

PART 4 - THE WAY IN WHICH THE COUNCIL OPERATES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This part of the Constitution sets out the way in which the Council operates, including the processes by which Council decisions should be made. Those processes vary, depending upon the nature of the decision to be made, whether the decision concerns an Executive or a non-Executive decision and whether the decision maker is the Council, a committee of the Council, the Executive, an Executive Member or an officer. It also sets out the Codes and Protocols which govern the conduct of Members and officers respectively.

1.2 This Part is divided into the following sections:-

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| Section 2 | Principles of Decision Making – this section sets out the general principles which apply to the process of decision making. Importantly, it establishes a presumption in favour of decision making being open and transparent. |
| Section 3 | Council Procedure Rules – this section sets out the rules which govern the conduct of meetings of the Full Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council. |
| Section 4 | Access to Information Procedure Rules – this section sets out the rights of members of the public to attend Council meetings, to access agendas, minutes and background papers and the circumstances in which those rights may be excluded. |
| Section 5 | Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules – this section sets out the procedures to be followed in the formulation and adoption of the Council's budget and any document which is to form part of the Council's Policy Framework. |
| Section 6 | Executive Procedure Rules – this section sets out the procedure for Executive Meetings. |
| Section 7 | Protocol for Executive Decision-Making by Members Under Executive Arrangements – this section sets out the procedures for Decision Making by the Executive, an Executive Committee or by Individual Executive Members. |
| Section 8 | Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules – this Section sets out the procedures relating to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Panels. |
| Section 9 | Financial Regulations – this section sets out the Council's Financial Regulations |
| Section 10 | Contract Standing Orders – this section sets out the Council's rules relating to the award of contracts, procurement of goods, services and work. |

- Section 11 Officer Employment Procedure Rules – this section sets out the procedures for the appointment, dismissal and taking disciplinary action in respect of the Chief Executive, Directors and Deputy Chief Officer posts.
- Section 12 Code of Conduct for Members – this sets out the Code of Conduct for Members.
- Section 13 Officers Code of Conduct – this section sets out the Code of Conduct for staff.
- Section 14 Member and Officer Protocol – this section sets out rules relating to the relationship between Councillors and staff.
- Section 15 Protocol for Members in Dealing with Planning Matters – this section sets out rules and guidance to Members in dealing with Planning Applications.
- Section 16 Protocol for Voluntary Stock Transfer – this section sets out guidance for Members and officers in connection with the proposed transfer of the Council's housing stock to a registered Social Landlord.

SECTION 2 - PRINCIPLES OF DECISION-MAKING

- 2.1 All decisions of the Council will be made and recorded in accordance with the terms of this Constitution.
- 2.2 Whichever body or individual is responsible for making a decision, the decision should be made, as far as possible, in accordance with the following principles:
- (a) there should be a presumption in favour of decision-making being open and transparent, with members of the public being afforded effective access to relevant information and the processes by which decisions are taken;
 - (b) due consultation should take place with those likely to be affected by a decision. So far as practicable, decision-making should be planned in advance and the public given due notification of forthcoming decisions;
 - (c) where a decision is likely to have wide-ranging or significant impact on the Community, additional time and emphasis should be given to consultation and members of the public actively encouraged to contribute their views
 - (d) decisions must be made with regard to all relevant considerations and ignoring all irrelevant matters;
 - (e) decisions should be made having regard to any approved policies or procedures of the Council;
 - (f) decisions should be made having regard to appropriate professional advice obtained from suitably-qualified Officers;
 - (g) the action required by a decision must be proportionate to the desired outcome; and
 - (h) decisions must be made in accordance with any relevant statutory requirements and with respect for human rights.
- 2.3 The management of the Council's financial affairs will be conducted in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules set out in Section 9 of this Part 4 of the Constitution.
- 2.4 Every contract placed by the Council will comply with Contract Regulations as set out in Section 10 of this Part 4 of the Constitution.

SECTION 3 – COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

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1. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1.1 Timing and Business

In a year when there is an ordinary election of Councillors, the Annual Meeting will take place within 21 days of the retirement of the outgoing Councillors. In any other year, the Annual Meeting will take place in March, April or May.

The Annual Meeting will:

- (i) elect a person to preside if the Mayor is not present;
- (ii) elect the Mayor;
- (iii) appoint the Deputy Mayor;
- (iv) approve the minutes of the last meeting;
- (v) receive any announcements from the Mayor;
- (vi) elect the Leader;
- (vii) receive the report of the Leader on the number of Members to be appointed to the Executive and the Portfolios to be allocated to individual Executive Members;
- (viii) appoint at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a Standards Committee and such other Committees as the Council considers appropriate to deal with matters which are neither reserved to the Council nor are Executive Functions (as set out in Part 3, Table 1 of this Constitution);
- (ix) where one covering the next municipal year is not in place, approve a programme of ordinary meetings of the Council for the year; and
- (x) consider any business set out in the Notice convening the meeting.

1.2 Appointment of Councillors to Committees and Outside Bodies

At the Annual Meeting, the Council will:

- (i) decide which Committees to establish for the Municipal Year;
- (ii) decide the size and Terms of Reference of those Committees;
- (iii) decide the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules;
- (iv) receive nominations of Councillors to serve on each Committee and Outside Body; and
- (v) appoint to those Committees and Outside Bodies except where appointment to those Bodies has been delegated by the Council or is exercisable only by the Executive.

2. **ORDINARY MEETINGS**

Ordinary meetings of the Council will take place in accordance with a programme decided at the Council's Annual Meeting, or at an earlier meeting of the Council prior to the scheduled Annual Meeting. Ordinary meetings will:

- (i) elect a person to preside if the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are not present;
- (ii) approve the minutes of the last meeting;
- (iii) receive any declarations of interest from Members;
- (iv) receive any announcements from the Mayor, the Leader, Members of the Executive or the Chief Executive;
- (v) receive, and respond to, any submissions made by members of the public in accordance with the current Scheme for Public Participation at Council Meetings approved by the Council;
- (vi) deal with any business from the last Council meeting;
- (vii) receive reports from the Executive, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the Council's Committees and receive questions and answers on any of those reports;
- (viii) receive annual reports from individual Executive Portfolio Holders, provided that no more than two such reports shall be received at any meeting, and receive questions and answers on these reports;
- (ix) receive reports about, and receive questions and answers on, the business of joint arrangements and external organisations;
- (x) consider Motions; and
- (xi) consider any other business specified in the Summons to the Meeting, including consideration of proposals from the Executive in relation to the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for debate.

3. **EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS**

3.1 **Calling Extraordinary Meetings**

Those listed below may request the Proper Officer to call Council meetings in addition to ordinary meetings:

- (i) the Council by resolution;
- (ii) the Mayor;
- (iii) the Monitoring Officer; and
- (iv) any five Members of the Council if they have signed a requisition presented to the Mayor and he or she has refused to call a meeting or has failed to call a meeting within seven days of the presentation of the requisition.

Only business specified in the Summons may be transacted at an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

3.2 **Special Meetings of Committees and Sub-Committees**

Those listed below may request the Proper Officer to call Committee and Sub-Committee meetings in addition to ordinary meetings:

- (i) the Committee or Sub-Committee by resolution
- (ii) the Chairman
- (iii) the Chief Executive
- (iv) one quarter of the whole number of Members of the Committee or Sub-Committee but in no case fewer than three Members

4. **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

4.1 **Substitute Members - Committees**

In addition to appointing Members to serve on Committees, the Council may also, in accordance with the procedures set out in Rule 4.3 and Rule 4.4, appoint on the nomination of a political group represented on the Council a number of Councillors up to the maximum as shown in the table below, to act as substitutes for Members of their Group appointed to Committees.

<u>Size of Political Group</u>	<u>Maximum Number of Substitutes</u>
Less than 11	3
11-17	4
18 or more	5

4.2 **Substitute Members – Sub-Committees**

In addition to appointing Members to serve on Sub-Committees, Committees may also appoint, on the nomination of any of the political groups represented on the Council, up to three Councillors to act as substitutes for Members of their Group appointed to Sub-Committees, also in accordance with the procedures set out in Rule 4.3 and Rule 4.4.

4.3 **Conditions for Substitution**

A substitute Councillor may attend a meeting as substitute for a Member if the following conditions are satisfied:

- (a) the Member asks the eligible Councillor to attend as a substitute and the eligible Councillor agrees;
- (b) at least two hours before the start of the meeting, and during normal office hours, the Member gives notice to the appropriate Democratic Services

Officer, orally, or in writing, that the eligible Councillor (naming him or her) has agreed to attend as substitute Member; and

- (c) the eligible Councillor attends the meeting and confirms to the appropriate Democratic Services Officer that he or she attends as substitute for the Member.

4.4 Status of Substituted Member

- a) On notifying the Democratic Services Officer that a substitution will be made, the original Member shall immediately, and irrevocably, cease to be a Member of that Committee or Sub-Committee until the conclusion of the meeting and any adjournment of it and the Substitute shall be a full Member for the same period.
- b) Substitute Members will have all the powers and duties of any ordinary Member of the Committee but will not be able to exercise any special powers or duties exercisable by the person they are substituting.

- 4.5 The appropriate Democratic Services Officer shall, at the commencement of any meeting, report any Substitution Notice(s) stating the name(s) of Member(s) attending as substitutes, together with the names of the Members they have replaced. These shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

5. TIME AND PLACE OF MEETINGS

The time and place of Council meetings will be determined by the Chief Executive and notified in the Summons.

6. NOTICE OF, AND SUMMONS TO, MEETINGS

6.1 Council Meetings

The Chief Executive will give notice to the public of the time and place of any meeting of the Council, in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules. At least five clear working days before a meeting, the Chief Executive will send a summons signed by him or her by post to every Member of the Council or leave it at their usual place of residence. The Summons will give the date, time and place of each meeting and specify the business to be transacted, and will be accompanied by such reports as are available.

6.2 Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings

The arrangements for Notice of, and Summons to Committee and Sub-Committee meetings will be as in Rule 6.1, except that the Proper Officer shall be the Director of Corporate Services.

7. CHAIR OF MEETING

The person presiding at the meeting may exercise any power or duty of the Mayor. Where these rules apply to Committee and Sub-Committee meetings, references to the Mayor also include the Chairman of Committees and Sub-Committees.

8. **QUORUM**

- (a) No business shall be conducted at a meeting of the Council unless a quorum of Members is present. The quorum of a meeting will be one quarter of the whole number of Members, provided that the quorum for a Committee or Sub-Committee shall be at least three Members.
- (b) If, at the expiration of fifteen minutes after the time at which any meeting of the Council is appointed to be held, there shall not be present a quorum of the Council, no meeting shall take place and the Mayor shall cause fresh Notices of a meeting to be issued for such day as he or she shall determine. In the event of there not being a quorum present, the names of the Members present shall be recorded in the Minute Book with a statement of the reason for the meeting not being held.
- (c) If during any meeting, the Mayor counts the number of Members present and declares there is not a quorum present then the meeting will adjourn immediately. Remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Mayor. If he or she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.

9. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- 9.1 Members of the public may make submissions to meetings of the Council in accordance with the current Scheme for Public Participation adopted by the Council. (Annexed to these Procedure Rules)
- 9.2 The Licensing and Safety Committee and the Planning and Highways Committee may make arrangements for public speaking at its meetings and meetings of its Sub-Committees.

10. **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

10.1 **On reports of the Executive or Committees**

A member of the Council may ask the Leader or the Chairman of a Committee, any question without notice, upon an item of the report of the Executive or a Committee when that item is being received or under consideration at the meeting.

10.2 **Questions on Notice at Council Meetings**

Subject to Rule 10.4, a Member of the Council may ask:

- the Mayor;
- a Member of the Executive;
- the Leader; or
- the Chairman of any Committee or Sub-Committee, a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties, or which affects the Borough.

10.3 Questions on Notice at Committees and Sub Committees

Subject to Rule 10.4, a member of a committee or sub-committee may ask the chairman of it a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the Borough and which falls within the terms of reference of that committee or sub-committee.

10.4 Notice of Questions

A member may only ask a question under Rule 10.2 or 10.3 if either:

- (a) the Member has given, in writing, the question to the Director of Corporate Services, by not later than 10.00am on the 6th working day prior to the date of the meeting; or
- (b) the question relates to urgent matters and they have the consent of the person to whom the question is to be put and the content of the question is given to the Director of Corporate Services before the commencement of the meeting.

10.5 Response

An answer may take the form of:

- (a) a direct oral answer;
- (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the Questioner.

10.6 Supplementary Question

A Member asking a question under Rule 10.2 or 10.3, may ask one supplementary question, without notice of the Member to whom the first question was asked. The supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.

11. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

11.1 Notice

Except for Motions which can be moved without notice under Rule 12, written notice of every Motion, from at least two Members, must be delivered to the Chief Executive by not later than 10.00am on the 6th working day prior to the date of the meeting. These will be entered in a book open to public inspection.

11.2 Motion Set Out in Agenda

Motions for which notice has been given will be listed on the Agenda in the order in which notice was received, unless the Member giving notice states, in writing, that they propose to move it to a later meeting or withdraw it.

11.3 **Scope**

Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility or which affect the Borough.

12. **MOTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

The following Motions may be moved without notice:

- (a) to appoint a Chairman of the Meeting at which the Motion is moved;
- (b) in relation to the accuracy of the minutes;
- (c) to change the order of business in the Agenda;
- (d) to refer something to an appropriate body or individual;
- (e) to appoint a Committee or Member arising from an item on the Summons for the meeting;
- (f) to receive reports for adoption of recommendations of Committees or Officers and any resolutions following from them;
- (g) to withdraw a Motion;
- (h) to give the consent of the Council where its consent is required by this Constitution.

13. **RULES OF DEBATE**

13.1 **No Speeches until Motion Seconded**

No speeches may be made after the Mover has moved a proposal and explained the purpose of it until the Motion has been seconded.

13.2 **Right to Require Motion in Writing**

Unless notice of the Motion has already been given, the Chairman may require it to be written down and handed to him or her before it is discussed.

13.3 **Secunder's Speech**

When seconding a Motion or Amendment, a Member may reserve their speech until later in the debate.

13.4 **Content and Length of Speeches**

Speeches must be directed to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or point of order. No speech may exceed five minutes without the consent of the Mayor.

13.5 **When a Member May Speak Again**

A Member who has spoken on a Motion may not speak again whilst it is the subject of debate, except:

- (a) to speak once on an amendment moved by another Member;
- (b) to move a further amendment if the Motion has been amended since he or she last spoke;
- (c) if his or her first speech was on an Amendment moved by another Member, to speak on the main issue (whether or not the amendment on which he or she spoke was carried);
- (d) in exercise of a right of reply;
- (e) on a point of order; and
- (f) by way of personal explanation.

13.6 Amendments to Motions

- (a) An amendment to a Motion must be relevant to the Motion and will either be:
 - (i) to refer the matter to an appropriate body or individual for consideration or reconsideration;
 - (ii) to leave out words;
 - (iii) to leave out words and insert or add others; or
 - (iv) to insert or add words.

as long as the effect of (ii) to (iv) is not to negate the Motion.

- (b) Only one amendment may be moved and discussed at any one time and no further amendment may be moved until the amendment under discussion has been disposed of, provided that the Mayor may permit two or more amendments to be discussed (but not voted on) together if circumstances suggest that this course would facilitate the proper conduct of the Council's business.
- (c) If an amendment is not carried, other amendments to the original motion may be moved.
- (d) If an amendment is carried, the Motion, as amended, takes the place of the original Motion. This becomes the substantive motion to which any further amendments are moved.
- (e) After an amendment has been carried, the Mayor will read out the amended motion before accepting any further amendments, or if there are none, put it to the vote.

13.7 Alteration of Motion

- (a) A Member may alter a Motion of which he or she has given notice with the consent of the meeting. The meeting's consent will be signified without discussion.

- (b) A Member may alter a Motion which he or she has moved without notice with the consent of both the meeting and the seconder. The meeting's consent will be signified without discussion.
- (c) Only alterations which could be made as an amendment may be made.

13.8 **Withdrawal of Motion**

A Member may withdraw a Motion or Amendment which he or she has moved with the consent of both the meeting and the seconder. The meeting's consent will be signified without discussion. No Member may speak on the Motion or Amendment after the Mover has asked permission to withdraw it unless permission is refused.

13.9 **Right of Reply**

- (a) The Mover of a Motion has a right to reply at the end of the debate on the Motion, immediately before it is put to the vote.
- (b) If an amendment is moved, the Mover of the original Motion has the right of reply at the close of the debate on the Amendment, but may not otherwise speak on it.
- (c) The Mover of the Amendment has no right of reply to the debate on his or her Amendment.

13.10 **Motions Which May be Moved During Debate**

When a Motion is under debate, no other Motion may be moved except the following Procedural Motions:

- (a) to withdraw a Motion;
- (b) to amend a Motion;
- (c) to proceed to the next business;
- (d) that the question be now put;
- (e) to adjourn a debate;
- (f) to adjourn a meeting;
- (g) to exclude the public and press in accordance with the Access to Information Procedural Rules; and
- (h) to not hear further a Member named under Rule 20.3 or to exclude him or her from the meeting under Rule 20.4.

13.11 **Closure Motions**

- (a) A Member may move, without comment, the following Motions at the end of a speech of another Member:
 - (i) to proceed to the next business;

- (ii) that the question be now put;
 - (iii) to adjourn a debate; or
 - (iv) to adjourn a meeting.
- (b) If a Motion to proceed to next business is seconded and the Mayor thinks the item has been sufficiently discussed, he or she will give the Mover of the original Motion a right of reply and then put the Procedural Motion to the vote.
- (c) If a Motion that the question be now put is seconded and the Mayor thinks the item has been sufficiently discussed, he or she will put the Procedural Motion to the vote. If it is passed, he or she will give the Mover of the original Motion a right of reply before putting his or her Motion to the vote.
- (d) If a Motion to adjourn the debate or to adjourn the meeting is seconded and the Mayor thinks the item has not been sufficiently discussed and cannot reasonably be so discussed on that occasion, he or she will put the Procedural Motion to the vote without giving the Mover of the original Motion the right of reply.

13.12 Points of Order

A Member may raise a point of order at any time. The Mayor will hear them immediately. A point of order may only relate to an alleged breach of these Council Rules of Procedure, or the law. The Member must indicate the rule or law and the way in which he or she considers it has been broken. The ruling of the Mayor on the matter will be final.

13.13 Personal Explanation

A Member may make a personal explanation at any time. A personal explanation may only relate to some material part of an earlier speech by the Member which may appear to have been misunderstood in the present debate. The ruling of the Mayor on the admissibility of a personal explanation will be final.

14. PREVIOUS DECISIONS AND MOTIONS

14.1 Motion to Rescind a Previous Decision

A Motion or Amendment to rescind a decision made at a meeting of Council within the past six months, cannot be moved unless the Notice of Motion is signed by at least one quarter of the Members of the Council or, unless subject to the prior approval of the Mayor, information which was not available when the Resolution was passed is placed before the Council.

14.2 Motion Similar to One Previously Rejected

A Motion or Amendment in similar terms to one that has been rejected at a meeting of the Council in the past six months cannot be moved unless the Notice of Motion or Amendment is signed by at least one quarter of the Members of the Council. Once the Motion or Amendment is dealt with, no one can propose a similar Motion or Amendment for six months.

15. **VOTING**

15.1 **Majority**

Unless this Constitution or the law provides otherwise, any matter will be decided by a simple majority of those Members voting and present in the room at the time the question was put. The Mayor shall ascertain the numbers voting for, and against, any question and the Mayor's declaration of the result shall be conclusive.

15.2 **Chairman's Casting Vote**

If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the Mayor will have a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Mayor chooses to exercise a casting vote.

15.3 **Show of Hands**

Unless a recorded vote is demanded under Rule 15.4, the Mayor will take the vote by show of hands, or if there is no dissent, by the affirmation of the meeting.

15.4 **Recorded Vote**

(a) If, before the vote is taken, a Member of the Council present at the meeting demands it, the names for and against the Motion or Amendment or abstaining from voting will be taken down in writing and entered into the minutes.

(b) A recorded vote shall not be taken where the Council is voting on appointments.

15.5 **Right to Require Individual Vote to be Recorded**

Where any Member requests it immediately after the vote is taken, their vote will be so recorded in the minutes to show whether they voted for or against the motion or abstained from voting.

15.6 **Voting on Appointments**

If there are more than two people nominated for any position to be filled and there is not a clear majority of votes in favour of one person, then the name of the person with the least number of votes will be taken off the list and a new vote taken. The process will continue until there is a majority of votes for one person.

16. **REFERENCE TO COUNCIL**

16.1 Subject to the provision in Paragraph 16.3 below, immediately following a vote on a decision taken by a Committee or Sub-Committee under delegated powers, one quarter of the Members of the Committee or Sub-Committee present and voting at the meeting may require that the decision be submitted to the Council as a recommendation.

