

This report will be made public on  
7 March 2025

**Folkestone  
Town Council**



Report Number **C/25/382**

**To:** Full Council  
**Date:** 13 March 2025  
**Status:** Non-Exempt  
**Responsible Officer:** Town Clerk

**Subject:** MAYORAL PORTRAITS

**SUMMARY:** This report outlines a change to procedure in relation to the Mayoral portraits.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The Council is asked to approve the recommendations set out below because:

- a) The space where the Past Mayor's portraits are currently located in the Meeting Room at the Town Hall is limited.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note Report C/25/382
2. To approve the reduction in size for each individual Mayoral portrait
3. To approve the gifting of the current Mayoral portraits to each relevant Past Mayor

*Aims and Objectives – To preserve and enhance the culture and historic traditions of the town.*

*Financial Implications – One off cost for replacement portraits est. £200. Annual reduction in cost of producing future Mayor's portraits.*

*Equal Opportunities – Access to all.*

*Environmental Issues - No material implications.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of Folkestone Town Council in 2004, Mayor's portraits have been produced for each Mayor which are displayed in the Meeting Room.

## 2.0 CURRENT ARRANGEMENT

The Mayor's portraits are currently produced as A1 portraits, professionally framed and hung in the Mayor's Parlour, moving to the Meeting Room at the end of each Mayor's term.

## 3.0 PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT

To reproduce the existing Past Mayor's portraits as framed 12 x 8 inch portraits and to gift the existing 16 no. large portraits to Past Mayors, where ever possible.

## 4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Replacement Portraits (16 x £12)  
Printing & Frames £192

### Annual Cost

Current		Proposed	
Photographer	£85	Photographer	£85
Printing	£24	Printing & Frame	£12
Frame	£70		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£179</b>		<b>£97</b>

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The Council is asked to consider a change in procedure to allow sufficient space to continue displaying the Mayor's portraits in the Meeting Room. This will incur an initial one-off cost of £200 but would mean a small reduction in the annual cost for future Mayoral portraits.

### CONTACT OFFICER

If you have any queries about this report, please contact The Town Clerk of the Council.

Tel: 01303257946 or email [toni.brenchley@folkestone-tc.gov.uk](mailto:toni.brenchley@folkestone-tc.gov.uk) prior to the meeting.

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**Folkestone  
Town Council**



Report Number **C/25/383**

**To:** Full Council  
**Date:** 13 March 2025  
**Status:** Public Report  
**Responsible Officer:** Town Clerk

**Subject:** GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RISK  
ASSESSMENT AND INSURANCE REVIEW 2025/26  
C/25/383

**SUMMARY:**

This report updates the Governance and Accountability Risk Assessment and reviews the current levels of insurance.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The Council is asked to agree the recommendations below because:

- a) The Council is required to demonstrate that it has considered any risks which may affect its business.
- b) The Council must be adequately insured.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note Report C/25/383
2. To approve and adopt the Governance and Accountability Risk Assessment 2025/26
3. To approve the Insurance Review and any recommended amendments to insurance cover

*Aims and Objectives – To carry out a business risk assessment and make certain that the Council has adequate insurance cover*

