dixon become Proper Officer and RFO.

3. **RECOMMENDATION –** Council is recommended to agree
   1. Note the appointment of Mrs Claire Dixon as Clerk to the Council from 2nd June 2025;
   2. Approve that Mrs Claire Dixon become the Council's Proper Officer and RFO from 2nd June 2025.

Agenda Item 28

The co-operative bank

Customer Response
The Co-operative Bank p.l.c
2nd Floor
Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

Tel: 0800 840 4986
Tel: 0343 208 7391
We're here from 9am - 5pm
Monday to Friday
co-operativebank.co.uk

Mrs Samantha Shippen
Sent by email to:
INFO@BRANDONANDBYSHOTTLESPARISHCOUNCIL.GOV.UK

Our Ref: 1858204

Date: 30 April 2025

We've finished looking into your complaint

Dear Mrs Shippen

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 089070 61020074

Thanks for your complaint received on 16th April 2025. I'm sorry you've had cause to complain.

I understand you're unhappy with the following:

- Our handling of your query regarding stopping a sweep between your current and savings accounts. You weren't initially informed that a letter is usually required to request stopping an account sweep. This led to delays in resolving the issue, as you could have sent a letter earlier if you'd been properly advised.
- On 24th March 2025 our advisor promised a call-back to you, which you never received.

We're sorry to hear you're unhappy

I've looked into the issues you've raised and upheld your complaint in full. Although I understand you've already accepted our resolution offered to you during your 16th April call, I've detailed my findings below for your reference.

My Findings

It's apparent from our records that at the time of a 24th March call we made to you, you were still awaiting an update from us about stopping your account sweep. I can also see that the delays in addressing your request led to unplanned overdraft charges of £60.00, which I'm sorry to see happened. The £60.00 charges were refunded to your account on 16th April, and I can also see that the sweep stop was actioned by our Business Account Maintenance team during your call that same day.

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*Calls to 03 numbers from a UK landline cost up to 16p per minute and from a mobile cost between 3p and 65p if outside any inclusive minutes. Calls to 0800 numbers are free from landlines and mobiles. Calls may be monitored or recorded for security and training purposes.

Classification: CONFIDENTIAL

As your request to stop the account sweep took longer to arrange than it should have, and our service regarding this matter has been poor overall, this aspect of your complaint is upheld, and I do apologise for any inconvenience this caused.

Our records confirm we advised you'll be called back once the relevant team updated our advisor handling your query during our 24th March call with you. A requested call back date was also noted as you were only available one day a week. The advisor handling your query at that time couldn't call you back as agreed, because they were on leave for the Eid holiday.

I found no evidence to show that our advisor handed over the matter to a colleague to follow-up on in their planned absence. This should have happened prior to them taking their leave, to ensure the agreed call-back was made. As you didn't receive the call-back we'd arranged with you, this aspect of your complaint is also upheld.

Based on the above information, as mentioned, overall your complaint has been upheld. Your comments regarding the issues you've raised have been recorded so we can work to improve our services in future.

I'm pleased to see we were able to resolve this complaint to your satisfaction during your 16th April 2025 call, and you accepted our offer of a £50.00 payment to your account. For your reference, I can confirm this payment was made that same day on 16th April. Thanks for taking the time to speak to us about this matter.

Your options now

If you're unhappy with how we've resolved matters, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service, free of charge - but you must do so within six months of the date of this letter.

If you do not refer your complaint in time, the Ombudsman will not have our permission to consider your complaint and so will only be able to do so in very limited circumstances. For example, if the Ombudsman believes that the delay was as a result of exceptional circumstances.

The Financial Ombudsman Service helps settle disputes between consumers and financial service organisations in the UK and further information is available on their website: **www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk**

Yours sincerely

Victor Spilsbury
Customer Resolution Investigator
Customer Response
On behalf of The Co-operative Bank p.l.c.

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