16.2 Where a reference has been made pursuant to the provision in Paragraph 16.1 above, the decision shall not be implemented before consideration of that recommendation by the Council.

16.3 The provisions in Paragraph 16.1 shall not apply to the Licensing and Safety Committee and the Planning and Highways Committee, or any Sub-Committee appointed by those Committees.

17. **MINUTES**

17.1 **Signing the Minutes**

The Mayor will sign the minutes of the proceedings at the next suitable meeting. The Mayor will move that the minutes of the previous meeting be signed as a correct record. The only matter in relation to the minutes that can be discussed is their accuracy.

17.2 **No Requirement to Sign Minutes of Previous Meeting at Extraordinary Meeting**

Where in relation to any meeting, the next meeting for the purpose of signing the minutes is a meeting called under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972 (an Extraordinary Meeting), then the next following meeting (being a meeting called otherwise than under that paragraph) will be treated as a suitable meeting for the purposes of paragraph 41(1) and (2) of Schedule 12 relating to the signing of minutes.

17.3 **Form of Minutes**

Minutes will contain all motions and amendments in the exact form and order the Mayor put them.

18. **RECORD OF ATTENDANCE**

All Members present during the whole or part of a meeting must sign their names on the attendance sheets before the conclusion of every meeting to assist with the record of attendance.

19. **EXCLUSION OF (PRESS AND) PUBLIC**

Members of the public and press may only be excluded either in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 Section 4 of this Constitution or Rule 21 (Disturbance by Public).

20. **MEMBERS' CONDUCT**

20.1 **Standing to Speak**

When a Member speaks at a Council meeting, he or she must stand and address the meeting through the Mayor. If more than one Member stands, the Mayor will ask one to speak and the others must sit. Other Members must remain seated whilst a Member is speaking unless they wish to make a point of order or a point of personal explanation.

20.2 **Mayor Standing**

When the Mayor stands during a debate, any Member speaking at the time must stop and sit down. The meeting must be silent.

20.3 Member Not to be Heard Further

If a Member persistently disregards the ruling of the Mayor by behaving improperly or offensively, or deliberately obstructs business, the Mayor may move that the Member be not heard further. If seconded, the Motion will be voted on without discussion.

20.4 Member to Leave the Meeting

If the Member continues to behave improperly after such a motion is carried, the Mayor may move that either the Member leaves the meeting or that the meeting is adjourned for a specified period. If seconded, the Motion will be voted on without discussion.

20.5 General disturbance

If there is a general disturbance making orderly business impossible, the Mayor may adjourn the meeting for as long as he or she thinks necessary.

21. DISTURBANCE BY PUBLIC

21.1 Removal of Member of the Public

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Mayor will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Mayor will order their removal from the meeting room.

21.2 Clearance of Part of Meeting Room

If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Chairman may call for that part to be cleared.

22. SUSPENSION AND AMENDMENT OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

22.1 Suspension

All of these Council Procedure Rules, except Rule 15.5 and 17.2, may be suspended by Motion on Notice, or without notice, if at least one half of the whole number of Members of the Council are present. Suspension may be for the consideration of a particular item of business or for the duration of that meeting.

22.2 Amendment

Any motion to add to, vary or revoke these Council Procedure Rules will, when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned, without discussion, to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

23. APPLICATION TO COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

23.1 All of the Council Procedure Rules apply to meetings of the Council.

23.2 The Council Procedure Rules do not apply to meetings of the Executive or Overview and Scrutiny bodies, which are governed by their own procedure rules.

23.3 Council Procedure Rules 2 (i-iii), 3–8, 10, 12, 13, 15–23 (but not Rule 20.1) apply to meetings of Committees of the Council and their Sub-Committees.

23.4 Council Procedure Rules 13.1 – 13.13 do not apply to meetings of the Licensing and Safety Committee and its Sub-Committees, when a hearing is being conducted.

24. **NOTICES**

24.1 For the purposes of these Council Procedure Rules Notice sent by fax or by e-mail shall be deemed to constitute Notice in Writing.

Scheme for Public Participation at Meetings of the Council

1. Why have a scheme?

The Council is committed to encouraging greater public participation in its work. This scheme will give members of the public the opportunity to tell Councillors directly at meetings of the Council about the things that concern them.

All issues raised by the public under this scheme will be given careful consideration.

While it will not be possible, in every case, to resolve an issue to the satisfaction of everyone, the Council will ensure that the issue is considered fairly.

2. What can the public do?

The public may use this scheme to make a submission to Councillors at a meeting of the Council in one of four ways:

(a) Petition

To present a petition at a Council meeting in order to request the Council to deal with any particular issue within the community. There is no minimum number of signatures.

(b) Question

To ask a question at a Council meeting. This may be addressed to the Mayor, a Member of the Executive or a Chairman of a Committee or Sub-Committee. The question must be about a Council Service, or a topic relevant to the Council.

A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question, without notice, to the Member who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply. The Mayor may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds in Paragraph 4 below.

(c) Statement

To make a Statement to a Council meeting about a Council Service, about something the Council has or has not done, or about a matter of local interest or concern.

(d) Deputation

To present to a Council meeting, a Deputation calling for action by the Council, registering a view about something the Council has or has not done, or about a matter of community interest.

A Deputation may only be made on behalf of an organised group of residents or other interested parties.

3. Relevance to the Council

The content of any form of submission must be about something that is within the Council's responsibilities. This includes matters of interest to the Council as a community leader.

4. What falls outside the scheme?

Some matters fall outside the scope of this scheme. These are:

- Individual's circumstances where it would not be appropriate for details to be aired in open session;
- Applications for legal consents where alternative procedures exist for the public to offer views; and
- Other proposals of any kind which have been formally published and where specific arrangements are made for the public to express their views.

The Chief Executive may also reject a submission if it:

- is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
- is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
- is substantially the same as a submission which has been put to a meeting of the Council in the past six months;
- Is about the subject of an appeal or review procedure that has not yet been concluded. or
- requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

5. Number of submissions

At any one meeting, no person may make more than one submission and no more than two submissions may be made on behalf of one organisation or group.

6. Notice of Submission

A submission may only be made if notice has been given by delivering it, in writing, or by electronic mail, to the Head of Democratic and Registration Services, no fewer than **six** clear working days (the date of the Council meeting and the date of giving Notice shall not count as clear working days) before the day of the Council meeting. A question must be set out, in full, and a written summary of all points to be raised in any other form of submission must be provided. This will ensure that time is available to prepare advice for the meeting, an individual Councillor or the person making the submission. Each submission must give the name and address of the person who will make the submission at the meeting and, in the case of questions, must include the name, or office, of the Member of the Council to whom it is to be put.

7. Advice on Content

The Head of Democratic and Registration Services will be available to give advice to the public about the content of their submissions and the process. The Head of Democratic and Registration Services will also give advice to the Mayor and Members on such matters as necessary.

8. Who can use the Scheme?

The Scheme is open to any resident in the area covered by the Authority. The Scheme is also open to a representative of a business operating in the area of the Authority.

The Scheme is not open to employees of the Council wishing to make representations in that capacity. Employees' rights as private citizens to use this scheme are preserved.

Only one person may speak about each submission at the meeting. In the case of a Statement or Deputation on behalf of more than one person, the Notice should identify others who are party to the submission.

9. At which meetings may submissions be made?

Any submission under this scheme may be made at any ordinary meeting of the Council other than the Annual Meeting.

10. Support for the Public

The prospect of speaking at a formal meeting of the Council may be daunting for the public. Every help and support will be made available to those who wish to use this scheme. The Councillors and Officers present will treat members of the public with courtesy and respect.

11. Time Limits

No individual submission will be allowed more than three minutes at a meeting. This rule will be strictly enforced in fairness to all those who wish to address the meeting.

The overall time allowed at a meeting to hear and deal with submissions from the public will be decided by the Mayor, or by the meeting itself, but will not normally exceed thirty minutes. This will take into account the issues to be raised in the submissions, the number of submissions and the other business of the meeting.

Submissions will be heard in the order notice of them was received, except that the Mayor may group together similar matters. Where there is insufficient time to deal with all submissions received, the Mayor will decide which submissions should be dealt with at the meeting. Any submissions not dealt with will be formally received by the meeting and a written response will be given as soon as possible after the meeting.

12. Balance

The Mayor will ensure that those who are making submissions on opposite points of view on the same subject are treated equally as far as possible.

13. How will submissions be dealt with at the meeting?

Details of all submissions will be printed on the agenda for the relevant meeting. If the subject matter of the submission is already on the agenda for the meeting, the meeting will be prepared to defer consideration of the submission until that item on the agenda is reached.

If necessary, and convenient to the other business, the Mayor or the meeting itself will agree to advance that item in the order or proceedings.

The Mayor will invite the member of the public to address the meeting for up to three minutes. If the submission is in the form of a question, the Mayor will invite the Questioner to put the question to the Member named in the Notice. If a person who has made a submission is unable to be present, they may ask the Mayor to present the submission to the Council on their behalf. In the case of a question, the Mayor may ask the question on the Questioner's behalf or indicate that a written reply will be given. In any case the Mayor may decide, in the absence of the person making the submission, that the submission will not be dealt with.

14. Councillors' Questions on Submissions

Councillors will be allowed up to five minutes to ask solely factual questions of the person making each submission. This is included in the thirty minutes normally set aside for dealing with submissions.

15. Written Answers to Questions

Any question which cannot be dealt with during the allocated time, either because of lack of time or because of the non-attendance of the Member to whom it was to be put, will be dealt with by a written answer. Written answers shall be sent to the Questioner and copied to all Members of the Council.

16. Action the Meeting May Take

In the case of a question, the Councillor named in the Notice will reply, or in his or her absence, the Mayor may ask another Councillor to reply. The reply will count against the thirty minute time limit. A written reply may be given where this is more convenient and can be circulated at the meeting.

Unless the submission relates directly to an issue to be dealt with at the meeting, petitions will normally be referred for consideration by the same, or another body, within the Authority on a report from Officers.

In the case of Statements and Deputations, the meeting will decide on the most appropriate course of action, which will be either to note the submission or to request an Officer report to a subsequent meeting of the Executive or appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee on the issue raised.

Any Member may move that a matter raised by a submission be referred to the executive or the appropriate committee or sub-committee. Once seconded, such a motion will be voted on without discussion.

17. General Information

This scheme will be reviewed and adjustments made from time to time.

The public are welcome to attend Council, Executive, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings where open business is discussed, but may not speak to the meeting. All such meetings will be held in accommodation that has reasonable access and seating for the public. A summary of public rights of access to information is contained in the Access to Information Procedure Rules available for inspection at the Council offices, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell.

SECTION 4 – ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES

1. SCOPE

These rules apply to all meetings of the Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Panels, the Standards Committee and Regulatory Committees and public meetings of the Executive (together called meetings).

2. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS TO INFORMATION

These rules do not affect any more specific rights to information contained elsewhere in this Constitution, or the law, in particular, the public may have additional rights of access to information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and/or the Data Protection Act 1998.

3. RIGHTS TO ATTEND MEETINGS

Members of the public may attend all meetings, subject only to the exceptions in these rules.

4. NOTICES OF MEETING

The Council will give at least five clear working days notice of any meeting by posting details of the meeting at Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell [the designated office].

5. ACCESS TO AGENDA AND REPORTS BEFORE THE MEETING

The Council will make copies of the agenda and reports, which are open to the public, available for inspection at the designated office, at least five clear working days before the meeting. If an item is added to the agenda later, the revised agenda will be open to inspection from the time the item was added to the agenda. Where reports are prepared after the Summons has been sent out, the designated Officer shall make each such report available to the public as soon as the report is completed and sent to Councillors.

6. SUPPLY OF COPIES

The Council will supply copies of:

- (a) any agenda and reports which are open to public inspection;
- (b) any further statements, or particulars, necessary to indicate the nature of the items in the agenda; and
- (c) if the Proper Officer thinks fit, copies of any other documents supplied to Councillors in connection with an item

to any person on payment of a reasonable charge for postage and any other costs.

Copies of agenda and those reports which are open to public inspection are available on the Council's web-site.

7. **ACCESS TO MINUTES ETC AFTER THE MEETING**

The Council will make available copies of the following for six years after a meeting:

- (a) the minutes of the meeting, or records of decisions made, together with reasons, for all meetings of the Executive, excluding any part of the minutes of proceedings which disclose exempt or confidential information;
- (b) a summary of any proceedings not open to the public, where the minutes open to inspection would not provide a reasonably fair and coherent record;
- (c) the agenda for the meeting; and
- (d) reports relating to items when the meeting was open to the public.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 **List of Background Papers**

The originating Director will set out, in every report, a list of those documents (called background papers) relating to the subject matter of the report which in his or her opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report, or an important part of the report, is based; and
- (b) which have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report

but does not include published works, or those which disclose exempt or confidential information, (as defined in Rule 10) and in respect of Executive reports, the advice of a political advisor.

8.2 **Public Inspection of Background Papers**

The Council will make available for public inspection, for four years after the date of the meeting, one copy of each of the documents on the list of background papers.

9. **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC'S RIGHTS**

A copy of these Rules containing a written summary of the public's rights to attend meetings and to inspect and copy documents must be kept at, and available to, the public during normal office hours at Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell.

10. **EXCLUSION OF ACCESS BY THE PUBLIC TO MEETINGS**

10.1 **Confidential Information – Requirement to Exclude the Public**

The public must be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, that confidential information would be disclosed.

10.2 **Exempt Information – Discretion to Exclude the Public**

The public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, that exempt information would be disclosed.

Where the meeting will determine any person's civil rights or obligations, or adversely affect their possessions, Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 establishes a presumption that the meeting will be held in public, unless a private hearing is necessary for one of the reasons specified in Article 6.

10.3 **Meaning of Confidential Information**

Confidential information means information given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure or information which cannot be publicly disclosed by Court Order.

10.4 **Meaning of Exempt Information**

To reflect the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, information falling within the following 7 categories (subject to any condition listed below) is exempt information if in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

- (1) Information relating to any individual.
- (2) Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
- (3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), provided that Information in this category is not exempt information if it is required to be registered under the Companies Act 1985; the Friendly Societies Acts 1974 and 1992; the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978; the Building Societies Act 1986; or the Charities Act 1993.
- (4) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations, or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or officer holders under, the authority.
- (5) Information in respect of which a claim of legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
- (6) Information which reveals that the authority proposes
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or,
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
- (7) Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

Information falling within any of categories 1-7 above is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the Local Planning Authority may grant itself planning permission under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.

The decision as to whether or not information should be considered to be exempt so as to permit exclusion of the public from a meeting and if so whether the public should be excluded will rest with the Council, Committee, Executive or Executive Committee receiving the report. The Borough Solicitor is authorised to determine whether or not information is exempt for all other purposes.

11. EXCLUSION OF ACCESS BY THE PUBLIC TO REPORTS

If the Proper Officer thinks fit, the Council may exclude access by the public to reports which, in his or her opinion, relate to items during which, in accordance with Rule 10, the meeting is likely not to be open to the public. Such reports will be marked "Not for Publication" and the Agenda shall indicate the category of information likely to be disclosed.

12. APPLICATION OF RULES TO THE EXECUTIVE

Rules 13 to 24 apply to the Executive and its Committees. If the Executive, or its Committees, meet to make a key decision then it must also comply with Rules 1 to 11, unless Rule 15 (general exception) or Rule 16 (special urgency) applies. A key decision is as defined in Article 13.03 of this Constitution.

If the Executive, or its Committees, meet to discuss a key decision to be made collectively, with an Officer other than a political assistant present, within 28 days of the date according to the Forward Plan by which it is to be decided, then it must also comply with Rules 1 to 11, unless Rule 15 (general exception) or Rule 16 (special urgency) applies. A key decision is as defined in Article 13.03 of this Constitution. This requirement does not include meetings whose sole purpose is for Officers to brief Members.

13. DEFINITION OF AND PROCEDURE BEFORE TAKING KEY DECISIONS

"Key Decision" means decision relating to an Executive function which is likely either:-

- (a) to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards or electoral divisions in the Borough.

The Council has determined that "significant" means expenditure/savings of £400,000 or more.

Subject to Rule 15 (General Exception) and Rule 16 (Special Urgency), a key decision may not be made unless it has been included in a Forward Plan (see Rule 14).

Where an individual Executive Member or an Officer receives a report in connection with a Key Decision which they will be making, the decision cannot be made until the

report has been made available for public inspection for five clear working days, unless the report contains confidential or exempt information. Also, the person submitting the report must, at the same time, send a copy to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

Decisions may be made at a meeting of the Executive or its Committees, only when notice of the meeting has been given in accordance with Rule 4 (notice of meetings).

14. THE FORWARD PLAN

14.1 Period of Forward Plan

Forward plans will be prepared by the Leader to cover a period of four months, beginning with the first day of any month. These will be prepared on a monthly basis and subsequent Plans will cover a period beginning with the first day of the second month covered in the preceding Plan.

14.2 Contents of Forward Plan

The Forward Plan will contain matters which the Leader has reason to believe will be subject of a key decision to be made by the Executive, a Committee of the Executive, individual Members of the Executive, Officers, or under joint arrangements in the course of the discharge of an Executive Function during the period covered by the Plan. It will describe the following particulars insofar as the information is available or might reasonably be obtained:

- (a) the matter in respect of which a decision is to be made;
- (b) where the decision-maker is an individual, his or her name and title, if any, and where the decision-maker is a body, its name and details of membership;
- (c) the date on which, or the period within which, the decision will be made;
- (d) the identity of the principal groups, whom the decision-maker proposes to consult before taking the decision;
- (e) the means by which any such consultation is proposed to be undertaken;
- (f) the steps any person might take who wishes to make representations to the Executive or decision-maker about the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made, and the date by which those steps must be taken; and
- (g) a list of the documents submitted to the decision-maker for consideration in relation to the matter.

The Forward Plan must be published at least 14 days before the start of the period covered. The Proper Officer will publish, once a year, a Notice in at least one newspaper circulating in the area, stating:

- (a) that key decisions are to be made on behalf of the Council;
- (b) that a forward plan containing particulars of the matters on which decisions are to be made will be prepared on a monthly basis;

- (c) that the Plan will contain details of the key decisions to be made for the four month period following its publication;
- (d) that each Plan will be available for inspection during normal office hours, free of charge, at the Council's Offices;
- (e) that each Plan will contain a list of the documents submitted to the decision-makers for consideration in relation to the key decisions on the Plan;
- (f) the address from which, subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of, or extracts from, any document listed in the Forward Plan is available;
- (g) that other documents may be submitted to decision-makers;
- (h) the procedure for requesting details of documents (if any) as they become available; and
- (i) the dates on each month in the following year on which each Forward Plan will be published and available to the public at the Council's Offices.

Exempt information need not be included in a forward plan and confidential information cannot be included.

15. **GENERAL EXCEPTION**

If a matter which is likely to be a key decision has not been included in the Forward Plan, then, subject to Rule 16 (special urgency), the decision may still be made if:

- (a) the decision must be made by such a date that it is impracticable to defer the decision until it has been included in the next Forward Plan and until the start of the first month to which the next Forward Plan relates;
- (b) the Proper Officer has informed the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or if there is no such person, each Member of that Commission in writing, by Notice, of the matter to which the decision is to be made;
- (c) the Proper Officer has made copies of that Notice available to the public at the Offices of the Council; and
- (d) at least 5 clear working days have elapsed since the Proper Officer complied with (a) and (b).

Where such a decision is made collectively, it must be made in public.

16. **SPECIAL URGENCY**

If, by virtue of the date by which a decision must be made, Rule 15 (general exception) cannot be followed, then the decision can only be made if the decision-maker (if an individual) or the Chairman of the body making the decision, obtains the agreement of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that the taking of the decision cannot be reasonably deferred. If there is no Chairman, or if the Chairman is unable to act, then the agreement of the Mayor, or in his or her absence, the Deputy Mayor will suffice.

17. REPORT TO COUNCIL

17.1 When the Overview and Scrutiny Commission can Require a Report

If the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thinks that a key decision has been made which was not:

- (a) included in the Forward Plan; or
- (b) the subject of the general exception procedure; or
- (c) the subject of an agreement with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or the Mayor or Deputy Mayor under Rule 16;

the Commission may require the Executive to submit a report to the Council within such reasonable time as the Commission specifies. The power to require a report rests with the Commission, but is also delegated to the Proper Officer, who shall require such a report on behalf of the Commission when so requested by the Chairman or any five Members. Alternatively, the requirement may be raised by resolution passed at a meeting of the Commission.

17.2 Executive's Report to Council

The Executive will prepare a report for submission to the next available meeting of the Council. However, if the next meeting of the Council is within seven days of receipt of the written Notice, or the Resolution of the Committee, then the report may be submitted to the meeting after that. The report to Council will set out particulars of the decision, the individual or body making the decision, and, if the Leader is of the opinion that it was not a key decision, the reasons for that opinion.

