

BISHOP'S STORTFORD TOWN COUNCIL



Constitutional Policies Issue 2.6

15th May 2023

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A. STANDING ORDERS

0.1 AMENDMENT HISTORY

Issue 2009.1	18 Dec 2009	First issue of major revision to Standing Orders
Issue 2010.1	20 Sep 2010	Modification to SO 5.6 to insert deadline for submission of resolutions Addition of Amendment History
Issue 2011.1	06 July 2011	Modification to Standing Order 2.10
Issue 2012.1	04 October 2012	Incorporates changes to Standing Orders 2.4 and 2.5 approved by Council 17 th September 2012
Issue 2012.2	10 December 2012	Incorporates changes to Standing Orders 2.13, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 7.8, 2.8
Issue 2012.3	22 September 2014	Incorporates changes to Standing Orders 2.8, 2.9, 5.21. Additional Standing Order 6.6
Issue 2015.1	15 December 2015	Incorporates changes to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations approved by Council on 14 th December 2015
Issue 2016.1 Draft	23 May 2016	Draft minor changes for review at F&GP
Issue 2016.1 Final	20 Jun 2016	Adopted by Council 20 Jun 2016
Issue 2017.1	16 May 2017	Readopted by Council with the deletion of 6.1xvii (which refers to Saturday Surgery)
Issue 2018.1	14 May 2018	In clause 5.24 replace Town Mayor with Chair and commence task with a capital letter. Delete clause 2.12 and renumber clause 2.13 accordingly
Issue 2019.1	13 May 2019	Reviewed and Readopted by Council
Issue 2019.2	30 September	Modifications to clause 2.4
Issue 2021.1	5 th October 2021	Incorporates modifications affecting financial regulations, mostly related to departure from the EU
Issue 2022.1	10 October 2022	Modification of Standing Orders to require election results to be presented
Issue 2022.2	13 December 2022	Modification to Standing order 5.10
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Modification to Standing Order 11, deletion of 6.22 requiring Members to stand at Full Council, Gender Neutral Language throughout and at 2.4 no designated persons to act as substitutes

1. Co-option of Council Members

1.1 Vacancies may be filled by Co-Option

In any year, a vacancy can be filled by Co-option following a formal resolution of the Council, if an election had not been previously requested during the statutory period.

2. Meetings

2.1 Timing of Meetings

Meetings of the Council shall be held in each year on such dates as the Council may direct. Meetings of standing committees and of full council will take place at 7.30pm unless the Council decides otherwise at a previous meeting. Meetings will conclude at 10pm unless a majority of the members present consent to an extension.

2.2 The Statutory Annual Meeting

In an election year the Statutory Annual Meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the Councillors elected take office and in a year which is not an election year the Statutory Annual Meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council may direct.

2.3 Statutory Council Meetings

In addition to the Statutory Annual Meeting of the Council at least three other meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times and at such place as the Council may direct. Additional meetings shall be held on such dates as shall be determined by the Council.

2.4 Appointment of Standing Committees

The Council may at its Annual Meeting appoint Standing committees and may at any other time appoint such other committees as are necessary, but subject to any statutory provision in that behalf:

- i. Shall not appoint any member of a committee so as to hold office later than the next Annual Meeting.
- ii. May appoint persons other than members of the Council to any committee/Task and Finish Group; and
- iii. May, subject to the provisions of Standing Order 5.13, at any time dissolve or alter the membership of committee.
- iv. May appoint substitute members to any Committee/Task and Finish Group

Following the appointment of members to a Standing Committee the Council will appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of that Committee.

Members of committees, sub-committees and task and finish groups who are not members of Council shall not have a vote.

A member may participate as a voting member of a meeting of a Committee provided that another member (the 'nominating member') of that committee

- i. has nominated a substitute to attend the meeting on their behalf (the substitute Member is selected by the nominating Member and need not be of the same political affiliation)
- ii. has notified the Chief Executive Officer or the officer attending the meeting to record minutes by email or in writing of the nomination not later than thirty minutes before the time at which the meeting is due to commence
- iii. is not themselves present at the meeting nor a substitute on that committee

A substitute member is not obliged to seek or have regard to the views of the nominating member on matters on the agenda and must under no circumstances take instruction which could be regarded as pre-determination.

2.5 Committee Meetings

Every committee/Task and finish Groups shall, at any meeting at which, for any reason, no previously appointed Chair or Vice Chair is available, appoint a Chair for the duration of the meeting.

2.6 Special Meeting

The Chair of a committee or the Mayor may summon an additional meeting of that committee at any time giving three clear working days' notice. An additional meeting shall also be summoned on the requisition in writing of not less than a quarter of the members of the committee. The summons shall set out the business to be considered at the special meeting and no other business shall be transacted at that meeting.

2.7 Admission of the Press and Public to Meetings

Other than as specified in Standing Order 2.8 the public and press shall be admitted to all meetings of the Council and its committees, sub-committees and task and finish groups.

2.8 Exclusion of Press and Public

The Press and Public may be temporarily excluded from a meeting and from reporting on or recording a meeting by means of the following resolution "Under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to

Meetings) Act 1960, the Press and Public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting and that reporting on or recording of the remainder of the meeting likewise be prohibited in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.”

2.9 Press Facilities

The CEO shall afford to the press reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of any proceedings at which they are entitled to be present.

Subject to Standing Order 2.8, audio or video recording or photographs of meetings of Council and its Committees are permitted provided that

- i. Recording is overt and plainly evident to anyone present at the meeting
- ii. No additional lighting or flash photography are to be used unless prior approval of the Council has been obtained
- iii. No interruptions to or disturbance of the meeting are caused
- iv. No oral commentary or reporting of the meeting as it takes place is permitted by a person present at the meeting
- v. Only members, officers of the Council and members of the public who are speaking under ‘Public Participation’ are recorded unless prior permission has been obtained from the individuals concerned who do not fall within these categories (and, in the case of minors, from a parent or guardian)
- vi. No liability is accepted by the Council for any actions(s) of the person recording

2.10 Participation by Members of the Public

At all meetings of the Council (including committees, subcommittees and task and finish groups), the Chair may, at a convenient time in the transaction of business, allow any members of the public to address the meeting in relation to the business to be transacted for a period of time not exceeding three minutes. Participation in this way is at the absolute discretion of the Chair which will not normally be refused unless allowing the address would be disruptive, illegal or slanderous or would cause the meeting to extend unreasonably. Such sessions form part of the Council meeting in law and shall be duly minuted.

2.11 Interruptions by Members of the Public

If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings at any meeting, the Chair may, after warning, order that he/she be removed from the meeting and may adjourn the meeting for such period as is necessary to restore order.

2.12 Participation by Members Having a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

At all meetings of the Council, members and co-opted members must not participate in any discussion of, vote on, or discharge any function related to any matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest unless they have received a dispensation in accordance with the members code of conduct. Members with such an interest and who have not received a dispensation may, but are not obliged to, leave the room for the duration of the relevant matter. A record will be made in the minutes of the name of any member who leaves the room under this provision. The record will show the reason for which they left and state for which discussions they were not present.

3. Sub-Committees

3.1 Appointment of Sub-Committees

Every committee may appoint sub-committees for purposes to be specified by the committee.

3.2 Membership

The membership of Sub-Committees shall be determined initially by the parent committee.

3.3 Power to Co-Opt

Sub-Committees shall have the power to co-opt members who need not be Councillors.

3.4 Chair and Vice Chair of Parent Committee to be Members

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee shall be members of every sub-committee appointed by it unless they signify that they do not wish to serve.

3.5 Application of Standing Orders

The Standing Orders on rules of debate (except those parts relating to Standing and to speaking more than once) and the Standing Order on interests of members in contracts and other matters shall apply to sub-committee meetings.

4. Task and Finish Groups

4.1 Creation

The Council may create Task and Finish Groups, whose name, and number of members and the bodies to be invited to nominate members shall be specified.

4.2 Terms of Reference

The brief of the task and finish group shall be determined initially by the Council.

4.3 Membership

The membership of Task and Finish Groups shall initially be determined by the Council. The initial membership shall consist solely of councillors

4.4 Power to Co-Opt

Task and finish groups shall have the power to co-opt members who need not be Councillors.

4.5 Mayor a Member Ex-Officio

The Mayor, ex-officio, shall be a voting member of every Task and Finish Group.

4.6 Recommendations

A Task and Finish Group may make recommendations and give notice thereof to the Council

4.7 Application of Standing Orders

The Standing Orders on rules of debate (except those parts relating to Standing and to speaking more than once) and the Standing Order on interests of members in contracts and other matters shall apply to meetings of Task and Finish Groups

5. Conduct of Meetings

5.1 Chair of the Meeting

The person presiding at a meeting may exercise all the powers and duties of the Chair in relation to the conduct of the meeting.

5.2 Quorum

One-third of the total membership shall constitute a quorum at meetings of the Council. The quorum of a Committee, a Task and Finish Group or a sub-committee shall be one-third of its members, but never less than three members.

5.3 Meeting Adjourned when Quorum not Present

If a quorum is not present or if during a meeting the number of Councillors present (not counting those debarred by reason of a declared interest) falls below the required quorum, the meeting shall be adjourned and business not transacted shall be transacted at the next meeting or on such other day as the Chair may fix.

5.4 Resolutions Moved on Notice

Except as provided by these Standing Orders, no resolution may be moved unless the business to which it relates has been put on the Agenda by the CEO.

5.5 Record of Receipt of Resolution

The CEO shall date every notice of resolution or recommendation when received by him/her, shall number each notice in the order in which it was received and shall enter it in a book which shall be open to the inspection of every member of the Council.

5.6 Resolutions and Recommendations to Appear in Summons

The CEO shall insert in the summons for every meeting all notices of motion or recommendation properly given in the order in which they have been received unless the member giving a notice of motion has stated in writing that he/she intends to move at some later meeting or that he/she withdraws it. A resolution shall be properly given if it is received in writing no later than 9am on the fourth working day before the meeting to be included.

5.7 Resolutions and Recommendations Deemed Withdrawn unless Moved

If a resolution or recommendation specified in the summons is not moved either by the member who gave notice of it or by any other member, it shall, unless postponed by the Council, be treated as withdrawn and shall not be moved without fresh notice.

5.8 Resolutions Referred to Committee without Discussion

If the subject matter of a resolution comes within the province of a committee of the Council, it shall, upon being moved and seconded, stand referred without discussion to such committee or to such other committee or Task and Finish Group as the Council may determine for report; provided that the Chair, if he/she considers it to be a matter of urgency, may allow it to be dealt with at the meeting at which it was moved.

5.9 Right to Explain Referred Resolutions

A member who has proposed a resolution, which has been referred to any committee of which he/she is not a member, may explain his/her resolution to the committee but shall not vote.

5.10 Resolutions to be Relevant

Every resolution, recommendation or agenda item shall be relevant to some subject over which the Council has power or duties and which affects its area. Any presentation by a third party given to a meeting of Council or its Committees shall relate directly to a decision to be made by the Council at the same or a near-future meeting.

Nothing in this standing order shall prevent the members of Council from attending, or being invited to, an informal meeting of members, convened for the express purpose of receiving a presentation and/or engaging with a third party, which relates to the Town but not to a decision to be made by Council. Such a meeting may be organised immediately before a formal meeting of Council or a Committee or at a separate time altogether and may be virtual. Such meetings will not constitute formal meetings of Council nor will minutes be taken, however the subject date and time will be noted and recorded in the minutes of the next relevant Council (or Committee) meeting as may be appropriate.

Attendance at an informal meeting of members convened in accordance with the above will not count for the purposes of section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

5.11 Resolutions Moved Without Notice

Resolutions dealing with the following matters may be moved without notice:-

- i. To appoint a Chair of the meeting.
- ii. To alter the order of business.
- iii. To proceed to the next business.
- iv. To close or adjourn the debate.
- v. To refer a matter to a committee.
- vi. To appoint a committee or Task and Finish Group or any members thereof.
- vii. To amend a motion.
- viii. To give leave to withdraw a resolution or amendment.

- ix. To extend the time limit for speeches.
- x. To exclude the press and public.
- xi. To silence or eject from the meeting a member named for misconduct.
- xii. To give the consent of the Council where such consent is required by these Standing Orders.
- xiii. To suspend any Standing Order.
- xiv. To adjourn the meeting.
- xv. To invite a member having an interest in the subject under debate to remain.

5.12 Alteration of Resolution

A member may, with the consent of the seconder, move amendments to his/her own resolution.

5.13 Rescission of Previous Resolution

A decision (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special resolution, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least four members of the Council, or by a resolution moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a committee.

5.14 Rescinded Resolution not to be moved within Six Months

When a special resolution or any other resolution moved under the provisions of Standing order 5.13 has been disposed of, no similar resolution may be moved within a further six months.

5.15 Right of Reply to Resolution

The mover of a resolution shall have a right to reply immediately before the resolution is put to the vote. If an amendment is proposed the mover of the amendment shall be entitled to reply immediately before the amendment is put to the vote. A member exercising a right of reply shall not introduce a new matter. After the right of reply has been exercised or waived, a vote shall be taken without further discussion.

5.16 Resolutions which Substantially Increase Net Expenditure

Any resolution moved otherwise than in pursuance of a recommendation of the Finance Committee which, if carried, would substantially increase the net expenditure, or would involve capital expenditure, shall stand adjourned without discussion until the next ordinary meeting of the Council. During the interim period the Finance Committee shall report on the financial aspect of the matters.

5.17 Questions

A member may ask the Town Mayor or the CEO any question concerning the business of the Council, provided 3 clear working days' notice of the question been given to the person to whom it is addressed.

5.18 Handling of Questions

No questions not connected with business under discussion shall be asked except during the part of the meeting set aside for questions.

5.19 Questions to be Put and Answered without Discussion

Every question shall be put and answered without discussion.

5.20 Right to Decline

A person to whom a question has been put may decline to answer.

5.21 Discussions and Resolutions Affecting Employees of the Council

If at a meeting there arises any question relating to the appointment, conduct, promotion, dismissal, salary or conditions of service of any individual person or identifiable groups of people employed by the Council, it shall not be considered until the press and public have been excluded and recording and reporting suspended.

5.22 Voting by Show of Hands only

Members shall vote by a show of hands. There is no provision for voting by ballot.

5.23 Recorded Votes

If a member so requires, the CEO shall record the names of the members who voted on any question so as to show whether they voted for, against or abstained. Such a request must be made before moving on to the next business. Individual members may also request that their personal vote be recorded.

5.24 Mayor's Decision Final

The Town Mayor (or Chair in the case of a Committee, Sub-Committee or Task and Finish Group) shall ascertain the numbers voting for or against any question and the Town Mayor's declaration as to the result shall be final

5.25 Chair's Vote

Except as specified in Standing Order 5.26 below the Chair may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote and, in any case of an equality of votes, may give a casting vote whether or not he/she gave an original vote.

5.26 Voting on Cessation of Membership

If the person presiding at the Statutory Annual Meeting of the Council would have ceased to be a member of the Council, but for the statutory provisions which preserve the membership of the Chair and Vice-Chair until the end of their term of office, he/she may not give an original vote in an election for Chair.

5.27 Obligation to Give a Casting Vote

The person presiding MUST give a casting vote whenever there is an equality of votes in an election for Chair.

5.28 Application to Committees

The above rules apply also to Committees, Subcommittees and Task and Finish Groups.

6. Order of Business

6.1 Statutory Annual Council Meeting

At each Statutory Annual Council Meeting the first business shall be:

- i. to establish whether anyone present wishes to record the meeting
- ii. to elect the Town Mayor.
- iii. to receive the Town Mayor's declaration of acceptance of office or, if not then received, to decide when it shall be received.
- iv. in the ordinary year of election of the Council to fill any vacancies left unfilled at the election by reason of insufficient nominations.
- v. to decide when any declarations of acceptance of office which have not been received as provided by law shall be received.
- vi. to note a report including the results of the recent Town Council elections, including the names of the candidates and any party labels, the number of votes received by each candidate, the total number of votes cast, the number of spoilt ballots, and the candidates' election

After these items the business shall proceed as follows

- vii. to elect the Deputy Town Mayor.
- viii. to receive members' apologies for absence

- ix. to receive members declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest on items on the Agenda.
- x. to receive representation from members of the public.
- xi. to re-adopt exiting or establish a procedure for amending the Standing Orders for regulation and Proceedings of the Council.
- xii. to appoint members to committees and sub-committees
- xiii. to appoint Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of standing committees
- xiv. to appoint members to or dispose of Task and Finish groups.to appoint nominees to outside bodies, and to request an annual report from those nominees to be presented during the course of the year.
- xv. to inspect any deeds and trust investments in the custody of the Council as required.
- xvi. to elect the Leader and Deputy Leader of Council for the forthcoming year
- xvii. to confirm the Ordinary Council and Committee meetings for the year

6.2 Town Council Meetings (other than the Annual Statutory meeting)

At every Town Council meeting other than the Annual Town Council Meeting the first business shall be

- i. to appoint a Chair if the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor be absent and
- ii. to establish whether anyone present wishes to record the meeting
- iii. to receive apologies for absence
- iv. to receive such declarations of acceptance of office (if any) and undertaking to observe the Council's code of conduct as are required by law to be made or, if not then received, to decide when they shall be received.

After the first business has been completed, the order of business, unless the Council otherwise decides on the ground of urgency, shall be as follows:

- v. to receive members declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest on items on the Agenda.
- vi. to receive representations from members of the public
- vii. to read and consider the minutes of the previous meeting(s). If the minutes have been duly reviewed according to Standing Order 6.3 and a copy has been circulated to each member not later than the day of issue of the summons to attend the meeting, the Minutes may be taken as read.
- viii. after consideration to approve the signature of the Minutes by the person presiding as a correct record.
- ix. to deal with business expressly required by statute to be done.
- x. to dispose of business, if any, remaining from the last meeting.
- xi. to receive such communications as the person presiding may wish to lay before the Council.
- xii. to answer questions from Councillors which have been tabled in advance by notification to the CEO not less than 3 working days before the meeting,
- xiii. to receive and consider reports, minutes and recommendations of committees and Task and Finish Groups.
- xiv. to receive and consider proposed resolutions or matters for discussion in the order in which they have been notified, innless they are to be considered after exclusion of press and public in which case the order shall be duly varied.

- xv. if necessary, to note a report including the results of any town council by-elections since the last town council meeting, including the names of the candidates and any party labels, the number of votes received by each candidate, the total number of votes cast, the number of spoilt ballots, and the candidates' election. The report shall also note any changes in the political composition of the council
- xvi. any other items as specified on the Agenda

6.3 Issue and Approval of Minutes

As soon as possible following a meeting of the Council or its committees draft minutes will be issued by email (or, if any Councillor serving on the committee in question does not have access to email, via post or courier). Committee members have one week from despatch of the email or courier to review the minutes and submit comments on accuracy, except during the months of July and August when two weeks will be allowed. No response will be taken as acceptance with the exception of the meeting Chair (or vice Chair should the Chair be indisposed) from whom positive confirmation is required.

Following receipt of the comments the Chief Executive Officer will make appropriate modifications and the resulting minutes will be issued and made available on the Council website and in other public places as appropriate

6.4 Correction of Minutes

When minutes duly issued and approved according to Standing Order 6.3 are read (or taken as read) no amendments will be accepted other than to correct a material inaccuracy in the reporting of the resolution, recommendation or the result of a ballot or appointment. Corrections to the Minutes shall be made by resolution and will be annotated both in the minute book and the minutes of the meeting at which the motion to correct was resolved.

6.5 Discussion of Minutes

No discussion of the Minutes shall take place except upon their accuracy in accordance with Standing Order 6.4.

6.6 Minutes to be the Official Record

Only the official, signed Minutes of the Council and its Committees will be recognised as the formal, statutory and legally binding record of the meeting.

