

Parish Clerk & RFO Report June 2024

Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 7 May 2024:

Minute 2607vi/2425 - AGAR 2023/24

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24 has been submitted to the external auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Minute 2609/2425 – Tesco/OLR Underpass

I continue to try to engage with National Highways, trying to get their confirmation to agree to the Departure.

Notes to accompany 4 June 2024 Agenda Items:

Agenda 7 iv. Financial Regulations

NALC has produced new 2024 Model Financial Regulations for local councils.

Notes:

The document is a model for councils of all sizes to develop their own financial regulations, suitable for the size of the council and the activities it undertakes.

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

For the rest, each council needs to adapt the model to suit its size and structure.

Specific areas that may need adapting:

- a) In 1.5 – is the Clerk the RFO?
 - b) In 3.3 and 3.4, the words “Governance and Accountability” do not apply in Wales
 - c) In section 4, does the council have committees and how many years are forecast?
 - d) In 5.6, does the council issue an open invitation to tender, or invite specific firms?
 - e) In 5.9, are online prices acceptable evidence?
 - f) In 5.13, 5.15 and 5.17, does the council have committees?
 - g) In 5.16, will a councillor ever be instructed to place an order?
 - h) In 5.20, is there a minimum level for official orders?
 - i) Section 6 includes several alternatives to cover delegation to committees or to officers, approval of invoices individually or in batches, or for approval of regular contractual payments at the beginning of the year.
 - j) Sections 7, 8 and 9 also includes several alternatives, including wording for where the clerk is a signatory. These are intended to allow a council’s financial regulations to fit what they actually do, not to force any council to change what they do.
 - k) Section 10 gives two alternatives, with or without petty cash.
 - l) 13.6 has alternatives for VAT-registered and unregistered councils – only use one.
 - m) 13.7 and 13.8 are removable if they don’t apply to the council.
 - n) Much of Section 16 can be deleted if not applicable.
 - o) 17.3, is the Clerk the RFO or will the RFO consult the Clerk?
- 2) Key limits to set:
- a) In 5.6, at what limit will the council require a formal tender process to ensure fair competition, rather than just asking for quotes? If this is set too low, it may discourage suppliers. Many small councils might only use formal tenders once every few years.
 - b) In 5.8, at what limit will the council require fixed-price quotes rather than estimates?
 - c) In 5.9, at what level can smaller purchases be made without competition?

- d) In 5.15, at what level can purchases be made under delegated authority (having complied with the rules about obtaining prices)?
- e) In 5.18, how much can the clerk commit to spending in an emergency?
- f) In 6.9, can payment of invoices (for purchases that have already been authorised) be authorised by an officer under delegated authority as a general principle, or only to avoid problems?
- g) In Section 9, what are the limits for card payments?
- h) In 16.5, what value of assets can be bought or disposed of, without seeking council approval?

Agenda 7 v. Effectiveness of Internal Audit

Following the internal audit, the Council has a duty to undertake a review of the effectiveness of that review. I have undertaken a review and have found no areas for improvement.

The Council is asked to adopt the document.

Agenda 7 vi. SALC Membership

The annual fee will be £474.96 (based on the number of electorate) however SALC is holding a couple of credit notes (from prepaid training sessions that were cancelled within the time limits) and so the invoice is for £402.96

FINANCE

I'm pleased to report that all of the allotment rent due for 2024/25 has been received.

OTHER MATTERS

- 29 May 2024 – it appears that finally we're able to receive emails from suffolk.gov.uk. With the help from Chris Hudson and our own hosting support (via Strudwick), and after months of not receiving any SCC emails, it appears the problem may have been resolved!

- I shall be away from Monday 17th June and back at my desk on Monday 1st July 2024.

Sue Frankis
Clerk to the Parish of Copdock & Washbrook