*Financial Implications – The present budget for insurance premiums is adequate*

*Equal Opportunities – Equal opportunities for all*

# **Folkestone Town Council**

*Governance and Accountability*

*Risk Assessment*

*2025/26*

No.	Risk Description	Impact	Probability	Existing Measures Taken	Recommendations
1.	Failure to attract sufficient candidates for vacancies or elections	Low	Medium	Council activities published on website and in community magazine. Publicise elections & vacancies on notice boards, social media and website.	
2.	Councillors lack relevant skills, commitment or work in isolation.	Low	Medium	Councillors' skills are reviewed upon election. In-house and external training offered. Members Welcome Pack & Good Councillor Guide Town Clerk and officers roles clearly defined.	
3.	Lack of Strategy and Forward Planning.	Medium	Low	Council adopts a four year Corporate Plan which sets out key aims and objectives. Councillors skills are reviewed and appointments to committees are made utilising individual strengths and interests wherever possible.	
4.	Adverse publicity and the impact on the services and facilities offered to the public. Lack of consultation.	Low	Medium	Good working relationship with the local media to ensure that the public are informed of any future projects or events. Agendas and minutes of Council meetings are available to the public. The Council promotes full disclosure and transparency. Decisions delegated to the Town Clerk relating to the granting of a permission or license, affecting the rights of an individual or awarding a contract or incurring material expenditure are made available for viewing by the public and retained by the Council for 6 years	
5.	Breaking and entering into the Town Hall offices & museum.	High	Low	Intruder alarms and fire extinguishers fitted. Secure locks fitted. Record of key holders maintained. Emergency call-out measures in place. Alarms and fire protection equipment serviced at least annually. CCTV Coverage. Security Grille to rear door corridor.	

No.	Risk Description	Impact	Probability	Existing Measures Taken	Recommendations
6.	Damage to third party property or individuals.	High	Low	Public Liability Insurance with reputable insurance provider. Staff awareness of health and safety policy.	
7.	Loss or damage to Council properties, furniture and equipment.	High	Medium	Town Hall building and contents insured with reputable insurance provider. Furniture and equipment insured by the Town Council with reputable insurance provider. Maintenance of asset register. Regular maintenance of equipment including alarms and fire extinguishers. Staff presence during Museum opening hours. CCTV Coverage.	
8.	Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty.	Medium	Low	Fidelity Guarantee with reputable insurance provider - sufficient to cover a minimum of total reserves plus half of precept. Regular banking of cash receipts. Thorough vetting process for job applicants and annual staff reviews. Minimise distance between office and bank. Carry out banking at random times.	
9.	Loss of Council funds held in bank accounts.	High	Low	Fidelity Guarantee with reputable insurance provider - sufficient to cover a minimum of total reserves plus half of precept. Monthly bank reconciliations. Two approved signatures for all payments. Regular schedule of payments reports to Finance & General Purposes Committee. Internal Audit. External Audit.	
10.	Insolvency of insurance company.	High	Low	Use of one of the largest companies providing specialist cover for Councils.	Seek advice from the Financial Services Authority if in doubt regarding insurance company.
11.	Failure to keep proper financial records in accordance with statutory requirements.	High	Low	Regular financial reporting. Adoption of Financial Regulations. Internal Audit checks. Annual External Audit.	

No.	Risk Description	Impact	Probability	Existing Measures Taken	Recommendations
12.	Non-payment of bills.	High	Low	Appropriate staff training. Efficient financial systems. Appropriately trained staff.	
13.	Insufficient precept to provide Council services.	High	Low	Approval of budget by full Council. Provision of regular budget monitoring statements.	
14.	Insufficient reserves to meet unexpected expenditure.	High	Low	Regular monitoring of general reserves. Prudent budgeting.	
15.	Failing to comply with legislation and council policies.	High	Low	Qualified Town Clerk. All key legal and regulatory requirements are identified. Regular Committee meetings. Internal Audit. External Audit. Councillor and staff training. FTC employs the services of Peninsula as both HR and H&S consultants to assist with risk mitigation and competent person.	
16.	Failure to ensure that employment law, pension and PAYE/N.I. regulations are adhered to.	High	Low	Contracts of employment for all staff. Systems in place for updating records for changes in relevant legislation. Maintenance of accurate personnel files. Organogram in operation providing clarity of posts.	
17.	Unfair dismissal claims.	High	Low	Disciplinary policy and grievance procedure in place. All staff are offered training. All staff have an annual appraisal and regular meetings with the Town Clerk. All staff have a job description and receive a copy of the employee handbook. Seek advice from Peninsula to ensure regulations are correctly administered.	
18.	Loss of Key Staff	High	Low	Systems, plans and processes are documented wherever feasible.	Succession planning.