6.7 Variation of Order of Business

A motion to vary the order of business may be made on the ground of urgency and

- i. May be proposed by the Chair or by any member and, if proposed by the Chair, may be put to the vote without being seconded, and
- ii. Shall be put to the vote without discussion.

6.8 Resolutions must be Proposed and Seconded

A resolution or amendment shall not be discussed unless it has been proposed and seconded.

6.9 Timing of Speeches

A member when seconding a resolution or amendment may, if he/she then declares his intention to do so, reserve his speech until a later period of the debate.

6.10 Speeches must be Relevant

A member shall direct his/her speech to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or to a question of order.

6.11 Rules of Debate

At the end of any speech a member may, without comment, move "that the question be now put", "that the debate be now adjourned" or "that the Council do now adjourn". If such motion is seconded, the Chair shall put the motion but, in the case of a motion "that the question be now put", only if he/she is of the opinion that the question before the Council has been sufficiently debated. If the motion "that the question be now put" is carried, he/she shall call upon the mover to exercise or waive

his/her right of reply and shall put the question immediately after that right has been exercised or waived. The adjournment of a debate or of the Council shall not prejudice the mover's right of reply at the resumption.

6.12 Members to Speak once Except when Permitted

A member, other than the mover of a resolution, shall not, without leave of the Council, speak more than once on any resolution except to move an amendment or further amendment, or on an amendment, or on a point of order, or in personal explanation, or to move a closure.

6.13 Speeches not to Exceed 3 Minutes without Consent

No speech by a mover of a resolution shall exceed 3 minutes and no other speech shall exceed 3 minutes except by consent of the Council.

6.14 Amendments to Resolutions

An amendment shall be either:-

- i. To leave out words.
- ii. To leave out words and insert others
- iii. To insert or add words.
- iv. An amendment shall not have the effect of negating the resolution before the Council.

6.15 Amended Resolutions Replace the Original

If an amendment be carried, the resolution, as amended, shall take the place of the original resolution and shall become the resolution upon which any further amendment may be moved.

6.16 Disposal of Amendments

A further amendment shall not be moved until the Council has disposed of every amendment previously moved.

6.17 Mover has Right of Reply

The mover of a resolution or of an amendment shall have a right of reply.

6.18 Points of Order

A member may speak on a point of order specifically identified or a personal explanation. A member speaking for these purposes shall be heard forthwith. A personal explanation shall be confined to some material part of a former speech by him/her which may have been misunderstood.

6.19 Ruling of Mayor or Chair Final

The ruling of the Town Mayor/Chair on a point of order specifically identified or on the admissibility of a personal explanation shall not be discussed.

6.20 Motion may be Withdrawn

A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer and the seconder which shall be signified without discussion, and no member may speak upon it after permission has been asked for its withdrawal unless such permission has been refused.

6.21 New Resolutions Permitted during a Debate

When a resolution is under debate no other resolution shall be moved except the following:-

- i. To amend the resolution.
- ii. To proceed to the next business.
- iii. To adjourn the debate.
- iv. That the question be now put.
- v. That a member named be not further heard.
- vi. That a member named leaves the meeting.
- vii. That the resolution be referred to a committee.
- viii. To exclude the public and press.

ix. To adjourn the meeting.

6.22 Members to Address the Chair

Members shall address the Town Mayor/Chair. If two or more members wish to speak, the Town Mayor/Chair shall decide who to call upon.

6.23 Members to be Silent during Speeches

Whenever a member of the Council is speaking other members shall be silent except that the Chair of the meeting may interrupt the member if necessary for orderly conduct of the meeting.

6.24 Members to be Seated and Silent if Mayor Stands

At meetings of the full council all members shall be seated and silent when the Mayor stands.

7. Standard of Conduct

7.1 Local Authority Code to be Observed

All members must observe the Code of Conduct from time to time approved by Council under the Localism Act 2011 which is annexed to Standing Orders.

7.2 Application

The Code of Conduct which was adopted by this Council on 20th July 2012 (or as amended) shall apply to members of the Council in respect of the entire meeting.

7.3 Breach of Conduct to be Reported

If a member reasonably believes another member is in breach of the code of conduct, that member is under a duty to report the breach to the Monitoring Officer.

7.4 Members must not Obstruct, Offend or Act Improperly

No member shall at a meeting persistently disregard the ruling of the Town Mayor/Chair, wilfully obstruct business, or behave irregularly, offensively, improperly or in such a manner as to bring the Council into disrepute.

7.5 Sanctions for Poor Conduct

If, in the opinion of the Town Mayor/Chair, a member has broken the provisions of Standing Order 7.4, the Town Mayor/Chair shall express that opinion to the Council and thereafter any member may move that the member named be no longer heard or that the member named do leave the meeting, and the motion, if seconded, shall be put forth with and without discussion.

7.6 Adjournment on Grounds of Disorder

If either of the motions mentioned in Standing Order 7.5, the Town Mayor/Chair may adjourn the meeting or take such further steps as may reasonably be necessary to enforce them.

7.7 Conduct of Chair

Any member who believes the Chair of the meeting to be behaving improperly during a meeting may bring this to the attention of the members present and the Vice Chair will deal with the matter. The Vice Chair shall in this case have the powers of the Chair specified in Standing Orders 7.5 and 7.6.

7.8 Complaints Against Officers

Complaints against officers shall be dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Policy from time to time approved by Council.

7.9 Complaints about or Disputes between Members

In the event of a dispute between members or a complaint by one or more member(s) about one or more other member(s) the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer will call a meeting of the members concerned (and such other members as are relevant to the case) at which the members will present their dispute and will endeavour to resolve the matter. In the event that the Mayor is a party to the dispute the Deputy Mayor will take the place of the Mayor. The Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer may recommend such further action as they deem fit including but not limited to a referral of the matter to Council. The outcome of these proceedings is not binding on any party unless they agree that it shall be binding

7.10 Rights of Referral Unaffected

Nothing in these Standing Orders shall affect in any way the right of any person (whether a party to the matter or not) to refer disputes or complaints to the Standards Officer or a Court of Law nor shall it affect any statutory duty to refer in cases where such a duty exists.

7.11 Members must have Authority to Act

No member of the Council or of any committee or sub-committee shall in the name of or on behalf of the Council issue Orders, instructions or directions unless authorised to do so by the Council or the relevant committee or sub-committee.

8. Declaration of Interest

8.1 Obligation to Declare

If a member has a disclosable pecuniary interest as defined by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council then he/she shall, unless it has already been registered with the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive Officer, declare such interest during the agenda item 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent whichever is the earlier. The member shall disclose the existence and nature of that interest as required.

In the event that a member makes such a declaration, he/she must, in addition, report it formally to both the Chief Executive Officer of the Council and the Monitoring Officer of East Herts District Council no later than 28 days after the meeting at which it was first declared.

8.2 Record of Interests

The CEO will compile and maintain a register of members' interests, which shall be published on the Council's website.

9. Urgent Matters Between Meetings

9.1 Urgent Matters considered by the Mayor and Two other Members

Urgent matters arising between Ordinary Meetings of the Council shall be considered by the Town Mayor (or in his/her absence, the Deputy Town Mayor) and at least two other members and recommendations made to the CEO. The CEO shall have regard to these recommendations and make the appropriate decision(s), on the basis of authority which is hereby delegated to him/her in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

9.2 Action in the Event of Disagreement by the CEO

If the CEO disagrees with a recommendation made to him/her, he/she shall advise the Town Mayor (or Deputy Town Mayor) accordingly and if necessary a Special Meeting of the Council shall be convened to consider the matter. The CEO shall report details of the decision(s) made pursuant to this Clause to the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council.

10. Financial Matters

10.1 Annual Statements – Management Accounts

The CEO shall supply to each member as soon as practicable after 31 March in each year a statement of the income and expenditure of the Council for the completed financial year.

10.2 Annual Statements – Statutory Accounts

The statutory accounts of the Council (which are subject to external audit) shall be presented to Council for formal approval before the end of July at the latest.

10.3 Approval of Precept

The Council shall approve, following the receipt of estimates from the CEO, the Precept for the financial year at a Town Council meeting to be held at its meeting before the end of the month of February.

10.4 Submission of Estimates

Any committee or Task and Finish Group desiring to incur expenditure shall give the CEO a written estimate of the expenditure recommended for the coming year before the Finance and Policy (Estimates) Meeting

10.5 Financial Regulations

The Council shall consider and later approve Financial Regulations drawn up by the CEO. Such Regulations shall include detailed arrangements for the following:

- i. The accounting records and systems of internal control.
- ii. The assessment and management of risks faced by the Council.
- iii. The work of the Internal Auditor and the receipt of regular reports from the Internal Auditor which shall be required at least annually.
- iv. The financial reporting requirements of members and local electors.
- v. Procurement policies.

10.6 Regulations to be Reviewed

The Financial Regulations of the Council shall be subject to regular review, at least once every two years.

10.7 Signature of Orders for Payment

Orders for the payment of money shall be as detailed in the Financial Regulations of the Council and signed by two members of Council and the Chief Executive Officer or, in the absence of the Chief Executive Officer, three members of Council to include the Mayor.

11. Tenders

11.1 Tender Processes

Any proposed contract for the supply of goods, materials, services and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of £30,000 but less than the thresholds mentioned below must, unless exempt for the specified regulations, be procured and publicised in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or successor regulations. In addition to the requirements set out in the regulations the opportunity will be advertised on the Council's website and may be disseminated in any other manner that is appropriate having regard to the nature of the contract and suppliers. This may include, but is not limited to, dissemination to a group of economic operators selected for the purpose whether ad hoc or by virtue of their membership of some closed category such as a trade association. The advertisements and disseminated material shall contain, as a minimum, the same information as that published on Contracts Finder in accordance with the Regulations.

Any proposed contract with an estimated value exceeding £213,477 for service/supply or £5,336,937 for works (or such other value as may be prescribed from time to time by regulation) must, unless exempt from the specified regulations, be procured and publicised in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or successor regulations.

Tenders submitted in accordance with the above processes are to be assessed by officers in accordance with Financial Regulations and stipulations in the regulations referred to above.

11.2 Restrictions

Unless contrary to regulations:

- i. Canvassing of members of the Council or of any committee, directly or indirectly, for any contract to be entered into by the Council shall disqualify the potential tenderer from the award of the contract.
- ii. No member of the Council nor of any committee shall solicit for any tenderer or recommend any tenderer but may nevertheless give a written testimonial of the tenderer's ability, experience or character for submission to the Council with an application for appointment.

12. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

12.1 Voting on Appointments

Where more than two persons have been nominated for any appointment to be made by the Council to a committee, sub-committee, task and finish group or outside body and there is not an absolute majority of votes cast in favour of one person, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken, and so on until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person.

12.2 Positions to be the Considered in Turn

If more than one appointment is to be made at any one meeting the appointments will be considered separately and in order of seniority (most senior first).

13. Inspection of Documents

13.1 Right to Inspect

Except as specified in Standing Order 13.3 a member may, for the purpose of his duty as such (but not otherwise), inspect any document in possession of the Council or a committee, and if copies are available shall, on request, be supplied for the like purpose with a copy.

13.2 Minutes Open for Inspection

All minutes kept by the Council and by any committee shall be open for the inspection of any member of the Council.

13.3 Confidential Data and Data Protection Act 1998

The Chief Executive Officer may designate certain information as confidential where necessary to comply with the Data protection act or to protect the legitimate confidentiality of personal or corporate data (including conditions of employment). Release of such information will occur only on written request to the Chief Executive Officer who may, in consultation with the Chair of the appropriate committee, refuse to release the information if it is deemed too sensitive. A member may appeal against refusal to full Council.

14. Confidential Business

14.1 Confidential Business shall not be Disclosed

No member of the Council committee, sub-committee or Task and Finish Group shall disclose to any person not a member of the Council any business declared to be confidential by the Council, the committee, the sub-committee or Task and Finish Group as the case may be.

14.2 Sanctions for Violators

The Council may censure any member in breach of the provisions of Standing Order 14.1 and may apply such sanctions in respect of the member as are permissible by law.

15. Sealing of Documents

15.1 Sealing upon Resolution

A document shall not be sealed on behalf of the Council unless its sealing has been authorised by a resolution.

15.2 Use and Storage of Common Seal

The Common Seal of the Council shall alone be used for sealing documents and shall be applied by the CEO. The Seal must be kept in a safe place and locked.

16. The Proper Officer

16.1 Chief Executive Officer is Proper Officer

Where a statute, regulation or order confers function or duties on the Proper Officer of the Council in the following cases, he/she shall be the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or nominated officer: -

- i. To receive declarations of acceptance of office.
- ii. To receive and record notices disclosing interests at meetings.
- iii. To receive and retain plans and documents.
- iv. To sign notices or other documents on behalf of the Council.
- v. To receive copies of bylaws made by another local authority.
- vi. To certify copies of bylaws made by the Council.
- vii. To sign and issue the summons to attend meetings of the Council.
- viii. To keep proper records for all Council meetings.
- ix. To be the Responsible Officer for the accounts.
- x. To carry out duties as described in Standing Order 5.5.

16.2 Exceptions

In any other case, the Proper Officer shall be the person nominated by the Council and in default of nomination the CEO will act in that capacity.

17. Liaison with County and District Councillors

17.1 Summons and Agendas

A summons and Agenda for each meeting shall be sent to the County or District.

18. Administration and Interpretation of Standing Orders

18.1 Variation, Revocation and Suspension of Standing Orders

Any or every part of the Standing Orders except those which are side-lined in the margin may be suspended by resolution in relation to any specific item of business.

18.2 Resolution to vary Standing Orders

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.

18.3 Town Mayor Ruling on Standing Orders

The Town Mayor's decision on the construction of Standing Orders and on the question of order not provided for by these Standing Orders shall be final and conclusive.

18.4 Standing Orders to be given to Members

A copy of these Standing Orders shall be given to each member by the CEO upon delivery to him/her of the member's declaration of acceptance of office and written undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.



B. COMMITTEE REMITS

0. Amendment History

Version	Issued	Notes
Issue	Issue 2012.1	
Issue Date	23 July 2012	
Approved	17 September 2012	
Amended	13 October 2014	
Approved	15 December 2014	
Approved	22 July 2019	
Approved by Council	13 May 2019	
Amended	30 September 2019	
Approved by Council	04 May 2019	
2021.2	5 th October 2021	Amendments to remit of Planning Committee
2022.1	10 th October 2022	Amendments to the remit and operating methods of the Committee dealing with grievances, appeals and complaints and consequential amendments following a Council resolution of 10 th October 2022
2022.2	13 th December 2022	Amendment to remit of Planning Committee following Town Council resolution of 12 th December 2022
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the remits of Committees and delegations to Committees and officers and is to be read in association with Standing Orders and Financial regulations.

2. Matters Reserved to Council

The following matters are to be resolved only by Council

- To consider annual estimates of income and expenditure and confirm the Precept to be levied
- To approve the Council's scale of charges for all the Council's activities prior to the annual budget meeting;
- To review and approve the end of year Accounts and Annual Return.
- To consider and initiate requests for boundary reviews
- To review and amend the Constitution and Financial Regulations
- To establish the number of Committees, and the names and number of Members appointed to each Committee together with the remit of and delegation to such Committees.
- To fill vacancies occurring on any Committee
- To approve any draft of a Neighbourhood Plan for submission to examination
- To consider and approve any loan (whether to or from the Council) with a term exceeding one year
- To consider and approve the acquisition or disposal of any real-estate;
- To appoint representatives to outside bodies
- To consider any new activity and if appropriate allocate it to an appropriate Task and Finish Group, Committee or other body;
- To review and approve or reject applications for grants within the overall budget for grants set by the Council
- To appoint or dismiss the Chief Executive Officer
- All other matters which must, by law, be reserved to the full Council

3. Matters within the Remit of or Delegated to Committees

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the remits of the committees and the delegated powers of decision making.

3.2 Call-In

Some committee decisions are 'subject to call in'. If a decision made by a Committee is 'subject to call-in' that decision will, on the request of any member or the Chief Executive Officer, be considered stayed and will be duly considered at the next Council meeting at which it will be treated as a recommendation by the Committee. The procedure for requesting call-in is as follows:

Following the issue for review (in accordance with Standing Orders 6.3 and 6.4) of draft minutes (which shall be issued to all Councillors whether or not they serve on the Committee in question) a member wishing to call in a decision marked '**RESOLVED** (subject to call-in)' shall notify the Chief Executive Officer of his wish within the timescale for commenting on the draft minutes as set out in the standing orders referred to above. On receipt of such a notification (or in the event that the Chief Executive Officer wishes the decision to be 'called in' the Chief Executive Officer will inform all members of the Committee that the decision has been called in and the record in the minutes will be amended to '**RECOMMENDED** (called-in)' to signify the status.

A decision which is not called in in accordance with the above will be regarded as a RESOLUTION and subject to implementation by the Chief Executive Officer upon the expiry of the review period set out in standing orders 6.3/6.4.

3.3 Table of Services

The remits below refer to the following table of services and allocations of oversight to Committees

Services to the public

Service	Committee
Allotments	E&PA
Cemeteries	E&PA
Flyposting and Advertising	E&PA
Grants	F&P
Market	F&P
Planning	Planning
Neighbourhood Planning	Planning
Pool and Playground	E&PA
Stride & Ride	F&P
Sworder's Field	E&PA
Venue Hire	F&P
Carnival Parade and Fun Day	F&P
Christmas Fayre	F&P
Stortford in Bloom	E&PA
Public Benches	E&PA
Remembrance	E&PA
Market Square Toilets	E&PA
St Michael's Churchyard	E&PA
Newtown Road Garden Sanctuary	E&PA
CCTV	F&P
Seasonal Taxi Marshals Scheme	F&P

Festive Lighting	F&P
Tourist Information centre and other Visitor services	E&PA

Internal services

Online presence and IT	F&P
Environmental Impact	F&P
HR	F&P
Services to the Mayor and members	F&P

3.4 Finance and Policy Committee

Financial Management

- to consider annual estimates of income and expenditure and recommend to the Council the amount of precept to be levied by the Town Council;
- to receive periodical statements of the Council's actual and budgeted income and expenditure and to recommend future corrective action if necessary;
- to review annually and recommend the Council's scale of charges for all the Council's services prior to the annual budget meeting and recommend the scales to be levied to Council
- Periodically to review *and approve (subject to call-in)* the Council's investment strategy
- To consider and recommend to Council any loan required to support the Council business or which it is proposed Council makes to a third party
- To review and approve (amended as appropriate) the budget for annual pay reviews recommended by the Chief Executive Officer, subject to the constraint that it is within the overall budget recommended to and subsequently adopted by Council

Fixed Asset Management

- To consider and recommend to Council the acquisition or disposal (whether by sale or lease) or re-designation of any real-estate having regard to any recommendation made by any other committee the services overseen by which depend on the asset.
- *To review and approve (subject to call-in)* the licence for the use of any parcel of land for a period (or with a term of notice) not exceeding 6 years where the land is owned by the Council and where such approval has not been delegated to the Chief Executive Officer.

Council Policies

- To keep under review the Council's standing orders, financial regulations, committee remits, investment policy and other governing documents and recommend changes to Council
- To review personnel policies recommended by the Chief Executive Officer and *approve (subject to call-in)* such policies (amended as necessary).

Strategy

- To review periodically, in consultation with all Councillors and Council Committees, the strategic objectives for the Council (the "Council Strategy") and recommend adoption to Council
- To implement a framework for the delivery of the Council Strategy which including where appropriate allocating strategic deliverables to Council Committees, formulating strategies to influence external bodies, where required to execute the council strategy
- To monitor the progress of the Council Strategy and provide summary period reports to Council

Services

- To oversee the operation of the services to the public and the internal services allocated to the Committee in the table of services above
- To review service policies recommended by the Chief Executive Officer which relate to the services allocated to the Committee in the table above and *approve (subject to call-in)** such policies (amended as necessary).

Other

- To consider any activity of the Council referred to it by the Council.