17.3 Quarterly Reports on Special Urgency Decisions

In any event, the Leader will submit quarterly reports to the Council on the Executive Decisions made in the circumstances set out in Rule 16 (special urgency) in the preceding three months. The report will include the number of decisions so made and a summary of the matters in respect of which those decisions were made.

18. RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

18.1 As soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event, within two days after any:

- (i) decision of the Executive;
- (ii) decision by a Committee of the Executive, whether held in public or in private;
- (iii) decision made by an individual Member of the Executive; or
- (iv) key decision made by an Officer

a written statement shall be prepared specifying:-

- (a) a record of the decision;
- (b) a record of the reasons for the decision;

- (c) details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the decision-making body at the meeting at which the decision was made, or, in the case of a decision made by an individual, at the time when he or she made the decision;
- (d) a record of any conflict of interest in relation to the matter decided which is declared by a Member of the decision-making body which made the decision or, in the case of an individual, any conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member consulted; and
- (e) in respect of any declared conflict of interest, a note of any dispensation granted by the Council's Standards Committee.

18.2 The statement required by 18.1 above shall be prepared by:-

- (i) in the case of decisions made by the Executive or a Committee of the Executive, the Proper Officer present at the meeting;
- (ii) in the case of a decision made by an individual Member of the Executive, the Proper Officer instructed by the Member;
- (iii) in the case of a key decision made by an Officer, the Officer making the decision.

18.3 An individual Member of the Executive making a decision shall, forthwith, instruct a Proper Officer to prepare a statement, as required by 18.1 above, and shall supply to the Proper Officer all information necessary for the proper preparation of the statement.

19. EXECUTIVE MEETINGS RELATING TO MATTERS WHICH ARE NOT KEY DECISIONS

The Executive will decide whether meetings relating to matters which are not key decisions will be held in public or private.

20. NOTICE OF PRIVATE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE

Members of the Executive or its Committees will be entitled to receive five clear working days notice of a meeting to which they are summoned, unless the meeting is convened at shorter notice as a matter of urgency.

21. ATTENDANCE AT PRIVATE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE

21.1 Executive Members

All Members of the Executive will be served notice of all private meetings of Committees of the Executive, whether or not they are Members of that Committee, and will be entitled to attend.

21.2 Other Members

Members other than Executive Members and Executive Support Members will not be entitled to attend private meetings of the Executive, and its Committees.

21.3 Officers

- a) The Chief Executive, the Borough Treasurer and the Monitoring Officer, and their nominees, shall be entitled to attend any meeting of the Executive and its Committees. The Executive may not meet unless the Proper Officer has been given reasonable notice that a meeting is to take place.
- b) A private meeting of the Executive or any of its Committees may only take place in the presence of the Proper Officer, or his or her nominee, with responsibility for recording and publicising the decisions.

22. INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS AFTER EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

22.1 A copy of any report, or part report, considered by the Executive, a Committee of the Executive or individual Member of the Executive when making a decision, or considered by an Officer when making a key decision, will be open to inspection by the public for six years from the date the decision was made. Documents containing confidential or exempt information, or the advice of a political adviser, need not be disclosed. If a document is not disclosed because it contains exempt information, the Proper Officer will prepare a statement. The statement will describe the category of exempt information. The statement will be open to inspection for 6 years from the date of the meeting.

22.2 The provisions of Rules 7 and 8 (inspection of documents after meetings) will also apply to the making of decisions by individual Members of the Executive. This does not require the disclosure of exempt or confidential information or advice from a political assistant.

23. DECISIONS BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

23.1 Reports intended to be taken into Account

Where an individual Member of the Executive receives a report which he or she intends to take into account in making any key decision, then he or she will not make the decision until at least five clear days after receipt of that report.

23.2 Provision of copies of reports to Chairman of Scrutiny Commission

On giving of such a report to an individual decision maker, the person who prepared the report will give a copy of it to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission as soon as reasonably practicable, and make it publicly available at the same time.

24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BODIES - ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

24.1 Rights to Copies

Subject to Rule 24.2 below, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or its Overview and Scrutiny Panels, will be entitled to copies of any document which is in the possession or control of the Executive or its Committees and which contains material relating to

- (a) any business transacted at a public, or private, meeting of the Executive or its Committees; or

- (b) any decision made by an individual Member of the Executive.

24.2 Limit on Rights

An overview and scrutiny body will not be entitled to:

- (a) any document that is in draft form;
- (b) any part of a document that contains exempt or confidential information, unless that information is relevant to an action, or decision, it is reviewing or scrutinising or intend to scrutinise; or
- (c) the advice of a political adviser.

25. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS OF ACCESS FOR MEMBERS

25.1 Material Relating to Previous Business

All Members will be entitled to inspect any document which is in the possession, or under the control of, the Executive or its Committees and contains material relating to any business previously transacted at a private meeting, unless either (a) or (b) below applies.

- (a) it contains exempt information falling within Paragraphs 1 to 6, 9, 11, 12 and 14 of the categories of exempt information; or
- (b) it contains the advice of a political adviser.

25.2 Material Relating to Key Decisions

All members of the Council will be entitled to inspect any document (except those available only in draft form) in the possession, or under the control of, the Executive or its Committees which relates to any key decision, unless Paragraph 25.1 (a) or (b) above applies.

25.3 Nature of Rights

These rights of a Member are additional to any other right he or she may have.

SECTION 5 - BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

1. In this Part –

“Executive” and “Executive Leader” have the same meaning as in Part II of the Local Government Act 2000; and “plan or strategy” and “working day” have the same meaning as in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001.

2 The Framework for Executive Decisions

The Council will be responsible for the adoption of its Budget and Policy Framework, as set out in Article 4. Once a budget or a Policy Framework is in place, it will be the responsibility of the Executive to implement it.

3 Process for Developing the Framework

The process by which the Budget and Policy Framework shall be developed is:

- (a) The Executive or Executive Member will publicise a timetable for making proposals to the Council for the adoption of any plan, strategy or budget that forms part of the Budget and Policy Framework, and the arrangements for consultation. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission will also be notified. After publication of those initial proposals, there will be a consultation period of not less than 6 weeks in each instance.
- (b) At the end of that period, the Executive will then draw up firm proposals having regard to the responses to that consultation. If the Overview and Scrutiny Commission wishes to respond to the Executive in that consultation process, then it may do so. The Commission may investigate, research or report, in detail, with policy recommendations before the end of the consultation period. The Executive will take any response from the Commission into account in drawing up firm proposals for submission to the Council, and its report to the Council will reflect the comments made by consultees and the Executive’s response.
- (c) Once the Executive has approved the firm proposals, the Proper Officer will refer them, at the earliest opportunity, to the Council for decision.
- (d) In reaching a decision, the Council may adopt the Executive’s proposals, amend them, refer them back to the Executive for further consideration, or, in principle, substitute its own proposals in their place, in accordance with the provisions set out below.
- (e) If it accepts the recommendation of the Executive without amendment, the Council may make a decision which has immediate effect.
- (f) The decision will be publicised in accordance with Article 4 and a copy shall be given to the Leader.
- (g) Following the submission of a draft plan or strategy to the Council for consideration and, where following consideration of that draft plan or strategy, the Council has any objections to it, the Council must take the action set out in sub paragraph (h).

- (h) The Executive Leader may seek a short adjournment of the Council meeting to consider amending a draft plan or strategy brought before it for approval and for the Council to consider such amendments on reconvening. If the Council has objections to a draft plan or strategy (following consideration of any amendments proposed by the Leader, if appropriate), it must give the Leader instructions requiring the Executive to reconsider, in light of those objections, the draft Plan or Strategy submitted to it.
- (i) Where the Council gives instructions in accordance with sub-paragraph (h), it must specify a period of at least five working days, beginning on the day after the date on which the Executive Leader receives the instructions on behalf of the Executive within which the Executive Leader may -
 - (i) submit a revision of the draft Plan or Strategy, as amended by the Executive (the “revised Plan or Strategy”), with the Executive’s reasons for any amendments made to the draft Plan or Strategy, to the Council for the Council’s consideration; or
 - (ii) inform the Council of any disagreement that the Executive has with any of the Council’s objections and the Executive’s reasons for any such disagreement.
- (i) When the period specified by the Council, referred to in sub-paragraph (i), has expired, the Council must, when –
 - (i) amending the draft Plan or Strategy or, if there is one, the revised draft Plan or Strategy;
 - (ii) approving, for the purpose of its submission to the Secretary of State or any Minister of the Crown for his approval, any plan or strategy (whether or not in the form of a draft or a revised draft) of which any part is required to be so submitted; or
 - (iii) adopting (with or without modification) the Plan or Strategy,

take into account any amendments made to the draft Plan or Strategy that are included in any revised draft plan or strategy, the Executive’s reasons for those amendments, any disagreements that the Executive has with any of the Council’s objections and the Executive’s reasons for that disagreement, which the Executive Leader submitted to the Council, or informed the Council of, within the period specified.
- (j) Subject to sub-paragraph (o), where, before 8 February in any financial year, the Executive submits to the Council for its consideration in relation to the following financial year –
 - (i) estimates of the amounts to be aggregated in making a calculation (whether originally or by way of substitute) in accordance with any of sections 32 to 37 or 43 to 49, of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;
 - (ii) estimates of other amounts to be used for the purposes of such a calculation;
 - (iii) estimates of such a calculation; or

- (iv) amounts required to be stated in a precept under Chapter IV of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992,

and following consideration of those estimates or amounts, the Council has any objections to them, it must take the action set out in sub-paragraph (l) below.

- (k) Before the Council makes a calculation (whether originally or by way of substitute) in accordance with any sections referred to in sub-paragraph (k)(i), or issues a precept under Chapter IV of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, it must inform the Executive Leader of any objections which it has to the Executive's estimates, or amounts, and must give to him, instructions requiring the Executive to reconsider, in light of those objections, those estimates and amounts, in accordance with the Council's requirements.
- (l) Where the Council gives instructions in accordance with sub-paragraph (l), it must specify a period of at least five working days, beginning on the day after the date on which the Executive Leader receives the instructions on behalf of the Executive, within which, the Executive Leader may –
 - (i) submit a revision of the estimates, or amounts, as amended by the Executive ("revised estimates or amounts"), which have been reconsidered in accordance with the Council's requirements, with the Executive's reasons for any amendments made to the estimates or amounts, to the Council for consideration; or
 - (ii) inform the Council of any disagreement that the Executive has with any of the Council's objections and the Executive's reasons for any such disagreement.
- (m) When the period specified by the Council, referred to in sub-paragraph (m), has expired, the Council must, when making calculations (whether originally or by way of substitute) in accordance with the sections referred to in sub-paragraph (k)(i), or issuing a precept under Chapter IV of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, take into account –
 - (i) any amendments to the estimates or amounts that are included in any revised estimates or amounts;
 - (ii) the Executive's reasons for those amendments;
 - (iii) any disagreement that the Executive has with any of the Council's objections; and
 - (iv) the Executive's reasons for that disagreement,which the Executive Leader submitted to the Council, or informed the Council of, within the period specified.
- (n) Sub paragraphs (k) to (n) shall not apply in relation to –
 - (i) calculations or substitute calculations which the Council is required to make in accordance with Sections 52I, 52J, 52T or 52U of the Local Government Finance Act 1992; and

- (ii) amounts stated in a precept issued to give effect to calculations, or substitute calculations, made in accordance with Section 52J or 52U of that Act.
- (p) In approving the Budget and Policy Framework, the Council will also specify the extent of virement within the Budget and degree of in-year changes to the Policy Framework which may be undertaken by the Executive, in accordance with Paragraphs 6 and 7 of these Rules (virement and in-year adjustments). Any other changes to the Policy and Budgetary Framework are reserved to the Council.

4 Decisions Outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) Subject to the provisions of Paragraph 6 (virement), the Executive, Committees of the Executive, individual Members of the Executive, Officers or joint arrangements discharging Executive functions, may only make decisions which are in line with the Budget and Policy Framework. If any of these bodies or persons wishes to make a decision which is contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the Budget approved by full Council, then that decision may only be taken by the Council, subject to 5 below.
- (b) If the Executive, Committees of the Executive, individual Members of the Executive and any Officers or joint arrangements discharging Executive functions want to make such a decision, they shall take advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Borough Treasurer as to whether the decision they want to make would be contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the Budget. If the advice of either of those Officers is that the decision would not be in line with the existing Budget and/or Policy Framework, then the decision must be referred by that body or person to the Council for decision, unless the decision is a matter of urgency, in which case, the provisions in Paragraph 5 (urgent decisions outside the Budget and Policy Framework) shall apply.

5 Urgent Decisions Outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) The Executive, a Committee of the Executive, an individual Member of the Executive or Officers or joint arrangements discharging Executive functions, may make a decision which is contrary to the Council's Policy Framework or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the Budget approved by full Council if the decision is a matter of urgency. However, the decision may only be made:
 - i) if it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the full Council; and
 - ii) if the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency.

The reasons why it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of full Council, and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's consent to the decision being made as a matter of urgency, must be noted on the record of the decision. In the absence of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, the consent of the Mayor, and in the absence of both, the Deputy Mayor, will be sufficient.

- (b) Following the decision, the decision-maker will provide a full report to the next available Council meeting explaining the decision, the reasons for it and why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.

6. Virement

Steps taken by the Executive, a Committee of the Executive, an individual Member of the Executive or Officers, or joint arrangements discharging Executive functions to implement Council Policy, shall not exceed those budgets allocated to each Budget Head. However, such bodies or individuals shall be entitled to vire across Budget Heads as permitted under the Council's Financial Rules in this Constitution. Approval to any virement in excess of the limits specified across Budget Heads shall require the approval of the full Council.

7. In-year Changes to the Policy Framework

The responsibility for agreeing the Budget and Policy Framework lies with the Council, and decisions by the Executive, a Committee of the Executive or Officers, or joint arrangements discharging Executive functions, must be in line with it. No changes to any policy and strategy which make up the Policy Framework may be made by those bodies or individuals except those changes:

- (a) which will result in the closure or discontinuance of a service or part of service to meet a budgetary constraint;
- (b) necessary to ensure compliance with the law, ministerial direction or Government guidance.

8. Call-in of Decisions Outside the Budget or Policy Framework

- (a) Where the Overview and Scrutiny Commission is of the opinion that an Executive decision is, or if made, would be contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the Council's Budget, then it shall seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, Borough Treasurer and other appropriate Officers.
- (b) In respect of functions which are the responsibility of the Executive, the Monitoring Officer's report and/or Borough Treasurer's report shall be sent to the Executive with a copy to every Member of the Council. Regardless of whether the decision is delegated or not, the Executive must meet to decide what action to take in respect of the Monitoring Officer's report and to prepare a report to Council in the event that the Monitoring Officer or the Borough Treasurer conclude that the decision was a departure, and to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission if the Monitoring Officer or the Borough Treasurer conclude that the decision was not a departure.
- (c) If the decision has yet to be made, or has been made but not yet implemented, and the advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or the Borough Treasurer is that the decision is, or would be, contrary to the Policy Framework or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with the Budget, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission may refer the matter to Council. In such cases, no further action will be taken in respect of the decision, or its implementation, until the Council has met and considered the matter. The Council shall meet within not less than 8 and not more than 15 working days of the request by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. At the meeting, it

will receive a report of the decision, or proposals, and the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or the Borough Treasurer. The Council may:

- i) endorse the decision or the proposal of the Executive decision maker as falling within the existing Budget and Policy Framework. In this case no further action is required, save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all Councillors in the normal way;

or

- ii) amend the Council's Financial Regulations or Policy concerned to encompass the decision or proposal of the body or individual responsible for that Executive function and agree to the decision with immediate effect. In this case, no further action is required save that the decision of the Council be minuted and circulated to all Councillors in the normal way;

or

- iii) where the Council accepts that the decision, or proposal, is contrary to the Policy Framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the Budget, and does not amend the existing Framework to accommodate it, require the Executive to reconsider the matter in accordance with the advice of the Officers.

SECTION 6 – EXECUTIVE PROCEDURE RULES

1. Conflicts of Interest

If the exercise of an Executive function has been delegated to a Committee of the Executive, an individual Member or an Officer, and should a conflict of interest arise, then the function will be exercised, in the first instance, by the person or body by whom the delegation was made and, otherwise, as set out in the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, in Part 5 of this Constitution.

2. Meetings of the Executive

The Executive will meet at least 10 times per year at times to be agreed by the Leader. The Executive shall meet at the Council's main offices or another location to be agreed by the Leader.

3. Public or Private Meetings

Subject to the provisions for the exclusion of access by the public set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the public may attend any meeting of the Executive where matters relating to key decisions will be discussed.

The Executive may decide whether meetings relating to matters which are not key decisions will be held in public or private but where the meeting will affect any person's civil rights or obligations, or adversely affect their possessions, the meeting will be open to the public, unless a private hearing is necessary for any of the reasons specified in Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

4. Quorum

The quorum for a meeting of the Executive, or a Committee of it, shall be three, not including any Executive Support Member who may be present at the meeting.

5. How Decisions are Made

- (i) Executive decisions which have been delegated to the Executive as a whole, will be made at a meeting convened in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules, in Part 4 of the Constitution.
- (ii) Where Executive decisions are delegated to a Committee of the Executive, the rules applying to Executive decisions made by them shall be the same as those applying to those made by the Executive as a whole.

6. Who presides at Executive Meetings?

If the Leader is present, he or she will preside. In his or her absence, the Deputy Leader shall preside.

7. Who may attend Executive Meetings?

Attendance at meetings of the Executive shall be in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules, in Part 4.2 of this Constitution.

8. **Order of Business at Executive Meetings**

At each meeting of the Executive, the following business will be conducted:

- (i) consideration of the minutes of the last meeting;
- (ii) declarations of interest, if any;
- (iii) matters referred to the Executive (whether by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission or by the Council) for reconsideration by the Executive, in accordance with the provisions contained in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, as set out in Part 4 of this Constitution;
- (iv) consideration of reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission; and
- (v) matters set out in the agenda for the meeting, and which shall indicate which are key decisions and which are not open to the public, in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules, as set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

9. **Consultation**

All reports to the Executive from any Member of the Executive, or an Officer, on proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework, must contain details of the nature and extent of consultation with stakeholders and relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and the outcome of that consultation. Reports about other matters will set out the details and outcome of consultations, as appropriate. The level of consultation required will be appropriate to the nature of the matter under consideration.

10. **Who can put items on the Executive agenda?**

- (i) The Leader will decide upon the schedule for the meetings of the Executive. He or she may put on the agenda of any Executive meeting, any matter which he or she wishes, whether or not authority has been delegated to the Executive, a Committee of it or any Member, or Officer, in respect of that matter. The Proper Officer will comply with the Leader's requests in this respect.
- (ii) Any Member of the Executive may require the Proper Officer to make sure that an item is placed on the agenda of the next available meeting of the Executive for consideration. If he or she receives such a request, the Proper Officer will comply.
- (iii) The proper Officer will make sure that an item is placed on the agenda of the next available meeting of the Executive where the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or the full Council, has resolved that an item be considered by the Executive.
- (iv) Any Member of the Council may ask the Leader to put an item on the agenda of an Executive meeting for consideration, and, if the Leader agrees, the item will be considered at the next available meeting of the Executive. The Notice of the meeting will give the name of the Councillor who asked for the item to be considered. This individual will be invited to attend the meeting for the

consideration of that item, whether or not it is a public meeting, and to speak, but not vote, on that item.

- (v) The monitoring Officer and/or the Borough Treasurer may include an item for consideration on the agenda of an Executive meeting and may require the Proper Officer to call such a meeting in pursuance of their statutory duties. In other circumstances, where any two from the Head of Paid Service, Borough Treasurer and Monitoring Officer are of the opinion that a meeting of the Executive needs to be called to consider a matter that requires a decision, they may jointly include an item on the agenda of an Executive meeting. If there is no meeting of the Executive soon enough to deal with the issue in question, then the person(s) entitled to include an item on the agenda may also require that a meeting be convened, at which, the matter will be considered.

SECTION 7 – PROTOCOL FOR EXECUTIVE DECISION-MAKING BY MEMBERS UNDER EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

2. With the law allowing individual Members to make decisions which bind the Council, it is important that procedures be put in place to avoid:-

- Contractual commitments being entered into without the benefit of all relevant advice.
- Disputes as to whether or not the Council has entered into any legally binding commitment by a Member acting under actual, or perceived, authorisation from the Executive.
- Claims for compensation for misrepresentation arising from (alleged) comments, discussions and correspondence in the course of negotiations.