No.	Risk Description	Impact	Probability	Existing Measures Taken	Recommendations
				More than one member of staff trained in particular functions wherever possible. Training is offered to all staff. Formal Notice Period written into Contracts.	
19.	Physical and/or verbal abuse of staff and/or visitors.	High	Medium	CCTV coverage. Staff awareness of health and safety policy. Appropriate training for frontline staff. Employers' liability cover with reputable insurance provider. Risk assessments carried out for all activities undertaken by employees. Lone working policies, procedures and risk assessments	
20.	Failure to ensure HMRC regulations are met with regard to VAT and the construction industry scheme.	High	Low	Regular returns to HMRC. Systems in place for updating records for changes in relevant legislation. Appropriately experienced/trained staff.	
21.	Failure to comply with Health & Safety and Fire regulations.	High	Low	Annual review of Health & Safety Policy. Prominent display of Health & Safety and Fire Safety advice. Appropriately trained staff. External Competent Person appointed.	
22.	Failure to provide accurate reporting of Council business.	Medium	Low	Minutes properly numbered and paginated with a master copy in safekeeping. Minutes circulated appropriately. Minutes placed on website (in draft initially). Minutes approved at next meeting.	
23.	Failure to ensure the proper use of funds granted to local community groups.	Low	Low	Schedule of payments reported to Finance & General Purposes Committee. Internal Audit. External Audit. Feedback forms.	Review of feedback forms from successful applicants to confirm appropriate use of grants.
24.	Failure to respond to electors wishing to	Low	Low	Minutes placed on website. Meet statutory dates and comply with legislation.	



No.	Risk Description	Impact	Probability	Existing Measures Taken	Recommendations
	exercise their rights of inspection.			Advertising of end of year accounts and making them available to the public for inspection, as required under the Financial Regulations.	
25.	Failure to record members' interests, gifts and hospitality received.	Medium	Low	Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and a register of gifts and hospitality received, kept by Town Clerk. Disclosures of interest as item on agendas. Internal Audit check. Update declarations of interest by Councillors is Councillors responsibility when circumstances change.	Annual reminder sent to Councillors requesting that they update the disclosure of pecuniary interests register.
26.	Inappropriate use of amenities/facilities by third parties and community groups.	Medium	Low	Leases and agreements in place for use/hire of amenities/facilities by third parties and community groups. Annual review of Leases & Agreements.	
27.	Failure of Computer System in whole or part.	High	Medium	Service contract with reputable organisation. Virus protection and data backup via Microsoft Azure Cloud and physical disk. Multi-factor authentication enabled. Cyber Essentials certification. All PCs running Windows 11 and Microsoft 365 Business Premium. Staff Training.	
28.	Failure to comply with codes of practice for procurement of goods and services.	Medium	Low	Purchase order system. Contracts awarded in line with Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Procurement Policy. Adherence to codes of practice for procurement.	Review of Financial Regulations & Procurement Policy
29.	Failure to comply with GDPR & Freedom of Information Act	High	Low	Town Clerk appointed as Data Protection Officer. GDPR Fundamentals certification. Annual review of Data Protection and associated audits & procedures. Council adheres to the model publication scheme. The Council is registered with the ICO. Staff Training.	

No.	Risk Description	Impact	Probability	Existing Measures Taken	Recommendations
30.	Government Policy and changes in legislation	High	High	All proposed legal and regulatory changes affecting local authorities monitored and reviewed. Membership of NALC. KALC & SLCC ensures Council is always informed of any proposed changes.	

