



# BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

www.boxleyparishcouncil.org.uk

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To all members of the Council, public and press

13 May 2014

There will be a meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** on **Tuesday 20 May 2014** at the Parish Office, Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 p.m.

1. **Apologies and non-attendance.**  
To receive apologies from members unable to attend.
2. **Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.**  
Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations or lobbying on items on this agenda.
3. **Minutes of the meetings of 11 March and 12 May 2014.**  
To consider the minutes of the meetings and if in order to sign as a true record. Minutes of 11 March previously circulated; minutes of 12 May (page 3).
4. **Matters Arising From the Minutes.**  
None as all items are included in the main agenda.

## **Adjournment to enable members of the public to address the meeting.**

5. **Financial report.**
  - 5.1 Reconciliation of accounts report as at 12 May 2014 (pages 3-4).
  - 5.2 Income/Expenditure report as at 31 March 2014, report to follow. Note: This represents the out-turn for FY 2013/14.
  - 5.3 Income/Expenditure report as at 12 May 2014, report to follow.
  - 5.4 Investment Bonds, see report (page 4).
  - 5.5 Precept issues, see report (page 4-5).
  - 5.6 Budget issues, see report (pages 5).
6. **Policy and procedures reviews.**
  - 6.1 Health and Safety Policy, see report (pages 5-11).
  - 6.2 Training and Statement of Intent, see report (pages 11-13).
  - 6.3 Financial Regulations, see report (pages 13-21).
  - 6.4 Internet Access by members of the Public, using the Parish Councils computers Risk Assessment see report (page 21-22).
  - 6.5 Internet Access by members of the Public, using the Parish Councils computers Policy see report (pages 22-23).
  - 6.6 BPC Policy for staff and councillors. Acceptable use of computer facilities, email and the internet see report (pages 23-25).
7. **Personnel matters.**  
TOIL, leave and leave/sickness cover. A report will be given at the meeting. Confidential report enclosed for members.  
For reasons of personal confidentiality the Chairman may recommend that part of this item be considered in closed session with the public and press excluded.

8. **Contingency Fund.**

To consider the following requests for draw-down of funds by Committees:

- 8.1 Purchase of noticeboard for allotments (Estates). A wall mounted noticeboard needs to be purchased. The cost is likely to be in the region of £180-£200 (£160 plus delivery charge).
- 8.2 To consider any requirement for funding of equipment to help cope with MBC's cessation of supplying paper copies of planning applications (Environment).

For reasons of commercial confidentiality the Chairman may recommend that the next item be considered in closed session with the public and press excluded.

- 8.3 Drainage improvements to the site entrance. Confidential report enclosed for members.

9 **Grant Requests.**

Friends of Boxley Church. Application for a grant towards the public liability insurance for the Flower Festival. Details enclosed for committee members, available to other members on request.

10 **Matters for Information.**

None.

11 **Date of Next Meeting.**

Tuesday 15 July 2014 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 p.m. Items for the agenda must be with the parish office no later than 7 July.

Pauline Bowdery  
Clerk to the Council.

Issues to be returned to agenda as they develop. Exporting of SCRIBE reports into excel review due July 2014.

**Note to all councillors:** you are welcome to attend meetings of committees of which you are not a member but only committee members may vote.

**Supporting agenda papers for the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on Tuesday 20 May 2014.**

**The Chairman will assume that these have been read prior to the meeting.**

Councillors wishing to suggest changes to any policy document or procedure in this agenda should notify the office, in writing, at least three working days in advance of the meeting. This will allow details to be circulated at the meeting (or in advance if particularly contentious).

**Item 3. Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade on Tuesday 12 May 2014 commencing at 7.28 p.m. Purpose of item: approval.**

Councillors present: Mr Ivor Davies (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mr Vic Davies, Mr P Dengate, Mr Bob Hinder, Mrs W Hinder, Mrs K Macklin and Mr G Smith.

- 1. Apologies and non-attendance.**  
There were none as all members were present.
- 2. Declarations of Interest or Lobbying.**  
There were none.

The meeting was not adjourned as no members of the public were present.

- 3. 2013/2014 End of Year Return.**  
Members **received** and **noted** the End of Year Return information. It was **agreed** that a recommendation that the return is signed would be made to the parish council.
- 4. Date of Next Meeting.**  
Tuesday 20 May 2014 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 p.m.  
Meeting closed at 7.31 pm.

**Item 5. Financial report Purpose of item: information and action.**

**Item 5.1 Reconciliation of accounts report for 12 May 2014**

**Bank Reconciliation at 12/05/2014**

Cash in Hand 01/04/2014	
<b>ADD</b>	328,555.48
Receipts 01/04/2014 - 12/05/2014	100,491.37
<b>SUBTRACT</b>	429,046.85
Payments 01/04/2014 - 12/05/2014	15,877.92

<b>A</b>	<b>Cash in Hand 12/05/2014</b>	<b>413,168.93</b>
	(per Cash Book)	
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements	
	Cash	150.00
	HSBC Beechen Hall	36,536.40
	Coop General Account	115,573.01
	Coop Investment Bond	0.00
	All & Leicester Invest Bond	0.00
	Santander Investment Bond	100,000.00
	Clydesdale Investment	0.00
	Natwest Fixed Rate Deposit	80,000.00
	Natwest Fixed 3 month	0.00
	Barclays Bank	90,138.25
		<b>422,397.66</b>
	Less unrepresented cheques	
	As attached	10,217.74
		412,179.92
	Plus unrepresented receipts	
	As attached	989.01
<b>B</b>	<b>Adjusted Bank Balance</b>	<b>413,168.93</b>

**A = B Checks out OK**

#### **Item 5.4 Investment Bonds**

The parish council is in the process of setting up the following investment accounts/bonds. Funds will be transferred from the Cooperative Bank and the matured NATWEST bond.

Lloyds Bank. 3 month bond £45,000  
12 month bond £80,000

Santander 12 month bond reinvestment of 105,095 plus £20,000 to increase sum to approx. £125,000.

Spare funds from the HSBC account will be used to set up

HSBC 6 month bond £25,000.

An additional HSBC bond (6 months) may be set up to take some more funds from out of the Cooperative Bank Account.

#### **Item 5.5 Precept issues.**

Members will have noted that their MBC council tax demands show a 6% reduction in the precept whereas the parish council had set the 2014/15 precept at the same level as that for 2013/14. This was queried with MBC.