3. The legal framework for decision-making under Executive arrangements is complex but it includes the following:-

- Except in cases of urgency, the most significant decisions, known as “Key Decisions”, can only be made if they are included in a “Forward Plan” which will be published by the Council each month and will set out those Key Decisions to be made during the next four months.
- Where an individual Executive Member, or Officer, receives a report which they intend to take into account when taking a Key Decision, the decision cannot be made until the report has been available for public inspection for five clear days and a copy sent to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- Whenever Executive Members make a decision and an Officer takes a key decision, a record must be made of
 - the decision
 - the reasons for the decision
 - the details of any options considered but rejected
 - any conflicts of interests declared by Members
 - any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee

The record must be made available for public inspection within two working days of the decision being made.

4. Purpose

This Protocol has been adopted by the Council to help in the achievement of the following aims, namely that:-

- The financial and propriety interests of the Council are protected.

- Decisions are based upon complete and sound information and advice from appropriate professional staff.
- Decisions are made in accordance with the Council's agreed processes and standards.

5. **Scope**

The Protocol does not purport to be a complete guide as to how decisions are made under Executive arrangements. Members and Officers will also need to be aware of, and guided by, those provisions which are set out in:-

- The Members' Code of Conduct
- The Code of Conduct for Officers
- The Member and Officer Protocol

6. **The Executive Work Programme and Forward Plan**

Although the law only requires that Key Decisions be included in the Forward Plan, the Director of Corporate Services will use best endeavours to maintain an Executive Work Programme containing information as to all decisions to be made by Executive Members (whether individually or collectively) and Key Decisions to be made by Officers. Although a paper copy of the Forward Plan is published on the first day of each month to comply with statutory requirements, this and a list of non-key executive decisions to be made will be updated on an ongoing basis and can be viewed on the Council's intranet and external web site. As soon as the need for an Executive decision arises, the relevant Director shall input the details to the system and submit these to the Head of Democratic and Registration Services who will check that all the required details have been provided and, if so, publish the new item on the intranet and web site. When submitting a new item, Directors must include details of:

- (i) Whether it is a key or non-key decision
- (ii) The title of the item
- (iii) A short description of the purpose of the decision
- (iv) Any relevant financial implications known at the time of submission, or if they are to be determined, a statement to that effect
- (v) The name of the decision-maker (Executive, Executive Committee, Individual (named) Executive Member or named Officer)
- (vi) A list of the groups or individuals to be consulted prior to the decision
- (vii) The method of consultation, presentation, letter, Public Notice, etc
- (viii) How anyone wishing to make representations should do so by indicating to whom they should be sent and where appropriate, the address
- (ix) The documents to be considered by the decision-maker

- (x) The closing date for representations
- (xi) The date the decision will be made

The Corporate Management Team will review the work programme on a monthly basis to ensure that due corporate consideration is given to any items being determined by individuals, as well as reviewing the draft agenda for each meeting of the Executive itself.

With the exception of urgent matters, Executive decisions shall not be made by Executive Members (collectively or individually) or a Key Decision made by an Officer, unless it has been included on the Forward Plan. Where grounds for urgency exist, the General Exception and Special Urgency Procedures, as set out in Section 15 and 16 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, shall also apply to non-key decisions.

7. Negotiations and Communications

It will only rarely be appropriate for Executive Members to participate in the conduct of negotiations on behalf of the Council. Members should only participate where there are clear reasons to conclude that their involvement in the negotiation, rather than in setting the framework and making a final decision, will add real value to the process. When it is appropriate for Members to become involved in any process of negotiation, the appropriate Officers (i.e. Officers designated by the relevant Director or his or her Deputy) must always be present, except by prior agreement with the relevant Director. Members should not enter into any prior correspondence or communications concerning an Executive decision which is to be made. Members should not give any indication that they have made an Executive decision in advance of the meeting with the relevant Director or the meeting of the Executive Committee or the Executive (as the case may be).

8. Confidentiality

Commercial transactions, by their nature, involve the commercial activities of a party, or parties, other than the Council and they might involve the disclosure to the Council of matters of commercial confidentiality, such as the Business Plans, performance standards or pricing structures of commercial organisations, disclosure of which, to a competitor, or to the market, could be very detrimental. This is even more so as Best Value encourages the development of Partnership and Open Book Transactions. The maintenance of confidentiality is essential both to maintain the integrity of the competitive procurement process and to ensure that those who have commercial dealings with the Council know that they can rely upon the Council to protect their commercial secrets, and are, therefore, able to be open with the Council.

- 9. It is important that Members should have access to the information necessary to enable them to understand the business of the Council and to ensure that it is being conducted in accordance with the Policies and Budgets of the Council and to the highest standards of propriety. Directors will ensure that all Members have the information necessary to enable them to perform their duties, but Members should only request access to confidential information where there are clear reasons why they need access to that information for the performance of their obligations, and should ensure that they do not disclose confidential information to unauthorised persons or organisations.

10. **Decision-making by individual Executive Members**

The process for a decision by individual Executive Members shall be as follows:-

- (i) A written report shall be prepared by the relevant Director. The report may be prepared by the Director on his or her own initiative or at the request of an Executive Member. A template for a report is shown at Annexe A to this Protocol.
- (ii) The Director's report shall set out the following:-
 - The Executive Portfolio within which the issues falls.
 - The issue to be decided.
 - Supporting Information – a summary of the facts relating to the matter under consideration. This Section of the report should also indicate whether or not the recommended decision is in accordance with the relevant policy framework of the Council.
 - The comments of the Borough Solicitor and the Borough Treasurer and shall include an Impact Assessment.
 - The Director's recommendations (if any) and the reasons for that recommendation.
 - Any consultations undertaken, the method of consultation, and a summary of any representations received.
 - Whether or not any Member consulted in connection with the matter, or participating in the making of the decision, has declared a conflict of interest.
 - If a conflict of interest has been declared, a note of any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee.
 - If the report contains confidential or exempt information, that must be stated.
 - A list of background papers.
- (iii) The Director may determine that the report should not be published until the Corporate Management Team has had an opportunity of considering it.
- (iv) The Executive Member shall make his or her decision at a meeting with the Director. A Schedule of Meetings for Executive Decisions will be agreed by the Director and the relevant Executive Member. Such meetings may, for example, be scheduled to commence immediately after meetings of Departmental Management Teams.
- (v) The Director shall forward a copy of the completed report to the Democratic and Registration Services Section not less than five clear days before the meeting with the Executive Member. The Director must have previously forwarded a copy of the draft report to the Borough Solicitor and the Borough

Treasurer, not less than three clear working days before it is sent to the Democratic and Registration Services Section. The Democratic and Registration Services Section will be responsible for ensuring that the report is available for public inspection for at least five clear working days prior to the meeting with the Executive Member and also for forwarding a copy of the report to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

- (vi) After each Executive decision has been made, the Executive Member shall, with the assistance of the relevant Director and Democratic and Registration Services, input that decision to the Modern.Gov System. The decision record must provide details of:
 - (i) Whether it was a key or non-key decision
 - (ii) The title of the item
 - (iii) A short description of the purpose of the decision
 - (iv) The name of the decision-maker (Executive, Executive Committee, Individual (named) Executive Member or named Officer)
 - (v) The decision
 - (vi) The reasons for the decision
 - (vii) The alternative options considered, if any
 - (viii) A list of any groups or other consultees contacted prior to making the decision
 - (ix) A list of the documents considered by the decision-maker, including the report of the relevant Director
 - (x) Any declarations of personal interest
 - (xi) Any dispensations granted by the Standards Committee in relation to declared conflicts of interest
 - (xii) The date on which the decision was made
 - (xiii) The date on which the decision will be implemented

Within two working days of the decision being made, the Democratic and Registration Services Section shall make available for public inspection, the record of the decision.

11. **Decision-making by Executive Committees and the Executive**

The process for decision-making by Executive Committees and by the Executive shall be as follows:-

- (i) A written report shall be prepared by the relevant Director. The report may be prepared by the Director on his or her own initiative or at the request of an Executive Member, an Executive Committee or the whole Executive. A template for executive reports is shown at Annexe A to this Protocol along

with examples of the format for the Council and regulatory committee and an information item.

- (ii) Paragraph 10(ii) shall apply to the Committee report.
- (iii) A draft of the report will be considered by the Corporate Management Team.
- (iv) Following the consideration of a report by the Corporate Management Team, the draft report (amended as necessary, or appropriate) shall be considered at a briefing meeting of the Executive, the purpose of which, will **solely** be for Officers to brief the Executive on matters connected with the making of the executive decisions for determination.
- (v) The Director shall be responsible for ensuring that a draft of the report is sent to the Borough Solicitor and Borough Treasurer not less than five working days before it is considered by the Corporate Management Team.
- (vi) Following the briefing meeting, the Director must forward a copy of the completed report to the Democratic and Registration Services Section, not less than seven clear days before the meeting of the Executive, or the Executive Committee. The Democratic and Registration Services Section will be responsible for ensuring that the report is available for public inspection for at least five clear working days before the Executive meeting.
- (vii) After each individual Executive decision has been made, a report on the Executive decision shall be made through the Executive Work Programme and Forward Plan System. Although the responsibility for each record being made is, legally, the responsibility of the Director of Corporate Services (or representative), all Members present at the meeting shall afford full co-operation on the completion of such form.

To: [THE EXECUTIVE/EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR... ETC (UPPERCASE TEXT)]
[DATE MONTH YEAR, (eg 19 JUNE 2005)]

[TITLE OF REPORT (uppercase text)]
[(Director of (lowercase text)]

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 [The introduction should clearly describe the issue for decision, preferably in no more than 5-10 lines. A more complex issue may require a more detailed summary of the issues to be addressed.]

NB: *This is the introduction and you should aim to keep it simple. The more detailed explanation of the issues and reasoning behind the recommendations should be set out in the Reasons for Recommendations” and “Supporting Information”*

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That [insert recommendation]

- 2.2 That [insert recommendation, if further paragraphs are required number 2.3, 2.4 etc]

NB: *There is no need to prefix the numbered recommendations with “The Executive is recommended to....” etc*

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 [The reasons for the recommendations must be clearly stated and numbered 3.1, 3.2 etc.]

NB: *You should avoid phrases such as “As set out in the report” unless the nature of the matter is such that a relatively simple statement of the reasons is unrealistic. A short summary with “Full details are set out in paragraphs ...” may be more appropriate where the reasons are more detailed.*

Where a report relates to one of the Council’s medium term objectives or departmental service plan objectives, reference to this should be made in this section of the report.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 [Provide details of alternative options considered.]

NB: Again avoid phrases such as “As set out in the report”. It may be simpler in some cases to summarise the alternatives and add that these are “detailed in paragraphs ...” etc.]

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Sub-Heading (if appropriate)

- 5.1 [Include any other relevant information and number subsequent paragraphs 5.2, 5.3, etc. There is no need to repeat the recommendations or reasons. In some cases a number of bullet points may adequately supplement the information set out above in the reasons for the recommendations.]

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 [The report author **must** consult the Borough Solicitor, or his representative, over the wording before submitting the report to CMT or the Executive Briefing etc. If there are legal issues pertinent to the matter, these should be included in the supporting information.]

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 [The report author **must** consult the Borough Treasurer, or his representative, over the wording before submitting the report to CMT or the Executive Briefing etc. If there are financial implications pertinent to the matter, these should be included in the supporting information.]

Impact Assessment

- 6.3 [The author must consider the impact of proposed decisions beyond purely physical implications (as was the case when considering access implications) and provide evidence of consideration of impact on other groups (internal and external), aligning decision-making with the requirements of legislation dealing with equalities and community safety. A completed Equality Impact Assessment record to evidence such consideration is required to support each report proposing a change of policy. Your department's representative on the Community Cohesion Working Group should be able to assist you.]

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 [Officers must consider any significant risks relating to the proposals contained in the report and identify them and any action being taken to mitigate them in this section. The Corporate Risk Register provides officers with a guide to the most significant risks facing the Council. The department's representative on the Strategic Risk Management Group should be consulted on the contents of this section.]

Other Officers

- 6.5 If other departments are involved further headings should be included and appropriately titled, eg "Chief Officer: Human Resources". In each case, the appropriate officer, or representative, should be consulted over the wording.]

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 [List the groups consulted, if any.]

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 [Detail the method of consultation]

Representations Received

- 7.3 [Summarise the main points emerging from the consultation exercise – bullet points may be sufficient.]

[The following are to be included at the end of each report.]

Background Papers

[List all documents used to a material extent in the preparation of the report]

Contact for further information

[Name, Department – Direct Dial Telephone Number]

[e-mail address]

Doc. Ref

[Insert name of document, folder etc]

[COUNCIL OR NAME OF COMMITTEE... ETC (UPPERCASE TEXT)]
[DATE MONTH YEAR, (eg 19 JUNE 2005)]

[TITLE OF REPORT (uppercase text)]
[(Director of (lowercase text)]

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 [The introduction should clearly describe the issue for decision, preferably in no more than 5-10 lines. A more complex issue may require a more detailed summary of the issues to be addressed.]

NB: *This is the introduction and you should aim to keep it simple. The more detailed explanation of the issues and reasoning behind the recommendations should be set out in the "Supporting Information"*

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That [insert recommendation]

- 2.2 That [insert recommendation, if further paragraphs are required number 2.3, 2.4 etc]

NB: *There is no need to prefix the numbered recommendations with "The Committee is recommended to...." etc*

3 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 3.1 [The report author must consult the Borough Solicitor, or his representative, over the wording. If there are legal issues pertinent to the matter, these should be included in the supporting information.]

Borough Treasurer

- 3.2 [The report author must consult the Borough Treasurer, or his representative, over the wording. If there are financial implications pertinent to the matter, these should be included in the supporting information.]

Impact Assessment

- 3.3 [The author must consider the impact of proposed decisions beyond purely physical implications (as was the case when considering access implications) and provide evidence of consideration of impact on other groups (internal and external), aligning decision-making with the requirements of legislation dealing with equalities and community safety. A completed Equality Impact Assessment record to evidence such consideration is required to support each report proposing a change of policy.]

Your department's representative on the Community Cohesion Working Group should be able to assist you.]

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 3.4 [Officers must consider any significant risks relating to the proposals contained in the report and identify them and any action being taken to mitigate them in this section. The Corporate Risk Register provides officers with a guide to the most significant risks facing the Council. The department's representative on the Strategic Risk Management Group should be consulted on the contents of this section.]

Other Officers

- 3.5 [If other departments are involved further headings should be included and appropriately titled, eg "Chief Officer: Human Resources". In each case, the appropriate officer, or representative, should be consulted over the wording.]

4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Sub-Heading (if appropriate)

- 4.1 [Include any other relevant information and number subsequent paragraphs 4.2, 4.3, etc. There is no need to repeat the recommendations or reasons. In some cases a number of bullet points may adequately supplement the information set out above in the reasons for the recommendations.]

[The following are to be included at the end of each report.]

Background Papers

[List all documents used to a material extent in the preparation of the report]

Contact for further information

[Name, Department – Direct Dial Telephone Number]

[e-mail address]

Doc. Ref

[Insert name of document, folder etc]

[NAME OF COMMITTEE/SUB COMMITTEE] COMMITTEE (CAPITALS)
[DATE MONTH YEAR, eg 20 JUNE 2003 in capitals]

[TITLE OF REPORT in capitals]
(Director of [insert title])

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 [The introduction should describe the issue, preferably in about 5-10 lines.]

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Sub-Heading (if appropriate)

- 2.1 [Set out the relevant background information and number subsequent paragraphs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 etc].

3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 [The author must consider the impact of proposed decisions beyond purely physical implications (as was the case when considering access implications) and provide evidence of consideration of impact on other groups (internal and external), aligning decision-making with the requirements of legislation dealing with equalities and community safety. A completed Equality Impact Assessment record to evidence such consideration is required to support each report proposing a change of policy. Your department's representative on the Community Cohesion Working Group should be able to assist you.]

4 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 [Officers must consider any significant risks relating to the proposals contained in the report and identify them and any action being taken to mitigate them in this section. The Corporate Risk Register provides officers with a guide to the most significant risks facing the Council. The department's representative on the Strategic Risk Management Group should be consulted on the contents of this section.]

[The following are to be included at the end of each report.]

Background Papers

[List all documents used to a material extent in the preparation of the report]

Contact for further information

[Name, Department – Direct Dial Telephone Number]

[e-mail address]

Doc. Ref

[Insert name of document, folder etc]

SECTION 8 – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

1. General Arrangements

Overview and Scrutiny is the responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission as described in Article 6 and the Council will appoint to it as it considers appropriate from time to time. The Commission shall appoint such overview and scrutiny panels as it determines, including those specified in Article 6.

2. Who May Sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Bodies?

All councillors except members of the Executive may be members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and/or one or more overview and scrutiny panels. However, no member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been directly involved.

3. Co-optees

The Commission and panels shall be entitled to appoint non-voting co-optees for the purpose of assisting with specific time limited reviews.

4. Education Representatives

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel shall include in their membership the following voting representatives:

- a) two parent governor representatives.
- b) two diocesan representatives.
- c) two teacher representatives.
- d) two social care representatives.

These representatives shall not vote on other matters which do not relate wholly or in part to any education function which is the responsibility of the Executive, though they may stay in the meeting and speak.

5. Meetings

- (a) Six ordinary meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission shall be held each year. In addition, extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time as and when appropriate. Meetings may be called by the chairman, or by the proper officer if he/she considers it necessary or appropriate.
- (b) Overview and scrutiny panels shall determine the frequency and time of their own meetings, according to the work programme set by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. Meetings may be called by the chairman, or by the proper officer if he/she considers it necessary or appropriate.

6. Quorum

The quorum for the Commission or for an overview and scrutiny panel shall be one quarter of the whole number of its members, provided that for a panel the quorum shall be at least three.

7. Who Chairs Meetings?

The chairmen of the Commission and panels will be drawn from among the councillors sitting on those bodies, and subject to this requirement the Commission/panel may appoint such a person as it considers appropriate.

8. Work Programme

- (a) The work programme for overview and scrutiny panels shall be set annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission following consultation with the Executive and Senior Officers. In setting the work programme the Commission shall take into account the wishes of members who are not members of the largest political group on the Council.
- (b) The work programme shall identify topics for detailed consideration by overview and scrutiny panels, including in each case the outline project plan and desired outcomes from the review project. Overview and scrutiny panels may recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission at any time a proposed addition to the work programme. The Commission shall only consider proposed additions to the work programme that clearly identify the issue to be investigated and include an outline project plan and desired outcomes.
- (c) The Commission shall allocate projects from the work programme to the service themed overview and scrutiny panels having regard to their service theme and shall allocate projects of a cross-cutting nature to any one of these overview and scrutiny panels, or to another panel, at its discretion.
- (d) The Commission shall keep the work programme under review throughout the year, making additions and adjustments as necessary and shall be responsible for ensuring effective consultation with the Executive on developments.

9. Agenda items

Any member of the Commission or of an overview and scrutiny panel shall be entitled to give notice to the proper officer that he/she wishes an item relevant to its functions to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Commission, provided that if the item proposes an addition to the work programme it shall fulfil the conditions set out in 8 (b), above. On receipt of such a request the proper officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission shall also respond, as soon as its work programme permits, to requests from the Council and, if it considers it appropriate,

the Executive to review particular areas of Council activity. Where it does so, the Commission shall report its findings and any recommendations back to the Executive

and/or Council. The Council and/or the Executive shall consider the report of the Commission by no later than the end of the following cycle of meetings.

10. Policy Review and Development

- a) The role of the Commission in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework is set out in detail in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
- b) In relation to the development of the Council's approach to other matters not forming part of its policy and budget framework, the Commission may make proposals to the Executive for developments, including considering and passing on to the Executive reports and recommendations from overview and scrutiny panels.
- c) Within the work programme determined by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, overview and scrutiny panels may hold enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisers and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. They may ask witnesses to attend to address them on any matter under consideration and may pay to any advisers, assessors and witnesses a reasonable fee and expenses for doing so.

11. Reports from Overview and Scrutiny Panels

- a) Once it has formed recommendations on proposals for development, an overview and scrutiny panel will submit a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission which, if it is satisfied with the report, will adopt it for submission to the proper officer for consideration by the Executive (if the proposals are consistent with the existing budgetary and policy framework), or to the Council as appropriate (e.g. if the recommendation would require a departure from or a change to the agreed budget and policy framework).
- b) If an overview and scrutiny panel, or the Commission, cannot agree on one single final report, then up to one minority report may be prepared and submitted for consideration by the Council or Executive with the majority report.
- c) The Council or Executive shall consider the report by no later than the end of the following cycle of meetings.

12. Consideration of Overview and Scrutiny Reports by the Executive

- a) Once an overview and scrutiny report on any matter which is the responsibility of the Executive has been completed, it shall be included on the agenda of the next available meeting of the Executive, unless the matter which is the subject of the report is scheduled to be considered by the Executive within a period of 6 weeks from the date the report was adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. In such cases, the report shall be considered by the Executive when it considers that matter. If for any reason the Executive does not consider the report within 6 weeks then the matter will be referred to Council for review, and the proper officer will call a Council meeting to consider the report and make a recommendation to the Executive.