3.5 Environment and Public Amenities Committee

Services to the Public

- To oversee the operation of the public services provided by the Council which are allocated to the Committee in the table of services
- To review service policies recommended by the Chief Executive Officer which relate to the services allocated to the Committee in the table above and *approve (subject to call-in)** such policies (amended as necessary).

Matters outside the Direct Control of the Council

- To consider and comment on environmental matters affecting the Town provided that the Council has either powers or duties in respect of these matters, including (but not limited to): parking, fly posting, A boards, dog fouling, public infrastructure initiatives in relation to sustainable transport
- Periodically to consider S106 money available, whether held by HCC or EHDC, and recommend to the responsible authority projects on which it could be spent.

Other

- To consider any activity of the Council referred to it by the Council.

3.6 Planning and Development Committee

Planning Consent and Related Matters

- To consider, and respond to on behalf of Council, all matters directly related to applications, or prospective applications, for planning permission or related permissions (e.g. listed building consent)
- Against each application considered by the Committee, to make a comment on conformance (or otherwise) with the policies in the made Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plans
- To consider and comment on all planning applications forwarded from other authorities for consultation.
- For larger applications, to seek influence over the content of S106 agreements made between the planning authority and developers.
- To make representations on behalf of Council as necessary in cases of appeals against refusal of planning consent or judicial reviews of the grant of consent.
- Periodically to create/review a list of candidate street names for new developments in the town
- To recommend new street names to the District Council either
 - by selection of names appropriate to the development from the candidate list or
 - by providing the District Council and/or developers with a copy of the Candidate list and requesting that they make a selection from same
 - or, if the circumstances dictate, creating a list of candidate names specifically relevant to the development having regard to those already on the candidate list
- To engage proactively with developers, prospective developers, a district-led masterplan process or other similar process where it sees fit in order to achieve a better result for the town than would have been achieved without such engagement

Planning and Development Framework

- To consider the timing of and, if appropriate, initiate proposals for revisions to Neighbourhood Plan(s), subject to budget availability (which must be approved by Council)
- To consider and respond on behalf of Council to any strategic planning documents or proposals affecting the town issued for consultation or comment by other authorities including any development plan, supplementary planning document, transport plan

Other

- To consider, and respond on behalf of Council, licencing applications referred by East Herts District Council
- To consider any activity of the Council referred to it by Council.

3.7 Committee which deals with Appeals, Complaints and Disciplinary Matters

Introduction

Appeals, complaints and disciplinary matters, are, where specified in the relevant procedure, dealt with the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee. The remit set out below is to be read in conjunction with the Council policies on complaints, grievances or disciplinary policy as appropriate.

Three members only will sit on each occasion that this Committee is required to consider a matter and the quorum will be three. Where this committee hears an appeal where the committee heard the case itself, three members sit who did not sit on the original case. The remit will be as follows:

- Appeal Committee for staff disciplinary and grievance matters determined initially by the Chief Executive Officer.
- Appeal Committee for complaints against Members determined initially by the Disciplinary Appeals and Complaints Committee.
- Appeal Committee for complaints against the Council determined initially by the Chief Executive Officer.
- Appeal Committee where the time limit for submission of complaints against the Council or Members has been exceeded and the Chief Executive Officer has denied a plea to extends based on 'exceptional circumstances'
- Committee of first instance to determine grievances against the Chief Executive Officer
- Committee of first instance to determine complaints against Members, subject to any constraints imposed by case law or statute
- Any other function in relation to a grievance, complaint or disciplinary matter specified in the appropriate policy.

4. Chief Executive Officer

The following functions are delegated to the Chief Executive Officer who may in turn delegate them to another member of staff in the interests of the effective and efficient management of the Council unless prohibited by law from so doing.

Statutory Functions

- to act as Proper Officer of the Council and to carry out all the functions, and in particular to serve or issue all the notifications required by law of a local authorities Proper Office
- to ensure that statutory and other provisions governing or affecting the running of the Council are observed.

Council Policies and Instructions

- to have total responsibility for ensuring that the instructions of the Council in connection with its function as a Local Authority are carried out.
- To prepare drafts of, recommend and advise the Council on overall policies to be followed in respect of the Authority's activities and in particular to product all the information required for making effective decisions and to implement constructively all decisions.

Meetings

- To prepare, in consultation with appropriate members and in accordance with Standing Orders, agendas for meetings of the Council and Committees. To attend such meetings and prepare minutes for approval, other than where such duties have been delegated to another Officer.
- To issue notices and prepare agendas and minutes for the Town Meeting: to attend the assemblies of the Town Meeting and to implement the decisions made at the assemblies that are agreed by the Council

Service Management

- To manage the day to day operation of all services (external and internal) provided by the Council
- To receive correspondence and documents on behalf of the Council and to deal with the correspondence or documents or bring such items to the attention of the Council. To issue correspondence as a result of instructions of, or the known policy of the Council.
- To monitor the implemented policies of the Council to ensure they are achieving the desired result and where appropriate suggest modifications.
- To draw up both on his/her own initiative and as a result of suggestions by Councillors proposals for considerations by the Council and to advise on practicability and likely effects of specific courses of action.
- To agree and issue any licence for the use of land by a third party including but not limited to Allotments, Concessions such as Ice cream vans, market licences, café licences for a duration (or with a notice period) not exceeding five years provided the fee for such licence is either authorised by Council, competitively established or, where there is no effective competition, based on precedent established by Council or on market rates

Staff

- To supervise any other members of staff as their line manager in keeping with the policies of the Council and to undertake all necessary activities in connection with the management of salaries, conditions of employment and work of other staff.
- To delegate tasks as deemed appropriate unless specifically mandated or prohibited by Council policy or law
- To appoint, re-assign or dismiss (other than for reason of redundancy) permanent or temporary staff as reasonably required to perform functions approved by Council within the approved staffing budget, having due regard to employment and other law and provided that any permanent appointment will not have a material adverse effect on the precept requirement for the current or following year.
- To dismiss for reason of redundancy permanent or temporary staff provided that Council has been duly advised of and approved the underlying reason (e.g. reorganisation, cessation of Council service etc.) that redundancies may be necessary and the necessary legal processes have been duly followed. For the avoidance of doubt there is no requirement for Council to approve redundancies individually as such a requirement risks prejudicing the rights of employees to be consulted without pre-determination (and other employment rights).

Responsible Financial Officer

- To act as Responsible Financial Officer or to oversee the function if delegated to another member of Staff. This includes:
 - To be responsible for all financial records of the Council and the careful administration of its finances.
 - To monitor and balance the Council's accounts and prepare the records for audit purposes and VAT
 - To receive and report on such invoices for goods and services to be paid for by the Council and to ensure such accounts are met.
 - To issue invoices on behalf of the Council for goods and services and to ensure payment is received.
 - To ensure that the Council's obligations for Risk Assessment are properly met.

- Periodically to review the Council's investments and make prudent adjustments to optimise within the overall Treasury management policy

Other

- To act as the representative of the Council as required to and on third party bodies.
- To be accountable for the effective management of all its resources and will report to them as and when required.
- To prepare, in consultation, with the Chair, press releases about the activities of, or decisions of, the Council.
- To be responsible for all Trusts administered by the Town Council including Rhodes Birthplace Trust/BSMACIO, which runs the flagship complex at South Mill Arts.
- To take any proceedings or other steps as may be necessary to enforce and recover any debt owing or other obligation due to the Council
- To institute, defend and appear in any legal proceedings authorised by the Council
- To appear or make representation to any tribunal or public inquiry into any matter in which the Council has an interest
- To make any decisions necessary as a matter of urgency in accordance with applicable Standing Order(s)



C. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
2010		
1.0	20 September 2010	
1.1	4 February 2013	Amendment to 10.3 (Reviewed by F&GP Committee 21 January 2013. Approved by Town Council 4 February 2013)
1.2	20 May 2013	Reviewed by F&GP Committee 2 ^h May 2013 Approved by Town Council 17 June 2013
1.3	19 May 2014	Reviewed by F&GP Committee 19 May 2014 Approved by Town Council 16 June 2014
1.4	15 December 2015	Incorporates changes to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations approved by Council on 14 December 2015
1.5	22 May 2017	Reviewed by F&GP Committee 22 May 2017 Approved by Town Council 15 June 2017
1.6	20 May 2019	Reviewed by F&GP Committee 20 May 2019 Approved by Town Council 30 September 2019
1.7	16 November 2020	Reviewed by F&P Committee 16 November 2020 Approved by Town Council 14 December 2020
1.8	26 July 2021	Reviewed by F&P Committee 26 July 2021 Approved by Town Council 4 October 2021
1.9	6 th February 2023	Adopted by Council 6 th February 2023
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout
Issue 2023.2	31 July 2023	Reviewed by F&P Committee 13 July 2023 Approved by Town Council 9 October 2023

1. General

1.1 These Financial Regulations govern the conduct of financial management by the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council. The Council is responsible in law for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that the Council has a sound system of financial control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk and for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. These financial regulations are designed to demonstrate how the Council meets these responsibilities.

1.2 The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) is a statutory office and shall be appointed by the Council. The Chief Financial Officer has been appointed as the RFO for this Council and these regulations will apply accordingly. The RFO, acting under the policy direction of the Council, shall administer the Council's financial affairs in accordance with proper practices. The RFO shall determine, on behalf of the Council, its accounting records and accounting control systems. The RFO shall ensure that the accounting control systems are observed and that the accounting records of the Council are maintained and kept up to date in accordance with proper practices.

1.3 The RFO shall produce financial management information as required by the Council.

1.4 At least once a year, prior to approving the Annual Return, the Council shall conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control which shall be in accordance with proper practices.

1.5 In these Financial Regulations, references to the Accounts and Audit Regulations shall mean the Regulations issued under the provisions of Section 32 of The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 or such successor regulations as are in force from time to time.

1.6 In these Financial Regulations, the term 'proper practice' or 'proper practices' shall refer to guidance issued in Governance and Accountability in Local Councils – a Practitioners' Guide (England) which is published by the Joint Practitioners Group and updated from time to time.

2. Annual Estimates (Budget)

2.1 Detailed estimates of all receipts and payments, including the use of reserves and sources of funding for the subsequent year shall be prepared each year by the RFO in the form of a budget to be considered by the Council.

2.2 The Council shall review the budget not later than the end of February each year and shall fix the Precept to be levied for the ensuing financial year. The RFO shall issue the precept to the billing authority and shall supply each member with a copy of the approved budget.

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

2.4 The Council shall consider the need for and shall have regard to a three-year forecast of Revenue and Capital Receipts and Payments which may be prepared at the same time as the annual budget.

3. Budgetary Control

3.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred in accordance with the regulations below.

3.2 Except as stated at 3.6 below no expenditure may be incurred that will cause or is likely to cause the total expenditure to exceed that budgeted unless it is approved by the Council having considered fully the implications and the overall availability of funds.

3.3 No expenditure may be incurred that will exceed the amount provided for that class of expenditure by more than 5% (and always subject to rule 3.2 above) unless it is approved by the Council having considered fully the implications and the overall availability of funds.

3.4 For the purposes of clauses 3.2 and 3.3 the 'class of expenditure' is the 'TOE Roll up' presented in the budget, without regard to cost centre.

3.5 In respect of the purchase of stock for resale clauses 3.2 and 3.3 shall not apply. Stock for resale may be purchased without limit provided that the net profit/loss made, within the budget year, on all stock purchased for resale is no less favourable than that budgeted.

3.6 The RFO shall at the Finance and Policy Committee meeting occurring shortly after the end of each quarter, provide the Committee with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget for the year.

3.7 The Chief Executive Officer may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to 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 £1,000. The Chief Executive Officer shall report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

3.8 Unspent provisions in the revenue budget shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year, unless placed in an earmarked reserve by resolution of the Council.

3.9 No expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available, or the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained.

3.10 All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations relating to contracts.

4. Accounting and Audit

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

4.2 The RFO shall complete the annual financial statements of the Council, including the Council's Annual Return, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them and report thereon to the Council.

4.3 The RFO shall complete the Accounts of the Council contained in the Annual Return (as supplied by the External Auditor) and shall submit the Annual Return for approval and authorisation by the Council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

4.4 The RFO shall ensure that there is adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting, financial and other operations in accordance with proper practices. Any officer or member of the Council shall, if the RFO or Internal Auditor requires, make available such documents of the Council which appear to the RFO or Internal Auditor to be necessary for the purpose of the Internal Audit and shall supply the RFO or Internal Auditor with such information and explanation as the RFO or Internal Auditor considers necessary for that purpose.

4.5 The Internal Auditor shall be appointed by and shall carry out the work required by the Council in accordance with proper practices. The Internal Auditor, who shall be competent and independent of the operations of the Council, shall report to Council, in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual written report in respect of each financial year. In order to demonstrate objectivity and independence, the Internal Auditor shall be free from any conflicts of interest and have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council.

4.6 The RFO shall make arrangements for the opportunity for inspection of the accounts, books, and vouchers and for the display or publication of any Notices and statements of account required by Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

4.7 The RFO shall, as soon as practicable, bring to the attention of all Councillors any correspondence or report from the Internal or External Auditor, unless the correspondence is of a purely administrative matter.

5. Banking Arrangements

5.1 The Council's banking arrangements, including the Bank Mandate, shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council. They shall be reviewed shortly after each ordinary election to Council.

5.2 A schedule of the purchase invoices made since the last meeting, forming part of the agenda for each Finance and Policy Committee meeting. For the avoidance of doubt this schedule does not include payments made by variable direct debit or corporate charge card (procedures in regulations 6.7 and 5.5 respectively).

5.3 Cheques drawn on the any of the bank accounts of the Council shall be signed by two members of Council and the Chief Executive Officer or, in the absence of the Chief Executive Officer, three members of Council to include the Mayor.

5.4 Electronic payments drawn on the any of the bank accounts of the Council shall be signed or otherwise authorised by two members of Council and the Chief Executive Officer or, in the absence of the Chief Executive Officer, three members of Council to include the Mayor. A Payment Audit Trail Report shall be retained showing which users authorised the transaction(s).

5.5 The Council may hold a corporate charge card account for paying for budgeted goods or services. The card may be used for the purchase of goods not exceeding £1,000 in any one transaction or series of linked transactions, and only where it is not reasonably practical to make arrangements for payment by alternative means. One or more cards (but not more than four) may be held on the account; The Chief Executive Officer will designate who may hold each card and any limits which apply to its use beyond those stated herein; the limit on any card not held by the Chief Executive Officer shall not exceed £500. No individual may hold a card unless their contract of employment includes a clause entitling the Council to deduct from salary any debt due to misuse by them of the company corporate charge card, and the individual in question has signed a letter acknowledging this. Each corporate charge card statement shall be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer and at least one member of Council.

5.6 Bank reconciliations shall be performed monthly. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, the RFO shall produce, and two members shall inspect, bank reconciliations for all accounts. The members shall verify their accuracy and, if satisfied that they are correct, sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification.

6. Payment of Accounts

6.1 All payments shall be effected by cheque, BACS, Direct Debit or other order drawn on the Council's bankers.

6.2 All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by a member of staff authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (or by the Chief Executive Officer). The person examining the invoice shall satisfy himself/herself that the goods or services to which the invoice relates have been received and approved, that the invoice matches a duly authorised order and is arithmetically accurate. Where a 'three way match' is present between a duly authorised order, an invoice and a goods received note or other evidence of delivery the delegated person may certify the invoice for payment. Where a 'three way match' is not present the invoice must be certified for payment by the Chief Executive Officer.

6.3 The Chief Executive Officer shall satisfy himself/herself by random sample checking that delegated inspection and authorisation has been carried out correctly and that transactions are analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading.

6.4 If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, and the Chief Executive Officer certifies that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, the Chief Executive Officer shall take all steps necessary to settle such invoices.

6.5 The Council will maintain a petty cash float not exceeding £100, separate from the Tourist Information Centre petty cash float not exceeding £50.

6.6 All cash received must be banked intact. Any payments made in cash by the Chief Executive Officer or other member of staff (for example for postage or minor stationery items) shall be refunded on a regular basis, at least quarterly.

6.7 If thought appropriate by the Council, payments may be made by variable Direct Debit/Standing Order provided that the instructions are signed by two members and the Chief Executive Officer. A list of suppliers paid by Direct Debit/Standing Order and the total amounts paid in the previous financial period will be reported to Council on an annual basis.

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

6.9 Payment of salaries and deductions from salary required for Tax, National Insurance and pension contributions, must be made in accordance with the payroll records and in accordance with employee contracts, provided that each payment is authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate prior to payment and countersigned or otherwise authorised by two members either prior to payment or as soon as reasonably possible after payment.

7. Loans and Investments

7.1 All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the Council and shall be made in accordance with the Treasury Management Policy set by the Council.

7.2 The Council shall maintain a Treasury Management Policy which shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Policy shall state the frequency with which it will be reviewed.

7.3 All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the Council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be approved by Council as to terms and purpose.

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

8. Income

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

8.2 The policy on charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied shall be reviewed at least once every two years by the Council. For services where a market price exists the Chief Executive Officer may make reasonable interim alterations to charges made by the Council in line with the market and without further authority.

8.3 The Council will review recurring fees and charges at least once every two years following a report of the Chief Executive Officer.

8.4 Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the Council and shall normally be written off in the year.

8.5 All sums received on behalf of the Council shall be banked intact. In all cases, all receipts shall be deposited with the Council's bankers with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary.

8.6 The origin of each receipt shall be entered on the paying-in slip or documentation (which may be electronic) retained referencing the paying in slip date.

8.7 Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the Council.

8.8 The RFO shall promptly complete any VAT Return that is required.

8.9 Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the Council, the Chief Executive Officer shall take such steps as are agreed by the Council to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

9. Orders for Work, Goods and Services

9.1 An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained.

9.2 Purchase Orders shall be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or delegated if the value is below £1,000.

9.3 The Chief Executive Officer or delegate shall verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order or when a resolution which requires expenditure is proposed.

9.4 For the purposes of the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014 the definition of 'material' (above which certain information must proactively be published as set out in the regulations) shall be set at £30,000.

10. Obtaining Value for Money

10.1 Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any de-minimis provisions in Regulation 11.1 (b, c) below

10.2 Where reasonably practical and consistent with applicable regulations officers will obtain goods and services from suppliers whose registered office is located within 5 miles of Bishop's Stortford¹ however this is subject to the requirement in all cases to obtain best value.

¹ Measured by road, shortest route over public highways, from the Council offices at CM23 2ND.

10.3 Members and officers may bring the existence of suppliers to the attention of the officer(s) dealing with a particular procurement but in no circumstance shall any Councillor or Officer apply pressure to choose a particular supplier in contravention of the best value rules.

10.4 Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding or likely to exceed £30,000 or such other threshold as may be prescribed from time to time by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or successor regulations, the Chief Executive Officer must consider whether these regulations apply to the contract and, if they do, must comply with the appropriate rules.

10.5 For contracts less than £2,500 in value the Chief Executive Officer will use their discretion in obtaining best value having regard to the nature of the goods or services, the nature of the market for those goods or services and the urgency of the requirement.

10.6 Where goods or services of a particular kind are required on a recurring basis the Chief Executive Officer may enter into one or more framework agreements for the supply of goods and services over a period not to exceed five years. The Chief Executive Officer shall obtain no less than three quotations for the supply of services under such an agreement unless there are less than three suppliers of the respective goods or services in which case the Chief Executive Officer will obtain quotations from each available supplier.

10.7 Where goods or services are purchased from a supplier in which one or more of the Councillors or Officers involved in the purchase or specification has a pecuniary interest competitive quotes will be obtained on all occasions irrespective of the value of the order unless the order is for a repeat or a near-likeness of goods or services purchased from the same supplier within the preceding twelve months (and for which competitive quotes were obtained).

10.8 For the purposes of clause 10.7 'pecuniary interest' shall have the same meaning as that specified in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 and a person shall be regarded as having a pecuniary interest if an interest so specified is held by the person, the person's spouse or civil partner or somebody with whom the person is living as a husband or wife, or as if they were civil partners.