**INSURANCE SCHEDULE 2025/2026**

<b>Insurance</b>	<b>Asset Value *</b>	<b>Existing Cover</b>	<b>Recommended Adjustments</b>
<p><i>Buildings:</i>                      The Town Hall, 1-2 Guildhall Street                      Club House and Contents, Park Farm Road Allotments                      Loss of Rent (Town Hall)</p>	£700,000	£7,500,000 (Rebuild Value) £7,302 £60,000	
<p><i>Contents/All Risks:</i>                      Civic Regalia                      Furniture, Fixtures and Fittings                      Chambers/Cinema Furniture &amp; Kiosk                      Chambers/Cinema Screen &amp; Speaker System                      Other Contents and Consumable Stock                      Computer and Office Equipment                      Cash (in locked safes)                      Cash (in transit in the custody of an employee)                      Cash (in locked receptacles other than safes)                      Temporary Contents (Third Party Exhibition Items)                      Rented Items</p>	£95,893 £64,472 £28,300 £24,900 £34,308	£158,339 (See Note 1) £65,171 £38,461 £33,840 £4,265 £40,000 £5,000 £5,000 £500 £764,812 £5,966	
<p><i>Additional Items:</i>                      Street Furniture (inc. Leas Beacon)                      Speedwatch Equipment                      William Harvey Statue                      War Memorial                      Gurkha Memorial                      CCTV Equipment                      Christmas Lights                      Power Columns (Cheriton High Street)                      Folkestone Collection (including display cabinets)                      Minibus                      Bus Shelters                      Play Equipment</p>	£26,752 £2,251 £124,833 £59,073 £30,000 £175,374 £83,890 £4,400 £2,000,000 £61,055 £27,500 £150,294	£42,145 £3,442 £190,947 £90,359 £41,995 £161,684 £90,000 £5,980 £2,919,897 £100,000 £33,206 £170,000	
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>Asset Value *</b>	<b>Existing Cover</b>	<b>Recommended Adjustments</b>

Public Liability	£15,000,000	
Employer's Liability	£10,000,000	
Hirer's Liability	£2,000,000	
Libel and Slander	£250,000	
<i>Motor Vehicle:</i>		
Damage to Property	£5,000,000	
Repairs	No limit	
Motor Legal Expenses and Uninsured Loss Recovery	£100,000	
Fidelity Guarantee (All Members and Employees)	£2,000,000 (See Note 2)	
Personal Accident (Accident and Assault Cover)	£500,000 any one person £2,000,000 any one incident	

\* It is an Audit requirement that assets, as shown in the balance sheet, are not revalued but remain at purchase price. However, they are insured at replacement or rebuild value.

#### Notes

1. The Council's Civic Regalia was professionally valued by a NAG Registered Valuer in August 2006. The Insurance Company has applied its standard annual increase (index linked) to all items.
2. The external auditor recommends that the fidelity guarantee insurance should be at least equivalent to cash and investments at year end plus half the precept. At the end of 2023/24 this equated to:

Cash and Investments	£653,880
Half Precept	£476,485
	<u>£1,130,365</u>

The cover of £2,000,000 is sufficient to comply with the external auditor's advice.

This report will be made public on 7 March 2025

Folkestone  
Town Council



Report Number **C/25/384**

**To:** Full Council  
**Date:** 13 March 2025  
**Status:** Public Report  
**Responsible Officer:** Town Clerk

**Subject:** TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT  
C/25/384

**SUMMARY:** This report provides an update on the treasury management activities that have taken place during 2024/25 and attaches the proposed Investment Policy for 2025/26.

#### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to agree the recommendations set out below because:-

- a) The Council must have regard to the Financial Codes when carrying out its duties under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- b) The Financial Standing Orders require that the Council receives an annual report on its treasury management activities.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note Report C/25/384.
2. To adopt the Investment Policy, as attached for the financial year 2025/26.

Aims and Objectives – *Quality Council Status*  
Financial Implications – *To maximise investment income at no risk to the Council*  
Equal Opportunities – *Equal access to services*  
Environmental Issues – *N/A*

#### 1. REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES FOR 2024/25

- 1.1 The Council's main source of income for 2024/25 was the Precept. In accordance with good practice and the Council's approved policy, majority of the surplus monies were invested in Folkestone & Hythe District Council and CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

- 1.2 The bank rate decreased steadily throughout the year from 5.25% in August 2024 to 4.50% in February 2025.
- 1.3 Some additional funds have been held on deposit and interest of approximately £6,319 has been received.
- 1.4 The Council opened a new investment account with CCLA this year with an initial deposit of £240,000 using the investment balance from Folkestone & Hythe District Council's investment account. The Council is committed to diversify the Council funds to secure capital and reserves invested, ensure the funds are readily available for expenditure when needed and potentially receive additional investment interest.
- 1.5 The Council had the following amounts invested/on deposit at the dates shown:-

	<u>Investment</u>	<u>Savings Accounts</u>
At 31 March 2024:	£480,000	£28,168
At 3 March 2025:	£240,000	£396,112

The following bank balances as at 3 March 2025 are listed below:

#### **HSBC Current Account**

- Primarily used for processing payments to suppliers and staff salaries.
- Account bank balance at £87,875.16.