- b) Where the Overview and Scrutiny Commission adopts a report for consideration by the Executive in relation to a matter where the leader or Council has delegated decision making power to another individual member of the Executive, then the Commission will submit a copy of the report to that individual for consideration. At the time of doing so, the Commission shall serve a copy on the proper officer and the leader. If the member with delegated decision making power does not accept the recommendations of the report then he/she must then refer the matter to the next available meeting of the Executive for debate before exercising his/her decision making power and responding to the report in writing to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. The Executive member to whom the decision making power has been delegated will respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission within 3 weeks of receiving the report. A copy of his/her written response to it shall be sent to the proper officer and he/she will attend a future meeting to respond.
- c) The Overview and Scrutiny Commission will in any event have access to the Executive's forward plan and timetable for decisions and intentions for consultation. Even where an item is not the subject of detailed proposals from an overview and scrutiny panel following a consideration of possible policy/service developments, the Commission will, at its discretion, be able to respond in the course of the Executive's consultation process in relation to any key decision.

13. Rights of Overview and Scrutiny Members to Documents

- a) In addition to their rights as councillors, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and overview and scrutiny panels have the additional right to documents, and to notice of meetings as set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.
- b) Nothing in this paragraph prevents more detailed liaison between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission as appropriate depending on the particular matter under consideration.

14. Members and Officers Giving Account

- a) The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and overview and scrutiny panels may scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Council function, where in the case of a panel this falls within its remit. As well as reviewing documentation, in fulfilling the scrutiny role, it may require any member of the Executive, the head of paid service and/or any senior officer to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit:
 - I. any particular decision or series of decisions;
 - II. the extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy; and/or
 - III. their performance.

and it is the duty of those persons to attend if so required.

- b) Where any member or officer is required to attend a meeting under this provision, the chairman of that body will inform the proper officer. The proper

officer shall inform the member or officer in writing giving at least five working days notice of the meeting at which he/she is required to attend. The notice will state the nature of the item on which he/she is required to attend to give account and whether any papers are required to be produced for the meeting. Where the account to be given to the Commission or panel will require the production of a report, then the member or officer concerned will be given sufficient notice to allow for preparation of that documentation.

- c) Where, in exceptional circumstances, the member or officer is unable to attend on the required date, then the Commission or panel shall in consultation with the member or officer arrange an alternative date for attendance (to take place within a maximum of ten days from the date of the original request).

15. Attendance by Others

The Commission or panel may invite people other than those people referred to in paragraph 14 above to address it, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions. It may for example wish to hear from residents, stakeholders and members and officers in other parts of the public sector and shall invite such people to attend.

16. Call-in

- a) When a decision is made by the Executive, an individual member of the Executive or a committee of the Executive, or a key decision is made by an officer with delegated authority from the executive, or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within two working days of being made. The chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and overview and scrutiny panels will be sent copies of the records of all such decisions within the same timescale, by the person responsible for publishing the decision.
- b) The notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 5 working days after the date the decision is published, unless the decision is called in as described below.
- c) During the period, the proper officer may call-in a decision for scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission if so requested by the chairman and any 2 members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or any 5 members of the Council and shall then notify the decision-maker and all other Executive members of the call-in. He/she shall call a meeting of the Commission on such date as he/she may determine, where possible after consultation with

the Commission chairman, and in any case within 7 working days of the decision to call-in.

- d) For the purposes of this section, where the decision relates to the exercise of an education function, the duly appointed diocesan representatives and parent governor representatives shall have the same rights to seek or support the calling-in of a decision as any other member of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- e) If, having considered the decision, the Commission is still concerned about it, then it may refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or refer the matter to full Council. If referred back the decision maker shall then reconsider within a further 7 working days, amending the decision or not, before adopting a final decision.
- f) If following an objection to the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission does not meet in the period set out above, or does meet but does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body or to the Council, the decision shall take effect on the date of the meeting, or the expiry of the period in which the meeting should have been held, whichever is the earlier.
- g) If the matter was referred to full Council and the Council does not object to a decision which has been made, then no further action is necessary and the decision will be effective in accordance with the provision below. However, if the Council does object, it has no locus to make decisions in respect of an executive decision unless it is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly consistent with the budget. Unless that is the case, the Council will refer any decision to which it objects back to the decision making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision making body or person shall choose whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was made by the Executive, as a whole or a committee of it, a meeting will be convened to reconsider within 7 working days of the Council request. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within 5 working days of the Council request.
- h) If the Council does not meet, or if it does but does not refer the decision back to the decision making body or person, the decision will become effective on the date of the Council meeting or expiry of the period in which the Council meeting should have been held, whichever is the earlier.
- i) The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being made by the Executive is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The record of the decision, and notice by which it is made public, shall state whether in the opinion of the decision making person or body the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call-in. The Mayor must agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor's consent shall be required. In the absence of both, the head of paid service or his/her nominee's consent shall be required. Decisions made as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.

- j) The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored annually, and a report submitted to Council with proposals for review if necessary.

17. The Party Whip

When considering any matter in respect of which a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission or an overview and scrutiny panel is subject to a party whip the member must declare the existence of the whip, and the nature of it, before the commencement of the Commission's/panel's deliberations on the matter. The declaration, and the detail of the whipping arrangements, shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

18. Procedure at overview and scrutiny meetings

- (a) The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and overview and scrutiny panels shall consider the following business:
 - i) minutes of the last meeting;
 - ii) declarations of interest (including whipping declarations);
 - iii) (Commission only) consideration of any matter referred to the Commission for a decision in relation to call-in of a decision;
 - iv) responses of the Executive to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission; and
 - v) the business otherwise set out on the agenda for the meeting.
- (b) Where an overview and scrutiny panel conducts investigations (e.g. with a view to policy development), it may also ask people to attend to give evidence at its meetings which are to be conducted in accordance with the following principles:
 - i) that the investigation be conducted fairly and all members of the panel be given the opportunity to ask questions of attendees, and to contribute and speak;
 - ii) that those assisting the panel by giving evidence be treated with respect and courtesy; and
 - iii) that the investigation be conducted so as to maximise the efficiency of the investigation or analysis.
- (c) Following any investigation or review, the panel shall prepare a report, for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, and shall make its report and findings public.

19. Matters within the Remit of More than One Panel

In the event of an issue for review by an overview and scrutiny panel falling within the remit of more than one panel, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission shall determine which overview and scrutiny panel shall consider the matter.

20. **Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Overview and Scrutiny Panels shall be as set out in Article 6 of the Constitution.

SECTION 9 – FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Financial regulations provide the framework for managing the authority's financial affairs. This framework requires all Officers to carry out their responsibilities in an open and consistent manner. They have been designed to promote and maintain the high standards expected of the public sector in dealing with the Council's finances:
- a) placing clear authority and accountability with Officers appointed to manage resources;
 - b) establishing key principles and processes, supported by detailed operating arrangements, that must be approved by the Borough Treasurer;
 - c) providing for a continuous internal audit to provide assurance to the Members and senior management of the Council on the compliance with the approved procedures and standards.
- 1.3 In accordance with their relevant codes of conduct, Members and Officers have a general responsibility for taking reasonable actions to provide for the security of the assets under their control, and for ensuring that the use of Council resources is lawful, is properly authorised and provides value for money.
- 1.4 The Borough Treasurer is responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the financial regulations to the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Council and/or to the Executive Members.
- 1.5 Directors are responsible for ensuring that all staff in their departments are aware of the existence and content of the authority's financial regulations and other internal regulatory documents and that they comply with them.
- 1.6 The Borough Treasurer is responsible for issuing advice and guidance to underpin the financial regulations that Members, Officers and others acting on behalf of the authority are required to follow. Any Officer requiring advice or assistance in interpreting, or operating, these regulations should contact their Departmental Finance Manager or Accountant in the first instance. In their absence then staff within Corporate Services Finance are available to assist.
- 1.7 Directors should maintain a written record where the discharge of their responsibilities set out in the Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures have been delegated. Where such responsibilities have been delegated or devolved to another responsible officer, references to the Director in the regulations should be read as referring to them.
- 1.8 These Regulations shall not apply in the following circumstances:
- a) Where the Council has agreed that separate constitutional arrangements, incorporating different Financial Regulations, shall apply;
 - b) Where the Council undertakes work as Agent for another public body, under an agreement which requires compliance with different procedures.

1.9 There are five topic areas covered by the financial regulations as follows:

- Financial Management
- Financial Planning
- Risk Management and Control of Resources
- Systems and Procedures
- External Arrangements.

1.10 The authority's detailed financial procedures, setting out how the regulations will be implemented, are contained in Appendix A to D attached to the financial regulations. These are set out in a consistent form identifying for each of the topic areas the following information:

- Why is this important?
- Key Controls
- Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer
- Responsibilities of Directors.

1.11 Various terms are used in these Regulations and Procedures and these are defined as follows:

Borough Treasurer	the S.151 Officer as defined in the Local Government Act 1972
Director	an Officer who is Head of a Department, or Head Teacher of a School
Consultant:	any person, or Company, engaged by the Council in a capacity to advise on, or manage, any works or services commissioned by the Council or to provide services of a professional nature to the Council.
Cost Centre Manager	any single Officer who is responsible for the management of a budget.
Executive Members	the Executive, a Committee of the Executive or an individual Member of the Executive, depending upon the Scheme of Delegation for Executive Functions determined by the Leader of the Council.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

2.1 Introduction

Financial management covers all financial accountabilities in relation to the running of the authority, including the policy framework and budget. Explanation of the respective roles of each of the decision making bodies or individuals is set out in the following paragraphs.

2.2 The Full Council

The Full Council has the ultimate responsibility for the decisions and actions of the Council. It is responsible for adopting the authority's constitution and Members' code of conduct and for approving the policy framework and budget within which the Executive operates. It is also responsible for approving and monitoring compliance with the authority's overall framework of accountability and control. The framework is set out in its constitution.

2.3 The Executive

The Executive is responsible for proposing the policy framework and budget to the Full Council, and for discharging Executive functions in accordance with the policy framework and budget.

In taking a decision the individual Member must take account of legal and financial liabilities and risk management issues that may arise from the decision.

2.4 Governance and Audit Committee

The Governance and Audit Committee's primary role is to maintain an overview of the Corporate Governance of the Council. It also approves the Council's Final Accounts and Annual Governance Statement. The committee is responsible for reviewing the internal auditor's assurance report, external auditor's reports and the annual audit letter.

2.5 THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

2.5.1 Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service)

The Chief Executive is responsible for the corporate and overall strategic management of the authority as a whole. He or she must report to and provide information for the Executive, the Full Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other committees. He or she is responsible for establishing a framework for management direction, style and standards and for monitoring the performance of the organisation.

2.5.2 Monitoring Officer (Borough Solicitor)

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for providing advice and guidance on measures designed to maintain high standards of conduct and therefore provides support to the Standards Committee, Governance and Audit Committee, the Executive and Full

Council. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for reporting any actual or potential breaches of the law to the Full Council and/or to the Executive.

The Monitoring Officer (together with the Borough Treasurer) is responsible for advising the Executive or Full Council about whether a decision is likely to be considered contrary or not wholly in accordance with the budget. The monitoring Officer is also responsible for reporting any findings of maladministration by a Local Government Ombudsman to the Executive and/or the Council.

2.5.3 **Borough Treasurer (Section 151 Officer)**

The Borough Treasurer has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the authority.

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for:

- the proper administration of the authority's financial affairs
- the setting and monitoring compliance with financial management standards
- advising on the corporate financial position and on the key financial controls necessary to secure sound financial management
- providing financial information
- preparing the revenue budget and capital programme
- treasury management.

In accordance with Section 114 of the 1988 Act the Borough Treasurer nominates a properly qualified member of staff (currently the Chief Officer: Financial Services) to deputise should he or she be unable to perform the required duties as the Section 151 Officer.

2.5.4 **DIRECTORS**

Directors are responsible for:

- ensuring that Executive Members are advised of the financial implications of all proposals and that the financial implications have been agreed by the Borough Treasurer
- signing contracts on behalf of the authority.

Where a matter arises in any Department, which could materially affect the Council's finances, other than a matter already approved, the Director shall consult the Borough Treasurer. This consultation must be before any expenditure is incurred or any commitment given.

2.6 OTHER FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITIES

2.6.1 Virement

The Full Council is responsible for agreeing procedures for virement of expenditure between budget headings.

The Executive and Directors are responsible for agreeing in-year virements within delegated limits, in consultation with the Borough Treasurer where required. They must notify the Borough Treasurer of all virements who will then maintain an updated budget reflecting these decisions.

2.6.2 Treatment of year-end balances

The Full Council is responsible for agreeing procedures for budget carry forwards on budget headings.

The Executive and Directors are responsible for agreeing budget carry forwards within the delegated limits, in consultation with the Borough Treasurer where required.

2.6.3 Accounting policies

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for selecting accounting policies and ensuring that they are applied consistently.

2.6.4 Accounting records and returns

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for determining the accounting procedures and records for the authority.

2.6.5 The annual statement of accounts

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that the annual statement of accounts is prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: A Statement of Recommended Practice (CIPFA/LASAAC). These have to be approved by the Audit Committee before the end of June following the year of account.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

3 FINANCIAL PLANNING

3.1 Introduction

The Full Council is responsible for agreeing the authority's policy framework and budget, which will be proposed by the Executive. In terms of financial planning, the key elements are:

- Corporate plan
- Service plan
- Revenue budget
- Capital programme.

3.2 Policy Framework

The Full Council is responsible for approving the policy framework and budget. The policy framework is described in Section 5 of the Constitution titled Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

The Full Council is responsible for approving procedures for agreeing variations to approved budgets, plans and strategies forming the policy framework and for determining the circumstances in which a decision will be deemed to be contrary to the budget or policy framework.

The Full Council is responsible for setting the level at which the Executive may reallocate budget funds from one service to another (virement). The Executive is responsible for taking in-year decisions on resources and priorities in order to deliver the budget policy framework within the financial limits set by the Council.

3.3 Preparation of the Corporate Plan and Service Plans

The Chief Executive is responsible for proposing the corporate and service plans to the Executive for consideration before its submission to the Full Council for approval.

3.4 BUDGETING

3.4.1 Budget format

The general format of the budget will be approved by the Full Council and proposed by the Executive following the advice from the Corporate Management Team. The draft budget should include allocation to different services and projects, proposed taxation levels, risk assessment and contingency funds.

3.4.2 Budget preparation

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that an annual revenue budget and a medium term financial plan covering the next three years are prepared for consideration by the Executive, before submission to the Full Council. The Full Council may amend the budget or ask the Executive to reconsider it before approving it.

Guidelines on budget preparation are issued to Members and Directors by the Executive following agreement with the Borough Treasurer. The guidelines will take account of:

- legal requirements
- medium-term planning prospects
- the corporate plan and service plans
- available resources
- spending pressures
- best value and other relevant government guidelines
- other internal policy documents.

It is the responsibility of Directors to ensure that budget estimates reflect, agreed service plans, demand and demographic changes and other socio-economic factors, and are submitted to the Executive and that these estimates are prepared in line with guidance issued by the Executive.

3.4.3 Budget monitoring and control

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for providing appropriate financial information to enable budgets to be monitored effectively. He or she must monitor and control expenditure against budget allocations and report to the Corporate Management Team on the overall position on a regular basis.

It is the responsibility of Directors to control income and expenditure within their area and to monitor performance, taking account of financial information provided by the Borough Treasurer. They should report on variances within their own areas monthly to the Borough Treasurer. They should also take any action necessary to avoid exceeding their budget allocation and alert the Borough Treasurer to any problems. The Borough Treasurer will on the basis of these returns prepare a report for the Corporate Management Team. Each Director will report on progress against budgets in the quarterly Performance Monitoring Report.

3.4.4 Preparation of the capital programme

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that a capital programme is prepared on an annual basis for consideration by the Executive before submission to the Full Council.

3.5 **MAINTENANCE OF RESERVES AND BALANCES**

It is the responsibility of the Borough Treasurer to advise the Executive and/or the Full Council on prudent levels of reserves and balances for the authority taking into account cash flow requirements and financial risks.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

4 RISK MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF RESOURCES

4.1 Introduction

It is essential that robust, integrated systems are developed and maintained for identifying and evaluating all significant operational risks to the authority. This should include the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.

4.2 Risk Management

The Executive is responsible for approving the authority's risk management policy statement and strategy and for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management. The Executive is responsible for ensuring that proper insurance exists where appropriate.

The Director of Corporate Services is responsible for preparing the authority's risk management policy statement, for promoting it throughout the authority. The Borough Treasurer is responsible for advising the Executive on proper insurance cover where appropriate.

4.3 Internal Control

Internal control refers to the systems of control devised by management to help ensure the authority's objectives are achieved in a manner that promotes economical, efficient and effective use of resources and that the authority's assets and interests are safeguarded.

The Borough Treasurer, in conjunction with the Chief Executive, Borough Solicitor and Director of Corporate Services, is responsible for advising on effective systems of internal control. These arrangements need to ensure compliance with all applicable statutes and regulations, and other relevant statements of best practice. They should ensure that public funds are properly safeguarded and used economically, efficiently, and in accordance with the statutory and other authorities that govern their use.

It is the responsibility of Directors to establish sound arrangements for planning, appraising, authorising and controlling their operations in order to achieve continuous improvement, economy, efficiency and effectiveness and for achieving their financial performance targets.

4.4 Audit Requirements

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (amended 2006) require every local authority to maintain an adequate and effective internal audit. The provision of this service is delegated to the Borough Treasurer with six monthly assurance statements being reported to the Audit Committee.

The Audit Commission is responsible for appointing external auditors to each local authority. The basic duties of the external auditor are governed by section 15 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, as amended by section 5 of the Audit Commission Act 1998.

The authority may, from time to time, be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies such as HM Customs and Excise and the HM Revenue and Customs, who have statutory rights of access.

4.5 Preventing Fraud and Corruption

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for the development and maintenance of an anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy.

4.6 Assets

Directors should ensure that records and assets are properly maintained and securely held. They should also ensure that contingency plans for the security of assets and continuity of service in the event of disaster or system failure are in place.

4.7 Treasury Management

The authority has adopted CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.

The Full Council is responsible for approving the treasury management policy statement setting out the matters detailed in paragraph 15 of CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities. The policy statement is proposed to the Full Council by the Executive. The Borough Treasurer has delegated responsibility for implementing and monitoring the statement.

All money in the hands of the authority is controlled by the Borough Treasurer.

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for reporting to the Executive a proposed treasury management strategy for the coming financial year at or before the start of each financial year.

All Executive decisions on borrowing, investment or financing shall be delegated to the Borough Treasurer, who is required to act in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for reporting annually to the Executive on the activities of the treasury management operation and on the exercise of his or her delegated treasury management powers.

4.8 Staffing

The Full Council is responsible for determining how officer support for Executive and Non-Executive roles within the authority will be organised.

The Chief Executive is responsible for providing overall management to staff.

Directors are responsible for controlling total staff numbers by:

- advising the Executive on the budget necessary in any given year to cover estimated staffing levels

- adjusting the staffing to a level that can be funded within the devolved staffing budget, varying the provision as necessary within that constraint in order to meet changing operational needs
- the proper use of appointment procedures.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

5 SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

5.1 Introduction

Sound systems and procedures are essential to an effective framework of accountability and control.

5.2 General

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for the operation of the authority's accounting systems, the form of accounts and the supporting financial records. Any changes made by Directors to the existing financial systems or the establishment of new systems must be approved by the Borough Treasurer. However, Directors are responsible for the proper operation of financial processes in their own departments.

Any changes to agreed procedures by Directors to meet their own specific service needs should be agreed with the Borough Treasurer.

Directors should ensure that their staff receive relevant financial training that has been approved by the Borough Treasurer.

5.3 Income and Expenditure

It is the responsibility of Directors to ensure that a proper scheme of delegation has been established within their area and is operating effectively. The scheme of delegation should identify staff authorised to act on the Director's behalf, or on behalf of the Executive, in respect of payments, income collection and placing orders, together with the limits of their authority.

5.4 Payments to Employees and Members

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for all payments to staff and for payment of allowances to Members.

5.5 Taxation

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for advising Directors, in the light of guidance issued by appropriate bodies and relevant legislation as it applies, on all taxation issues that affect the authority.

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for maintaining the authority's tax records, making all tax payments, receiving tax credits and submitting tax returns by their due date as appropriate.

5.6 Trading Accounts/Business Units

It is the responsibility of the Borough Treasurer to advise on the establishment and operation of trading accounts and business units.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

6 EXTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 Introduction

The local authority provides a distinctive leadership role for the community and brings together the contributions of the various stakeholders.

6.2 Partnerships

The Executive is responsible for approving delegations, including frameworks for partnerships. The Executive is the focus for forming partnerships with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to address local needs.