10.9 Neither the Chief Executive Officer nor the Council shall be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

11. Payments under Contracts for Building or Other Construction Works

11.1 Payments on account of the contract sum (staged payments) shall be made within the time specified in the contract by the Chief Executive Officer upon authorised certificates of the architect or other consultants engaged to supervise the contract (subject to any percentage withholding as may be agreed in the particular contract).

11.2 Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments. In any case where it is estimated that the total cost of work carried out under a contract, excluding agreed variations, will exceed the contract sum of 5% or more a report shall be submitted to the Council.

11.3 Any variation to a contract or addition to or omission from a contract must be approved by Chief Executive Officer to the Contractor in writing.

12. Assets, Properties and Estates

12.1 The Chief Executive Officer shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds of properties owned by the Council. The Chief Executive Officer shall ensure a record is maintained of all properties owned by the Council, recording the location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

12.2 No property shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed the de-minimis figure below which assets are not capitalised as recorded in the most recent year end accounts (£3,000 at the time of writing).

12.3 The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date. The continued existence of tangible assets as shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually.

13. Insurance

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

13.2 The Chief Executive Officer and RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim. The Chief Executive Officer or RFO will negotiate all claims through the Council's insurers and, shall report any uninsured losses exceeding £10,000 at the next available meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee of Council.

13.3 The insurance shall include all insurance required by law or regulation as well as any further cover deemed necessary following the annual financial risk assessment.

14. Risk Management

14.1 The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Chief Executive Officer and RFO shall prepare, for approval by the Council, risk management policy statements in respect of activities of the Council which create risk. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.

14.2 When considering any new activity, the Chief Executive Officer shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council.

15. System of Internal Control

15.1 The Council's System of Internal Control shall cover:

- i. Appointment of Proper Officers and the Responsible Financial Officer.
- ii. Proper bookkeeping and a financial reporting arrangements.
- iii. Financial Regulations including Standing Orders and payment controls.
- iv. Risk Management arrangements.
- v. Budgetary controls.
- vi. Income controls.
- vii. Petty cash controls.
- viii. Payroll controls.
- ix. Capital controls covering asset management, investments & borrowing.
- x. Bank reconciliation.
- xi. Other areas identified from time to time in risk assessments.

16. Revision of Financial Regulations

16.1 It shall be the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council from time to time, normally every two years. The Chief Executive Officer shall make arrangements to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the Council of any requirement for a consequential amendment to these Financial Regulations.



D. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

0. Amendment History

Issue	Issue 2012.1
Issue Date	23 July 2012
Approved	17 September 2012
Amended	21 September 2015 pursuant to Council resolution
Approved	13 May 2019
Approved	Re-adopted by Town Council on 30 September 2019
Draft	For consideration by F&P on 23 rd Jan 2023
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023 – Gender Neutral Language Throughout

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out policies for the management of cash held by the Town Council which is not required for operating purposes

2. Background

At the time of writing the Council has a cash balance which fluctuates between approximately £8.2M and £9M on a six month cycle corresponding to the cycle on which the precept is deposited. The majority of this originates from a capital receipt from the proceeds of the sale of former allotment land at Rye Street. There is a possibility that a further receipt will become due.

The Council recognises that it is required to have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State². This guidance sets out principals for investment and in particular the principal that a prudent investment must have two underlying objectives namely a) protecting the capital sum from loss and b) ensuring that the funds are available when needed. It goes on to say that yield is also a consideration, but that consideration of this should follow the determination of a proper level of security and liquidity.

The Council expects, during 2023-2024 to spend some of these reserves on a variety of capital projects, The precise expenditure and timing of the projects is kept under review, generally at meetings of the Finance and Policy Committee, as the information becomes available. At the time of writing the plan of record and most recent review took place in January 2023.

Adequate liquidity is required to ensure both that day to day activities can be funded and that the planned expenditure on the larger projects and grants can be met when this becomes due. At the same time it is desirable to ensure that an appropriate return on cash deposits is achieved. In general higher returns involve either higher risk, a restriction on withdrawals (compromising liquidity) or both.

This document sets out the general principles to be adopted by the Officers in managing the reserves.

3. Attitude to Risk and Preferred Investments

The Council adopts a risk-averse approach to investment. Investments may be made in:

- Cash deposits (including term deposits) with banks headquartered in the UK, subject, if practical, to a credit check
- Cash deposits (including term deposits) with UK Mutual Societies
- Government Bonds (Gilts)
- Public Sector Deposit Fund managed by COIF

The Council will not normally invest in

- Equities

² STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678866/Guidance_on_local_government_investments.pdf

- Corporate bonds
- Banks not headquartered in the UK or UK subsidiaries of banks not headquartered in the UK
- Other financial instruments

Within these parameters the Officers will seek to maximise returns, subject to maintaining adequate liquidity and having regard to likely future capital expenditure. The day-to-day management of the reserves and of the liquidity within these guidelines is delegated to the Chief Financial Officer in discussion with the Chief Executive Officer.

In addition to the above the Council may consider, on a case-by-case basis, investing in real estate where at least one of the following criteria are met

- the estate in question has an amenity value
- the estate has strategic value in connection with Council activities or possible future activities
- the estate has a high probability of providing a steady source of income, a tolerably low probability of decline in capital value and the funds will not be needed in the foreseeable future for other projects.

Any decision to make such an investment will be considered by Council following a recommendation made by the Finance and Policy Committee. Unless Council has signalled its intent to make such an investment, Officers will not be ensure that liquid funds are available at any point in time for this purpose.

At the time of writing the consequence of this policy is that the majority of the surplus cash will be invested in a mix of term deposits and instant access (or near instant access accounts) including, where available, accounts which pay a higher rate of interest on an introductory or short term basis as well as one or more current or 'call' accounts. Active management of the balances of the various accounts, supplemented by automatic transfers between accounts where such facilities exist, ensures that adequate funds are available for day to day activities.

4. Risk Assessment

The principal risks of this policy are:

Default by the institution on repayment of capital.

This risk is considered acceptably small given the choice of investment vehicles and the likelihood that, in the event of insolvency by a major UK bank, the UK government would be forced to provide financial support.

Inadequate funds in current accounts to meet working needs

This risk is minimised by active monitoring of balances undertaken by the finance team. It is further reduced by the option, albeit at a cost, to withdraw monies in certain term accounts before the expiry of the term. Together these measures reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Erosion of real value of the cash assets

If the rate of inflation exceeds the rate of interest the real value of cash assets erodes.

The council considers that, while undesirable, the erosion of real value is a price which must be paid, in certain economic circumstances (including those existing at the time of review), for the security which the risk averse approach provides..

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years on or around the anniversary of its issue. It may be reviewed at other times in the event of an actual or projected material shift in the financial circumstances of the Council or of the investment environment.



E. GRANTS

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
2009		Historical Policy
1.0	25 June 2012	Reviewed by F&GP Committee on 29th October and Recommended for adoption by Council (with modifications)
1.1	3 December 2012	V1.0 with modifications as requested by F&GP Committee
1.2	10 December 2012	Approved by Town Council
1.3	28 April 2014	Approved by Town Council
1.4	20 July 2020	Approved by F&P Committee
1.5	5 October 2020	Approved by Town Council
1.6	14 December 2020	Policy Amendments Approved by Town Council
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Introduction

Bishop's Stortford Town Council currently has a commitment to offer grants to a wide variety of organisations that demonstrate good value for money and help to develop or maintain opportunities for the residents of Bishop's Stortford

The aim of the grants is to support projects that show a clear benefit to the residents of the Town.

2. Policy Statement

Community Grants will be awarded to support and encourage a diverse range of community activities across all age ranges, a wide range of interests, initiatives and events that help to meet the needs of the residents of Bishop's Stortford. In determining applications, the Council will give particular consideration as to how each proposal helps to meet the Council's objectives for the Town.

3. Guidelines and Criteria

Grants will normally be given only to:

- Voluntary, charitable organisations or not for profit organisations, based in or serving the area of the civil parish of Bishop's Stortford
- Individuals resident in or around Bishop's Stortford where the grant is for charitable or educational purposes and for the benefit of the residents of the civil parish of Bishop's Stortford

Grants will not be awarded to National Charities unless it can be demonstrated that the local branch will benefit directly. Written evidence must be provided.

Grants may be made:

- for capital purchases, in which case no more than one application may be made per project
- for one-off projects (which may include a combination of revenue and capital items), in which case no more than one application may be made per project
- for revenue support, in which case no more than one successful application may be made by any organisation (or group of related organisations) in any three year period.

In exceptional cases only, the Council will consider requests for recurring revenue support from organisations which play a lasting and central role in the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives.

In the event that recurring support is granted the Council will normally reserve the right to withdraw support at the time of annual renewal or will apply alternative notice terms which will be specified on a case by case basis.

The Council will not normally provide grants for:

- services that should be funded by other statutory authorities
- political purposes
- to supplement any shortfall in expenditure incurred by another authority with responsibility for the service involved.

All applicants must submit:

- An application on the prescribed grant application form (including a one page summary of your project as specified on the application form)
- evidence that the project or endeavour for which a grant is sought is financially viable
- evidence that there is a real financial need for the grant including an explanation of why it is not practical to self-fund the project and a bank statement/statements (or summary of current cash position) not less than 3 months old
- (for organisational applicants only) accounts for the most recent financial year which should show that the finances are well managed and the organisation as a whole is financially viable.

Applications which do not conform to the above requirements will be returned without consideration. Applicants will be disqualified if they submit non-conforming applications on more than one occasion. ('the above requirements' referred to in this recommendation is the documentation which applicants for grants must submit).

Applications will be considered by the Full Council at ordinary meetings of Council. The Council cannot guarantee a grant to any organisation or individual. Each grant application is considered on its individual merits.

The Council will normally expect to distribute grants to a variety of organisations, this may mean a smaller amount is awarded than that applied for. The Council reserves the right to decline any application or to apply conditions to the grant.

The Council will require all organisations to provide a formal acknowledgement of receiving grant aid. In the case of individuals, the Council will require a report of the project or other agreed method of verifying the use for which application of grant was made.

When a grant is awarded, the Council also reserves the right to reclaim part or the entire grant if it is not satisfied that it has been spent in accordance with the application and/or conditions applied by the Council. It will only take this action after giving the organisation or individual any opportunity to make representations.

Effective from 1st April 2021, Town Council funds available for ad-hoc grants be donated each year to the Brazier Trust for charitable purposes for the general benefit of the inhabitants of Bishop's Stortford (i.e. in accordance with the powers of the Trust). It was NOTED that 'charitable purposes' are defined in statute and this does not restrict recipients to registered charities.



F. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
1.0	1 July 2012	Adopted following Localism Act 2011
2.0	5 th October 2021	Based on LGA model code of conduct
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

Joint statement

The role of councillor across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. It is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. Our conduct as an individual councillor affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to. We also want individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to be putting themselves forward to become councillors.

As councillors, we represent local residents, work to develop better services and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area; taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.

Importantly, we should be able to undertake our role as a councillor without being intimidated, abused, bullied or threatened by anyone, including the general public.

This Code has been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

Introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed this Model Councillor Code of Conduct, in association with key partners and after extensive consultation with the sector, as part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. It is a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments.

All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct.

The LGA will undertake an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to town and parish councils.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a "councillor" means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A "co-opted member" is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as "a person who is not a member of the authority but who

- a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
- b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint subcommittee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee".

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, "local authority" includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The LGA encourages the use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the Nolan Principles.

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and parish councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.

Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor-officer protocol.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the council

As a councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 I do not disclose information:

- a. given to me in confidence by anyone
- b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless
 - i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;
 - ii. I am required by law to do so;
 - iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - iv. the disclosure is:
 - 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and
 - 3. I have consulted the Chief Executive Officer prior to its release.

4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse council resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local or authorising their use by others:

- a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and**
- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.**

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.

Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers
- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

8.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.

8.2 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

8.3 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.

8.4 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its

governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with the Chief Executive Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. A system for registration will be established by the Chief Executive Officer who will also forward registered interests to the Monitoring Officer. Members will be asked to re-submit their registration annually or thereabouts however this will not exempt members from registering new interests as required by the Localism Act or other applicable legislation.

You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in **Table 1**, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor:

- 10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.**
- 10.2 I register with the Chief Executive Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.**
- 10.3 I register with the Chief Executive Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.**

In addition you will be required to make an annual declaration (which may be 'none'). This system will be organised by the Chief Executive Officer and will occur at the same time as the annual re-registration of interests.

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

Appendices

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B Registering interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Chief Executive Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in “The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012”. You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

“**Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**” means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

“**Partner**” means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Chief Executive Officer.
2. A ‘sensitive interest’ is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a ‘sensitive interest’ you must notify the District Council's Monitoring Officer and the Chief Executive Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

5. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
 - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative, close associate; or
 - c. a body included in those you need to disclose under Other Registerable Interests as set out in **Table 2**you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied
8. Where a matter **affects** your financial interest or well-being:
 - a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

9. Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must make sure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of your interest.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.

Subject	Description
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where—

	<p>(a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>
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* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:

- a) any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- b) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) any body directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

Appendix C – the Committee on Standards in Public Life

The LGA has undertaken this review whilst the Government continues to consider the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in their report on [Local Government Ethical Standards](#). If the Government chooses to implement any of the recommendations, this could require a change to this Code.

The recommendations cover:

- Recommendations for changes to the Localism Act 2011 to clarify in law when the Code of Conduct applies
- The introduction of sanctions
- An appeals process through the Local Government Ombudsman
- Changes to the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
- Updates to the Local Government Transparency Code
- Changes to the role and responsibilities of the Independent Person
- That the criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished

The Local Government Ethical Standards report also includes Best Practice recommendations. These are:

Best practice 1: Local authorities should include prohibitions on bullying and harassment in codes of conduct. These should include a definition of bullying and harassment, supplemented with a list of examples of the sort of behaviour covered by such a definition.

Best practice 2: Councils should include provisions in their code of conduct requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors.

Best practice 3: Principal authorities should review their code of conduct each year and regularly seek, where possible, the views of the public, community organisations and neighbouring authorities.

Best practice 4: An authority's code should be readily accessible to both councillors and the public, in a prominent position on a council's website and available in council premises.

Best practice 5: Local authorities should update their gifts and hospitality register at least once per quarter, and publish it in an accessible format, such as CSV.

Best practice 6: Councils should publish a clear and straightforward public interest test against which allegations are filtered.

Best practice 7: Local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons.

Best practice 8: An Independent Person should be consulted as to whether to undertake a formal investigation on an allegation, and should be given the option to review and comment on allegations which the responsible officer is minded to dismiss as being without merit, vexatious, or trivial.

Best practice 9: Where a local authority makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following a formal investigation, a decision notice should be published as soon as possible on its website, including a brief statement of facts, the provisions of the code engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the reasoning of the decision-maker, and any sanction applied.

Best practice 10: A local authority should have straightforward and accessible guidance on its website on how to make a complaint under the code of conduct, the process for handling complaints, and estimated timescales for investigations and outcomes.

Best practice 11: Formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk should be made by the chair or by the parish council, rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances.

Best practice 12: Monitoring Officers' roles should include providing advice, support and management of investigations and adjudications on alleged breaches to parish councils within the remit of the principal authority. They should be provided with adequate training, corporate support and resources to undertake this work.

Best practice 13: A local authority should have procedures in place to address any conflicts of interest when undertaking a standards investigation. Possible steps should include asking the Monitoring Officer from a different authority to undertake the investigation.

Best practice 14: Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.

Best practice 15: Senior officers should meet regularly with political group leaders or group whips to discuss standards issues.

The LGA has committed to reviewing the Code on an annual basis to ensure it is still fit for purpose.



G. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
1.0	27 September 2016	Adopted by Council 26 th September 2016
1.0	Reviewed 5 th October 2021	No changes made
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Introduction

Transparency is essential to the integrity of local government and therefore it is important that, when the Council enters into contracts or other relationships, any interests which members or employees may have which might prejudice the Council's relationship are known. Members are required by law to publish certain interests set out in the Code of Conduct above. The Council also has established a policy for Gifts and Hospitality which, in most cases, must be declared in a book dedicated for the purpose. Broadly similar rules, set out in the Staff Handbook, also apply to employees.

2. Policy

Members should discourage offers of gifts or hospitality but may accept:

1. offers of gifts or hospitality with a value not exceeding £20 (in any one civic year from any one organisation/person) but not where a procurement or policy decision affecting the donor is, to the knowledge of the person accepting the gift, likely to be made within six months of the date on which the gift is received
2. hospitality offered in association with a legitimate business meeting at the time when a meal or other refreshment would otherwise be taken
3. gifts or hospitality offered also to the general public

In addition

4. The Mayor (or person deputising for the Mayor) may accept hospitality to any value offered in association with an event which he/she is attending in an official capacity

In the event that a gift falling outside these parameters is offered and the donor will not 'take no for an answer' employees or members may accept it with a statement provided that it is subsequently donated to charity and the donor is informed accordingly.

ALL gifts or hospitality received by members exceeding £5 must be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality with the following exceptions:

- a. Gifts/hospitality falling wholly within category 2
- b. In the case of the Mayor only, hospitality to a value not exceeding £75 offered in association with an event which he/she is attending in an official capacity



H. COMPLAINTS

0. Amendment History

Version	Issued	Notes
Draft 0.9	July 2011	For review by F&GP
Draft 0.95	September 2011	Amended following comments from F&GP
Issue 1.0	September 2011	Approved 19 September 2011
Draft 2.0	October 2014	Revised version for review
Issue 2.1	November 2014	Approved 15 December 2014
Issue 3.0	December 2017	Adopted 18 December 2017
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Introduction

The Town Council provides many services to community groups, sports teams, companies and individuals. We try to get our service delivery right every time, but there are occasions when users of our services maybe dissatisfied with an aspect of our performance. This policy sets out how to raise a complaint with the Town Council.

The policy applies to

- services provided by the Council or the behaviour of staff employed by the Council
- the behaviour of individual or groups of Councillors

It does not apply to general complaints about the town. These should be made through the various other channels available and would normally be handled by members or officers of the appropriate Council as a part of their role. Nor does it apply to complaints about decisions made by Councillors during the course of formal Council meetings. Such complaints may be made in writing but will be considered only at the absolute discretion of the Council.

2. Confidentiality

All complaints made according to this policy will be treated as confidential both by Officers of the Council and by Councillors. Details of the complaint and the complainant and those involved in the complaint will be disclosed only to those who have a need to know as part of any investigation of or resolution to the complaint.

3. Informal Complaint

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route.

Informal complaints can be made by telephone, letter, email or a visit to the Council offices. The complaint will be handled by the most appropriate member of staff, depending on the nature of the complaint. The Chief Executive Officer will be kept informed of the handling of the complaint and its resolution.

Complaints should always be directed through the Council offices. Complaints made to individual Councillors (or groups of councillors) will be acknowledged and recorded by the Councillor and passed to the office for handling according to this procedure.

Experience shows that the overwhelming majority of complaints can be resolved through this informal route. However, the Council appreciates that on occasions if an informal approach has not resolved the complaint, or that the initial complaint is so serious, then the formal complaints process should be followed.

4. Formal Complaints – General

4.1 Complaint Management and Nominated Investigator

The Chief Executive Officer to the Council is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. The investigation of any given complaint will be handled by a nominated investigator. The nominated investigator will be as follows:

In the case of a complaint against a member or any member of staff, The Chief Executive Officer or such person as the Chief Executive Officer may, at his/her sole discretion, designate

In the case of a complaint against the Chief Executive Officer, the Mayor

In the case of a complaint against a member, the Chief Executive Officer (however note that his/her role is limited in this case to facilitation of the process and the establishment of the facts – see section 6)

The process for dealing with complaints against the Council (acting as a corporate body) and/or its officer(s) differs from the process for dealing with complaints against one or more councillors. The respective processes are described in sections 5 and 6 below. If a prospective complainant has any doubt which applies, they may seek guidance from the Chief Executive Officer.