#### **Unity Trust Bank Current Account**

- Secondary current account for processing payments to suppliers and staff salaries.
- Account bank balance at £74,268.63.

#### **HSBC Receipts Account**

- Used for collecting payments on the reception till for Museum workshops, retail and allotment payments.
- Receipts Account bank balance £8,052.

#### **HSBC Deposit Account**

- Used for holding precept funds and earn interest on investments.
- Current AER interest at 1.69%.
- Interest received from 1 April 2024 to 28 February 2025 is £4,761.
- Deposit Account bank balance £314,554.

#### **Cambridge Building Society Council Saver Account**

- Variable interest is received annually in April.
- Current AER interest at 2.40%
- Interest received from April 2024 to February 2025 is £1,558
- Savings account bank balance at £81,558

### **Folkestone & Hythe District Council Investment Account**

- Loan to Folkestone & Hythe District Council current balance of £240,000
- Variable interest average at 3.8%
- Interest is received half yearly from 1 April 2024 to January 2025 is £18,345.
- Next investment interest will be received in April 2025.

## **2. INVESTMENT POLICY 2025/26**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the attached Investment Policy for 2025/26 which complies with the requirements of the Local Authorities Regulations 2003.





# Folkestone Town Council's Investment Policy

## Investment Policy

### 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Folkestone Town Council acknowledges its responsibility on behalf of the community and the importance of prudently investing any reserves held by the council.
- 1.2 This strategy complies with the revised requirements set out in the Guidance on Local Government Investments issued by the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- 1.3 The council defines its treasury management objective as "the management of the council's cash flows, its banking and money market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of best value performance consistent with those risks."
- 1.4 The Local Government Act 2003 states that a local authority may invest: - for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment - for the purpose of management of its financial affairs.
- 1.5 Where a council builds up balances these must be safeguarded by investing in an appropriate account. Investing balances must be done prudently.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The general policy establishes formal objectives, practices and reporting arrangements for the effective management and control of the Council's treasury management activities and the associated risks.

The council's investment priorities are:

1. Security – Protecting the capital and reserves invested from loss.
2. Liquidity – Ensuring the funds invested are available for expenditure when needed.
3. Optimum return on investment.

The council's investment duties are:

1. All investments to be made in sterling.
2. Investments to be spread over different providers where appropriate to minimise risk.

3. The council to monitor the risk of loss on investments reviewed on a regular basis.
- 2.2 The procedure for undertaking investments, considering the need for timely and speedy placing of deals shall be documented by the Responsible Financial Officer and approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee or Council before any investments are placed.
- 2.3 The Council shall diversify its reserves between multiple relatively highly rated UK banks and building societies.
- 2.4 A significant percentage of the Council's bulked reserves shall be placed on interest bearing term/notice deposits.
- 2.5 The Town Council may also invest in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

### **3.0 REPORTS**

- 3.1 Investment forecasts for the coming financial year are considered when the budget is prepared.
- 3.2 During each financial year, the Finance and General Purposes Committee or Council and Town Clerk shall report to the full Council any investments made in line with this Strategy.

### **4.0 REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

- 4.1 Any revisions to this policy shall be approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee or Full Council.
- 4.2 The Finance and General Purposes Committee or Full Council shall review this policy annually and recommend any proposed changes prior to the commencement of the new financial year.