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for promoting and maintaining the same high standards of conduct with regard to financial administration in partnerships that apply throughout the authority. The Borough Treasurer must ensure that the accounting arrangements to be adopted relating to partnerships and joint ventures are satisfactory.

The Borough Solicitor must consider the overall corporate governance arrangements and legal issues when arranging contracts with external bodies.

Directors are responsible for ensuring that appropriate approvals are obtained before any negotiations are concluded in relation to work with external bodies.

6.3 External Funding

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the authority's accounts.

FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

The Council's detailed financial procedures, setting out how the financial regulations will be implemented, are contained in the following appendices.

The following index sets out a detailed list of these appendices

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1.1 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Why is this important?

All staff and Members have a duty to abide by the highest standards of probity in dealing with financial issues. This is facilitated by ensuring everyone is clear about the standards to which they are working and the controls that are in place to ensure that these standards are met.

Key controls

The key controls and control objectives for financial management standards are:

- (a) their promotion throughout the authority
- (b) a monitoring system to review compliance with financial standards, and regular comparisons of performance indicators and benchmark standards that are reported to the Executive and Full Council.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To ensure the proper administration of the financial affairs of the authority.

To set the financial management standards and to monitor compliance with them.

To ensure proper professional practices are adhered to and to act as head of profession in relation to the standards, performance and development of finance staff throughout the authority.

To advise on the key strategic controls necessary to secure sound financial management.

To ensure that financial information is available to enable accurate and timely monitoring and reporting of comparisons of national and local financial performance indicators.

Responsibilities of Directors

To promote the financial management standards set by the Borough Treasurer in their departments and to monitor adherence to the standards and practices, liaising as necessary with the Borough Treasurer.

To promote sound financial practices in relation to the standards, performance and development of staff in their departments.

1.2 PREPARING REPORTS FOR DECISIONS

Why is it important?

All decisions taken by Members or Officers on the basis of reports presented to them by an Officer must take into account all of the key legal and financial issues and implications arising from the recommendations of that report.

Key Controls

All Member and Corporate Management Team decision reports must include a section within the report for comments from the Borough Treasurer and Borough Solicitor.

It is the responsibility of the report author to ensure that any report contains these comments from the Borough Treasurer and Borough Solicitor prior to publication of the report.

The report author must allow sufficient time (usually five days) for the Borough Treasurer and the Borough Solicitor prior to publication to enable the appropriate comment to be provided

Responsibilities of Borough Treasurer and Borough Solicitor

To provide appropriate professional advice on the contents and recommendations of the report within a reasonable time period after receiving copy of report.

If a report is published which, in the opinion of the Borough Treasurer or Borough Solicitor, does not contain appropriate and accurate financial or legal information, this will be reported to the Chief Executive or Director of Corporate Services who will consider withdrawing the report from the agenda.

Responsibilities of Directors

All draft reports which require decision by Members, except where the Borough Treasurer has otherwise decided, shall contain a section dealing with the financial implications of the matter(s) covered by the report. Officers preparing reports must consult, and satisfy, the Borough Treasurer that the financial information is appropriate and accurate before the report is finalised and published.

All draft reports which require decision by Members, except where the Borough Solicitor has otherwise decided, shall contain a section dealing with the legal implications of the matter(s) covered by the report. Officers preparing reports must consult and satisfy the Borough Solicitor that the legal information is appropriate and accurate before the report is finalised and published.

1.3 SCHEME OF VIREMENT

Why is this important?

The scheme of virement is intended to enable the Executive, Directors and their staff to manage budgets with a degree of flexibility within the overall policy framework determined by the Full Council, and therefore to optimise the use of resources.

Key controls

The overall budget is proposed by the Executive and approved by the Full Council. Any addition to the overall budget will require approval by the Full Council. Directors and budget managers are therefore authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the estimates that make up the budget. The rules below cover virement; that is, switching resources between approved estimates or heads of expenditure. For the purposes of this scheme, a budget head is considered to be a line in the approved and published budget.

Virement does not create additional overall budget liability. Directors are expected to exercise their discretion in managing their budgets responsibly and prudently. They should aim to avoid supporting recurring expenditure from one-off sources of savings or additional income, or creating future commitments, including full-year effects of decisions made part way through a year, for which they have not identified future resources. Directors must plan to fund such commitments from within their own budgets.

Virement is administered by the Borough Treasurer within guidelines approved by the Full Council and these are as follows:

Approval of the Executive is required for any virement, of whatever amount, where it is proposed to vire between budgets managed by different Directors or Executive Members. Virement is only allowed where at the time of approving the virement the Directors overall budget is not expected to be overspent. The following authorisation levels apply to all virements between one budget head and another.

Value	Authoriser
Up to and including £25,000	Director
Over £25,000 up to and including £50,000	Executive Member
Over £50,000 up to and including £100,000	Executive
Over £100,000	Full Council

Where virements require Member approval they can only be approved following a joint report by the Borough Treasurer and the Director, which must specify the proposed expenditure and the source of funding, and must explain the implications in the current and future financial year.

No virement relating to a specific financial year should be made after 31 March in that year.

Virement is not allowed between any funds from internal recharges, capital charges, interest, support service recharges to other budget heads without the approval of Full Council.

Virement can only be applied to the Devolved Staffing Budget if the effects are contained within the same financial year.

Where an approved budget is a lump-sum budget or contingency intended for allocation during the year, its allocation will not be treated as a virement, provided that:

- (a) the amount is used in accordance with the purposes for which it has been established
- (b) the Executive has approved the basis and the terms on which it will be allocated.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To administer the scheme of virement.

To prepare jointly with the Director a report to the Executive on proposed virements which are in excess of the delegated limits.

Responsibilities of Directors

A Director may exercise virement on budgets under their control for amounts up to £25,000 on any one budget head during the year, following notification to the Borough Treasurer in accordance with the key controls set out above.

A school's governing body may transfer budget provision between heads of expenditure within the delegated school budget in accordance with the Scheme for Local Management of Schools.

1.4 TREATMENT OF YEAR END BALANCES

Why is this important?

Any revenue budget provision which remains unspent at the end of the financial year is returned to general balances. However, there may, occasionally, be exceptional circumstances which require some unspent provision to be carried forward to the following year. This will only be permitted provided that the carry forward does not result in either the individual budget head, or the Service Budget, overspending its approved budget. For the purposes of this scheme, a budget head is considered to be a line in the approved and published budget.

Key controls

Appropriate accounting procedures are in operation to ensure that carried-forward totals are correct.

The Officer approval of budget carry forwards can only be made where the whole Council's budget is under spent and the relevant Department's budget is under spent.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To administer the scheme of budget carry-forwards within the guidelines approved by the Full Council.

To report all budget carry-forwards to the Corporate Management Team, Executive and Full Council.

Responsibilities of Directors

Any request for a carry forward must be made, in writing, by the relevant Director to the Borough Treasurer who, with the Director of Corporate Services, may authorise the necessary funding to be set aside. In such cases, any carry forward allocation lasts for one year only, at the end of which, any unused funds are automatically returned to General Balances.

All revenue budget lines can be carried forward except for the following:

- Capital Charges
- Inter-Directorate Charges
- Employees
- Income.

Directors can carry forward Capital Budgets for one additional year. For subsequent years, funding may only be rolled forward automatically if work on a project has commenced on-site, otherwise the approval of the Full Council must be obtained.

The Council's Local Management of Schools Scheme of Delegation for Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, includes the statutory requirement for schools to be able to carry forward funds on their delegated Budget. By the same rule, any

overspends are brought forward as a first charge to their next year's Budget. This rule is extended to cover budgets devolved to the Language and Literacy Centres, Pupil Referral Units and Adjustment Centres. Budgets held for the Schools Specific Contingency may also be automatically carried forward.

1.5 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Why is this important?

The Borough Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the authority's statement of accounts, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the format required by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: A Statement of Recommended Practice (CIPFA/LASAAC), for each financial year ending 31 March.

Key controls

The key controls for accounting policies are:

- (a) systems of internal control are in place that ensure that financial transactions are lawful
- (b) suitable accounting policies are selected and applied consistently
- (c) proper accounting records are maintained
- (d) financial statements are prepared which present fairly the financial position of the authority and its expenditure and income.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To select suitable accounting policies and to ensure that they are applied consistently. The accounting policies are set out in the statement of accounts, which is prepared at 31 March each year, and covers such items as:

- (a) separate accounts for capital and revenue transactions
- (b) the basis on which debtors and creditors at year end are included in the accounts
- (c) details on substantial provisions and reserves
- (d) fixed assets
- (e) depreciation
- (f) capital charges
- (g) work in progress
- (h) stocks and stores
- (i) deferred charges
- (j) accounting for value added tax
- (k) government grants

(l) leasing

(m) pensions.

Responsibilities of Directors

To adhere to the accounting policies and guidelines approved by the Borough Treasurer.

1.6 ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND RETURNS

Why is this important?

Maintaining proper accounting records is one of the ways in which the authority discharges its responsibility for stewardship of public resources. The authority has a statutory responsibility to prepare its annual accounts to present fairly its operations during the year. These are subject to external audit. This audit provides assurance that the accounts are prepared properly, that proper accounting practices have been followed and that quality arrangements have been made for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the authority's resources.

Key controls

The key controls for accounting records and returns are:

- (a) all Executive Members, Finance Staff and Budget Managers operate within the required accounting standards and timetables
- (b) all the authority's transactions, material commitments and contracts and other essential accounting information are recorded completely, accurately and on a timely basis
- (c) procedures are in place to enable accounting records to be reconstituted in the event of systems failure
- (d) reconciliation procedures are carried out to ensure transactions are correctly recorded
- (e) prime documents are retained in accordance with legislative and other requirements.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To determine the accounting procedures and records for the authority. Where these are maintained outside the finance department, the Borough Treasurer should consult the Director concerned.

To arrange for the compilation of all accounts and accounting records under his or her direction.

To comply with the following principles when allocating accounting duties:

- (a) separating the duties of providing information about sums due to or from the authority and calculating, checking and recording these sums from the duty of collecting or disbursing them
- (b) employees with the duty of examining or checking the accounts of cash transactions must not themselves be engaged in these transactions.

To make proper arrangements for the audit of the authority's accounts in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (amended 2006).

To ensure that all claims for funds including grants are made by the due date.

To prepare and publish the audited accounts of the authority for each financial year, in accordance with the statutory timetable and with the requirement for the Full Council to approve the statement of accounts before 30 September.

To ensure the proper retention of financial documents in accordance with the requirements set out in the authority's document retention schedule.

Responsibilities of Directors

To consult and obtain the approval of the Borough Treasurer before making any changes to accounting records and procedures.

To comply with the following principles when allocating accounting duties:

- (a) separating the duties of providing information about sums due to or from the authority and calculating, checking and recording these sums from the duty of collecting or disbursing them
- (b) employees with the duty of examining or checking the accounts of cash transactions must not themselves be engaged in these transactions.

To maintain adequate records to provide a management trail leading from the source of income/expenditure through to the accounting statements.

To supply information required to enable the statement of accounts to be completed in accordance with guidelines issued by the Borough Treasurer.

1.7 THE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Why is this important?

The authority has a statutory responsibility to prepare its own accounts to present fairly its operations during the year. The Full Council is responsible for approving the statutory annual statement of accounts and this has been delegated to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Key controls

The key controls for the annual statement of accounts are:

- the authority is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of these affairs. In this authority, that officer is the Borough Treasurer
- the authority's statement of accounts must be prepared in accordance with proper practices as set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: A Statement of Recommended Practice (the SORP) (CIPFA/LASAAC).

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To select suitable accounting policies and to apply them consistently.

To make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.

To comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice(SORP).

To sign and date the statement of accounts, stating that it presents fairly the financial position of the authority at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March.

To draw up the timetable for final accounts preparation and to advise staff and external auditors accordingly.

Responsibilities of Directors

To comply with accounting guidance provided by the Borough Treasurer and to supply the Borough Treasurer with information when required.

2.1 BUDGETING – FORMAT OF THE BUDGET

Why is this important?

The format of the budget determines the level of detail to which financial control and management will be exercised. The format shapes how the rules around virement operate, the operation of cash limits and sets the level at which funds may be reallocated within budgets.

Key controls

The key controls for the budget format are:

- (a) the format complies with all legal requirements
- (b) the format complies with CIPFA's Best Value Accounting - Code of Practice
- (c) the format reflects the accountabilities of service delivery.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To advise the Executive on the format of the budget that is approved by the Full Council.

Responsibilities of Directors

To comply with accounting guidance provided by the Borough Treasurer.

2.2 REVENUE BUDGET PREPARATION, MONITORING AND CONTROL

Why is this important?

Budget management ensures that once the budget has been approved by the Full Council, resources allocated are used for their intended purposes and are properly accounted for. Budgetary control is a continuous process, enabling the authority to review and adjust its budget targets during the financial year. It also provides the mechanism that calls to account managers responsible for defined elements of the budget.

By continuously identifying and explaining variances against budgetary targets, the authority can identify changes in trends and resource requirements at the earliest opportunity. The authority itself operates within an annual cash limit, approved when setting the overall budget. To ensure that the authority in total does not overspend, each service is required to manage its own expenditure within the cash-limited budget allocated to it.

For the purposes of budgetary control by managers, a budget will normally be the planned income and expenditure for a service area or cost centre. However, budgetary control may take place at a more detailed level if this is required by the Director's scheme of delegation.

Key controls

The key controls for managing and controlling the revenue budget are:

- (a) budget managers should be responsible only for income and expenditure that they can influence
- (b) there is a nominated budget manager for each cost centre heading
- (c) budget managers accept accountability for their budgets and the level of service to be delivered and understand their financial responsibilities
- (d) budget managers follow an approved certification process for all expenditure
- (e) income and expenditure are properly recorded and accounted for
- (f) performance levels/levels of service are monitored in conjunction with the budget and necessary action is taken to align service outputs and budget.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To establish an appropriate framework of budgetary management and control that ensures that:

- (a) budget management is exercised within annual cash limits unless the Full Council agrees otherwise
- (b) each Director has available timely information on receipts and payments on each budget which is sufficiently detailed to enable managers to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities

- (c) expenditure is committed only against an approved budget head
- (d) all officers responsible for committing expenditure comply with relevant guidance, and the financial regulations
- (e) each cost centre has a single named manager, determined by the relevant Director. As a general principle, budget responsibility should be aligned as closely as possible to the decision-making processes that commits expenditure
- (f) significant variances from approved budgets are investigated and reported by budget managers regularly.

To submit reports to the Executive and to the Full Council, in consultation with the relevant Director, where a Director is unable to balance expenditure and resources within existing approved budgets under his or her control.

To prepare and submit reports on the authority's projected income and expenditure compared with the budget on a monthly basis to Corporate Management Team based on information provided by Directors.

The Borough Treasurer will have the right to independently monitor budgets and raise any concerns with the relevant Director.

Responsibilities of Directors

To maintain budgetary control within their departments and to ensure that all income and expenditure are properly recorded and accounted for.

To ensure that an accountable budget manager is identified for each item of income and expenditure under the control of the Director (grouped together in a series of cost centres). As a general principle, budget responsibility should be aligned as closely as possible to the decision-making that commits expenditure.

To ensure that spending remains within the service's overall cash limit, and that individual budget heads are not overspent, by monitoring the budget and taking appropriate corrective action where significant variations from the approved budget are forecast.

Where there is a need to incur expenditure on any item, without delay, for which no budgetary provision exists, or where the provision is insufficient, a Director may incur such expenditure provided they seek approval through the appropriate Urgent Action Procedure set out in the Constitution.

To ensure that a monitoring process is in place to review performance levels/levels of service in conjunction with the budget and is operating effectively.

To prepare and submit in the quarterly performance management report (PMR) a report on the service's projected expenditure compared with its budget, in consultation with the Borough Treasurer.

To ensure prior approval by the Full Council or Executive (as appropriate) for new proposals, of whatever amount, that:

- (a) create financial commitments in future years
- (b) change existing policies, initiate new policies or cease existing policies
- (c) materially extend or reduce the authority's services.

To ensure compliance with the scheme of virement.

2.3 BUDGETS AND MEDIUM-TERM PLANNING

Why is this important?

The authority is a complex organisation responsible for delivering a wide variety of services. It needs to plan effectively and to develop systems to enable scarce resources to be allocated in accordance with carefully weighed priorities. The budget is the financial expression of the authority's plans and policies.

The revenue budget must be constructed so as to ensure that resource allocation properly reflects the service plans and priorities of the Full Council. Budgets (spending plans) are needed so that the authority can plan, authorise, monitor and control the way money is allocated and spent. It is illegal for an authority to budget for a deficit.

Medium-term planning (or a three- to five-year planning system) involves a planning cycle in which managers develop their own plans. As each year passes, another future year will be added to the medium-term plan. This ensures that the authority is always preparing for events in advance.

Key controls

The key controls for budgets and medium-term planning are:

- (a) specific budget approval for all expenditure
- (b) budget managers are consulted in the preparation of the budgets for which they will be held responsible and accept accountability within delegations set by the Executive for their budgets and the level of service to be delivered
- (c) a monitoring process is in place to review regularly the effectiveness and operation of budget preparation and to ensure that any corrective action is taken.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To prepare and submit reports on budget prospects for the Executive, including resource constraints set by the Government. Reports should take account of medium-term prospects, where appropriate.

To determine the detailed form of revenue estimates and the methods for their preparation, consistent with the budget approved by the Full Council, and after consultation with the Executive and Directors.

To prepare and submit reports to the Executive on the aggregate spending plans of departments and on the resources available to fund them, identifying, where appropriate, the implications for the level of Council tax to be levied.

To advise on the medium-term implications of spending decisions.

To encourage the best use of resources and value for money by working with Directors to identify opportunities to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness,

and by encouraging good practice in conducting financial appraisals of development or savings options, and in developing financial aspects of service planning.

To advise the Full Council on Executive proposals in accordance with his or her responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Responsibilities of Directors

To prepare estimates of income and expenditure, in consultation with the Borough Treasurer, to be submitted to the Executive.

To prepare budgets that are consistent with any relevant cash limits, within the authority's annual budget cycle and within guidelines issued by the Executive. The format should be prescribed by the Borough Treasurer in accordance with the Full Council's general directions.

To integrate financial and budget plans into service planning, so that budget plans can be supported by financial and non-financial performance measures.

In consultation with the Borough Treasurer and in accordance with the laid-down guidance and timetable, to prepare detailed draft revenue and capital budgets for consideration by the appropriate committee.

When drawing up draft budget requirements, to have regard to:

- (a) spending patterns and pressures revealed through the budget monitoring process
- (b) legal requirements
- (c) policy requirements as defined by the Full Council in the approved policy framework
- (d) initiatives already under way.

2.4 RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Why is this important?

A mismatch often exists between desired outcomes and those resources required to deliver the outcomes. It is therefore imperative that needs/desires are carefully prioritised and that resources are appropriately allocated, in order to fulfil all legal responsibilities. Resources may include staff, money, equipment, goods and materials.

Key controls

The key controls for resource allocation are:

- (a) resources are acquired in accordance with the law and using an approved authorisation process
- (b) resources are used only for the purpose intended, to achieve the approved policies and objectives, and are properly accounted for
- (c) resources are securely held for use when required
- (d) resources are used with the minimum level of waste, inefficiency or loss for other reasons.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To advise on methods available for the funding of resources, such as grants from central government and borrowing requirements.

To assist in the allocation of resources to budget managers.

Responsibilities of Directors

To work within budget limits and to utilise resources allocated, and further allocate resources, in the most efficient, effective and economic way.

To identify opportunities to minimise or eliminate resource requirements or consumption without having a detrimental effect on service delivery.

2.5 CAPITAL PROGRAMMES

Why is this important?

Capital expenditure involves acquiring or enhancing fixed assets with a long-term value to the authority, such as land, buildings, and major items of plant, equipment or vehicles. Capital assets shape the way services are delivered in the long term and create financial commitments for the future in the form of financing costs and revenue running costs.

Capital expenditure should form part of an investment strategy and should be carefully prioritised in order to maximise the benefit of scarce resources. For the purposes of these Financial Regulations, a scheme or project is defined as a line within the annual Capital Programme Report approved by the Council.

Key controls

The key controls for capital programmes are:

- (a) specific approval by the Full Council for the programme of capital expenditure
- (b) a scheme and estimate, including project plan, progress targets and associated revenue expenditure is prepared for each capital project
- (c) proposals for improvements and alterations to buildings must be approved by the appropriate Director
- (d) schedules for individual schemes within the overall budget approved by the relevant Executive Member (for example, minor works)
- (e) the development and implementation of asset management plans
- (f) accountability for each proposal is accepted by a named manager
- (g) monitoring of progress in conjunction with expenditure and comparison with approved budget.
- (h) Council to approve a capital strategy which is subject to regular review and updates.
- (i) Directors can only transfer funds between schemes where the overall schemes for which they are responsible are underspending and are limited to a maximum transfer of £25,000 between any scheme.
- (j) Any transfer of funds in excess of £25,000 between schemes will need the approval of the Full Council.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To prepare capital estimates jointly with Directors and the Chief Executive and to report them to the Executive for approval. The Executive will make recommendations on the capital estimates and on any associated financing requirements to the Full Council.