4.2 Criteria for Consideration of Complaints

The Council has an obligation to use its resources efficiently in the interests of its parishioners. Whilst all complaints are taken seriously, the Council may decline to consider complaints falling into certain categories if it appears that to do so would be contrary to the public interest and/or represent a significant waste of public resources. Complaints will not normally be investigated in the following circumstances:

1. The complaint appears to be motivated principally by malice or deliberate wasting of officer/member time, “tit-for-tat” or politically motivated
2. It appears that there can be no relevant breach of generally acceptable standards of conduct and/or the Members Code of Conduct (as applicable), for example, that it relates to the private life of an individual
3. The complaint is about dissatisfaction with a decision made by full Council or a committee of Council duly recorded in minutes, unless it is alleged that the decision in question is discriminatory or unlawful
4. It is about the behaviour of someone who is no longer an officer or member. This will not however exclude complaints about the consequences of decisions made someone who is no longer an officer or member.
5. The complainant has provided insufficient information adequately to consider the complaint
6. The complaint has been received more than 2 months after the alleged incident (or the date on which the alleged incident became apparent if later) unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. allegation of bullying, harassment etc. or some other exceptional reason why the complaint could not have been brought within 2 months.
7. The same, or similar, complaint has already been investigated and there is nothing further to be gained by a new investigation
8. It is an anonymous complaint, unless it is clearly in the public interest to examine it and there is adequate evidence available
9. Where the Officer or Member complained of has apologised and/or admitted making an error and the matter would not warrant a more serious sanction and/or compensation
10. The complaint is not sufficiently serious to warrant investigation
11. The complaint is about the process by which a complaint was handled or about the outcome (this should be pursued through the appeals process)

The decision to reject a complaint will rest with the Chief Executive Officer (or in the case of a complaint against the Chief Executive Officer, with the Mayor) and may be made at any time during the consideration of a complaint. The rationale for rejecting the complaint will be clearly set out in writing.

A complainant may appeal a decision to decline consideration of a complaint. The appeal will be heard by the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee according to the summary process set out below.

If the Committee upholds the appeal then the decision to reject it will be set aside and complaint will be fully investigated by the in accordance with the complaints process

If the committee rejects the appeal then the complainant will be notified and no further action will be taken. The complainant will not be permitted to make any further complaint in relation to the same incident or series of incidents and the Council and/or its officer may decline to enter into further correspondence on matters related to the complaint.

4.3 Timings for Dealing with Complaints

The Town Council will try to adhere to the timings outlined in this policy, but in the case of a complex complaint, or the absence of a member of staff who is involved in the complaint, may mean that the timings have to vary.

Should this occur then the complainant will be kept advised of the revised timescales.

5. Formal Complaints about Services Provided by the Council

This section applies to complaints about services provided by the Council. It also applies to complaints about the behaviour of staff employed by the Council when acting in an official capacity

5.1 Finality of Submission

The required detail as set out above should, other than in exceptional circumstances, be submitted within two weeks of the initial notification of a formal complaint.

The complainant may be asked to confirm when all information has been submitted. In the absence of such confirmation the nominated investigator will be entitled to advise, with no less than one weeks' notice, a deadline for submission. This must be no less than 2 weeks after initial notification of the complaint. Once the deadline is passed the complainant will not normally be permitted to introduce new evidence.

The Council will not be obliged to consider any complaint until either the complainant advises that he/she has submitted all evidence he/she wishes to submit or the deadline for submission notified by the nominated investigator has expired.

5.2 Investigation and Determination

The nominated investigator will carry out an investigation into the complaint. During the course of the investigation he/she will make such enquiries of the complainant, the subject of the complaint and others as he/she reasonably sees fit however it will remain the responsibility of the complainant to produce evidence in support of the complaint.

In considering the complaint the investigator will be entitled to have regard to the differing standards expected according to circumstances. For example transactions of a 'business to business' nature may be considered against criteria which differ in some respects to those which apply when the Council is dealing with an individual as a parishioner.

The nominated investigator may suggest a resolution alternative to that suggested by the complainant or discuss a resolution with the complainant. If agreement can be reached on the resolution the matter will be closed.

In the absence of agreement on a resolution the nominated investigator will provide a written determination setting out the decision made on the merit of the complaint (and, if appropriate, the nature of any proposed resolution) as well as the rationale in support of that decision. Normally this will be within ten working days however if the CEO, relevant members of staff, the complainant or other key individuals are absent for any reason or the investigation is particularly complex the investigation may take up to one month.

If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed.

5.3 Appeal Against Determination of Complaint

Making an Appeal

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint then he/she has recourse to appeal. Appeals will be heard by the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee. This has delegated authority from the Town Council to review and decide on complaints against the Council and a decision made by the committee is final.

In order to appeal the determination of a complaint and/or the resolution proposed by the nominated investigator the appellant must set out, in writing, the grounds for appeal. These must be specific, it is not sufficient for the complainant simply to state that he/she disagrees with the determination. For example:

if the appeal is against the decision on the merits of the complaint then the appellant must set out clearly why he/she considers that the rationale given in the determination by the nominated investigator is not valid.

if the appeal is against the proposed resolution then the complainant must set out what alternative resolution is proposed and why this is reasonable having regard to the nature of the complaint.

if the appeal is on the grounds of failure to follow process the complainant must set out the nature of the failure and explain in what way the outcome was materially affected by the failure.

Appeals must be made within four weeks of the issue of the written determination at first instance; appeals made outside this timescale will be disallowed.

At this stage the appellant is not required to submit evidence in support of his/her arguments, however they must outline the arguments as set out above.

The nominated investigator will consider whether the complainant has met these requirements. There will be a presumption in favour of allowing an appeal, however if the nominated investigator reasonably considers that the grounds for appeal have not been clearly or adequately stated in accordance with the above then he/she may deny leave to appeal. The applicant may contest the decision to deny leave to appeal and if he/she does so then the Complaints (Appeals) Committee will determine in summary session whether or not leave to appeal is to be granted. If leave is granted by the Committee then the appeal process will proceed as if leave to appeal had not initially been denied.

Exchange of Evidence

Not less than seven clear working days before the meeting of the Committee the complainant will provide the Town Council with copies of all documentation, or other evidence (such as photographs) that they intend to introduce to the meeting in support of their appeal. The Town Council will provide to the complainant any further evidence it intends to rely on in support of its determination

The Appellant may not, other than in exceptional circumstances, introduce evidence pertaining to the substantive complaint which was not produced at the time of the initial determination unless it was not reasonably practical to do so. The Committee may, at its sole discretion, strike out such evidence if it is produced. Failure to produce evidence for the initial determination will not constitute a reason for admitting evidence at appeal.

Hearing Preliminaries

Three members of the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee will review an appeal. This will ensure the panel is quorate and that the number of members present is not excessive. The Committee is subject to all of the normal meeting notification, agenda and minute requirements, as laid down in the Town Council's Standing Orders.

The whole committee or a subset may, at their discretion, hold a separate meeting prior to the hearing to consider matters of procedure or other matters aside from the substantive appeal.

The Committee members hearing the appeal will endeavour to agree a meeting date and time which is convenient the appeal and when the necessary staff are available. In the event that a mutually

agreeable date cannot be found which is within six weeks of receipt of grounds of appeal (or such longer timescale as the Committee may, at its sole discretion, determine), the Committee may set a date giving not less than two weeks' notice.

Meetings will be held at the Town Council Offices commencing between 9am and 7pm unless otherwise determined by the Committee.

The Hearing Meeting

(a) .As far as possible the Council carries out its business in public, matters that involve individual identified members of staff, may require the exclusion of the press and public. The Committee shall consider whether the circumstances are such that this is the case.

(b) The Chair of the Committee shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure to be used in order to consider the complaint made. The meeting should be as informal and friendly as possible, without prejudicing the need to consider properly the matter under discussion.

(c) The Committee will review the written material presented

(d) The parties will be given the opportunity to make representations:

- The appellant (or representative) will be invited to outline the grounds for appeal and panel members given the opportunity to ask any question of the complainant.
- If relevant, the Chief Executive Officer (or other appropriate Officer) will explain the Council's position and panel members shall ask any questions of the Chief Executive Officer, the appellant and such other persons as they see fit.
- The appellant is to be offered the opportunity of a last word as a means of summing up their position.
- The Chief Executive Officer is to be offered the opportunity of a last word as a means of summing up their position.

(e) The Committee may decide that a recess and/or further meeting is required before a determination can take place, to gather more evidence or for any other reason.

(f) The Committee may decide both to make and to communicate a decision at the meeting, or to communicate the decision via a written judgement to be issued at a later date.

(g) The Chief Executive Officer and complainant will be asked to leave the room while Committee members decide the appeal. The Committee may ask that they remain available in case points of clarification are necessary, (in which case both parties should be invited back for questioning) or advise that they are free to depart on the basis that a written judgement will be issued.

If judgement is to be issued at the meeting both parties will be asked to return to hear the decision.

(h) The Committee will issue a determination at the meeting or subsequently in writing and, if appropriate a proposed resolution. This shall be final.

5.4 Summary Hearings of the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee

Certain matters set out above will be determined by the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee committee in a summary hearing. These are as follows:

- Appeal against the rejection of a complaint under section 4.2
- Appeal against the decision to refuse leave to appeal under section 5.3

A summary matter will be determined by three members of the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee and unless that Committee determines otherwise the decision will be on the basis of written evidence only.

Not less than seven clear working days before the meeting of the Committee the complainant will provide the Town Council with a written rationale for appealing the rejection/refusal of leave to appeal which should respond to the reasons for refusal notified by the Council.

5.5 Impact on Council Staff

A formal complaint is a serious matter. A complaint against a member of the Council's staff could result in disciplinary action; or in cases of gross misconduct dismissal from the Council's employment.

The Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee is not authorised to impose any sanction on members of Staff. This is, in all cases, a matter for the Council's formal disciplinary procedure.

The Council will not under any circumstances enter into any correspondence, or discussion, with any complainant about any action taken, formally or informally against any member of its staff. This is expressly to protect the employment rights to which all employees of the Council are entitled.

6. Formal Complaints about the Behaviour of Councillors

6.1 Introduction and Submission

This section applies to complaints about the behaviour of an individual Councillor or group of Councillors. The Chief Executive Officer to the Council is responsible for managing the formal process from complaints against members in association with the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor if the Mayor is the subject of the complaint.

Councillors are bound by a Code of Conduct which is approved by Council and is the minimum standard of behaviour which the Council expects from its members. Complaints will be judged on their merits having due regard to the code of conduct.

A formal complaint can either

- be submitted in writing to the Council offices, it should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, marked "Confidential". Alternatively the complaint may be sent by email to the Chief Executive Officer whose contact details are on the Town Council Website.
- Be submitted in writing to the monitoring officer at East Herts District Council who have obligations to investigate certain complaints against Town and Parish Councillors

The following details the process which Bishop's Stortford Town Council will use to investigate a complaint. Complaints submitted to East Herts District Council will be investigated in accordance with their process.

The complaint should cover as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant supporting documentation.

6.2 Investigation of Facts

The Chief Executive Officer will advise the Member(s) against whom a complaint has been made and may make reasonable enquiries to clarify salient facts. Normally this will be within ten working days however if the CEO or relevant individuals are absent for any reason or the investigation it may take up to one month or longer if further information is required from the complainant.

6.3 Meeting of the Parties

The Mayor (or Deputy Mayor if the Mayor is a party to the complaint) and the Chief Executive Officer will call a meeting of the complainant and the member or member concerned and, at their sole discretion, such other individuals as are relevant to the case.

At the meeting the parties will present their dispute and will endeavour to resolve the matter.

The Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer may recommend such further action as they deem fit with the objective of reaching a consensual resolution. In the event that a consensual resolution is reached then the matter is closed

6.4 Investigation and Determination in the Absence of Consensual Resolution

In the event that no consensual resolution is reached and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further then a formal investigation will be carried out to determine whether a breach of the members' code of conduct has occurred.

The Chief Executive Officer, or other appropriate officer, or if appropriate, an independent person will carry out a full investigation of the facts and produce a report which both parties will be offered the opportunity to comment on.

A meeting of the Complaints and Disciplinary Committee will be held at which the report of the Chief Executive Officer will be reviewed. The Committee will be supported by an independent person and may interview the complainant, the respondent(s) and such other individuals as they deem fit.

If present the parties will be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not a breach of the code of conduct has occurred. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties should be invited back.

In any case both parties will be asked to return to hear the decision, or to be advised when the decision will be made.

The Committee will issue a determination and, if it considers that a breach has occurred may order that a sanction be imposed or recommend to council the imposition of a sanction (see below).

6.5 Appeal

Either party may appeal against:

- The determination of whether a breach of the code of conduct has occurred (other than where a determination has been made by EHDC)
- The sanction (if any) imposed by the Town Council

Appeals must be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer within fourteen calendar days of the determination and must state the rationale for the appeal. The Chief Executive Officer will advise the other party of the appeal and offer them the opportunity to prepare a written response.

The appeal will be heard by the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee who will consider only those matters against which the appeal has been made. The Committee will review the argument made by the appellant and the response and may, but is not obliged to, interview the parties. The parties are therefore advised to make their arguments clear in the written submissions.

The Committee will issue a determination. There will be no further internal appeal.

6.6 Sanctions

The range of sanctions available against members is limited and in particular the Council has no right to suspend members. The following sanctions may be considered by the determining Committee:

- A formal letter to the member(s) found to have breached the code;
- Appropriate communication if required
- A recommendation to Council that the member(s) be formally censured by motion;
- A recommendation to Council that the member(s) be removed from one or more committee(s) (but not full Council) subject to statutory and constitutional requirements (note that the Council cannot prevent members from attending Committee meetings)

6.7 Referral to East Herts District Council

A complainant may at any point in the proceedings refer any alleged breach of the members' code of conduct for investigation by East Herts District Council. It should be noted, however, that East Herts District Council may at their option decline to investigate or may refer the matter back to the Town Council if the Town Council's procedure has been bypassed.

If a referral is made or if at any time, the Town Council becomes aware that the complaint is also being considered by the Monitoring Officer of East Herts District Council, the Chief Executive Officer may suspend further consideration of the complaint pending the outcome of the investigation by EHDC.

The determination by EHDC will, unless circumstances dictate otherwise, be taken as definitive by the Complaints and Disciplinary Committee which will consider (if appropriate) the question of sanctions only, having regard to any sanction imposed or recommended by EHDC.



I. BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
Issue 1	7 October 2015	Adopted 20 July 2015
Issue 2021.1	5 th October 2021	Minor amendments
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Introduction

The business continuity plan sets out in outline what will occur should a major incident occur resulting in the loss of the whole (or a major part of) a site or which results in a situation where significant numbers of staff members are unavailable for work.

Due to the wide variety of circumstances in which the BCP could be triggered it is not practical to set out precisely the steps which would need to be taken. These will be determined by those responsible for the recovery. This outline focusses instead on priorities and general principles of the recovery process.

2. The Business

Bishop's Stortford Town Council delivers a variety of services to the public. It also delivers financial and facility management services to community centre trusts, the Bishop's Stortford Community Transport, Bishop's Stortford Museum and Arts CIO, and to Windhill House Limited. In addition the Council operates Bishop's Stortford's street market and supplies certain economic development services under contract to the District Council. Finally the offices at the Monastery accommodate a number of small businesses who are tenants of the Council.

The core business is delivered by the staff under the general direction of the members who meet regularly to decide policy matters. In addition, every three weeks, the Planning Committee, comprising a subset of members, meets to review planning applications and make representations to the District Council.

3. General Principles of Recovery

The general principles of the recovery process will be to prioritize, in the following order:

- Actions to deal with injuries or threat to staff, members or others.
- Actions (where safe) which seek to minimise the impact on property
- Actions to restore public facing services which are both important and time critical
- Actions to restore other public facing services
- Actions which restore internal services (e.g. financial accounting)
- Actions to restore strategic planning/decision making

Public facing services and statutory requirements are to be prioritized in the following order:

- Cemetery services
- Major events already announced to the public
- Telephone and email response to customer queries
- Market
- Venue hire and minibuses
- Tourist Information Centre
- Contractual services to tenants and others
- Review of planning applications
- Council meetings other than those required by statute and meetings at which planning applications are reviewed
- All other services and activities

4. Resources

4.1 Resources Required

To restore services in full the following resources will be required

- All staff (or substitute personnel)
- Adequate office accommodation to accommodate staff
- Functional computers with internet connection for all members of staff other than the maintenance staff
- Access to records, mostly electronic but some paper records are required
- Telephony (both external and intercom between staff)
- At least 2 vehicles

The majority, but not all, of the services offered by the Council are not time critical and none are essential for survival. A period of between 3 weeks and one month would be reasonable to restore full service although some services must be restored within 48 hours or less to avoid significant inconvenience to a limited number of people.

4.2 Alternative Resources Available

Staff

The following options are potentially available:

- Agency Staff
- Increased hours working of existing staff (particularly part time staff)
- Former employees

Accommodation

Space is tight at all three Council sites however the following options can provide limited accommodation:

- At the monastery: chamber/meeting room suite
- At the TIC: Accommodation for 3-4 desks could be provided by suspending retail operations
- At the Cemetery: mess room could be converted to provide emergency accommodation

With the exception of the Council chamber, which might be used with limited inconvenience for an extended period of time, these would be for short term use (<2 months) only.

The following sites could also be considered, although the availability of space is not guaranteed and will need to be determined at the time:

- Markwell Pavilion
- Apton Day Centre
- Community Centres
- Staff private houses
- South Mill Arts
- Third party accommodation.

In addition other local authorities, most notably East Herts District Council, may also be able to assist.

Computers

Staff private computers may be usable for activities performed 'in the cloud' however they are not practical for activities needing connection to the BSTC file server. Practically the purchase of new computers is almost certainly the best option

Telephony

Staff work and private³ mobiles could be used in the short time. Alternatively the purchase of pay as you go sims could be considered as short term options. Connecting an analogue telephone (purchased locally e.g. from Argos) to the available broadband lines is the simplest way to restore a basic telephony service in most cases.

Records

Computer records are backed up and an outline of the recovery procedure is set out below.

The only alternative to paper records is computer based copies of the same information where these exist. In some cases computer copies do not exist. This will have no short term impact however will need to be considered as part of the long term recovery plan.

Vehicles

It is unlikely that all council vehicles would be lost simultaneously.

4.3 Essential Departments and External Suppliers

The only external suppliers which are both not readily replaced and which play a time-critical role in the daily routines are (at the time of writing)

Guru Internet (web hosting)
Heart Internet (Domain hosting)
Microsoft (email hosting)
Konica Minolta (printing supplies)
T2K (Telephony service and PABX maintenance)
TalkTalk (Broadband)

5. The Response

5.1 Initial Response

The objective of the initial response period is to deal with any matters affecting human safety and to establish a safe, stable situation. This phase is expected to last between two and forty-eight hours.

The initial response will be coordinated by
The Chief Executive Officer
The Cemetery and Maintenance manager
The Tourism and Events Manager
The Chief Financial Officer

These individuals will establish a command centre at the Monastery (if available) or the Tourist Information Centre. The command centre location will be closed to the public for the duration of the first response period, and for such time thereafter as is necessary for the effective working of the response team.

The Chief Executive Officer will coordinate overall. In his/her absence the team will elect an individual from their number to coordinate or the team may request the Mayor, leader or another member of Council to coordinate (if they are willing)

The members of the co-ordination team will individually log any key decisions in case these are required in evidence (e.g. for insurers or the police) at a later date.