It seems that, through an administrative error, the parish council's request for a precept of £97,931 was processed by MBC as £91,931, a shortfall of £6,000. MBC have noted that a mistake occurred but, after taking legal advice, say that they are not able to

correct the error because of the disproportionate cost in reissuing the requisite council tax demands for each property in Boxley Parish. MBC are not in a position to augment parish funds directly. It is unlikely that this will present problems for the council in FY 2014/15 as, in case of need, a draw-down can be made from reserves.

However, this does mean that next year it is likely that the precept will need to be raised to at least the intended FY 2014/15 level. It is therefore important that this issue is carefully managed so that residents are fully aware of the situation both now and when the new precept is set next year. It is planned to place an article in next month's Boxley Parish Mail.

Members should also be aware that there may be a further knock-on effect of this error. If, as has been mooted, the Government introduces a cap on precept increases next year of say 3% and the parish council decides to increase its precept by 6%, it may trigger a mandatory referendum. As the cost of a referendum would probably exceed any gain, common sense may need to prevail. The Clerk will monitor the progress of the legislation and advise the council of any implications.

#### **Item 5.6 Budget issues.**

Salaries budget. Late last year the Government announced that small employers would benefit from a £2,000 reduction in their NIC contributions. Although full details were not known, quite reasonably this figure was used in calculating the budget. Unfortunately the Government has decided that local authorities, including parish councils, will not be eligible for the deduction. This has resulted in a potential shortfall of £2,000 in the budget.

<b>Item 6.1 Health and Safety Policy.</b> <i>Purpose of item: information and decision.</i>
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To review. Some minor additions/amendments have been made to the document and, where significant, these are shown as underlined. The whole has been re-branded as a formal policy document rather than a "policy statement"

### Health and Safety Policy

#### **Part I – The Policy.**

1.1 It is the policy of the Council to meet at all times its obligations, both legal and as a good employer, to provide and monitor safe and healthy working conditions and systems of work for all its members and employees and to provide such information, training and supervision as may be required for this purpose. The Council is fully aware of its Duty of Care for the health and safety of visitors and others who may be affected by its activities and this should be borne in mind at all times.

Under current legislation, all hirers of the hall are responsible for the health and safety of their clients or guests<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Part II – Organisational Responsibilities.**

##### 1. Overall Responsibility.

The Clerk has overall responsibility for ensuring

- (a) the provisions and implementation of the Health and Safety Policy; and
- (b) its annual review.

##### 2. Detailed Responsibilities.

2.1 In particular the Clerk is responsible for:-

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<sup>1</sup> Regular and casual hirers are given a briefing as part of their 'welcome' to the hall. The briefings include a walk around the hall, kitchen, foyer and toilets. Fire doors, alarms and extinguishers are pointed out and hirers are reminded of the need to keep fire doors clear etc. Signs reinforce the health and safety issues as does the information folder left with casual hirers.

- (a) Establishing safe systems of work and procedures for carrying out the Health and Safety Policy of the Council, incorporating any regulations, approved codes of practice and other relevant legislation.
- (b) Ensuring that safe working procedures and safe systems of work are implemented and followed by staff and that a safe working environment is provided for them (see Appendix A). This applies also to contractors working on the Council's premises and land (see Appendix B).
- (c) Ensuring that all employees receive adequate training, information and supervision to maintain safe standards (see Appendix C)
- (d) Ensuring all safety rules are observed and that protective clothing and equipment is worn or used where required.
- (e) Ensuring that all machinery and equipment is properly maintained and safe to use and that guards are in position.
- (f) Ensuring that the mental welfare of all employees is protected as far as the Council is able and that its responsibility to identify and manage stress in the work place is recognised.

2.2. All employees are expected to co-operate fully with their Line Manager and others to achieve and maintain a healthy and safe workplace and to take reasonable care of themselves and others and of the plant and equipment they may use.

2.3. All employees are required to:

- (a) Make themselves familiar with and conform to the Council's Health and Safety Policy.
- (b) Observe safety rules at all times.
- (c) Where required, wear protective clothing and use the appropriate safety devices provided.
- (d) Report to their immediate Supervisor all accidents, injuries to persons and damage to vehicles, plant and equipment.
- (e) Know the location of first aid facilities and the identity of trained first aiders.
- (f) Report all safety hazards as a matter of urgency to their immediate supervisor.
- (g) Know what to do in the case of fire or other emergency and the location of firefighting equipment.
- (h) Maintain good housekeeping at all times.
- (i) Observe safe standards of behaviour and dress.
- (j) Not to enter into any kind of horseplay or practical joking.

2.4 It is the policy of this Council that all employees shall receive training in all safety aspects of their occupation. Courses, where necessary, will be held for this purpose.

2.5 It is the duty of all staff to carry out a visual safety inspection of plant and equipment prior to using the machinery.

2.6 It is the duty of the Clerk to investigate all accidents and to submit a full and prompt report to the Chairman of the Council and Chairman of the relevant committee. Where necessary the Clerk will issue instructions to ensure such accidents are not repeated and where appropriate make recommendation on accident prevention.

2.7 It is the responsibility of the Clerk to monitor the maintenance and condition of all plant and equipment and to submit an annual report for consideration by the relevant committee on obsolete machinery or which otherwise needs replacement.

### **Part III – General Arrangements.**

#### **1. First Aid**

The First Aid Box is located in the kitchen at Beechen Hall. The Caretaker and Clerk are responsible for carrying out periodic checks to ensure the contents are adequately maintained.

The Clerk is a trained First Aider.

The Assistant Clerk has training in the use of the defibrillator located on the south wall of the main hall.

## 2. Accidents, Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences.

2.1 It is the responsibility of the Clerk/staff to record all such incidents in the Accident Book and where necessary the Clerk to report these injuries<sup>2</sup>, diseases and other dangerous occurrences to the Health and Safety Executive, normally by telephoning RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences). The Clerk is responsible for a periodic review of the accident book.

2.2 The accident book is located in the parish office at Beechen Hall.

## 3. Fire Safety

3.1 Personal Responsibility. All persons should be conscious that fire is an ever-present danger and be conversant with the Council's evacuation procedures and the action to be taken in the event of fire.

3.2 Escape Routes. It is the responsibility of the Clerk or other named person to see that escape routes and passageways are kept clear at all times.

3.3 Fire Extinguishers. It is the responsibility of the Clerk to organise an annual inspection of all fire extinguishers on premises administered by the Council and to ensure replenishment/replacement whenever necessary.

3.3 Fire Alarms. The Clerk or other named person will test the fire alarm every 2 weeks and note that this has been done in the record book provided for this purpose.

3.4 Emergency Lighting. The Clerk or other named person will test the emergency lighting every 4 weeks and note that this has been done in the record book provided for this purpose.