<i>Date Adopted</i>	<i>25 Jan 2024 (F&amp;GP 1627)</i>	<i>Review Date</i>	<i>2025</i>
<i>Revised Dates</i>			

———— **POLICY ENDS HERE** ————



## FOLKESTONE TOWN COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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## 1. General

- 1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.4. In these Financial Regulations:
  - 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.
  - "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
  - "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
  - 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
  - *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England or Governance and Accountability for Local Councils in Wales – A Practitioners Guide jointly published by One Voice Wales and the Society of Local Council Clerks in Wales.
  - 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
  - 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.
- 1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The Town Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO;
  - acts under the policy direction of the council;
  - administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
  - determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
  - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
  - ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
  - seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
  - produces financial management information as required by the council.
- 1.6. **The council must not delegate any decision regarding:**

- **setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);**
- **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**
- **approving accounting statements;**
- **approving an annual governance statement;**
- **borrowing;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors**

1.7. In addition, the council shall:

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;

## **2. Risk management and internal control**

- 2.1. **The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.**
- 2.2. The Clerk with the Finance Officer shall prepare, for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk with the Finance Officer shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.
- 2.4. **At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.**
- 2.5. **The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:**
- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
  - **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
  - **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
  - **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
  - **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
  - **ensure division of responsibilities.**
- 2.6. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair or a bank signatory shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the Finance Officer. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the council Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- 2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. The council shall

put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

### 3. Accounts and audit

- 3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.2. **The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonable accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**
  - **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
  - **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;**
- 3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- 3.4. The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.5. **The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.**
- 3.6. **Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit** and shall, as directed by the council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.
- 3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.
- 3.8. The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:
  - is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
  - reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
  - can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
  - has no involvement in the management or control of the council

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

- perform any operational duties for the council;
- initiate or approve accounting transactions;
- direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.

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

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

#### 4. Budget and precept

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

4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the Personnel Committee at least annually in February for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the Council or relevant committee.

4.3. No later than November each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year

4.4. Each committee (if any) shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the Finance and General Purposes Committee no later than the end of November each year.

4.5. The draft budget with any committee proposals, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and a recommendation made to the council.

4.6. Having considered the proposed budget, the council shall determine its council tax (England) requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.

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

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



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

## 5. Procurement

- 5.1. **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from at least three suppliers.
- 5.2. Every contract shall comply with these the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.3. **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.4. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.10) obtain prices as follows:
- 5.5. For contracts estimated to exceed £60,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers agreed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee OR advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.
- 5.6. **For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation<sup>1</sup> regarding the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices about the award of contracts.**
- 5.7. Where the value is between £1,000 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.
- 5.8. Where the value is between £3,001 and £25,000, the Clerk shall try to obtain 3 quotes from suppliers.
- 5.9. For smaller purchases, the clerk shall seek to achieve value for money.
- 5.10. **Contracts must not be split into smaller lots to avoid compliance with these rules.**
- 5.11. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:
- i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;

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<sup>1</sup> The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website if they advertise contract opportunities and also to publicise the award of contracts over £30,000 including VAT, regardless of whether they were advertised.

- ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
- iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;
- iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.

5.12. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the council or to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.

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

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

- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items below £3,000 excluding VAT.
- the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council or Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for any items above £3,000 and below £10,000 excluding VAT.
- Finance and General Purposes Committee or council for all items of expenditure within their delegated budgets for items above £10,000 excluding VAT.
- In respect of grants, a duly authorised committee within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council.

5.15. No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order unless instructed to do so in advance by a resolution of the council or make any contract on behalf of the council.

5.16. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £10,000 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council or relevant committee as soon as practicable thereafter.

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

5.18. Copies of orders shall be retained.

## **6. Banking and payments**

6.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO or Finance Officer and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The arrangements shall be reviewed annually for security and efficiency.

- 6.2. The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing.
- 6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked by the RFO. Where the certification of invoices is done as a batch, this shall include a statement by the RFO that all invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO.
- 6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.
- 6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking or cheque
- 6.6. The Clerk and Finance Officer shall have delegated authority to authorise payments in the following circumstances:
  - i. any payments of up to £3,000 excluding VAT, within an agreed budget.
  - ii. payments of up to £10,000 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises.
  - iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 or to comply with contractual terms, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of the council, where the Clerk and Finance Officer certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council or Finance and General Purposes Committee.