The following individuals will have responsibilities listed:

³ Subject to agreement with staff who should not be pressurised. Many staff are sensitive about disclosing their private mobile and telephone numbers so these should not be relied upon

Deal with any Medical Emergencies or other Factors imminently affecting Health and Safety

Responsibility: Cemetery and Maintenance Manager, backup Tourism and Events manager

The objective is to ensure all persons in the vicinity or affected by the incident are safe and accounted for, and are receiving any necessary medical attention

Where necessary the Cemetery and Maintenance Manager will instruct staff to assist with anyone with injuries, disabilities or limited mobility.

Initial Communication to Public via Website and other Channels.

Responsibility: Tourism and Events manager, backup Events Coordinator

The objective is to inform the public and relatives/friends of any person injured what has happened, what is expected to occur in the next 48 hours and how to make contact in case of urgency.

Establish Mechanisms for Communication with all Staff Having Regard to the Remaining Communications Infrastructure, including While off Site

Responsibility: Chief Financial Officer

The objective is to provide the necessary telephony and internet infrastructure to enable actions a) and b) to take place

Stabilise the situation

Once 1-3 have been completed the team will review the situation and take any action they deem necessary to establish a stable situation in preparation for phase 1 of the recovery process.

During the initial response period staff not affected by the incident will be expected to remain in place or in the relocation centre designated by the response team, unless advised to go elsewhere

Other than this document there is no prepared response pack.

Evacuation and First Aid

Affected premises will normally be fully evacuated in any disaster situation. First aid kits are available on all sites. The emergency services will be expected to deal with any first aid not covered by the first aid kits.

5.2 Recovery Process – Phase 1

Introduction

The objective of the recovery process will be to get a basic level of operational service up and running on the following time-critical customer facing services:

- Cemetery services
- Major events already announced to the public
- Telephone and email response to customer queries
- Venue hire, market and minibuses

It is expected that phase 1 will commence immediately after the initial phase is complete and may take up to ten working days, although the majority of functions should be running, at least in part, within three working days.

The major challenges in re-establishing service delivery are:

- Office space
- IT equipment
- Telephones

- Incoming telephone and broadband lines
- The pbx (private branch exchange – i.e. the councils local telephone system which directs incoming calls to the correct instrument, routes internal calls, handles voicemail etc.)
- Desktop computers loaded with the required software
- Provision of shared file and backup services

Office Space

In the event of loss of the monastery a temporary office will be established at the Tourist Information centre which will be closed to the public if necessary. Stock will be relocated elsewhere as necessary to provide space for additional desks. The mess room at the cemetery may also be used.

If only a part of the Monastery is lost it may be possible to relocate staff and facilities to the remaining part and this will be considered in preference to the use of the Tourist Information Centre

In the event of loss of either the Cemetery or the Tourist Information Centre the Monastery will be used as a backup, the chamber suite being used to provide temporary accommodation if necessary.

Telephones and Broadband

In the event of loss of the Monastery the Councils' main landline telephone services will also be lost at the TIC and the Cemetery (because the pbx is physically sited at the Monastery).

The following steps will take place unless otherwise determined by the incident team:

- i. The Telephone service provider (T2K at the time of writing) will be instructed to redirect incoming calls on all of the Councils operational landline numbers (including ddi numbers) to the line used for broadband at the TIC, into which an analogue phone will be plugged. The lead time for this is measured in minutes.
- ii. Staff making outgoing calls will be instructed to use mobile phones wherever possible, to keep the line available for incoming calls.

In the event of loss of either the Cemetery or the Tourist Information centre sites, the pbx maintainer T2K at the time of writing) will be instructed to reroute incoming calls (which would otherwise be switched by the Council pbx to these sites) to the Monastery. Alternatively the CEO can carry out this operation.

Desktop Computers and Software

It is expected that several desktop computers will need to be sourced and configured. Dell computers purchased from Misco (or whatever computers are generally purchased at the time) will be the first choice however if operational needs dictate alternative machines may be purchased locally.

Although Outlook is used on a day to day basis, access to email can be quickly established on an interim basis by using webmail.

The principal challenge will be configuring software. At the time of writing the following software is in use;

- Microsoft Server 2019
- Microsoft Office 2010 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access (& Access runtime), Publisher and Outlook

- RBS Omega accounting software
- Symantec Endpoint Protection (antivirus)
- Cobian backup
- Locally written Cemetery, Allotment and Planning databases

Images for all of these are kept on the main file server (and backed up periodically) and they can also be downloaded from the Internet.

The Finance officer (or, in the absence of the Finance Officer, the most IT literate person present) will be responsible for re-establishing computing infrastructure under the general direction of the CEO.

Shared file and Backup Services, print services

These are located at the TIC and the Monastery. The principal file server is at the Monastery and is backed up to the TIC. The machine at the TIC is identical to that at the Monastery and, with some reconfiguration, can serve the purpose. A windows application server running the finance system and several monitoring processes (which are not required on a real time basis) is located at the Monastery. The server is virtual running on Hyper-V. The whole server is backed up to the file server each day, and restoration to another Hyper-v platform is simple, requiring a couple of clicks and configuration of the .ip address (so that the ip address of the restored server matches that of the original). These processes have been tested.

The Chief Financial Officer will be responsible for establishing access to shared file, backup and print services.

5.3 Recovery Process – Phase 2a

Introduction

The objective of phase 2 will be the re-establishment of the following services

- Contractual services to tenants and others
- Tourist Information Centre (limited service)
- Review of planning applications
- Council meetings other than those required by statute and meetings at which planning applications are reviewed

Some compromises in the level or quality of service may need to be accepted for a period of between two weeks and two months.

The key challenges, in addition to those present in phase 1 are,

- Increased communications and staffing needs
- Bulk printing (for Council meetings)
- Meeting space
- Tenant accommodation space

Prior to the commencement of phase 2 of the recovery process an assessment will be made of the likely duration of outage of the lost accommodation. This will inform the choice of temporary location for services

The Council has limited insurance cover⁴ for business interruption which may be used to fund the inevitable costs incurred. Current financial regulations are adequate to allow the necessary emergency expenditure to the extent it is covered by insurance and a limited emergency expenditure not covered by insurance, without further reference to Council.

⁴ At the time of writing £50,000 additional expenditure and £24,000 loss of revenue. In addition the leased multifunction devices, fixtures, fittings and equipment are covered by insurance

Responsibilities will, unless otherwise directed by the Chief Executive Officer, be as follows:

Common Infrastructure

- Identifying temporary accommodation and meeting space – Cemetery And Maintenance manager
- Establishing and implementing a plan to deal with the accommodation needs of tenants – Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer
- Restoration of telephony services – Chief Financial Officer
- Transition from temporary file and backup to replacement file and backup – Chief Financial Officer with support of Chief Executive Officer

Service Delivery

Individual service delivery staff will be responsible for restoring the delivery of their own service

5.4 Recovery Process – Phase 2B

During this phase all remaining services will be re-established, albeit in a temporary location. Phases 2A and 2B may run concurrently, however the services in phase 2A will take priority

- Council meetings other than those required by statute and meetings at which planning applications are reviewed
- All other services and activities not included in phases 1-2A

The key challenges, in addition to those present in phase 1 are,

Restoration of bulk printing

Meeting facilities adequate for full Council

Retrieval of paper records lost during the incident

Restoration of full financial accounting

5.5 Normalisation – Phase 3

Phase 3 may not commence for some months or more after the completion of phase 2 and comprises normalisation, i.e. a return to a permanent location and operating environment.

This phase will be planned in the period between the completion of phase 2 and the commencement of phase 3.

This phase will be the plan for permanent recovery and full re-establishment of services.

As part of this phase of the plan the impact of any permanent loss of paper records which are not also backed up on computer will be considered.



J. WHISTLEBLOWING – CODE OF PRACTICE

0. Revision History

Version	Issued
Draft 1	26 April 2010
Amended	22 July 2013

1. Incorporation into Staff Handbook

The Whistleblowing policy has been incorporated into the Staff Handbook



K. LEADER OF COUNCIL – JOB DESCRIPTION

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
Version 1	20 April 2016	Job description as approved at the Town Council Meeting of 6 Feb 2012
2021.1	5 th October 2021	Minor changes
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. General

Neither the leader nor the Deputy Leader has any special power that is not available to ordinary members (this is a legal requirement); the leader works by influence

2. Relationship to the Public

The leader (and deputy leader) is expected to be 'highly visible' to the public but will have no civic ceremonial responsibilities (which are the province of the Mayor)

The Leader will be the political spokesperson for the Council on all policy matters; he/she will lead the Council's political representatives at major conferences (if any) and important deputations as necessary.

The Leader (and deputy leader) will partner with public officials, politicians, public & private agencies (both internal and external to the Council) for the greater good of the community.

The Leader (or deputy) will attend at meetings, external events to promote Council business and public relations generally within the wider community.

3. Relationship to Members

The leader will be the first line of control of any member who is behaving inappropriately towards colleagues or staff (thereafter the procedure laid out in Standing Order 7.9 will apply)

The Leader is the most senior Councillor politically. He/she leads the decision making process at Councillor level.

4. Relationship to Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Officer may use the Leader as a "sounding board" to gauge likely Councillor reaction.

The Leader is responsible for the appraisal of the Chief Officer, and is his/her line manager. The Mayor acts as the line of complaint by the Chief Officer about the Leader.

The Leader will liaise with the Chief Executive Officer on forward plans and matters of policy or strategic direction.

5. Election/Selection

The leader (and deputy leader) is elected at Annual Council Meeting, Council may, at the same time, elect a Deputy Leader. He/she will generally hold office for several years (e.g. one term of Council.), even though he/she is re-elected annually

The leader and/or Deputy leader may be replaced at any meeting of Full Council. Any proposal to replace shall be an agenda item.

6. Town Council Agenda, Relationship to Trusts

The Agenda for meetings of the Town Council will be drawn up in accordance with Standing Orders and the leader will have principal responsibility with the involvement of the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

Town Council meetings will be chaired by the Mayor

The Leader has no special role in relationship to any of the Trusts in which the Council is involved.

7. Other

The leader (and/or deputy leader) does not have to chair a committee nor is he/she debarred from so doing

Neither the Leader nor the Deputy Leader will be ex-officio voting members of Committees (which is the practice in some Councils)



L. GUIDANCE NOTES FOR THE MAYOR

0. REVISION HISTORY

Version	Issued	Notes
0.9 Draft	19/6/2014	
1.0 Draft for approval	13/4/2015	For review by Council
1.0	20/4/2015	Approved by Council
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. INTRODUCTION

These notes are produced for the guidance of the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor of Bishop's Stortford during their term of office. They are intended to be an addition to and not a substitute for the advice and assistance which is available from the Mayor's Secretary and the Chief Executive Officer. You will be provided with all possible support and assistance based on past experience and the close working relationship between the Town Mayor and officers.

2. APPOINTMENT AND ROLES

2.1 Title

Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 the Chair of a Town Council is entitled to the style of 'Town Mayor' and the Chair of the District Council to the style of 'Mayor'. Locally however there is no ambiguity since the term 'Mayor' is not used by the Chair of the District Council. As a result many local documents use the terms 'Town Mayor' and 'Mayor' interchangeably. Nevertheless invitations and other documents which have a wide distribution outside the Town should always use the correct style.

Henceforth in this document the terms 'Mayor' and 'Town Mayor' are used interchangeably to mean the Town Mayor.

2.2 The Town Mayor

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected by Members of the Council at the Annual Statutory meeting of the Full Town Council in May of each year.

The Mayor remains in office until immediately after the new Mayor is elected at the next Annual Statutory Meeting of the Council. In an election year the outgoing Mayor has a statutory duty to preside (until the new Mayor is elected) at the first meeting following the election, even if they are no longer a Councillor.

During the term of office, the Mayor should, as near as humanly possible, be impartial on controversial matters regardless of their own personal views. It can be particularly helpful in the chairing of the Council Meetings if the Mayor at the outset demonstrates that he/she intends to be impartial.

Difficulties can arise from time to time because many outside the Council do not understand the role of the Mayor and assume the office controls the Council and its workings. In addition some misunderstand the role and function of the Town Council. The Mayor should be sensitive to the possibility of such misunderstandings and deal with them appropriately.

2.3 The Deputy Town Mayor

The Deputy Town Mayor is also elected by Members of the Council at the Annual Statutory meeting of the Full Town Council in May of each year, immediately following receipt of the Mayor's declaration of acceptance of office

The Deputy Mayor is entitled to discharge all the functions of the Mayor if for any reason the Mayor is unable to act or the office of Mayor is vacant, and he/she will take the Chair at a Council meeting in the absence of the Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor should only attend functions as deputy to the Mayor when requested to do so, not in their own right. Invitations to functions should not be sent to a Deputy Mayor and any received should be passed to the Mayor's secretary who will in turn liaise with the Mayor.

2.4 Partners

The Town Mayor is referred to as 'Mayor' (or 'Town Mayor') whatever their gender. A female partner of the Mayor is usually referred to as "Mayoress", a male partner is usually referred to as "Consort", "Partner" or "Husband", depending on the preference of the Mayor.

The partner has no standing or executive powers, although the supporting role is fully appreciated. There will be occasions when the host of an event feels it appropriate to invite the Mayor only without a partner, or the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer. The Mayor should respect the host's wishes, and remember that it is the Mayor, and the Mayor alone, who represents the Council.

On occasions when the official Mayoress/Consort is not available to accompany the Mayor to the engagement, the Mayor may ask another person to accompany them to the engagement, i.e. a member of the Mayor's family, Councillor, Council Officer or a personal friend.

2.5 Former Mayors

Former Mayors have no formal role.

3. THE ROLES

3.1 Introduction

Although there is no formal job description and each holder will approach the task differently according to personality, interests and the time that can be made available, the Mayor has two distinct formal roles

- He/she is the Chair of full meetings of the Council
- He/she will take a prominent and leading role in the civic life of the Town. This will generally include representing the Council and attending a variety of functions as well as acting as host at Civic gatherings

In addition it has become the custom (although not strictly necessary) for the Mayor to lend support and raise money for charitable organizations of their choice.

3.2 Chair of Council Meetings

Most Mayors will have had experience of chairing Committee Meetings before they are required to chair a Council meeting. The principles are similar with an added level of formality. The Mayor should make sure that he/she has a good general knowledge of Standing Orders. While chairing he/she should be careful to avoid bias and be firm in giving rulings on points that arise during the meeting. Training is available – contact the Chief Executive Officer for assistance.

3.3 Attendance at Functions

There are no rigid rules about which invitations should be accepted and which refused, this is for the Mayor to decide. Some caution should be exercised having regard to the fact that he/she is representing the Council and is not attending as an individual. Attendance should not bring the Council into disrepute or show commercial or political bias.

Where there are clashes, acceptance would normally be on a 'first come first served' basis with preference given to events within the Town. However, should the Mayor have accepted an engagement outside of the Town, it would not normally be acceptable to cancel in favour of another engagement within the Town. The Deputy Mayor should attend in his/her place.

Procedures in relation to invitations and acceptance by the Mayor are well established and dealt with in writing by the Mayor's Secretary. If the Mayor judges it appropriate to attend but cannot accept an invitation, it would be normal practice for the Secretary to explain this and ask whether it is acceptable for the Deputy Mayor to attend, if available.

All hosts receive advice on receiving the Mayor and the usual protocol. The Mayor's Secretary will seek information on dress, whether the Mayor should be accompanied, and whether a speech is expected. Generally the system works well, but, occasionally hosts appear not to have understood or heeded the advice they have been given. Any lapses should be reported so that future embarrassment can be avoided.

The Mayor's Secretary will endeavour to ascertain and inform the Mayor when a speech is required. In practice, however, the Mayor is regularly called upon to give brief impromptu speeches at functions without warning, it's always best to be prepared.

If the Mayor needs any special assistance at an event or has special dietary requirements he/she should ensure that the Mayor's Secretary is given as much notice as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made with the host.

At functions, it is very often preferable that the Mayor should leave ahead of the last guests. On the other hand, the Mayor should not leave dinner (except by arrangement) before the last toast to the guests has been proposed and responded to.

In the event of cancelling attendance at a function due to ill health or unforeseen circumstances, it is important to give as much notice as possible to enable the Mayor's Secretary to make arrangements for a replacement, normally the Deputy Mayor, to attend and to inform the function organizer accordingly.

Advice is given to organizations that the Mayor has agreed to visit, but from time to time problems do occur and the Mayor is not afforded the courtesy that the office dictates. It is important that the dignity of the office is upheld, and if there are serious breaches of protocol they should be discussed with the Chief Executive Officer.

3.4 Charity Events

It is the prerogative of the Mayor to decide whether to include a fund-raising element to their role and if so which charity/charities to support. The chosen charity/charities should have some local significance. A Mayor's Charity bank account exists to support this element of the role and the Finance Officer can advise on its use.

Confusion can arise over the level of support provided by the Council to the Mayor's charity activities and the following guidelines are intended to clarify.

- The Council Chamber and other council owned facilities are available to the Mayor to use free of charge (subject to any prior commercial bookings) for charity activities which are both organised and promoted by the Mayor and in aid of the Mayors Charities. The Mayor may not however 'offer' these facilities to other charities for their use.
- The South Mill Arts provides space for a limited number of 'free' events each year to the Council each year. Separate guidelines are given and the Mayor should pay special attention to the limits of the 'free' services provided in the guidelines.
- Facilities which are not owned by the Council must be negotiated (and if necessary paid for) by the Mayor out of the allowance or out of the profit from any event. Note that the Council does NOT own the Monastery grounds nor the Monastery Car Park, other than the limited number of spaces marked 'BSTC'. A fee is payable to Windhill House Limited for the use of these facilities and restrictions on their use apply.
- The costs of incidental stationery etc. used in the course of Charity events will be met by the Council, however other costs including extensive printing and any other extensive stationery costs are to be paid from the Mayors allowance or the proceeds of the function. If in doubt please consult the Chief Executive Officer before any expense is incurred.
- The Mayor's secretary can provide only very limited support to the Mayor's Charity Events (other than the Civic Dinner and Civic Service should these also be fund-raising). The support will normally include maintaining a list of potential invitees, issuing invitations and collating responses, but will not normally include other organizational or promotional activities.

4. THE MAYOR'S SECRETARY

The Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer also acts as Secretary to the Mayor and is employed by the Council. He/she will provide the administrative support necessary to enable the Mayor to perform his/her official duties, including receiving and replying to invitations to events, issuing invitations and supporting the organisation of the Civic Service and Civic Dinner. The support provided to charity events is set out above.

The Mayor's secretary does not provide secretarial support for the Deputy Mayor, except when the Deputy Mayor is acting in the place of the Mayor.

5. MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE AND TAXATION

The Mayor's allowance is provided by the council to enable the mayor to entertain guests, etc, on the council's behalf and to defray the expenses of office. The mayor and deputy mayor may agree that entrance fees or other significant reasonable expenses will be paid by the mayor to the deputy mayor should the mayor request his/her attendance at a function. The inland revenue regards the office of mayor as an employment and the allowance is taxed as pay. The mayor will need to provide details for payroll to enable the payment to be made. Expenses for mayoral charitable activities and events are to be met from the mayor's allowance or the proceeds of the event not from other council funds.

Some of the expenses that the Mayor incurs during the course of office are tax deductible. It is the responsibility of the Mayor to reclaim tax should he/she choose to do so. The Chief Executive Officer can provide general guidance on the rules, however, this is not definitive and the Mayor is ultimately responsible for his/her own tax affairs.

Although not formally a requirement, it would be advisable that any expense met out of the Mayor's allowance, which ultimately comes from public funds, should stand up to public scrutiny.

6. PRECEDENCE AND CIVIC PROCESSIONS

6.1 Introduction

Precedence and the make-up of Civic Processions and order of precedence at events can be a source of considerable confusion. The Local Government Act 1972 states that the Chair of the District Council "shall have precedence in the District, but not so as prejudicially to affect Her Majesty's Royal Prerogative". Thus the Chair of the District is entitled to and should receive precedence throughout the District over all Town Mayors. There is, however, a local agreement that the Bishop's Stortford Mayor has precedence at all events organized by Bishop's Stortford Town Council. Similar agreements operate in the other towns in the district.