3.4 Fire drills for office staff will be carried out periodically to test the adequacy of these procedures and a record kept. Regular hirers will be given the opportunity to book fire drills.

## 4. Training<sup>3</sup>.

4.1 It is the duty of the Clerk to issue to all newly appointed staff<sup>4</sup> with a copy of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and such supplemental information as is applicable to that person's duties and responsibilities.

4.3 It is the duty of the Clerk to ensure that all new staff receive adequate training in all safety aspects of their occupation.

## 5. Contractors and Visitors.

5.1 Where contractors and sub-contractors are engaged by the Council, they must ensure that they and those working under them comply with the responsibilities and duties set out in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and any subsequent legislation (see appendix A).

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<sup>2</sup> If the Clerk considers that it is a serious accident (medical intervention is needed) then the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Estates Committee and the Chairman of the Parish Council will be informed as soon as possible. All accidents are to be reported at the next Estates Committee meeting

<sup>3</sup> The parish council has Training – statement of intent.

<sup>4</sup> References to staff also cover any trainee or person who may be located at the office for over 24 hours.

- 5.2 The Parish Council shall ensure that those not in the employment of the Council, including the general public, are not exposed to risk to their safety or health when on the Council's premises.
- 5.3 Contractors must ensure that any electrical appliances brought on to Council premises shall be safe, in good working order and used in a safe manner.
- 5.4 Contractors are expected to follow the general advice for safe working set out in Appendix B to this statement.
- 5.5 Caretakers must follow the opening up and briefing procedures when welcoming casual hirers to the hall<sup>5</sup>.

## Appendix A

### *GUIDANCE TO EMPLOYEES*

#### OFFICES

##### 1. HEATING, LIGHTING AND VENTILATION

- a) Temperature should reach a minimum of 60.8°F after the first hour of working time and be maintained between 60.0 and 60.8 degrees throughout the working day.
- b) Free standing heaters must not be used unless specifically authorised by the Clerk or Assistant Clerk. When these are so authorised, they must comply fully with Fire Regulations and the area around them must be kept clear of any paper or other flammable materials, and be sited away from desks and chairs.
- c) Office lighting. Desks should be placed to gain the maximum amount of light. Free-standing desk lights should be avoided or placed so as to minimise the danger of trailing electrical leads.

##### 2. ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

- a) All portable electrical equipment shall be regularly checked by a qualified person as part of the hall's electrical safety check, undertaken every 18 months.
- b) Mains must not be overloaded. It is important that the correct socket outlet and plug top face (where these are available) is used for each item of electrical equipment.
- c) Only electrical equipment provided by the Council should be used and electric points must not be overloaded by means of multi-adaptors. Where possible all mains sockets should be switched off when not in use.
- d) Supply leads across floors to desks etc. should not present a hazard by trailing across areas of access. Such extension leads are for temporary use only.
- e) Defective equipment must never be used. Staff should not attempt to effect repairs to electrical equipment, unless competent to do so.

##### 3. FURNITURE, FITTINGS AND EQUIPMENT

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<sup>5</sup> This includes a mini health and safety procedure stressing the need to keep fire exits clear etc.

- a) All heavy equipment and storage units should preferably be placed against the wall.
- b) Heavy equipment and furniture must not be moved by individuals.
- c) Office equipment whether manually or electrically operated, must not be used by unauthorised, untrained personnel.
- d) Filing cabinets should always have sufficient weight in the bottom drawer to prevent the cabinet from tipping when a full top drawer is opened. Filing cabinet and desk drawers must always be closed immediately after use. Damaged or defective cabinets must not be used.
- e) High shelves should only be reached through the use of steps provided for that purpose. It is dangerous to stand on desks and chairs, particularly those fitted with castors and this should be avoided at all times.
- f) Work stations for office staff using computers etc. should conform to the guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) concerning position, seating and work practices.

#### CARETAKING AND CLEANING

1. It is essential that all labelled instructions on containers and packages are read and followed. Products, particularly those products containing hydrocarbon and other flammable solvents, should be stored away from extreme low temperatures, heat sources and naked lights. Additional information can be found sources on the HSE website under Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)
2. Appropriate protective clothing, such as gloves and overalls must be worn when handling corrosive substances.
3. Care must be taken to avoid ingestion, inhalation and skin contact of all chemical substances. Spillage must be cleaned up immediately while observing all precautions.
4. Consideration must be given to the possibility of hazardous by-products that may arise from reaction between various products or from products exposed to heat or fire. Particularly in the case of bleach which will produce chlorine gas if mixed with acidic cleansers (e.g. Harpic) or other acidic substances.
5. Step-ladders which are used to gain access to heights must be in good condition and free from defects. The legal requirements applicable to working at heights must be observed at all times, including the presence of a second person where this is required.
6. All electrical cleaning equipment must have been wired up by a competent person. Any deterioration in electrical connections or wiring should be reported immediately.
7. Floors must be treated only with approved non-slip products. The method of application and quantities to be applied should be that recommended by the manufacturer.
8. YOU SHOULD REPORT:

- a) Structural faults which appear dangerous.
- b) Floor coverings, etc. which cause a tripping hazard.
- c) Faulty equipment.
- d) All accidents, however small, should be reported.

YOU SHOULD NOT:

- e) Attempt to repair equipment, unless competent to do so.
- f) Attempt to move obviously heavy furniture alone.

YOU SHOULD:

- g) In the event of your having to stand on something to reach windows, etc. do ensure the object on which you will stand is solid and reliable.
- h) Dispose of aerosol cans in the recommended way.
- i) Dispose of soiled materials in sealed bags.
- j) Lift any boxes or heavy loads in accordance with Manual Lifting Guidelines (supplied with this document).

GENERAL ADVICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES

1. TIDINESS

Keep floors, passages etc. clear of stores, packages and litter.

Put waste paper in the bin. Do not throw broken glass, razor blades or other dangerous items loose in the waste bin. Dispose of these with care and ask for advice from your Supervisor if in doubt.

2. FALLS AND COLLISIONS

Walk, do not run. Look where you are going.

Use care in opening doors outward.

Take care on steps or stairs and use the handrail.

Mop up spills of liquid, do not leave it to someone else.

Do not climb on chairs, desks, window sills to reach shelves or to open windows.

Use a step-ladder and window poles etc.

3. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

READ AND UNDERSTAND FIRE PRECAUTION NOTICES

Ensure that you know the lay-out of the fire exits and emergency routes. Report or remove where possible any obstruction of fire exits and passages. Keep cloths and towels away from heaters and convectors etc.