The definition of 'capital' will be determined by the Borough Treasurer, having regard to government regulations and accounting requirements.

To decide on financing of capital schemes – capitalise revenue budgets where in compliance with regulations and accounting policies and in the Councils overall financial interest

To prepare a quarterly budget monitoring report for CMT on Capital Schemes based on information provided by Directors.

To prepare and maintain the Council's Capital Strategy.

Responsibilities of Directors

To comply with guidance concerning capital schemes and controls issued by the Borough Treasurer.

To ensure that all capital proposals have undergone a project appraisal in accordance with the Capital Strategy.

To prepare quarterly budget monitoring reports for submission to the Borough Treasurer. This quarterly budget monitoring statement to be included in the quarterly performance monitoring report (PMR).

To ensure that adequate records are maintained for all capital contracts.

To proceed with projects only when there is adequate provision in the capital programme and where the full revenue impact has been provided for within the revenue budget or plans of the Council

Directors are authorised to incur expenditure up to £25,000 above the estimated sum included for an approved scheme or project in their Department's section of the Capital Programme, subject to the total sum approved by the Council, in their Department's section of the Capital Programme, not being exceeded.

Where expenditure on a scheme is below the approved budget, the responsible Director may use the level of under spend for other schemes within their Department's section of the Capital Programme subject to:

- a) the total sum approved by the Council, in their Department's section of the Capital Programme, not being exceeded,
- b) a maximum of £25,000 can be transferred from or to any one scheme.

To prepare and submit reports to the Executive, of any variation in contract costs greater than the budget and to seek approval from the Full Council for additional funding where necessary.

To ensure that credit arrangements, such as leasing agreements, are not entered into without the prior approval of the Borough Treasurer.

2.6 MAINTENANCE OF RESERVES AND BALANCES

Why is this important?

The local authority must decide the level of general reserves and balances that it wishes to maintain before it can decide the level of Council Tax. Reserves and balances are maintained as a matter of prudence. They enable the authority to provide for unexpected events and thereby protect it from overspending, should such events occur. Reserves for specific purposes may also be maintained, such as the purchase or renewal of capital items.

Key controls

To maintain reserves in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: A Statement of Recommended Practice (CIPFA/LASAAC) and agreed accounting policies.

For each reserve or balance established, the purpose, usage and basis of transactions should be clearly identified.

Authorisation and expenditure from reserves approved in accordance with the approved terms for the use of the reserve or balance. These terms to be approved by the Executive.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To advise the Executive and/or the Full Council on prudent levels of reserves and balances for the authority, and to take account of the advice of the external auditor in this matter.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that resources provided from reserves or balances are used only for the purposes for which they were intended.

3.1 RISK MANAGEMENT

Why is this important?

All organisations, whether private or public sector, face risks to people, property and continued operations. Risk is the chance or possibility of loss, damage, injury or failure to achieve objectives caused by an unwanted or uncertain action or event. Risk management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risk. Its objectives are to secure the assets of the organisation and to ensure the continued financial and organisational well-being of the organisation. In essence it is, therefore, an integral part of good business practice. Risk management is concerned with evaluating the measures an organisation already has in place to manage identified risks and then recommending the action the organisation needs to take to control these risks effectively.

It is the overall responsibility of the Executive to approve the authority's risk management strategy, and to promote a culture of risk management awareness throughout the authority.

Key controls

The key controls for risk management are:

- (a) procedures are in place to identify, assess, prevent or contain material known risks, and these procedures are operating effectively throughout the authority
- (b) a monitoring process is in place to review regularly the effectiveness of risk management.
- (c) managers know that they are responsible for managing relevant risks and are provided with relevant information on risk management initiatives
- (d) provision is made for losses that might result from the risks that remain
- (e) procedures are in place to investigate claims within required timescales
- (f) acceptable levels of risk are determined and insured against where appropriate
- (g) the authority has identified business continuity plans for implementation in the event of disaster that results in significant loss or damage to its resources.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To offer insurance cover to schools in accordance with Fair Funding arrangements.

To effect corporate insurance cover, through external insurance and internal funding, and to negotiate all claims in consultation with other officers, where necessary.

Responsibilities of the Director of Corporate Services

To prepare and promote the authority's risk management policy statement.

To develop risk management controls in conjunction with other Directors.

Responsibilities of Directors

To notify the Borough Treasurer immediately of any loss, liability or damage that may lead to a claim against the authority, together with any information or explanation required by the Borough Treasurer or the authority's insurers.

To take responsibility for risk management and insurable risks, having regard to advice from the Borough Treasurer and other specialist officers (eg crime prevention, fire prevention, health and safety).

To ensure that there are regular reviews of risk within their departments.

To notify the Borough Treasurer promptly of all new risks, properties or vehicles that require insurance and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.

To consult the Borough Treasurer and the Borough Solicitor on the terms of any indemnity that the authority is requested to give.

To ensure that employees, or anyone covered by the authority's insurances, do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation that may prejudice the assessment of liability in respect of any insurance claim.

3.2 INTERNAL CONTROLS

Why is this important?

The authority is complex and beyond the direct control of any one individual. It therefore requires internal controls to manage and monitor progress towards strategic objectives.

The authority has statutory obligations, and, therefore, requires internal controls to identify, meet and monitor compliance with these obligations.

The authority faces a wide range of financial, administrative and commercial risks, both from internal and external factors, which threaten the achievement of its objectives. Internal controls are necessary to manage these risks.

The system of internal controls is established in order to provide measurable achievement of:

- (a) efficient and effective operations
- (b) reliable financial information and reporting
- (c) compliance with laws and regulations
- (d) risk management.

Key controls

The key controls and control objectives for internal control systems are:

- (a) key controls should be reviewed on a regular basis and the authority should make a formal statement annually to the effect that it is satisfied that the systems of internal control are operating effectively
- (b) managerial control systems, including defining policies, setting objectives and plans, monitoring financial and other performance and taking appropriate anticipatory and remedial action. The key objective of these systems is to promote ownership of the control environment by defining roles and responsibilities
- (c) financial and operational control systems and procedures, which include physical safeguards for assets, segregation of duties, authorisation and approval procedures and information systems
- (d) an effective internal audit function that is properly resourced. It should operate in accordance with the principles contained in the Auditing Practices Board's auditing guideline Guidance for Internal Auditors, CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom and with any other statutory obligations and regulations.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To assist the authority to put in place an appropriate control environment and effective internal controls which provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, financial stewardship, probity and compliance with laws and regulations.

Responsibilities of Directors

To manage processes to check that established controls are being adhered to and to evaluate their effectiveness, in order to be confident in the proper use of resources, achievement of objectives and management of risks.

To review existing controls in the light of changes affecting the authority and to establish and implement new ones in line with guidance from the Borough Treasurer. Directors should also be responsible for removing controls that are unnecessary or not cost or risk effective - for example, because of duplication.

To ensure staff have a clear understanding of the consequences of lack of control.

3.3 INTERNAL AUDIT

Why is this important?

The requirement for an internal audit function for local authorities is implied by Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that authorities "make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs". The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (amended 2006) more specifically require that a "relevant body shall maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of their accounting records and control systems".

Accordingly, internal audit is an independent and objective appraisal function established by the authority for reviewing the system of internal control. It examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of internal control as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

Key controls

The key controls for internal audit are:

- (a) that it is independent in its planning and operation
- (b) the Head of Audit and Risk Management has direct access to the Chief Executive, all levels of management and directly to elected Members
- (c) the internal auditors comply with the Auditing Practices Board's guideline Guidance for Internal Auditors, as interpreted by CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To ensure that internal auditors have the authority to:

- (a) access authority premises at reasonable times
- (b) access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems
- (c) receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration
- (d) require any employee of the authority to account for cash, stores or any other authority asset under his or her control
- (e) access records belonging to third parties, such as contractors, when required
- (f) directly access the Chief Executive, the Executive and Governance and Audit Committee.

To prepare the strategic and annual audit plans, which take account of the characteristics and relative risks of the activities involved for approval by the Governance and Audit Committee.

To ensure that effective procedures are in place to investigate promptly any fraud or irregularity.

Ensure that any person engaged in internal audit work is aware that they must maintain confidentiality regarding the operations and management information relating to the part of the Council being reviewed or investigated.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that internal auditors are given access at all times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.

To ensure that auditors are provided with all information and explanations that they need in the course of their work to enable them to draw appropriate conclusions.

To ensure that Internal Auditors are not misled or provided incorrect information.

To consider and respond promptly to recommendations in audit reports.

To ensure that any agreed actions arising from audit recommendations are carried out in a timely and efficient fashion.

To notify the Borough Treasurer immediately of any suspected fraud, theft, irregularity, improper use or misappropriation of the authority's property or resources. Pending investigation and reporting, the Director should take all necessary steps to prevent further loss and to secure records and documentation against removal or alteration.

To ensure that new systems for maintaining financial records, or records of assets, or changes to such systems, are discussed with and agreed by the Head of Audit and Risk Management prior to implementation.

3.4 EXTERNAL AUDIT

Why is this important?

The Local Government Finance Act 1982 set up the Audit Commission, which is responsible for appointing external auditors to each local authority in England and Wales. The external auditor has rights of access to all documents and information necessary for audit purposes.

Key controls

External auditors are appointed by the Audit Commission normally for a minimum period of five years. The Audit Commission prepares a code of audit practice, which external auditors follow when carrying out their audits.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To ensure that external auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the external auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.

To ensure there is effective liaison between external and internal audit.

The Chief Executive and Borough Treasurer shall agree with the Council's External Auditors, their plans for audit. Recommendations made within the Management Letter by the Auditors shall be considered by the Borough Treasurer and reported to the Corporate Management Team and then to the Council, Committee or the Executive, as appropriate.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that external auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets which the external auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.

To implement any recommendations made by the External Auditors in so far as they are accepted by the Governance and Audit Committee.

To ensure that all records and systems are up to date and available for inspection.

3.5 PREVENTING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

Why is it this important?

The authority will not tolerate fraud and corruption in the administration of its responsibilities, whether from inside or outside the authority.

The authority's expectation of propriety and accountability is that Members and staff at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.

The authority also expects that individuals and organisations (eg suppliers, contractors, service providers) with whom it comes into contact will act towards the authority with integrity and without actions involving fraud and corruption.

Key controls

The key controls regarding the prevention of financial irregularities are that:

- (a) the authority has an effective fraud and corruption policy and maintains a culture that will not tolerate fraud or corruption
- (b) all Members and staff act with integrity and lead by example
- (c) senior managers are required to deal swiftly and firmly with those who defraud or attempt to defraud the authority or who are corrupt
- (d) the maintenance of a register of interests and hospitality or gifts register
- (e) whistle blowing procedures for staff are in place and operate effectively
- (f) legislation including the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 is adhered to.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To monitor and update the fraud and corruption policy and to issue guidance and procedures for officers on the use of the policy.

To maintain adequate and effective internal control arrangements.

To ensure that significant irregularities are reported to the Head of Audit and Risk Management, the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer, Executive and the Governance and Audit Committee. The Borough Treasurer shall determine the arrangements for investigating these irregularities. The Borough Treasurer shall ensure that the appropriate persons are informed of the outcome of any investigation.

The Borough Treasurer shall consider, during the course of any investigation or at its conclusion, as they deem appropriate, whether the matter may require investigation by the Police and/or notification to the External Auditor. Where appropriate, the advice of the Borough Solicitor shall be sought. The Chief Officer: Human Resources will be informed in any case where Officers are involved so that the agreed internal disciplinary procedures may be complied with.

At the conclusion of any investigation, or earlier if appropriate, the Borough Treasurer, shall agree with the Director concerned, the steps that should be taken to mitigate any loss and prevent a recurrence of it.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that all suspected irregularities are reported to the Borough Treasurer or the Head of Audit and Risk Management.

To instigate the authority's disciplinary procedures where the outcome of an audit investigation indicates improper behaviour.

To ensure that the staff within their Department are aware of their responsibilities within the Fraud and Corruption Policy.

To ensure that where financial impropriety is discovered, the Borough Treasurer is informed

To maintain a departmental register of staff interests

To maintain a departmental register of gifts and hospitality received and provided by staff.

3.6 ASSETS - Security

Why is this important?

The authority holds assets in the form of property, vehicles, equipment, furniture and other items worth many millions of pounds. It is important that assets are safeguarded and used efficiently in service delivery, and that there are arrangements for the security of both assets and information required for service operations. An up-to-date asset register is a prerequisite for proper fixed asset accounting and sound asset management.

Key controls

The key controls for the security of resources such as land, buildings, fixed plant machinery, equipment, software and information are:

- (a) resources are used only for the purposes of the authority and are properly accounted for
- (b) resources are available for use when required
- (c) resources no longer required are disposed of in accordance with the law and the regulations of the authority so as to maximise benefits
- (d) an asset register is maintained for the authority, assets are recorded when they are acquired by the authority and this record is updated as changes occur with respect to the location and condition of the asset
- (e) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding the authority's assets and information, including the requirements of the Data Protection Act and software copyright legislation
- (f) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding the security of the authority's computer systems, including maintaining restricted access to the information held on them and compliance with the authority's computer and internet security policies.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To receive the information required for accounting, costing and financial records from each Director.

To ensure that assets are valued in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: A Statement of Recommended Practice (CIPFA/LASAAC).

Responsibilities of Directors

Each Director is responsible for, and shall make arrangements for, the safe custody and care of all assets in their Department including, where appropriate, exercising proper control over the use of those assets.

Directors shall maintain a database in a form approved by the Borough Treasurer for all properties, plant and machinery and moveable assets currently owned or used within their Department.

Directors are responsible, so far as land and property under their control is concerned, for obtaining the best economic return possible, consistent with Council Policy, and shall ensure that all rents and charges due under property agreements are regularly reviewed.

The Director of Corporate Services shall maintain a terrier recording details of all land and properties held by the Council.

To ensure that lessees and other prospective occupiers of Council land are not allowed to take possession or enter the land until a lease or agreement, in a form approved by the Chief Officer: Property in consultation with the Borough Solicitor, has been established as appropriate.

To ensure the proper security of all buildings and other assets under their control.

To pass title deeds to the Borough Solicitor who is responsible for custody of all title deeds.

To ensure that no authority asset is subject to personal use by an employee other than that permitted by Council Policies or Procedures.

To ensure that assets are identified, their location recorded and that they are appropriately marked and insured.

To consult the Borough Treasurer in any case where security is thought to be defective or where it is considered that special security arrangements may be needed.

To ensure cash holdings on premises are kept to limits agreed with the Council's Insurers.

To ensure that keys to safes and similar receptacles are in the custody of those responsible at all times; loss of any such keys must be reported to the Borough Treasurer as soon as possible.

To record all disposal or part exchange of assets that should normally be by competitive tender or public auction, unless, following consultation with the Borough Treasurer, the Executive agrees otherwise.

To arrange for the valuation of assets for accounting purposes to meet requirements specified by the Borough Treasurer.

The Director of Social Care and Learning shall be responsible for the safe custody of the private property of residents in Council establishments and shall maintain records of property so held in a format agreed by the Borough Treasurer.

Inventories

To maintain inventories and record an adequate description of furniture, fittings, equipment, plant and machinery above £1,000 in value and any asset that is

attractive, valuable and portable such as computers, cameras and video recorders but not limited to these examples.

To carry out an annual check of all items on the inventory in order to verify location, review, condition and to take action in relation to surpluses or deficiencies, annotating the inventory accordingly. Attractive, valuable and portable items such as computers, cameras and video recorders should be identified with security markings as belonging to the authority.

To make sure that property is only used in the course of the authority's business, unless the Director concerned has given permission otherwise.

Stocks and Stores

To make arrangements for the care and custody of stocks and stores in the department.

To ensure stocks are maintained at reasonable levels and are subject to a regular independent physical check. All discrepancies should be investigated and pursued to a satisfactory conclusion.

To investigate and remove from the authority's records (ie write off) discrepancies between the inventory and actual assets held.

To authorise or write off disposal of redundant stocks and equipment. Procedures for disposal of such stocks and equipment should be by competitive quotations or auction, unless, following consultation with the Borough Treasurer, the Executive decides otherwise in a particular case.

3.7 ASSET DISPOSAL

Why is this important?

It would be uneconomic and inefficient for the cost of assets to outweigh their benefits. Obsolete, non-repairable or unnecessary resources should be disposed of in accordance with the law and the regulations of the authority.

Key controls

Assets for disposal are identified and are disposed of at the most appropriate time, and only when it is in the best interests of the authority, and best price or benefit reasonably obtainable is secured, bearing in mind other factors, such as environmental issues, economic conditions and the Medium Term Objectives of the Council. For items of significant value, disposal should normally be by competitive tender or public auction.

Procedures to protect staff involved in the disposal from accusations of personal gain.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To issue guidelines representing best practice for disposal of assets.

To ensure appropriate accounting entries are made to remove the value of disposed assets from the authority's records and to include the sale proceeds if appropriate.

Responsibilities of Chief Officer: Property

To dispose of land and buildings in order to obtain maximum benefit to the Council taking into account current economic and market conditions and the Medium Term Objectives of the Council within the officer delegations for this post set out in the Constitution.

Responsibilities of Directors

To seek advice from purchasing advisors on the disposal of surplus or obsolete assets (other than land and buildings).

To ensure that income received for the disposal of an asset (other than land and buildings) is properly banked and coded.

3.8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Why is this important?

Millions of pounds pass through the authority's books each year. This led to the establishment of codes of practice. These aim to provide assurances that the authority's money is properly managed in a way that balances risk with return, but with the overriding consideration being given to the security of the capital sum.

Key controls

That the authority's borrowings and investments comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

Responsibilities of Borough Treasurer

Treasury management and banking:

- To arrange the borrowing and investments of the authority in such a manner as to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the authority's treasury management policy statement and strategy.
- To report annually on treasury management activities to the Executive.
- To operate bank and credit card accounts as are considered necessary - opening or closing any bank or credit card account shall require the approval of the Borough Treasurer.
- To regularly review the Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement and Strategy and seek approval for changes from the Full Council.

Investments and borrowing:

- To ensure that all investments of money are made in the name of the authority or in the name of nominees approved by the Full Council.
- To ensure that all securities that are the property of the authority or its nominees and the title deeds of all property in the authority's ownership are held in the custody of the Director of Corporate Services.
- To effect all borrowings in the name of the authority.
- To act as the authority's registrar of stocks, bonds and mortgages and to maintain records of all borrowing of money by the authority.
- To authorise loans to third parties in accordance with the Councils budgets.

Imprest accounts:

- To provide employees of the authority with cash or bank imprest accounts to meet minor expenditure on behalf of the authority and to prescribe rules for operating these accounts. Minor items of expenditure should not exceed the prescribed amount.
- To determine the petty cash limit and to maintain a record of all transactions and petty cash advances made, and periodically to review the arrangements for the safe custody and control of these advances.
- To reimburse imprest holders as often as necessary to restore the imprests.

Responsibilities of Directors

Treasury management and banking:

- To follow the instructions on banking issued by the Borough Treasurer.

Investments and borrowing:

- To ensure that loans are not made to third parties and that interests are not acquired in companies, joint ventures or other enterprises.

Trust funds and funds held for third parties:

- To arrange for all trust funds to be held, wherever possible, in the name of the authority. All officers acting as trustees by virtue of their official position shall deposit securities, etc relating to the trust with the Borough Treasurer, unless the deed otherwise provides.
- To arrange for the secure administration of funds are held on behalf of third parties and to maintain written records of all transactions.
- To ensure that trust funds are operated within any relevant legislation and the specific requirements for each trust.

Imprest accounts

To ensure that employees operating an imprest account:

- (a) obtain and retain vouchers to support each payment from the imprest account. Where appropriate, an official receipted VAT invoice must be obtained
- (b) make adequate arrangements for the safe custody of the account
- (c) produce upon demand by the Borough Treasurer cash and all vouchers to the total value of the imprest amount
- (d) record transactions promptly

- (e) reconcile and balance the account at least monthly; reconciliation sheets to be signed and retained by the imprest holder
- (f) provide the Borough Treasurer with a certificate of the value of the account held at 31 March each year
- (g) ensure that the float is never used to cash personal cheques or to make personal loans and that the only payments into the account are the reimbursement of the float and change relating to purchases where an advance has been made
- (h) on leaving the authority's employment or otherwise ceasing to be entitled to hold an imprest advance, an employee shall account to the Borough Treasurer for the amount advanced to him or her.

3.9 STAFFING

Why is this important?