## **7. Electronic payments**

- 7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO and Finance Officer shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. The Clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.
- 7.2. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.
- 7.3. Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment using the online banking system.
- 7.4. Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment online and a printout of the transaction confirming that the payment has been made shall be appended to the invoice for audit purposes.

- 7.5. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next Finance and General Purposes meeting.
- 7.6. Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.
- 7.7. Remembered password facilities other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

## **8. Cheque payments**

- 8.1. Cheques or orders for payment in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two bank signatories.
- 8.2. A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.
- 8.3. To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.

## **9. Payment cards**

- 9.1. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and the Finance Officer will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £1,000.
- 9.2. A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the RFO.
- 9.3. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and Finance Officer and any balance shall be paid in full each month.

## **10. Petty Cash**

- 10.1. The RFO can maintain a petty cash float/impress account of up to £300 and may provide petty cash to officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses.
  - a) Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept, along with receipts to substantiate every payment.
  - b) Cash income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.

## **11. Payment of salaries and allowances**

- 11.1. **As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**
- 11.2. **Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.**
- 11.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or by the Personnel Sub-Committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and

conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council or by the Personnel Sub-Committee.

- 11.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.
- 11.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.
- 11.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook.
- 11.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council or to the Personnel Sub-Committee, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council or by the Personnel Sub-Committee.
- 11.8. Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

## **12. Loans and investments**

- 12.1. Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council or Finance and General Purposes and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.
- 12.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council or by the Finance and General Purposes, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.
- 12.3. The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 12.4. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 12.5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.
- 12.6. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

## **13. Income**

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

- 13.2. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.
- 13.3. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.
- 13.4. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.
- 13.5. The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.
- 13.6. Any income that is the property of a charitable trust shall be paid into a charitable bank account. Instructions for the payment of funds due from the charitable trust to the council (to meet expenditure already incurred by the authority) will be given by the Managing Trustees of the charity meeting separately from any council meeting.

#### **14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works**

- 14.1. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.
- 14.2. Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

#### **15. Stores and equipment**

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

#### **16. Assets, properties and estates**

- 16.1. The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.
- 16.2. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest,

tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

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

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

16.5. No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £1,000. In each case a written report shall be provided to council or Finance and General Purposes with a full business case.

## **17. Insurance**

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

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

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

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

## **18. Charities**

18.1. Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Clerk and RFO shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial reports made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk and RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.

## **19. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations**

19.1. The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of Clerk or Finance Officer. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or



proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.

- 19.2. The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.
- 19.3. The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

### **Appendix 1 - Tender process**

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

# Folkestone Town Council's Social Media Policy



## 1. About this policy

The aim of this policy is to set out guidelines and principles to Councillors, Council staff and others who engage with the Council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

It deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, X (Twitter), Google+, WhatsApp, Wikipedia, Instagram, Tumblr and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for Council purposes as well as personal use that may affect the Council in any way.

This policy is in place to minimise the risks to the Council through the use of social media. Social media content that is contentious, which disparages or reflects poorly on the Town Council should not be responded to, but instead reported to the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

This policy covers all Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers of the Town Council, all of whom have a responsibility to ensure the success of this policy.

## 2. Principles Guiding Use of Social Media

Social Media will be used as follows.

- a) To inform the community and to promote to a variety of audiences, the work of Folkestone Town Council; through promotion of its actions, decisions and the services and facilities it provides.
- b) To advertise and promote engagement in the democratic process and to widen participation across the community in the affairs of the Town Council and the community it represents.
- c) To advertise and promote the work of its partner agencies such as the Borough and County Councils, Police, and other local service providers.
- d) To disseminate community news of interest such as road closures, planning and licensing applications, events and so on.
- e) To listen to conversations and issues relevant to the local area.

Social Media will not be used as follows.

- a) To enter or participate in, online debates or arguments about the Town Council's work or activities.
- b) Bring the Council into disrepute, or post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Council.
- c) Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks; engage in personal attacks, online fights or hostile communications.
- d) To canvas, promote or advertise any political ideological policy or any political party or the decisions or actions of any individual Councillor.