4. HORSEPLAY

Avoid horseplay, sky-larking, practical jokes, etc., these can be dangerous.

Appendix B.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS

To comply with relevant legislation, all outside contractors employed to do work on Council premises are to be made aware of the expected requirements related to health and safety. A contractor accepting a contract from the Council shall be deemed to have agreed to comply with the following requirements:

1. As a contractor, you will supply and ensure that you and your employees wear and use protective equipment or anything provided in the interest of health, safety or welfare of any of the relevant statutory provisions.
2. You and your employees will ensure that all equipment, plant machinery and apparatus brought onto or used on the Council premises are safe and without risk to health, and are maintained to a standard that will not constitute an offence under the Act or any of the relevant statutory provisions.
3. You and your employees will conform, in all respects, to your legal duties and responsibilities as laid down by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and relevant statutory provisions.
4. The Council will retain the right to stop any operation, plant or equipment, or the action of you or any of your employees if it is considered that there is a hazard to the safety and health of employees or others. The Council will not accept any responsibility for any increased costs arising out of such action.
5. In the event of the Council taking this action, your site representative will be notified verbally and given confirmation in writing by the Council's representative to order such a stoppage.
6. The Council will be indemnified by you or your insurers in respect of any claims, costs or expenses arising out of any incidents on Council premises involving you or your employees.
7. The Council may notify an inspector, appointed under the relevant legislation, of any breach of the Regulations.

**Item 6.2 Training and Statement of Intent.** *Purpose of item: information and decision. Clerk's note: the reviews mentioned in this document are programmed for the June and July meetings.*

### **Statement of Intent - Training.**

Boxley Parish Council is committed to improving the standard of its staff and councillors by training and to support this includes a budget for conferences and training in each financial year.

Boxley Parish Council will require future Clerks to be qualified or agree to become qualified. The Parish Council also pays for the Clerks' subscription to the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Boxley Parish Council recognises that training can take many forms (formal, in house and peer mentoring). The Parish Council encourages members to consider and undertake training; this is particularly recommended for any member wishing to serve on the Environment and Finance & General Purposes Committee and new councillors.

Boxley Parish Council has adopted the four guiding principles in the National Training Strategy for Town and Parish Councils for its staff and councillors. The four guiding principles of

- Formal Training. Examples – Cilca (Certificate in Local Council Administration) and Local Policy Certificate (Gloucester University).
- Personal Skills. Public speaking; Customer care; Accounting techniques; Report writing; Presentation techniques etc. Boxley Parish Council will support its staff and councillors seeking relevant training.
- Specialist Skills. Newsletter and website; Green Spaces and play equipment safety checking; Cemetery management; Community planning etc.
- Technical Updating. Legal and statutory provisions; Regional conferences; Planning updates etc.

The Finance Committee will be responsible for undertaking a formal review of the training needs of the parish council and council personnel in July of each year (in order to plan for the next financial year). The Committee will review the four guiding principles to identify what training might be needed and then plan how to achieve it.

Boxley Parish Council will use all resources available to it. Examples:

Formal training - Borough Council, County Council, Kent Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks and other organisations. All Parish Councillors are informed of training opportunities and encouraged to attend. It is expected that Members of the Environment and Finance & General Purposes Committee attend planning and Finance training offered by the Borough Council and Kent Association of Local Councils. New Councillors are expected to attend the Kent Association of Local Councils Information Day for New Councillors.

New staff are to be given on job training and formal training where appropriate.

Informal/In House Training – All new Councillors have an induction meeting with the Clerk and receive an information pack (Standing Orders, policies procedures, leaflets, List of Parish Council Powers etc.)

Boxley Parish Council is to work towards providing 4 in house training sessions a year run by the Clerk or a relevantly experienced parish councillor.

The Clerk is to continue to issue briefing papers, containing details of relevant document or websites that can be consulted, to increase member's knowledge etc. DVDs and books are also to be made available.

The parish office is to maintain and annually circulate a list of the training documents that are available (members attending training are requested to give a copy of the documents that they received to the parish office). Parish councillors can request the documents for reading etc.

Peer Mentoring – Inexperienced councillors are encouraged and supported by their colleagues. Councillors who have been on training courses are asked to share their knowledge with their colleagues.

The Finance & General Purposes Committee is to review regularly the training undergone by all Parish Council members and staff. Persons who have attended formal training will be asked to submit a report on the training, its appropriateness and what they gained from it. Personnel are also requested to inform the Clerk of any relevant formal training they receive outside the Parish Council 'envelope', e.g. at their work-place.

The Parish Council and its Committees are asked to make suggestions about and recommendations about training needs to the Finance & General Purposes Committee. An agenda item is placed at a relevant meeting to ensure that discussion takes place. The impact of the informal training sessions run by the parish council is also to be evaluated.

It is recognised that the parish office plays a pivotal role in identifying when training is needed due to changes in legislation, new equipment or an unusual circumstance. There is a standing requirement for the Clerk to place an item concerning this on to an agenda (either committee if related to that committee or parish council) rather than wait for the scheduled Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting.

**Item 6.3 Financial Regulations.** *Purpose of item: information and decision.*

Clerk’s briefing. NALC has released new model Financial Regulations and a comprehensive review of this Parish Council’s Financial Regulations has been undertaken. The NALC model includes new regulations for areas that this Council’s regulations do not currently cover and where the Clerk, who is also RFO, considers that they are potentially relevant in the near future she has included them. Members’ views on these potential changes can be recorded and brought back to them when the changes start to occur.

A parish council is required to have financial regulations and these should be tailored to each parish council whilst still meeting the requirements of the legislation and regulations namely the Governance and Accountability in Local Councils in England and Wales – A Practitioners’ Guide. This Practitioners Guide is soon to be updated and the Government is soon to sign-off the change in legislation to do away with the two-signatory rule. Members may wish to defer some of the decisions on the new regulations until the changes have been officially released as they will be required to review current arrangements with appropriate risk assessments etc.

Boxley Parish Council has always attempted to have user-friendly documents and some minor refreshing, generally of presentation, has taken place. Where major changes or new issues have been included these are clearly marked. **Bold** in the general text indicates a major change to the existing regulations. ~~Strikethrough~~ is also used when suggesting changes.

Due to the inclusion of footnotes in a previous document the numbering in this document starts at 6 this will be amended in any agreed document.