In the absence of the Mayor his/her Deputy is entitled to the Mayor's right of precedence but he/she does not wear the Mayor's chain.

Spouses of members of the Council and others, with the exception of the Mayor's consort should not be included in a civic procession but arrangements should be made for them to be seated in reserved seats in the Church before the civic procession arrives.

The Chief Executive Officer may, on occasions, accompany the Mayor, both on ceremonial occasions and at other times. The Mayor will meet many important people and the Chief Executive officer should have access to such people, as well as being able to advise the Mayor on the "public front" which the Council has agreed on a range of issues.

Although the Chief Executive Officer is not entitled to precedence as such (except for royal visits), he/she should be very close to the Mayor, both as the Council's senior officer and as the main officer support for the Mayor. Custom and practice usually give the Chief Executive Officer a billing at the Mayor's right hand, ahead of Councillors other than the Mayor.

6.2 High Ranking Visitors

Where a distinguished visitor (e.g. high-ranking Officer of the Armed-Forces) is attending a civic ceremony or service and the Council considers him worthy of the honour, he/she may be invited to walk in procession behind the Mayor.

6.3 Members of Parliament

The Member of Parliament is usually placed between the Mayoral Party and the Councillors, unless he/she is a Minister of the Crown in which case he/she should be included in the Mayoral Party.

6.4 Representatives of Local Organisations

In some areas there is a local custom that representatives of local organisations should be included in any procession, however, this is not the case in Bishop's Stortford. At Civic services they will be asked to attend the Church as members of the congregation and seats will be reserved for them.

7. ROYAL VISITS

Royal visits are arranged principally by Buckingham Palace and the Lord Lieutenant's Office at County Hall. In any formal visit the Mayor and the Mayor's consort would probably be present. Recent advice indicates that the order of precedence on such occasions would be:

Lord Lieutenant and Partner
High Sheriff and Partner
Chair of the County Council and Partner
County Chief Executive and Partner
Mayor of Town Council and Partner
Chief Executive Officer and Partner
Member of Parliament and Partner
Chief Constable and Partner

This order of precedence may change depending on the specific event.

Increasingly, the Royal Family is showing a preference for informal visits for a specific purpose. On those occasions it is no longer automatic that the Mayor will be invited to the function or, if present, will be presented. The importance of the office as Mayor will be drawn to the attention of hosts and each case will be treated individually.

8. CIVIC REGALIA

The Mayoral regalia comprises a chain of office for the Mayor, a rather more modest chain of office for the Deputy Mayor and a badge and chain for the Mayor's consort.

The Mayor would normally wear the regalia at functions to which they are invited where these take place within the Parish boundaries. The Mayors Secretary will seek advice if there is any ambiguity.

Where functions take place outside parish boundaries it is the custom to ask permission from the Mayor or Chair of the parish concerned before regalia is worn. There is an agreement between the five Towns in East Herts that this will not generally be necessary however there have nevertheless been misunderstandings despite this agreement. This being the case it would be advisable in all cases to ensure that the Mayors Secretary communicates with his/her counterpart so that any potential for ambiguity is circumvented.

Civic regalia are to be worn only when on official Council business. The use of the regalia for personal purposes is not permitted by Council. The use of Civic symbols by (and in particular the Coat of Arms) is similarly restricted to official Council business.

9. ATTENDANCE AT FUNERALS

The Council will frequently be represented at the funeral of a prominent person however in all circumstances the wishes of the family of the deceased should take precedence. The following guidance is given and may be used where this is consistent with wishes of the family.

9.1 Former Mayors of the Town

The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer should normally attend the funeral and a wreath would normally be sent. A Minute's silence may be held prior to an appropriate meeting of Council.

9.2 Serving Councillors

Depending on the scale of the funeral the Mayor, Chief Executive Officer, Council Members and Officers of the Council may attend as a sign of respect and a wreath may be sent.

9.3 Former Councillors and prominent local people connected with public life

Cases of this kind should be treated on their individual merits and decision taken by the Mayor in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and Leader of Council

A letter of condolence should be sent on behalf of the Mayor to the next of kin in all the above cases and such other cases as may be considered necessary in the light of prevailing circumstances.

10. GIFTS

From time to time, the Mayor may receive a personal gift, if so the Mayor must make a written record in the hospitality register of any gifts or hospitality received over the value of £25.00.

11. POLICY ON 'FREE' EVENTS AT SOUTH MILL ARTS

11.1 Introduction

The Bishop's Stortford Arts and Museum CIO makes the Centre available to the Town Council free of charge for six events per year. With the exception of the Civic Dinner, where reasonable staffing support is provided, the 'free' service is the provision of the venue only, other services (for example production services) are chargeable.

The Council uses the venue for:

- Democratic activities
These are typically the Annual Town meeting, planning committee meetings where a large public representation is expected, and occasionally other 'special' meetings. These are generally organised by the Chief Executive Officer on behalf of Council committees. Typically in recent year the Council has required the a venue for three such meetings
- Ceremonial/Charity events
These are organised by or on behalf of the Mayor and are referred to below as 'Mayoral Events'

In recent years some misunderstandings have occurred either between the Mayor and SMA or between the requirements for democratic activities and those for ceremonial/charity activities. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to avoid future misunderstandings and to assist the Chief Executive Officer, the Mayor and SMA Management in ensuring that events, of whatever nature, operate smoothly.

This policy has been reviewed with and has the support of the Director of Operations at SMA.

11.2 Accounting Period

The accounting period for the 'six' events will be the Council year. This is most convenient for Council and has been agreed with SMA Management

11.3 Split of Events

The split of events between ceremonial/charity and democratic should be determined by discussion between the Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor. The objective will be to provide as many democratic meetings as are likely to be necessary with the proviso that at least one slot must be preserved for the Mayor.

By default both the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer will assume that three 'democratic' meetings and three 'Mayoral Events' will be provided for until they agree otherwise. Neither the Chief Executive Officer nor the Mayor will make irrevocable bookings outside these guidelines unless they have agreed otherwise (or are prepared to pay the normal hire fee).

The Chief Executive Officer will assess, from time to time, the likely requirement for democratic meetings. If the Chief Executive Officer is of the reasonable opinion, at any point in the year, that fewer will be required then the balance will be made available to the Mayor. Conversely if the Chief Executive Officer is of the reasonable opinion that more may be required then the number available to the Mayor will be reduced accordingly, unless the Mayor has made irrevocable commitments and is unable to fund the hire fee out of the proceeds of the event.

In the event that agreement cannot be reached between the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer the matter will be determined in accordance with Standing Orders 9.1 and 9.2 (Urgent Matters between meetings).

11.4 Events Open to the General Public

Both Mayoral and democratic events, if open to the general public, have the potential to cause a conflict with SMA programming. This conflict can arise because of the nature of the event or because of some factor associated with the performers/artists or other participants.

It will be an express requirement that the Chief Executive Officer, Mayor or other event organiser consults with SMA Management before making any arrangements or commitments, however vague, to hold an event, and refrains from making any arrangements to which SMA Management has not agreed.

The Town Council accepts that public events will be subject to the same examination (for consistency with the programme etc.) as any other event held at SMA by a third party and that SMA management may reject an event or ask for rescheduling or amendment before agreeing to it.

The Town Council also accepts that SMA may levy a reasonable charge to defray losses incurred if its Officers or Councillors fail to follow these guidelines and that such charges (if any) will be borne by the Council for democratic events or the Mayor for Mayoral events.

11.5 Events – Nature of Contract

The Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor should be aware that the 'free' services offered by SMA extend to venue hire only and that other services are chargeable.

If any other service is required whatsoever the Chief Executive Officer will (in the case of democratic events) obtain written confirmation from SMA setting out the services to be provided and the charges to be levied.

The Mayor (or person organising an event on behalf of the Mayor) is strongly advised to obtain such a contract and any unexpected costs incurred due to failure to do so will be solely at the risk of the Mayor.



M. PROTOCOL ON THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OR SENIOR FIGURE

0. Revision History

Version 1	October 2016	Approved by F&GP Committee 7 November 2016	
Version 2	May 2018	Approved by Town Council	
Version 3	Feb 2022	Approved by Council 7 th Feb 2022	Rewritten in the light of the practical experience following the death of the Duke of Edinburgh
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout	Issue 2023.1

1. Introduction

This protocol sets out the action to be taken in the event of the death of members of the Royal family. Once the protocol has been triggered the arrangements will be undertaken by the Assistant to the CEO under the supervision of the CEO, unless otherwise specified below.

The information in this document represents guidance on what is most likely to occur/be appropriate. Specific circumstances may vary however, due to the wishes of the deceased, national circumstances or other factors and the lead will be taken from wishes, directions or indications given by the Royal Family and the Lieutenancy. The Chief Executive Officer, acting with the Mayor, has the authority to vary the guidance as he/she reasonably sees fit

2. Applicable Persons

The protocol is applicable upon the death of any of the following:

- H.M. The Queen
- H.R.H. The Prince of Wales
- H.R.H. The Duchess of Cornwall
- H.R.H. The Duke of Cambridge
- H.R.H. The Duchess of Cambridge
- Progeny of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge
 - The Duke of Sussex
- Progeny of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex
 - The Duke of York
- H.R.H. The Earl of Wessex
- H.R.H. The Princess Royal
- H.R.H. The Countess of Wessex

In the case of doubt whether the protocol should be followed in respect of a particular individual (whether or not they appear in the list above), the lead will be taken from the information provided by the Royal Family or the Lieutenancy.

3. Trigger for Implementation

Plans to mark a death should be implemented only after a formal announcement has been made. For example: "It has been announced by Buckingham Palace/Downing Street that....". Either the Mayor or the Chief Executive Officer may trigger implementation.

4. Death of the Monarch

The following guidance sets out the events following the death of the Monarch

4.1 Mourning Period

This is anticipated to last from the day of death, once announced officially by Buckingham Palace, until the day after the funeral. Please have regard to guidance from Buckingham Palace (www.royal.uk).

4.2 Proclamation Day – Proclamation of the New Sovereign

Proclamation Day is set to be the day following the death of the Sovereign. The Proclamation will be made at St. James's Palace at 11am (or 2pm if it is a Sunday – but this is to be confirmed).

The Mayor must attend the Hertfordshire's 'The Reading of the Proclamation on the Accession of a new Sovereign' at The Council Chamber at County Hall, Hertford at 12:30pm (arrive by 11.45am. and be seated by 12.15). Mayors are to wear chains of office.

The Bishop's Stortford Town Council's Proclamation of the Accession will be read out by the Mayor at the War Memorial in Castle Park at 3pm. If the Mayor is unable to attend the Proclamation Day, the Deputy Mayor should take their place in the proceedings.

The Mayor's Speech

The following is the expected form however the Buckingham Palace Website will be checked to confirm.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Proclamation of the Accession;

We come together this afternoon following the passing of our late Sovereign, Queen Elizabeth the Second. Our sadness at this time is shared by people across the globe, as we remember with affection and gratitude the lifetime of service given by our longest-reigning Monarch.

But the basis on which our monarchy is built has ensured that through the centuries the Crown has passed in an unbroken line of succession. Today's ceremony marks the formal Proclamation to the people of Bishop's Stortford of the beginning of our new King's reign.

Yesterday the Accession Council met at St. James's Palace to proclaim our new Sovereign. The flags which had flown at half-mast since The Queen's death were raised briefly to their full height to mark the start of His Majesty's reign.

The Accession Council also made an Order requiring High Sheriffs to cause the Proclamation to be read in the areas of their jurisdiction. The High Sheriff of Hertfordshire discharged that duty earlier today and now, with my humble duty, I now bring the words of the Proclamation to the residents of Bishop's Stortford.

God Save The King.

Official Guests repeat:

God Save The King

All present join in saying:

God Save The King

The National Anthem

A recording of the National Anthem music will be played.

Finally, the Mayor will call for three cheers for His Majesty The King

4.3 FLAGS

All flags on Town Council land will fly at half-mast for Mourning Period, then raised to full mast or removed from flagpole at 8am the day after the funeral. This will be organised by our Outdoor Team.

Half-mast means the flag is flown a third of the way down the flagpole from the top, with at least the height of the flag between the top of the flag and the top of the flagpole. NOTE: Check if flags are required to be at full mast on Day of Proclamation.

4.4 Bells

Locally it may be appropriate for local churches to ring either a full or half muffled peal on eve on the funeral.

4.5 Council Meetings and Events

Town Council and Committee meetings will be cancelled, and rescheduled until after the funeral, unless there is an urgent reason to hold a meeting.

With regards to events, cancellation may be appropriate on the day of the death, the eve of the funeral and the day of the funeral. Be aware of the public mood and consider whether further scaling back is an option.

4.6 Web Page and Social Media

The home page will be changed to black, with appropriate official photo designed for web use. ⁵

BSTC will post message of sympathy on web page and social media (not an obituary, but condolence message).

The meetings calendar will be updated.

Social Media will carry details of the ways in which the death is being marked locally (Events and Tourism Manager to implement when needed).

With regards to events: Cancellation may be appropriate on the day of the death, the eve of the funeral and the day of the funeral. Be aware of the public mood and consider whether further scaling back is an option.

4.7 Mayor, Council Members and Staff - Dress

Council Members and Staff

When on official business Council Members and staff must wear plain/discreet dark clothing during the mourning period. The CEO should wear plain/discreet dark clothing with the black tie, and a Bishop's Stortford Town Council badge with a black ribbon attached (provided by BSTC).

The Mayor and Consort

When on official business during the mourning period, The Mayor must wear plain/discreet dark clothing with the black tie, and wear the pendant from their Mayor's chain with a black ribbon attached (provided by BSTC) whilst on official business.

A female consort should wear black rosette (provided by BSTC) and a male consort should wear a black tie (provided by BSTC).

4.8 Condolence Book and Condolences

Condolence books will be made available during normal working hours at the Tourist Information Centre and the Council Chambers, alongside any virtual Buckingham Palace Condolence Book (www.royal.uk). If possible the Mayor, Leader of Council and CEO should sign it first, however the format is loose leaf so it is possible to rearrange the page order if necessary.

In each location a table will be provided with, a black tablecloth, condolence books, Official Framed Royal Photo (with mourning ribbon), sign for where to place flowers, chair, pens and hand sanitiser.

The Mayor must write a condolence letter to the new Sovereign's Private Secretary asking that condolences be passed to the new Sovereign.

Following the funeral, a letter should be issued condolence letter to the new Sovereign's Private Secretary, advising of the condolence book, the number of signatures, and that the book(s) will be retained in the council archive.

The Mayor may wish to visit care homes with the condolences book in order that those who are less able to attend in person can express their wishes.

4.9 Flowers

The designated places for the laying of wreaths will be:

⁵ The images designed for web use can only be used on a website after the official announcement has been made by Buckingham Palace and it can only be used for condolence purpose and no other use unless permission has been granted. Please note these images cannot be printed to a full size.

St Michael's Churchyard, at the North West corner adjacent to Windhill or near the War memorial
Castle Gardens near the War Memorial

These locations have been agreed with the authorities responsible.

The Events and Tourism Manager to purchase flowers and lay them on behalf of the Town Council and the people of Bishop's Stortford at the War Memorial at Castle Park and at St Michael's Church (at the War Memorial). A laminated flower arrangement note will be attached to the flowers. The floral message is saved in the BSTC document database as 'Laying of Flower Signs - Floral Message'.

The message is:

Bishop's Stortford Town Council and the people of Bishop's Stortford express their heartfelt sorrow of the death of Her Royal Highness, The Queen. With our deepest sympathy, we offer our thoughts, prayers, and good wishes.

Bishop's Stortford Town Council

PA to CEO will make notices for the Monastery Car Park and Chambers notifying people where to lay flowers.

Flowers should be removed the day after the funeral.

4.10 Imagery and Portraits

The official condolence photographs are available from Royal Images. The condolence photograph can only be used for use with condolence books placed on a table with a black tablecloth. The official framed photos must have a black ribbon draped around it, in this way:



4.11 Day of Funeral

It is likely to be designated as a Public Holiday; however the actions / workings of the Council on the day need to be considered along with those of the Mayor/CEO and Councillors.

Two Minutes Silence

If the funeral is not a public holiday the Council will take part in a national two minutes silence, which is most likely to take place on the day of the funeral. This will take place at the War Memorial in Castle Park.

The Mayor will lead a public marking of the two minutes silence. The Mayor can give a short introductory speech before the two minutes silence, if they wish (using the small speaker).

If the Mayor is unable to attend, the Deputy Mayor should take their place.

Maroons

Maroons will be set off before and after the two minute silence (if available).

The Events and Tourism Manager will liaise with the maroon supplier to ensure that they understand that the maroon is to be set off to mark the beginning and the end of the silence and have the necessary access. Guidance for times to specify when the silence will take place (date and time) will

be available on www.royal.uk and www.gov.uk. The Events and Tourism Manager will also be responsible for coordinating the event.

4.12 Provisions at Town Council Office

The items below will be needed in response to the death of a Royal.⁶

- 2 x Condolence Books
- 2 x Black Table Cloth
- 1 x Official Framed Royal Photo
- 1 x Black Ribbon for the Photo Frames and Mayor's Pendant and CEO badge
- 2 x Black Tie for the Mayor and/or male consort and CEO
- 2 x Black Rosettes for the Mayoress and/or female consort, if required
- 1 x Box Pens
- 1 x Hand Sanitiser
- 1 x Anti-Bacterial Wipes

4.13 Provisions at Tourist Information Centre

The items below will be needed in response to the death of a Royal⁷.

- 1 x Condolence Book
- 6 x Condolence Books additional pages – 20 loose pages per pack
- Letters to Care Homes – If required to be sent
- 1 x Black Table Cloth
- 1 x Official Framed Royal Photo
- 1 x Black Ribbon for the Photo Frames
- 2 x Floral Laminated Messages
- 1 x Box Pens
- 1 x Hand Sanitiser
- 1 x USB Stick with a recording of the National Anthem music on it
- 1 x Small Speaker with Microphone

5. Death or a Member of the Royal Family other than the Monarch

The protocol following the death of a senior member of the Royal Family is similar to that outlined above, except that there is no proclamation of the New Sovereign. Any further differences are set out below

5.1 Mourning Period

No differences

5.2 Flags

All flags on Town Council land will fly at half-mast for Mourning Period, then raised to full mast or removed from flagpole at 8am the day after the funeral. This will be organised by our Outdoor Team. Half-mast means the flag is flown two-thirds of the way up the flagpole, with at least the height of the flag between the top of the flag and the top of the flagpole.

5.3 Bells

No differences

5.4 Council Meetings and Events

The Chief Executive Officer, Mayor and Leader will consider whether Town Council and Committee meetings should be cancelled, and rescheduled until after the funeral, having regard to public mood and the urgency of the meeting.

⁶ At the time of writing these are placed in a blue box file in the cupboard behind the desk of the PA to CEO.

⁷ At the time of writing these are placed in a box in the cupboard behind the reception desks at the TIC.

With regards to events, cancellation may be appropriate on the day of the death, the eve of the funeral and the day of the funeral. Be aware of the public mood and consider whether further scaling back is an option.

5.5 Web Page and Social Media

No differences

5.6 Mayor, Council Members and Staff - Dress

No differences

5.7 Condolence Book and Condolences

Condolence books will be made available during normal working hours at the Tourist Information Centre and the Council Chambers, alongside any virtual Buckingham Palace Condolence Book (www.royal.uk). If possible the Mayor, Leader of Council and CEO should sign it first, however the format is loose leaf so it is possible to rearrange the page order if necessary.

In each location a table will be provided with, a black tablecloth, condolence books, Official Framed Royal Photo (with mourning ribbon), sign for where to place flowers, chair, pens and hand sanitiser.

Following the funeral, a letter should be issued condolence letter to the Queen's Private Secretary, advising of the condolence book, the number of signatures, and that the book(s) will be retained in the council archive.