- e) Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other Town Council policy.
- f) Saying anything which might be interpreted as abusive, defamatory, in contempt of court or that could be interpreted as such, or by endorsing comments from others, for example, by liking or reposting.
- g) To make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- h) to defame or disparage the Council's, staff, Councillors or any third party;
- i) to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- j) Social media will not be used to:
  - i. harass or bully in any way;
  - ii. unlawfully discriminate against others;
  - iii. breach the council's GDPR policies;
  - iv. breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.

### **3. Guidance for Councillors**

If Councillors communicate on any social media platforms on behalf of themselves or any other organisations with which they are affiliated with they should state on any such profile that any views expressed do not represent those of the Council. Councillors should not present personal opinions as that of the Council or present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Council.

Councillors should be mindful of how they communicate in a private capacity, especially on social media. Postings on social media sites, places information into the public domain - even when the social media platform is limited to 'friends' or a small group of people. This is because anyone reading the post can forward it on and share the information. Councillors must, therefore, avoid criticising the Council or their colleagues on any social media platform, even if they have made it clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the Council.

Social media accounts on behalf of the Council or the services it runs or appearing to represent the Council should only be created with the approval of the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

Should guidance be needed, advice should be sought from the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

### **4. Guidance for employees, volunteers and contractors**

*This and all clauses below are intended for staff - to include employees, workers, apprentices, contract, agency workers and volunteers.*

Individuals should make it clear in social media postings, or in their personal profile, that they are speaking on their own behalf.

Individuals must be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that they are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.

If an individual discloses their affiliation with the Town Council on their profile or in any social media postings, they must state that their views do not represent those of the Council, (unless authorised to speak on the Council's behalf). They should also ensure that their profile and any content posted is consistent with the professional image that is presented to the public and colleagues.

Should guidance be needed, advice should be sought from the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

### **Personal use of social media during working hours**

Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it is accessed on the individual's own device, does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content. Personal use must not interfere with employment responsibilities or productivity and must be compliant with this policy.

### **Prohibited use for Staff**

Staff must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the Town Council's interests or reputation, even indirectly and should not express opinions on the Council's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. Any staff member who is contacted for comments about the organisation for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, should direct the enquiry to the Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk and should not respond without their written approval.

Staff may be required to undergo training before posting on the Council's behalf, the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk may impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to staff activities.

Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

## **5. Social media and public comments**

In order to ensure that comments posted on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, the public are asked to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Council's social media accounts for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

Messages sent via social media will not be considered as contacting the Town Council for official purposes and therefore the Council, is not obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the Town Clerk and/or members of the Council by emailing.

The Town Council retains the right to remove comments or content that includes any of the following.

- Obscene or racist content.
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
- Potentially libellous statements.
- Plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright.
- Private, personal information published without consent.
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum.
- Commercial promotions or spam.
- Material which alleges a breach of the Council's policy or the law.

The Council's response to any communication which fails to meet the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any comments posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page. The Council may post a statement that 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'. If the post alleges a breach of a Council policy or the law the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

## **6. Monitoring**

The Town Council reserves the right to monitor and review, without further notice, staff and Councillor activities, social media postings and activities, to ensure that its rules are being complied with and used for legitimate business purposes.

Day-to-day responsibility for the operation of this policy will be undertaken by the Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk.

## **7. Breach of this policy**

### Breach of the policy by a Councillor

Any breach of this Social Media policy, by a Councillor, may constitute a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct. The Council's Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way that it does to written or verbal communication.

### Breach of this policy by a Staff Member/Volunteer

Breach of this policy by a staff member or volunteer may result in invocation of the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

Breach of this policy by a Contractor

Any breach of this policy by a contractor will be handled under the terms of their contract.

Any breach of this policy may lead to a requirement to remove any social media content considered to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in subsequent action such as recourse to disciplinary procedure or action as a potential Code of Conduct breach.

**8. Review of Policy**

This Policy will be reviewed every four years by the Personnel Sub-Committee following consultation with staff. However, interim revisions will be made if required.

<i>Date Adopted</i>	<i>???? (Full Council Min. ???)</i>	<i>Review Date</i>	<i>???? 2027</i>
<i>Revised Dates</i>			