**Boxley Parish Council  
Financial Regulations**

**1. GENERAL.**

The Parish Council is legally responsible for ensuring that its Financial Management is adequate and effective and that the Council has a sound system of Financial Control, including arrangements for the management of risk and for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. Financial regulations must be observed in conjunction with the council’s standing orders and any individual financial regulations relating to contracts.

These Financial Regulations demonstrate how the Parish Council meets these responsibilities and may only be amended or varied by a resolution of the Council after a recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

**2. RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER.**

The position of Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) is a statutory office. The RFO, in this case the Parish Clerk:

- Is appointed by the Parish Council and acts under the policy direction of the council.

1. Administers<sup>6</sup> the Council's financial affairs in accordance with all acts, regulations and proper practices.
  - Determines, on behalf of the Council, its accounting records, and accounting control systems.
  - Maintains and ensures that the accounting records of the council are up to date in accordance with proper practices;
  - Assists the council to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources; and
  - Produces financial management information as required by the council.

If, in the opinion of the RFO, a decision has been taken that is unsafe or which may bring the council into disrepute the RFO has authority to 'call in' the decision and report the issue back to the council or committee for review.

**3. Value for Money.** *Clerk's note: Previously titled Best Value - best value was a principle that seems to have disappeared from general use.*

**The Parish Council shall adopt the principles of Value for Money in all of its financial dealings and associated matters.**

**4. ~~Communications~~ OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE.**

All financial and budgetary matters, including those leading to the setting of the Precept, shall be fully available to all parishioners and promoted via the Parish Council Agendas and Minutes, notice boards and the Parish Council's website. The allocation of budgets and their purpose shall be promoted in a similar way once the Precept has been approved

**5. Principles of Expenditure and Authority to Commit.**

- 5.1 No project shall be submitted for approval to the Parish Council unless it has a Parish Council owner and unless it can be demonstrated to be of Value for Money to the parish and has adequate supporting capital and revenue information. The only exceptions to this rule shall be proposals for feasibility studies.
- 5.2 The Parish Council shall only commit annual expenditure up to the value of the Precept, received grants and other income including reserves. Monies taken from the reserves shall be clearly identified.
- 5.3 Once agreed - all expenditure shall be authorised by the Clerk, who shall specify the goods or service to be supplied and their agreed value. No expenditure will be authorised for payment unless provided for within these Financial Instructions or which is a previously agreed Standing Order, Direct Debit or BACS.

*Note. Outside of the powers delegated to the Clerk, expenditure is authorised by the Parish Council and committees. Agreed budgets also indicate what expenditure has been agreed/planned.*

- 5.4 (a) The Parish Council and committees shall be permitted to commit up to the approved sum on all schemes within their budgets.

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<sup>6</sup> The accounting records determined by the RFO shall be sufficient to show and explain the council's transactions and to enable the RFO to ensure that any income and expenditure account and statement of balances, or record of receipts and payments and additional information, as the case may be, or management information prepared for the council from time to time comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

- (b) The Finance and General Purposes Committee may authorise the transfer of monies between the contingency budget and other budget after considering recommendations from the relevant committees.
  - (c) Committees can vire monies between its own committee budgets subject to a ceiling of a thousand pounds per project. Amounts in excess of this will require endorsement by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. These will be noted and the accounting system will be adjusted to reflect those changes
  - (d) The Finance and General Purposes Committee will monitor progress on projects and seek confirmation that the budget 'envelope' created is to the size established at the project authorisation stage.
- 5.5 Payments due by Standing Order, Direct Debit or BACS are authorised by the relevant committee and a list of all such payments must be included on the accounts payment lists. A complete list of all approved Standing Orders, Direct Debits or BACS will accompany invoices for payment.
- 5.6 For clarity, the following procedural steps shall be followed for all projects requiring expenditure: -
- a) Identification of project to the Parish Council or relevant committee. It is expected that this will be done at the budget setting stage.
  - b) Approval or rejection by Council/committee after discussion.
  - c) Priority rating allocated by Council/committee.
  - d) Tender specification<sup>7</sup> drawn up and approved by Council or relevant committee.
  - e) Management of successful tenders/work agreed<sup>8</sup>
  - f) Tenders/quotations invited by clerk to meet with specification approved by appropriate committee or Parish Council chairman.
  - g) Opening of Tenders/Quotations.
  - h) Evaluation by project owner and parish office for submission to appropriate committee.
  - i) Approval/rejection by Committee or Parish Council.
  - j) Order raised by Clerk.
  - k) Work in progress shall be monitored<sup>2</sup>.
  - l) Signing off confirming work done/goods delivered by Clerk/committee chairman.
  - m) Payment of invoice, including the stage payment where appropriate.
- 5.7 Where the Parish Council donates money to, or financially supports another organisation or group, it is a condition of such financial support that a copy of the organisation's approved accounts shall be made available. Village Hall organisations will be encouraged to apply for other sources of funding. [See relevant grant policies].
- 5.8 Any resolution, which is not the result of a recommendation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and which, if agreed, would, in the opinion of the Chairman or RFO, substantially increase the expenditure or reduce the revenue of the Council or committee, shall be referred to the next ordinary meeting of the Council for discussion.

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<sup>7</sup> Specifications should include when available relevant dates (commencement of work/services, finish date, frequency of any maintenance etc.), standards set/required, relevant maps or descriptions of locations, glossaries, payment terms, any identified penalties etc.

<sup>8</sup> Issues to be considered identification of project manager, identification of what checks will be undertaken to ensure any standards are met/work is completed, will there need to be any reviews on costs/prices etc.

5.9 If, in the opinion of the RFO, a decision has been taken that is unsafe or which may bring the council into disrepute the FRO has authority to report the issue back to the council or committee for review.

## **6. Banking and Investments.**

6.1 The Parish Council shall operate bank account(s) as appropriate and banking arrangements shall be approved by resolution of the Parish Council. The Parish Council shall review the banking arrangements as and when required but at least annually. Banking arrangements shall only be changed by resolution of the Parish Council. The Bank will issue statements to the Clerk at least monthly for current accounts and as appropriate for other accounts. Reports on investments will be made to every Finance and General Purposes Committee or, if deadlines are pending, Parish Council meetings.

*Clerk's note. 4.2 is the current position however the two signatory legislation is being amended to allow councils, subject to adequate checks, audits etc. to have a different signatory rule which will then allow on-line banking. It is recommended that members retain 4.2 with the knowledge that this may have to be revisited.*

6.2 All parish councillors can be authorised signatories. Each cheque/ Direct Debit/Standing Order or BACS authorisation shall bear 2 authorised signatures. The Clerk, as the Parish Council's Proper Financial Officer, shall not be an authorised signatory.