5.8 Flowers

No differences except that the message is varied to include the title of the deceased person

5.9 Imagery and Portraits

No differences

5.10 Day of Funeral

No differences except that it is less likely that the day will be declared a public holiday.

5.11 Provisions at Town Council Offices

No differences

5.12 Provisions at Tourist Information Centre

No differences

6. Deaths of Prominent Politicians

The following protocol will apply on the death of

- The Prime Minister
- The Member of Parliament for Hertford and Bishop Stortford
- A Serving Member of The Council

Flags will fly at Half-Mast on the day of the announcement of the death.

Usual flag-flying arrangements will resume on the days between the announcement of death and the day of the funeral.

Flags will fly again at Half-Mast on the day of the funeral.

7. Suppliers and Sources

The following lists sources of information and supplies (at the time of writing). It does not form part of the policy but is placed here for convenience

Large official condolence photographs must be purchased from Royal Images, contact Mike O'Keefe (mike@royalimages.co.uk) of Royal Images to obtain a council discount. Telephone: 0845 634 5577.

Condolence books are purchased from Executive Retail (www.executive-retail.com) Condolences Books (Ref: EL59) & Condolences Books Additional Pages (Ref: EL59R).

Mourning rosettes from <https://www.victoriaregalia.com/Freemason-Masonic-Mourning-Black-Rosette-60mm>

Maroons from:

Essex Pyrotechnics Ltd (Chris)
6 Wicken Rd, Newport, Saffron Walden CB11 3QG
Phone: 01223 264563
They provide Public Liability Insurance.



N. POLICY FOR THE RECEIPT OF PUBLIC PETITIONS

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
Version 1	December 2018	Adopted by Council 17 December 2018
Version 2	July 2019	Approved by Finance and Policy Committee 22 July 2019
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Introduction

The Council welcomes community feedback and offers many opportunities and ways to do so as a matter of course. The Council recognises that petitions are one way in which residents of the town can let the Council know about their concerns.

The Council will only treat a document as a petition if it is identified as such

Petitions should be addressed to the Council and submitted to:

The Chief Executive Officer
Bishop's Stortford Town Council
The Old Monastery
Windhill
Bishop's Stortford
CM23 2ND

Or by email to enquiries@bishopsstortfordtc.gov.uk with 'Petition FAO Chief Executive Officer' in the subject header

2. Petition Requirements

2.1 Petitions may only be submitted to the Town Council regarding areas of its responsibility. Petitions for matters under the control of East Hertfordshire District Council or Hertfordshire County Council will not be accepted, and the petitioners will be directed to an appropriate contact at the relevant authority.

2.2 Petitions that are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted.

2.3 Signatures must be accompanied by the signatories full name and address, and any signatory must be resident in the civil parish of Bishop's Stortford for their signature to be valid and a minimum of (100) signatories are required for a petition to be considered under this policy.

2.4 Petitions must include a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition and the action the petitioners wish the Council to take.

2.5 Petitions must be accompanied by contact details for a petition organiser. This will be the person the Council will contact regarding the petition.

2.6 A petition will not be accepted if a similar petition has been accepted within the previous six months.

2.7 Decisions on the validity of a petition will be made in accordance with 2-1-2.6 by the Chief Executive Officer.

2.8 The applicant may appeal against a decision that a petition is not valid. Any such appeal will be heard by the Grievance, Appeals and Complaints Committee.

Process

3.1 An acknowledgement of the petition will be sent to the petition organiser stating whether the petition has been accepted or not as valid. This will be as soon as possible and normally within ten working days of the Council receiving the petition. If a petition has been deemed invalid the reasons will be stated.

3.2 All councillors will also be informed of the receipt of a valid petition.

3.3 If a petition is accepted as valid, the petition organiser will be invited to the next full council meeting to make a three minute presentation to the Council as part of the 'Public Participation' agenda item.

3.4 If a Councillor makes a written request to the Chief Executive Officer sufficiently ahead of the next full council meeting (in accordance with the applicable Standing Order (s), the valid petition will be added as an agenda item for discussion and debate at the meeting.

3.5 In the event that the Chief Executive Officer and/or the Mayor reasonably judge that the meeting may be overloaded, the presentation under 3.2 may be delayed until the following meeting of full Council.

3.6 In the event that a debate is not requested by a member under 3.4, either the Chief Executive Officer or the Leader may (but is not obliged to) respond with one of the following:

- i. A factual statement of resolved Council policy relevant to the petition
- ii. A statement of fact(s) relevant to the petition
- iii. An invitation to engage with one or more officers or members

Wherever reasonably practical the response will be pre-prepared and circulated in advance to members.

Nothing in the above will permit any member or officer to make any decision or imply any commitment (other than a commitment of engagement) in direct response to the petition.



O. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
Version 1	September 2019	Adopted by Council 30 September 2019
Issue 1.1	February 2022	Approved by Council 7 th Feb 2022. Updated with progress and action plan.
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Introduction and Overview

Bishop's Stortford Town Council recognises the severe threat posed by man-made climate change and other man-made activities which contribute to the degradation of the natural environment, and is committed to taking concrete and measurable action to reduce the environmental impact caused by activities and to influencing others, to the extent that it is able, to do likewise. The Town Council has embarked, on a programme of analysis and reduction of its own environmental impact with a specific focus on the consumption of

- Energy
- Water
- Materials and in particular non-recyclable materials

In addition the Council will continue to promote bio-diversity through appropriate management of its parks and green spaces.

The objectives of this policy are incorporated into the Strategic Plan for the Council for 2019-2023 approved by Council in June 2019.

2. Policy Coverage

This policy applies to all the land and properties that Bishop's Stortford Town Council owns and land/properties that the Council manages or is responsible for.

3. High Level Analysis

The tables below set out, at a high level, the measured consumption of energy and water during a 12 month period to July 2019. To put the figures into context, the Council energy consumption is roughly equivalent to the energy consumed by 16 people in the UK⁸, and the water consumption roughly equivalent to that consumed by 100 people in the UK⁹.

Energy

Area	kWh/annum	Note
Space heating	71,234	1
Staff Commute	54,444	2
Paddling Pool	47,159	
Transport	38,922	
Offices other	30,689	3
Markwell	4,592	
Market pillars	3,754	
Public Toilets	3,130	

⁸ <https://selectra.co.uk/energy/guides/consumption/average-consumption-uk>

⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766894/water-conservation-report-2018.pdf

War Memorial	2,104
Grand Total	256,028

Water

Area	m ³ /annum
Allotments	3714
Paddling pool	1309
Offices	388
Public Toilets	106
Grand Total	5517

4

Notes:

General: These figures are based on invoices for the utilities or, in the case of transport, measured or estimated fuel consumption

1. This figure is for the Monastery only and includes the whole of Suite 2 comprising the chamber on the ground floor the middle floor occupied by Dotmatics, and the top floor which is occupied by sublet offices.
2. Based on travel distances and a fuel consumption of 30miles per gallon. Of this figure approximately 30,000 is attributable to staff whose roles negate completely any possibility of home working.
3. This figure includes heating at the Cemetery and TIC, as well as general electricity consumption
4. This included the deemed consumption at the Cemetery where the supply is unmetered. The actual consumption is likely to be somewhat higher as this supply is used for watering of hanging baskets etc. around the town.

4. Specific Environmental Actions

Bishop's Stortford Town Council is committed to action in the following, specific areas:

4.1 Climate Change & Energy Conservation

Consumption of energy produced by the burning of fossil fuels contributes directly to climate change by the release of carbon dioxide, a 'greenhouse gas' into the atmosphere. Carbon offsetting, the practice of paying a third party to invest in environmental projects to negate carbon emissions are favoured by some, remains controversial in part because of the difficulty of proving that the purchased interventions would not otherwise have taken place by another means and for other reasons.

The Council will therefore concentrate on reducing its own carbon footprint (and encouraging others to do likewise) thereby making a provable contribution.

The Council will as a matter of course:

- monitor its energy use through the production of annual statistics based on consumption
- when energy consuming equipment comes up for replacement, endeavour to procure energy-efficient variants (for example low energy lighting, energy efficient refrigeration etc.
- encourage energy conserving behaviour e.g. switching off lights that aren't needed, switching off equipment rather than using standby and eliminating unnecessary journeys

However the Council is conscious that the above measures will have only a relatively small effect (in single digit percentages) and that bigger solutions, which will need some engineering, are necessary if the total consumption is to be reduced by more than a few percentage points. Such solutions will require careful design, may initially be disruptive and/or require changes of habit or new technology, and will certainly require financial investment. The Council has therefore (as of 1st January 2022) undertaken the following

- Switched to a supplier of 100% renewable electricity for all purchases by the Town Council and the Community Centres managed by the Town Council¹⁰
- Purchased an electric van to replace an aging diesel van, and an electric bike for local transport where there is no requirement to carry loads
- Replaced electric storage heaters at the Tourist Information Centre with air source heat pump technology
- Implemented measures at the splash pool to reduce energy consumption (accounted largely for by 2, 3kW pumps which operate 24x7 during the operational season)
- Converted the heating at Bishop's Park Community Centre from gas to electric air source heat pump
- Insisted that the buildings to be refurbished as part of the Castle Park project be heated by air source heat pumps instead of gas which had been planned

The Council will continue to pursue improvements with the objective that

- All properties owned or managed by the Council are insulated to modern standards (or better) or, where this is not possible because, for example, the building is listed, to such standards as are possible
- Water and Space heating for all properties owned or managed by the Council is provided other than by burning fossil fuels and the heat source is as efficient as reasonably possible (for example air source heat pump)
- The energy source for all tools and vehicles owned or managed by the Council is low carbon – eg electricity
- The opportunities to reduce the environmental footprint of the daily commute for example by remote working are exploited whilst ensuring that business efficiency and staff welfare are improved or, at worst, not compromised.

More specifically this will include, but is not limited to, the following (in addition to the actions already completed)

- Double glazing at the Tourist Information Centre (planning consent applied for)
- Improved insulation and conversion to low carbon (eg heat pump) heating at the Old Monastery, to the extent permitted/reasonably possible¹¹
- Conversion of the existing electric heating at the Cemetery to more efficient (eg heat pump) technology
- Improved insulation and conversion to low carbon (eg heat pump) heating at Havers and St Michaels Mead Community centres, subject to feasibility
- When vehicles or fossil fuel powered tools come up for replacement, and provided suitable technology is available at an affordable price, replace with electrically powered equipment unless a more sophisticated lifetime environmental calculation (where available) shows that this is environmentally detrimental
- Audit and identification of roof areas of buildings owned or managed by the Council for suitability to install solar panels¹²
- Develop an practical remote working policy taking into account business needs, staff welfare, environmental impact and other factors

¹⁰ The energy supplier chosen by the Council purchases energy 100% from renewables. The mix of energy actually supplied to the Council is determined by the National Grid/DNO which does not and cannot differentiate between customers in respect of the source of the energy.

¹¹ This work has commenced but is proving extremely challenging due to limitations imposed arising out of the fact that it is a listed building. The Conservation Officer has rejected all of the most technically effective measures and work is ongoing to identify which, if any, less effective measures will be permitted.

¹² The most immediately obvious opportunity of a material area is the Monastery which has an extensive south-facing roof that is invisible from the public realm. However the Conservation officer at the District Council has vetoed the installation of solar panels on this roof

These actions will be carried out and completed in the period 2022-2026 unless they are shown not to be practical in that timescale.

To ensure such measures are both energy- and cost-effective a scientific approach will be taken and the Council will refrain from taking actions where the impact has not been estimated and considered in relation to the cost both financial and in terms of materials and embodied energy therein. The Council will however not exploit this requirement to be scientific as a reason for inaction.

4.2 Water

The abstraction of water for industrial or domestic consumption depletes natural watercourses with a negative impact on habitat. The processing and distribution of drinking water and treatment of sewerage consumes energy¹³ and increased water consumption requires the construction of capture and supply plant, heavy engineering with its own impact.

The Council will as a matter of course

- monitor its water use through the production of annual statistics based on consumption
- encourage water-energy conserving behaviour e.g. at allotments
- endeavour to reduce water use at the splash pool to the extent consistent with maintaining a high water quality
- where practical, manage its parks and green spaces with planting schemes and technology that minimise the need for watering e.g. by planting drought-resistant species and using mulches and/or water gel crystals.

Over 90% of the Council total water consumption (as measured in 2019) is for allotments and the splash pool. Analysis carried out in 2020/2021 has confirmed that the amount of water used at the allotments is more or less what would be expected given the area of soil cultivated so, other than when leaks occur, it is not practical to reduce this figure significantly. The opportunity, therefore, is limited to the possibility that unprocessed water could be supplied. This presents some challenges specifically

- Sourcing the water – collection and storage of rainwater do not appear (based on analyses carried out in 2020/2021) to be practical. It is possible that local extraction from groundwater might prove practical, albeit expensive
- Mitigation of risk associated with water contamination, given that the allotment tenants are accustomed to a supply of potable water

Until a further study has been carried out it will not be possible to assess what level, if any, of reduction in the use of treated water could reasonably be achieved. The Council will therefore

- Undertake a study of the opportunities, feasibility and risks of replacing treated water with untreated water at its allotments
- If the above concludes that the continued use of mains water is inevitable, install leak detection at all sites where water leaks are not otherwise obvious

Water use at the splash pool is essential to its operation. In total approximately 25cum of water recirculates within the system however it has to be topped up due to losses from evaporation and, several times per season, must be changed entirely due to the build-up of contamination (principally 'combined chlorine' and the products from sun tan lotion as well as the occasional bio-contamination 'incident'. At the current time there is no known practical way to reduce the consumption materially

Together the allotments and splash pool account for 90% of the Council water use other measures will have a relatively small effect overall. Nevertheless the Council will:

¹³ It has not been possible to obtain exact figures, but based on data available water and waste treatment uses between 2 and 8 kWh per cubic metre of treated water used. This adds between 4 and 16% to the total energy consumed by the Council activities.

- Conduct an audit of and Investigate water saving measures at all establishments managed by the Council

4.3 Use of Materials - Recycling

Consumption of any material which is not recycled depletes the availability of (often scarce) natural resources and contributes to the hazards of land-fill. Whether recyclable or not, *any* consumption of material contributes to climate change through the energy embodied in production and transport (so called 'embodied energy'). At the present time it is, unfortunately, not practical to estimate the Council's impact from materials consumption.

The 'waste hierarchy' sets out the priorities in minimising the impact of waste as follows

- Reduce (highest priority)
- Reuse
- Recycle

Whilst much attention is focussed on recycling, the higher priority actions of reduction and reuse must not be ignored.

There is, however, all too frequently a conflict between reduction of materials consumption and convenience/efficiency and this will inevitable restrict the

The Council will as a matter of course

- minimise its waste production wherever possible, by reducing repairing and reusing resources, and by recycling the waste its activities produce where facilities exist.
- Dispose of waste safely, following the correct procedures, and only licensed contractors will be used to deal with hazardous wastes.
- Strive to eliminate single-use plastics where alternatives exist

The Council offices already benefit from segregated waste collection and in addition shredded paper is taken to a local charity for use as animal bedding. The Council has already

- strengthened waste segregation by introducing segregated bins at the point of disposal throughout the Tourist Information Centre and Offices

The Council will

- investigate the options for segregating waste at the Cemetery and other green spaces under Town Council control, including waste produced by members of the public
- seek a skip supplier which recycles waste
- investigate the possibility of composting suitable waste on Council land as an alternative to the current practice of burning green waste

4.4 Biodiversity and Green Spaces

The Council will, wherever possible, consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity in all its activities, but particularly with regard to land management. The 'wild area' at the Old Cemetery, whilst initially attracting controversy, has now been accepted and this principle is capable of extension to other areas maintained by the Council.

The Council will continue to promote the use of its allotments as a source of local food, helping to reduce the food miles consumed by Bishop's Stortford residents.

The Council acknowledges that the River Stort that runs through Bishop's Stortford, as a chalk stream, is a globally rare habitat that is important for the characteristic wildlife of the area. The Council is committed to the conservation of this habitat and will continue to lead on the Waterside Stortford

project and support the Castle park project, both of which include improvements to the River Stort that runs through Bishop's Stortford.

In addition to the above the Council will consider opportunities to plant additional trees on its land.

4.5 Procurement Policies

Council procurement policy is based on 'obtaining value for money'¹⁴. The policy does not expressly oblige the Council to accept the lowest quote and does state that the Council will obtain goods and services from suppliers whose registered office is located within 5 miles of Bishop's Stortford which is beneficial to the local economy and may contribute to a reduction in the environmental damage done by purchased goods and services. There is currently no express requirement to consider environmental impact (which in many cases would not be meaningfully practical) nor any indication of what weight to give it.

The Council will, where reasonably practical, consider when making purchases, the following when assessing 'value for money':

- The environmental credentials of the company supplying the goods/services (for example is an environmental management policy in place?)
- The environmental impact of the goods/services supplied

The Council will, unless there is no practical alternative, refrain from the use of (or from purchasing products including):

- Ozone depleting chemicals
- Tropical hardwood that is not certified independently as coming from a well-managed forest
- Pesticides on the UK 'Red List' or the EU 'Black List'

The use of peat for soil amelioration will be avoided wherever possible.

As an indication of the weight to be attached to such factors the Council, if faced with two otherwise identical offers for goods/services, would pay up to an additional x% for the product/service which is demonstrably and materially more environmentally friendly. The weight applicable to any specific procurement will be decided by the Chief Executive Officer having regard to the guidance above and the scale of the environmental advantages of the competing offers.

4.6 Influence on others and Partnership Working

The above measures concern matters which are under the direct control of the Council. Through its policies and partnership working the Council will encourage others to adopt environmentally friendly policies these include

Development

- The Council's Planning and Development Control Committee will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity and prefer sustainable drainage systems when commenting on planning applications
- The Council will also press for the use of planning obligations (section 106 agreements) to promote sustainable development and mitigate environmental impacts resulting from developments.

Transport

- The Council will continue to encourage sustainable transport systems, promoting public transport and non-polluting modes of transport within the town, such as cycling and walking.
- The Council will continue to support community transport through its contribution to Bishops Stortford Community Transport CIO

¹⁴ Bishop's Stortford Town Council Financial Regulations 11.1-11.9

- The Council will also press other tiers of government for the alleviation of traffic congestion within Bishop's Stortford.



P. REVIEW POLICY

0. Revision History

Version	Issued	Notes
Version 1	January 2022	Adopted by Finance and Policy 18 th Jan 2021
Issue 2023.1	15 May 2023	Amendment to alter to Gender Neutral Language throughout

1. Policy

The table below sets out the regular review cycle for the various Town Council Policies. In addition ad-hoc reviews of policies may be undertaken at any time

Policy Section	Review Frequency and Timing
Standing Orders	Annually at Statutory Annual meeting
Committee Remits	Annually at Statutory Annual meeting
Financial Regulations	Every 2 years , Normally December in even-numbered years
Treasury Management	Every 2 years , Normally December in even-numbered years
Grants	Not applicable. Council has decided that 'small' grants will be awarded through Brazier Trust wef 1st April 2021
Members Code of Conduct	Every 4 years, approximately 1 year after the commencement of a new Council
Gifts and Hospitality	Every 4 years, approximately 1 year after the commencement of a new Council
Complaints	Every 4 years, approximately 1 year after the commencement of a new Council
Business Continuity Plan	Every 2 years , Normally September in odd-numbered years
Leader of the Council – Job Description	Annually at Statutory Annual meeting
Protocol on Death of a Member of the Royal Family	Every 2 years , Normally September in odd-numbered years
Policy for the Receipt of Public Petitions	Every 4 years, approximately 1 year after the commencement of a new Council
Environmental Policy	Every 2 years , Normally September in odd-numbered years
Planning policies	Every 4 years, approximately 1 year after the commencement of a new Council
Staff Handbook	Every 2 years , Normally September in odd-numbered years