6.3 Cash in excess of £200 received by the parish council shall be banked within two working days.

6.4 Cheques will be banked within 5 working days of receipt.

*Clerk's note: The following regulation is within the NALC model Financial Regs. It is the opinion of the Clerk that such a regulation may be suitable for this parish council I, in the future, it amends the two signatory rule.*

**The Clerk and RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise the payment of items only in the following circumstances:**

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

## **7. Payment of Creditors.**

7.1 All payments will be authorised in accordance with 4.2 above. Payments will only be made against invoices properly directed to the Clerk, Beechen Hall or Boxley Parish Council.

7.2 The Clerk can authorise procurement of goods or services and agree expenditure up to £1,000 after consultation with the Chairman of the relevant Committee.

7.3 The Clerk shall have discretion to order goods and sundries and authorise the execution of minor works up to £500 necessary for the day-to-day performance of the Council's business.

7.4 Petty cash of £150 will be held in the parish office. A monthly account of expenditure is to be submitted to restore the amount to £150. As there are no local cashing facilities the cheque to replenish the petty cash shall be paid to the Clerk who would then draw out cash for the parish office.

7.5 At every meeting invoices will accompany cheques for payment and 2 parish councillors shall check these against the cheques being presented for signature.

*Clerk's note: The following regulation is within the NALC model Financial Regs. It is the opinion of the Clerk that such a regulation may be suitable for this parish council. This regulation may give a safeguard for the council and signatories (especially if in the future the number of signatories is reduced). As members are aware there are re-occurring payments each month.*

**7.6 For each financial year the Clerk and RFO shall draw up a list of due payments which arise on a regular basis as the result of a continuing contract, statutory duty, or obligation (such as but not exclusively, Salaries, PAYE and NI, Superannuation Fund and regular maintenance contracts and the like for which council [,or a duly authorised committee,] may authorise payment for the year provided that the requirements of regulation 4.1 (Budgetary Controls) are adhered to, provided also that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council [or Finance Committee].**

*Clerk's note: The following can be included now but would only be triggered when the parish council formally agrees internet banking.*

**If thought appropriate by the council payment for certain items may be made by internet banking transfer provided evidence is retained showing which member/s approved the payment.**

*Clerk's note: Members views are sought on the following.*

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

## **8. Annual and Interim Accounts**

8.1 Accounts will be prepared annually for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, and then as soon as practical, presented to a full meeting of the Parish Council. A financial report shall be submitted to the Parish Council or Finance and General Purposes Committee on variances over 15% against the budget, concurrent function expenditure and on the overall position of the Parish Council finances.

8.2 The Parish Council finances will be subject to two independent internal audits by a person who is both competent and can act independently from influence by the council. A report will be submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Committee after each inspection. The appointment of the independent internal auditor will be reviewed annually by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

8.3 The Parish Council will make an annual return as required by the Audit Commission.

8.4 Two audits will be undertaken by parish councillors and a report will be submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

8.5 The Chairman or a parish councillor should undertake a minimum standards check every 4 months. This check will include checking the petty cash amount held at the office, bank statements and that regular banking of amounts paid to the parish council are taking place. Members will be asked to sign a minimum standards form to indicate that this has happened.

8.6 The Finance and General Purposes Committee will be responsible for producing the Annual Governance Statement.

## **9. Principles of the Precept**

9.1 The Precept shall be used to raise the money necessary for the maintenance and repair of assets, buildings and land that are the responsibility of the Parish Council. As well as specific projects which the Parish Council may decide are for the benefit and in the interests of the community.

## **10. Preparation of Budgets and Setting of the Precept**

10.1 Committees will be responsible for setting their individual budgets.

10.2 The timing of preparation of budgets will be such as to lead to a draft budget being prepared by the Clerk and submitted to parish councillors in October. Committees will debate and agree a recommended budget and supporting projects and programmes for submission to the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting in January. The Finance and General Purposes Committee will consider the budgets and make recommendations to the January Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council shall then agree a budget and set a Precept.

10.3 All discussions on budgets and preparation of submissions should be based upon the principles of Zero Based Budgeting.

10.4 All proposed expenditure will show the legislation under which the Parish Council is empowered to make payment.

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

## **11. Financial Carry-over Limits**

11.1 Schemes or projects which were approved but which are not contractually committed during a financial year shall be treated as new projects and subject to re-submission and re-evaluation for subsequent year(s).

## **12. Tenders Quotations and Estimates**

12.1 A Quotation is defined as a fixed price for which specified work will be carried out, or goods supplied. Where possible the Parish Council will seek quotations.

12.2 An Estimate is defined as a sum of money, which specified work, or supply of goods may cost. It is not a fixed price. Estimates should not normally be sought.

12.3 Any proposed contract for the supply of goods, materials, services and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of £15,000 shall be procured on the basis of a formal tender as summarised below.

(a) The method of selection of or persons to be contacted shall be decided by members or the Responsible Financial Officer from any of the following sources:

- any local authority 'fair trading' list,
- by recommendation; or by
- an advertisement in a local newspaper of the intention of the Council to invite tenders.

- (b) The procurement of goods, materials, services and the execution of works exceeding £10,000 shall not be entered into without a minimum of five contractors being invited to submit tenders.
  - (c) The procurement of goods, materials, services and the execution of works over £5,000 and not exceeding £10,000 shall not be entered into without three written quotations being obtained.
  - (d) The procurement of goods, materials, services and the execution of works between £1,000 and £5,000 shall be entered into, at the Councils' or committees' discretion after consideration of estimates invited from contractors.
  - (e) The Clerk can authorise the procurement of goods, materials, services and the execution of works up to £1,000 after consultation with the Chairman of the relevant Committee.
  - (f) Where the circumstances make it inappropriate to invite such a number of quotations (paragraphs (b) and (c) above) a lesser number of contractors, as decided by the Council, may be invited.
  - (g) Where the work or the supply of goods or materials is of such a nature as to render competitive tendering or the obtaining of a quotation impractical, the council may decide to select a single firm with or without a quotation for the purpose.
  - (h) Tenders shall be opened in the presence of a Parish Councillor who is not a member of the committee considering the tender. A note signed by the opener will record the name of the company and the tender price. An alphabetical list of firms is to be included in the briefing document submitted to the committee choosing the successful quotation/tender.
  - (i) If, despite attempts, no quotations/tenders are received or all submissions are identical the council may make such arrangements for procuring the goods or materials or executing the works as it thinks fit.
  - (j) All tenders and quotations for goods, materials or for the execution of works shall as far as practicable be based on a specification and unless the specification sent to companies invites submission of other ideas/recommendations no tender shall be accepted which deviates from that specification.
- 12.4 In view of point 1.1 in these regulations neither the Parish Council or any committee is bound to accept the lowest tender, estimate or quote.
- 12.5 If a person applying to the Council for work is to his/her knowledge related to or has business links to any member or employee of the Council, then this link/relationship must be notified appropriate committee in writing to the Clerk. Failure to do so will result in an application being rejected and, if already appointed, could result in dismissal without notice. The Clerk shall report to the council or to the any such disclosure.
- 12.6 Canvassing of members of the Council or of any committee, directly or indirectly, for any appointment shall disqualify the applicant for such appointment. The Clerk shall make known the purpose of this sub-paragraph of this regulation to every candidate.
- 12.7 The European Union Procurement Directive shall apply and the terms of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 and the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2006 including thresholds shall be followed<sup>9</sup>.
- Clerk's note: The parish council has never included this regulation. Members' views are sought.

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<sup>9</sup> See Standing Order ???????

**When applications are made to waive financial regulations relating to contracts to enable a price to be negotiated without competition the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the council.**

### **13. Payment of salaries and Parish Councillor Allowances<sup>10</sup>.**

13.1 The Council shall pay all salaries and Councillor Allowances in accordance with payroll records and the rules of PAYE and National Insurance operating at the time. Salaries and Parish Councillor Allowances shall be as approved by a resolution of the council or the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

13.2 Payment will be made by cheque or BACS on the 22 of each month unless that day is a weekend or bank holiday when it will be paid the previous Friday.

13.3 Parish Councillor Allowances, staff salaries and PAYE/NI can be paid by standing order or BACS as approved by the parish council.

### **14. Assets**

14.1 The Clerk shall maintain an Asset Register, which shall be reviewed annually and re-valued as necessary.

14.2 The Asset Register will be used as a basis for the annual insurance renewal.

### **15. Responsibility for Observance**

15.1 Responsibility for advice to the Parish Council and observance of financial controls rests with the Clerk as the Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer.

*Clerk's note. I would suggest that the following regulations should be included.*

**A breach of these Regulations by an employee is gross misconduct.**

**Members of Council are expected to follow the instructions within these Regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow instructions within these Regulations brings the office of Councillor into disrepute.**

### **16. ~~Review of Financial Regulations.~~ Suspension and revision of financial regulations.**

16.1 The Financial Regulations of the Council shall be subject to annual review prior to the adoption of the Annual Governance Statement.

*Clerk's note. I would suggest that the following regulations should be included.*

**The Clerk shall make arrangements to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the council of any requirement for a consequential amendment to these financial regulations.**

**The council may, by resolution of the council duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been drawn up and presented in advance to all members of council.**

### **17 Risk Management**

*Clerk's note. I would suggest that the following regulation should be included.*

**The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the council.**

17.1 The Estates Committee will undertake Risk Management Assessments for Beechen Hall.

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<sup>10</sup> Includes the Chairman's Allowance

17.2 The Finance and General Purposes Committee shall annually review the Risk Management Assessment. This will include risks relating to financial issues including investments, security of cheque books and cheque signing mandates.

17.3 The Finance and General Purposes Committee shall annually review the insurance of the property, liabilities and commitments of the Parish Council.

**18 Beechen Hall**

18.1 The Estates Committee shall be responsible for an annual review of the hire fees for Beechen Hall.

*Clerk's note. Members' views are sought on the inclusion of the following regulations. I would suggest that the following regulations should be included.*

**Income**

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

**The council will review all fees and charges at least annually, following a report of the Clerk.**

**Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year.**

**Item 6.4. Risk Assessment: Internet Access by members of the Public, using the Parish Councils computers.** *Purpose of item: information and decision.*

RISK	RISK LEVEL	PROPOSED ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transmission or deliberate reception of defamatory material.</li> <li>• Transmission of unsolicited advertising material.</li> <li>• Transmission or deliberate reception of racist, sexist, pornographic or generally offensive material.</li> <li>• Any action which jeopardises the integrity of the network or any other user's data.</li> <li>• Financial gain or for any illegal purpose.</li> <li>• Transmission or deliberate reception that infringes another person's copyright (this applies to the vast majority of digital music and video files).</li> <li>• Hacking.</li> <li>• Installation of malicious code, Trojans or key loggers</li> </ul>	<p>Low/ medium</p>	<p>All users will be supervised and required to sign an Acceptable Use Policy.            Personal use (accessing personal e-mail accounts etc.) will not be allowed.            Data storage on the hard drive will not be allowed.            No portable storage devices will be allowed.</p>

Protection of a user's Privacy		
Viruses and Malicious code.	Low	<p>Prior to use by any member of the public a member of the office staff will ensure the latest version of anti-virus software is installed. <i>Clerk's note: it was planned to use the very old laptop and the issue of the anti-virus software will be investigated. The office computers are regularly updated.</i></p> <p>Users are not allowed to store any data, download (without prior permission) any documents or install any software.</p> <p>In most circumstances the public use will be via a spare laptop that is not connected into the office computer network.</p>

**Item 6.5 Internet Access by members of the Public, using the Parish Councils computers.** *Purpose of item: information and decision.*

DRAFT

**Boxley Parish Council.**

**Internet Access by members of the Public, using the Parish Councils computers.**

"The IT System" is taken to mean all parish council owned computer, software and broadband.

The parish council recognises that government is now really only truly accessible if you have access to a computer. In recognition of the fact that some residents do not it is making available internet access from a parish council owned computer.

The parish council will not normally offer printing services however if a resident considers that they may need a print of a document they should supply their own paper and the Clerk will use her discretion about whether it will be permitted on this occasion.

*Clerk note: Rather than supply their own paper members may consider that it is easier to make a nominal charge such as allowed for Freedom of Information requests. A nominal charge has been avoided in this instance as it would be advertised and potentially put the parish council/office into a difficult position if residents then try to use the office to get photocopies. This would put the parish council into direct competition with any stores offering photocopying services and as the PC is zero rated for VAT purposes force the PC into registering for payment of VAT (a disaster). FofI is different as the legislation covering this specifically allows a parish council to charge for photocopying and p&p. The parish office is asked to be allowed to use common-sense.*

Where possible and if time allows office staff will help residents' access websites etc. if they are inexperienced in the use of computers.

**Acceptable Use Policy**

Acceptable use.

The IT system is being made available for residents of the parish to electronically access local government sites and related organisation in order for them to:

- Report problems, respond to consultations etc.
- Research legislation, planning applications, local authority documents etc.
- Access to safe sites. *Clerk's notes: we have no way of enforcing this other than verbal instruction however it is a reminder to any user that there is a standard expected.*

Misuse of the IT system

The IT system shall not be used for:

- For accessing or setting up personal e-mail accounts, facebook etc.
- Transmission or deliberate reception of defamatory material.
- Transmission of unsolicited advertising material.
- Transmission or deliberate reception of racist, sexist, pornographic or generally offensive material.
- Any action which jeopardises the integrity of the IT system or any other user's data.
- Financial gain or for any illegal purpose.
- Transmission or deliberate reception that infringes another person's copyright (this applies to the vast majority of digital music and video files).
- Hacking, spamming or installation of key loggers or other entrapment devices.

Misc.

- No data shall be intentionally stored on the local hard drive of the computer.
- Users are not to interfere with the virus protection or anti-malware software installed on the PC.
- Permission to temporary download documents must be sought prior to the activity.
- Users are not permitted to install any software or use mobile storage units. *Clerk's note: A resident who has heard that the service is going to be offered has already asked whether she can download onto a storage unit so that she can, I believe start storing items for when she gets a computer. Parish office could use its common sense, our 'radars' are fairly well developed so if we feel uncomfortable we know to make excuses not to allow this, can we use common-sense?*
- Prior to any use the user must outline the reason for the use.
- The user must only use the PC that has been assigned to them and must not interfere with any other IT device that the parish council owns unless authorised to do so.

I have read the above and accept compliance with the Acceptable Use Policy.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Starting time \_\_\_\_\_

Finishing time \_\_\_\_\_

**Item 6.6 BPC Policy for staff and councillors. Acceptable use of computer facilities, email and the internet.** *Purpose of item: information and decision.*

**BPC Policy for staff and councillors.**

**Acceptable use of computer facilities, email and the internet**

General

- You may make reasonable personal use of computing facilities provided by the Parish Council. This personal use should not interfere with the performance of your duties or cause any damage or difficulty to computers or to IT systems, or any difficulty or distress to others.
- You should use computing facilities in a reasonable manner. You will not install inappropriate software and you should not reconfigure any machine you have access to.
- You will not make substantial use of the Parish Council's facilities for private financial gain or for commercial purposes outside the scope of official duties or functions.

Internet usage (including e-mail, the Web, chat rooms)

- You may make reasonable use of the Web for other than strictly work purposes provided it does not adversely affect your work and the work of others and has a minimal effect on the Parish Council's resources.
- You may make reasonable use of the Parish Council's facilities for personal e-mails, provided that this does not have more than a minimal impact on resources and does not adversely affect your work or the work of others.
- If an e-mail message is personal, you may wish to make this clear by using the word 'personal' in the subject line, but you are actively encouraged to use systems that are not associated with the council's system.
- When you send e-mail, you should remember the following:
  - i. An e-Mail message is legally equivalent to a letter. e-Mail messages can be defamatory and can and often do form contracts. For these reasons it is important to take the same care composing e-Mail messages as letters.
  - ii. e-Mail messages, like other documents, can be disclosed to the person they are about under the Data Protection Act and in the event of legal proceedings.
  - iii. Messages may be seen by other staff, just as postcards may be seen by postal workers. Moreover, the Parish Council cannot guarantee that communications will not be accessed illicitly.
  - iv. The privacy of any personal e-Mail cannot be guaranteed by the parish council and the content may be disclosed to anyone in authority that has a valid reason to investigate or while carrying out their duties.

#### Security and protection of information

The main points to be aware of in the context of IT System are:

- You should guard confidential material and personal information by the proper use of passwords and other security measures.
- Passwords should be complex (contain alpha, numeric, symbols and be of different case and sufficient characters, eight or more are recommended) and these must not be disclosed.
- Not all computer systems are suitable for the storage of confidential information. Seek advice if you are unsure.
- You can protect highly sensitive material through the use of encryption.
- You must not disclose passwords or other access codes to other persons.
- You must comply with the Data Protection Act, which requires that the Parish Council keeps personal information secure.
- When working with confidential information, you must take care not to leave it inappropriately on screen. You should not leave your computer logged on when unattended, unless it is in a secure location.
- You should observe the same standards of confidentiality for electronically held or generated information as for information held on paper.
- All data that is stored by the parish council must be protected e.g. backups, encryption etc. *Clerk's note: Backups are taken however encryption is not yet part of the office routine it is currently an aspiration rather than practically possible at the moment.*

If you have a concern about the inadequate protection of data, you should inform the Clerk or Parish Council so that any necessary steps can be taken to safeguard the data.

All members of staff have an obligation to protect data and systems by following up-to-date recommendations to avoid damage from viruses and other malicious programs.

#### Misuse of computing facilities

As stated above, the Parish Council permits reasonable personal as well as professional use of computing facilities. You should be careful not to misuse these facilities, for instance by:

- Hacking — attempting to access systems or information without authority, or encouraging others to do so.
- Installation of Trojans or Key loggers to covertly capture sensitive information that may be used illicitly.
- Deliberately accessing Internet material which is contrary either to legislation, Parish Council rules or policies (e.g. equal opportunities) or to commonly accepted standards, or is likely to be offensive to reasonable people. However, accidental access to such sites can take place; if you are concerned that such accidental access has taken place you may wish to report your concerns to an appropriate person.
- E-mail communications which constitute bullying or harassment, as defined in the Parish Council's code of advice and instructions on bullying and harassment. *Clerk's note: this policy is next on the list of policies to do.*

Investigation of misuse and interception

The Parish Council will undertake an investigation of any suspected misuse of computing facilities and this will include all files and e-mails even if they are of a personal nature.

Misuse and disciplinary action

The investigating panel<sup>11</sup> should decide in the light of the outcome of an investigation of possible misuse of computing facilities whether disciplinary action is appropriate, and if it is judged appropriate, instigate necessary action in accordance with the relevant disciplinary procedures concerned.

*Clerk's note: 1. It is suggested that this should be a small panel, the Chair of the PC, the person that is being investigated immediate manager and someone with an understanding of IT systems, these would be the minimum. At some point the PC may also need to consider going outside the Council, perhaps working in partnership with a neighbouring council?*

The Investigating Panel should report any misuse to the Finance & General Purposes Committee which will then decide whether disciplinary action should be instigated against a member of staff, making a recommendation to the Parish Council if necessary.

**Item 10. Matters for Information.** *Purpose of item: information and where necessary decisions.*

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<sup>11</sup> The makeup of the panel would be recorded here.