In order to provide the highest level of service, it is crucial that the authority recruits and retains high calibre, knowledgeable staff, qualified to an appropriate level.

Key controls

The key controls for staffing are:

- (a) an appropriate staffing strategy and policy exists, in which staffing requirements and budget allocation are matched
- (b) procedures are in place for forecasting staffing requirements and cost
- (c) controls are implemented that ensure that staff time is used efficiently and to the benefit of the authority
- (d) checks are undertaken prior to employing new staff to ensure that they are competent, appropriately qualified, experienced and trustworthy
- (e) all staff are to be paid through the payroll unless the Director can demonstrate that the person meets the HM Revenues and Customs criteria for self employed persons.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To ensure that budget provision exists for all existing and new employees.

To act as an advisor to Directors on areas such as National Insurance and pension contributions, as appropriate.

Responsibilities of Chief Officer: Human Resources

To act as an advisor to Directors to ensure that measures are in place to ensure that the key controls are implemented, monitored and effective.

Responsibilities of Directors

To comply with the Personnel Guide for Managers and to seek advice as appropriate from the Borough Treasurer and Chief Officer: Human Resources on staffing issues.

To produce an annual staffing budget (Devolved Staffing Budget).

To ensure that the staffing budget is an accurate forecast of staffing levels and is equated to an appropriate revenue budget provision (including on-costs and overheads).

To monitor staff activity to ensure adequate control over all staffing costs including authorised and unauthorised absences.

To ensure that the staffing budget is not exceeded without due authority and that it is managed to enable the agreed level of service to be provided.

Use of agency or casual staff may be made in covering posts that are vacant (permanently or temporarily), or to undertake special projects. Directors shall first ensure they have adequate budgetary provision, but shall not contravene any directive or policy in force at the time. Payment of such staff shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Borough Treasurer.

To ensure that checks are undertaken prior to employing new staff to ensure that they are competent, appropriately qualified, experienced and trustworthy.

To ensure that there is a regular review of the employment status of the workforce which is not paid through payroll.

4.1 FINANCIAL SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES - GENERAL

Why is this important?

Departments have many systems and procedures relating to the control of the authority's assets, including purchasing, costing and management systems. Departments are increasingly reliant on computers for their financial management information. The information must be accurate and the systems and procedures sound and well administered. They should contain controls to ensure that transactions are properly processed and errors detected promptly.

The Borough Treasurer has a professional responsibility to ensure that the authority's financial systems are sound and should therefore be notified of any new developments or changes.

Key controls

The key controls for systems and procedures are:

- (a) basic data exists to enable the authority's objectives, targets, budgets and plans to be formulated
- (b) financial performance is communicated to the appropriate managers on an accurate, complete and timely basis
- (c) early warning is provided of deviations from plans and budgets that require management attention
- (d) financial operating systems and procedures are secure.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To make arrangements for the proper administration of the authority's financial affairs, including to:

- (a) issue advice, guidance and procedures for officers and others acting on the authority's behalf
- (b) determine the accounting systems, form of accounts and supporting financial records
- (c) establish arrangements for audit of the authority's financial affairs
- (d) approve any new financial systems to be introduced
- (e) approve any changes to be made to existing financial systems.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that accounting records are properly maintained and held securely.

To ensure that vouchers and documents with financial implications are not destroyed, except in accordance with the Councils document retention policy.

To ensure that a complete management trail, allowing financial transactions to be traced from the accounting records to the original document, and vice versa, is maintained.

To incorporate appropriate controls to ensure that, where relevant:

- (a) all input is genuine, complete, accurate, timely and not previously processed
- (b) all processing is carried out in an accurate, complete and timely manner
- (c) output from the system is complete, accurate and timely.

To ensure that the organisational structure provides an appropriate segregation of duties to provide adequate internal controls and to minimise the risk of fraud or other malpractice.

To ensure there is a documented and tested disaster recovery plan to allow information system processing to resume quickly in the event of an interruption.

To ensure that systems are documented and staff trained in operations.

To consult with the Borough Treasurer before changing any existing system or introducing new systems.

To establish a scheme of delegation in writing identifying officers authorised to act upon the Director's behalf in respect of payments, income collection and placing orders, including variations, and showing the limits of their authority.

To supply lists of authorised officers, with specimen signatures and delegated limits, to the Borough Treasurer, together with any subsequent variations.

To ensure that effective contingency arrangements, including back-up procedures, exist for computer systems. Wherever possible, back-up information should be securely retained in a fireproof location, preferably off site or at an alternative location within the building.

The Director will ensure that only bona fide data is transferred between subsidiary systems and the Financial Management System. Directors shall ensure that there are adequate controls to verify correct transfer of data has taken place and shall ensure that systems under their control are fully, and regularly reconciled.

4.2 INCOME

Why is this important?

Income can be a vulnerable asset and effective income collection systems are necessary to ensure that all income due is identified, collected, receipted and banked properly. It is preferable to obtain income in advance of supplying goods or services as this improves the authority's cashflow and also avoids the time and cost of administering debts.

Key controls

The key controls for income are:

- (a) all income due to the authority is identified and charged correctly, in accordance with an approved charging policy, which is regularly reviewed
- (b) all fees and charges are subject to at least annual review and approval by the Full Council. In determining charges, the Council, shall have regard to
 - current legislation
 - the need to cover the cost of the service, as a minimum
 - market rates, where a service operates in free market conditions
 - the value of the service to users
 - the cost of collecting the income
 - the advice of the Director and Borough Treasurer
- (c) all income is collected from the correct person, at the right time, using the correct procedures and the appropriate stationery
- (d) all money received by an employee on behalf of the authority is paid without delay to the Borough Treasurer or, as he or she directs, to the authority's bank, and properly recorded. The responsibility for cash collection should be separated from that:
 - for identifying the amount due
 - for reconciling the amount due to the amount received
- (e) prompt and effective action is taken to pursue non-payment within defined timescales
- (f) formal approval for debt write-off is obtained
- (g) appropriate write-off action is taken within defined timescales
- (h) appropriate accounting adjustments are made following write-off action
- (i) all appropriate income documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention schedule
- (j) money collected and deposited is reconciled to the bank account by a person who is not involved in the collection or banking process.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To set arrangements for the collection of all income due to the authority and to approve the procedures, systems and documentation for its collection.

To provide advice, set the framework, collect and review annually proposals for fees and charges from each Director for submission to the Executive and Full Council for approval.

To approve all debts to be written-off up to £50,000 in consultation with the relevant Director and to keep a record of all sums written off up to the approved limit and to adhere to the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (amended 2006).

To obtain the approval of the Executive in consultation with the relevant Director for writing off debts in excess of £50,000.

To ensure that appropriate accounting adjustments are made following write-off action.

To approve arrangements for the submission of all claims for grants to Government Departments and other outside bodies.

Responsibilities of Directors

To review annually the fees, charges and concessions including the appropriate charging of VAT in line with the Council's policies.

Where charges are assessed according to ability to pay, the Director may make arrangements for the reduction of charges in accordance with policies approved by the Council, Committee or the Executive.

Directors may make variations to charges which are set in order to cover specified costs, in consultation with the Borough Treasurer.

To separate the responsibility for identifying amounts due and the responsibility for collection, as far as is practicable.

To establish and initiate appropriate prompt recovery procedures, including legal action where necessary, for debts that are not paid promptly.

To issue official receipts or to maintain other documentation for income collection.

To ensure that at least two employees are present when post is opened so that money received by post is properly identified and recorded.

To hold securely receipts, tickets and other records of income for the appropriate period.

To lock away all income to safeguard against loss or theft, and to ensure the security of cash handling.

To ensure that income is paid fully and promptly into the appropriate authority bank account in the form in which it is received. Appropriate details should be recorded on

to paying-in slips to provide an audit trail. Money collected and deposited must be reconciled to the bank account on a regular basis.

To ensure income is not used to cash personal cheques or other payments.

To supply the Borough Treasurer with details relating to work done, goods supplied, services rendered or other amounts due, to enable the Borough Treasurer to record correctly the sums due to the authority and to ensure accounts are sent out promptly.

Directors have a responsibility to assist the Borough Treasurer and Borough Solicitor in collecting debts that they have originated, by providing any further information requested by the debtor, and in pursuing the matter on the authority's behalf.

Ensure that cash held on any Council premise is in accordance with the agreed levels of insurance cover approved by the Borough Treasurer.

To keep a record of every transfer of money between employees of the authority. The receiving officer must sign for the transfer and the transferor must retain a copy.

To recommend to the Borough Treasurer all debts to be written off and to keep a record of all sums written off up to the approved limit. Once raised, no bona fide debt may be cancelled, except by full payment or by its formal writing off. A credit note to replace a debt can only be issued to correct a factual inaccuracy or administrative error in the calculation and/or billing of the original debt.

To obtain the approval of the Borough Treasurer when writing off debts in excess of the approved limit, and the approval of the Executive where required.

To notify the Borough Treasurer of outstanding income relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31 March in line with the timetable determined by the Borough Treasurer and not later than 30 April.

4.3 ORDERING AND PAYING FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

Why is this important?

Public money should be spent with demonstrable probity and in accordance with the authority's policies. Authorities have a statutory duty to achieve best value in part through economy and efficiency. The authority's procedures should help to ensure that services obtain value for money from their purchasing arrangements. These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Manual.

General

Every officer and Member of the authority has a responsibility to declare any links or personal interests that they may have with purchasers, suppliers and/or contractors if they are engaged in contractual or purchasing decisions on behalf of the authority.

Official orders must be in a form approved by the Borough Treasurer. Official orders must be issued for all work, goods or services to be supplied to the authority, except for supplies of utilities, periodic payments such as rent or rates, petty cash purchases or other exceptions specified by the Borough Treasurer.

Each order must conform to the guidelines approved by the Full Council on central purchasing and the standardisation of supplies and materials. Standard terms and conditions must not be varied without the prior approval of the Borough Solicitor.

Apart from petty cash, schools' own bank accounts and other payments from advance accounts, the normal method of payment from the authority shall be by cheque or other instrument or approved method, drawn on the authority's bank account by the Borough Treasurer. The use of direct debit shall require the prior agreement of the Borough Treasurer.

Official orders must not be raised for any personal or private purchases, nor must personal or private use be made of authority contracts.

Key controls

The key controls for ordering and paying for work, goods and services are:

- (a) all works, goods and services are ordered only by appropriate persons and are correctly recorded
- (b) all works, goods and services shall be ordered in accordance with the authority's contract standing orders unless they are purchased from sources within the authority
- (c) works, goods and services received are checked to ensure they are in accordance with the order
- (d) payments are not made unless goods have been received by the authority to the correct price, quantity and quality standards

- (e) all invoices are authorised by the relevant cost centre manager and that the authoriser cannot order or receive the goods and services
- (f) all payments are made to the correct person, for the correct amount and are properly recorded, regardless of the payment method
- (g) all appropriate evidence of the transaction and payment documents are retained and stored for the defined period, in accordance with the document retention schedule
- (h) all expenditure, including VAT, is accurately recorded against the right budget and any exceptions are corrected
- (i) in addition, the effect of e-business/e-commerce and electronic purchasing required that processes are in place to maintain the security and integrity of data for transacting business electronically.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To ensure that all the authority's financial systems and procedures are sound and properly administered.

To approve any changes to existing financial systems and to approve any new systems before they are introduced.

To approve the form of official orders and associated terms and conditions.

To make payments from the authority's funds on a Director's authorisation that the expenditure has been duly incurred in accordance with financial regulations.

To make payments, whether or not provision exists within the estimates, where the payment is specifically required by statute or is made under a court order.

To make payments to contractors on the certificate of the appropriate Director, which must include details of the value of work, retention money, amounts previously certified and amounts now certified.

To provide advice on making payments by the most economical means.

To ensure that a budgetary control system is established that enables commitments incurred by placing orders to be shown against the appropriate budget allocation.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that an Agresso purchase requisition is raised for all goods and services, other than where it has been agreed with the Borough Treasurer that manual orders can be issued.

To ensure that orders are only used for goods and services provided to the Directorate.

To ensure that only those staff authorised by him or her sign orders and to maintain an up- to-date list of such authorised staff identifying in each case the limits of their authority. The authoriser of the order should be satisfied that the goods and services

ordered are appropriate and needed, that there is adequate budgetary provision and that quotations or tenders have been obtained if necessary. Best value principles should underpin the authority's approach to procurement. Value for money should always be achieved.

To ensure that goods and services are checked on receipt to verify that they are in accordance with the order and are entered into Agresso. This check should be carried out by a different officer from the person who authorised the order. Appropriate entries should then be made in inventories or stores records.

To ensure that payment is not made unless a proper VAT invoice has been received, checked, coded and certified for payment, confirming:

- (a) receipt of goods or services
- (b) that the invoice has not previously been paid
- (c) that expenditure has been properly incurred and is within budget provision
- (d) that prices and arithmetic are correct and accord with quotations, tenders, contracts or catalogue prices
- (e) correct accounting treatment of tax
- (f) that the invoice is correctly coded or matched with the Agresso order within agreed tolerances
- (g) that discounts have been taken where available
- (h) that appropriate entries will be made in accounting records.

To ensure that at least two authorised members of staff are involved in the ordering, receiving and payment process. A different officer from the person who authorised the order, and in every case, a different officer from the person checking a written invoice, should authorise the invoice.

To ensure that the department maintains and reviews periodically a list of staff approved to authorise invoices. Names of authorising officers and details of the limits of their authority shall be forwarded to the Borough Treasurer.

To encourage suppliers of goods and services to receive payment by the most economical means for the authority. All payments made by direct debit must have the prior approval of the Borough Treasurer.

To secure compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

To utilise the central purchasing procedures established by the Borough Treasurer in putting purchases, where appropriate, out to competitive quotation or tender.

To ensure that loans, leasing or rental arrangements are not entered into without prior agreement from the Borough Treasurer. This is because of the potential impact on the authority's borrowing powers, to protect the authority against entering into unapproved credit arrangements and to ensure that value for money is being obtained.

To notify the Borough Treasurer of outstanding expenditure relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31 March in line with the timetable determined by the Borough Treasurer.

With regard to contracts for construction and alterations to buildings and for civil engineering works, to document and agree with the Borough Treasurer the systems and procedures to be adopted in relation to financial aspects, including certification of interim and final payments, checking, recording and authorising payments, the system for monitoring and controlling capital schemes and the procedures for validation of subcontractors' tax status.

To notify the Borough Treasurer immediately of any expenditure to be incurred as a result of statute/court order where there is no budgetary provision.

To ensure that all appropriate payment records are retained and stored for the defined period, in accordance with the document retention schedule.

4.4 PAYMENTS TO EMPLOYEES AND MEMBERS

Why is this important?

Staff costs are the largest item of expenditure for most authority services. It is therefore important that payments are accurate, timely, made only where they are due for services to the authority and that payments accord with individuals' conditions of employment. It is also important that all payments are accurately and completely recorded and accounted for and that Members' allowances are authorised in accordance with the scheme adopted by the Full Council.

Key controls

The key controls for payments to employees and Members are:

- (a) having a scheme of Members Allowances approved in accordance with the relevant statutory procedures
- (b) proper authorisation procedures are in place and that there is adherence to corporate timetables in relation to:
 - starters
 - leavers
 - variations
 - enhancements

and that payments are made on the basis of timesheets or claims

- (c) frequent and regular reconciliation of payroll expenditure against approved budget and bank account
- (d) all appropriate payroll documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention schedule
- (e) that HM Revenue and Customs regulations are complied with.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To arrange and control secure and reliable payment of salaries, compensation or other emoluments to existing and former employees, in accordance with procedures prescribed by him or her, on the due date.

To record and make arrangements for the accurate and timely payment of statutory payments, superannuation and other deductions.

To make arrangements for payment of all travel and subsistence claims.

To make arrangements for paying Members travel or other allowances upon receiving the prescribed form, duly completed and authorised.

To ensure that there are adequate arrangements for administering superannuation matters on a day-to-day basis within the terms of the Service Level Agreement with the Pension Fund Managers.

Responsibilities of Chief Officer: Human Resources

The Borough Human Resource Manager shall maintain a list of authorised permanent posts. This list shall include all relevant details regarding the grade and pay range of the job, the hours contracted (expressed as a percentage of a "full time equivalent"), the post holder and their start date and actual spinal point, plus details of other allowances.

To notify the Borough Treasurer following the receipt of the information from Directors of all appointments, terminations or variations which may affect the pay or pension of an employee or former employee, in the form and to the timescale required by the Borough Treasurer.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure appointments are made in accordance with the regulations of the authority and approved establishments, grades and scale of pay and that adequate budget provision is available.

To notify the Chief Officer: Human Resources of all appointments, terminations or variations which may affect the pay or pension of an employee or former employee, in the form and to the timescale required by the Chief Officer: Human Resources.

To ensure that adequate and effective systems and procedures are operated, so that:

- payments are only authorised to bona fide employees
- payments are only made where there is a valid entitlement
- conditions and contracts of employment are correctly applied
- employees' names listed on the payroll are checked at regular intervals to verify accuracy and completeness

To maintain and regularly update a list of the names of officers authorised to sign records associated with the payment to employees to the Borough Treasurer, together with specimen signatures.

To ensure that payroll transactions are processed only through the payroll system. Directors should give careful consideration to the employment status of individuals employed on a self-employed consultant or subcontract basis. The HM Revenue and Customs applies a tight definition for employee status, and in cases of doubt, advice should be sought from the Borough Treasurer.

To certify travel and subsistence claims and other allowances. Certification is taken to mean that journeys were authorised and expenses properly and necessarily incurred, and that allowances are properly payable by the authority, ensuring that cost-effective use of travel arrangements is achieved. Due consideration should be given to tax implications and that the Borough Treasurer is informed where appropriate.

To ensure that the Borough Treasurer is notified of the details of any employee benefits in kind, to enable full and complete reporting within the income tax self-assessment system.

To ensure that all appropriate payroll documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention schedule.

4.5 TAXATION

Why is this important?

Like all organisations, the authority is responsible for ensuring its tax affairs are in order. Tax issues are often very complex and the penalties for incorrectly accounting for tax are severe. It is therefore very important for all officers to be aware of their role.

Key controls

The key controls for taxation are:

- (a) budget managers are provided with relevant information and kept up to date on tax issues
- (b) budget managers are instructed on required record keeping
- (c) all taxable transactions are identified, properly carried out and accounted for within stipulated timescales
- (d) records are maintained in accordance with instructions
- (e) returns are made to the appropriate authorities within the stipulated timescale

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To complete all HM Revenue and Customs returns regarding PAYE.

To complete a monthly return of VAT inputs and outputs to HM Customs and Excise.

To provide details to the HM Revenue and Customs regarding the construction industry tax deduction scheme.

To maintain up-to-date guidance for authority employees on taxation issues in the accounting manual and the tax manual.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that the correct VAT liability is attached to all income due and that all VAT recoverable on purchases complies with HM Revenue and Customs regulations.

To ensure that, where construction and maintenance works are undertaken, the contractor fulfils the necessary construction industry tax deduction requirements.

To ensure that all persons employed by the authority are added to the authority's payroll and tax deducted from any payments, except where the individuals are bona fide self-employed or are employed by a recognised staff agency.

To follow the guidance on taxation issued by the Borough Treasurer in the authority's accounting manual and VAT manual.

5.1 PARTNERSHIPS

Why is this important?

Partnerships are likely to play a key role in delivering community strategies and in helping to promote and improve the well-being of the area. Local authorities are working in partnership with others - public agencies, private companies, community groups and voluntary organisations. Local authorities still deliver some services, but their distinctive leadership role is to bring together the contributions of the various stakeholders. They therefore need to deliver a shared vision of services based on user wishes.

Local authorities will mobilise investment, bid for funds, champion the needs of their areas and harness the energies of local people and community organisations. Local authorities will be measured by what they achieve in partnership with others.

General

The main reasons for entering into a partnership are:

- (a) the desire to find new ways to share risk
- (b) the ability to access new resources
- (c) to provide new and better ways of delivering services
- (d) to forge new relationships.

A partner is defined as either:

- (a) an organisation (private or public) undertaking, part funding or participating as a beneficiary in a project
- (b) a body whose nature or status give it a right or obligation to support the project.

Or, Partners participate in projects by:

- (a) acting as a project deliverer or sponsor, solely or in concert with others
- (b) acting as a project funder or part funder
- (c) being the beneficiary group of the activity undertaken in a project.

Partners have common responsibilities:

- (a) to be willing to take on a role in the broader programme appropriate to the skills and resources of the partner organisation
- (b) to act in good faith at all times and in the best interests of the partnership's aims and objectives
- (c) be open about any conflict of interests that might arise

- (d) to encourage joint working and promote the sharing of information, resources and skills between public, private and community sectors
- (e) to hold confidentially any information received as a result of partnership activities or duties that is of a confidential or commercially sensitive nature
- (f) to act wherever possible as ambassadors for the project.

Key controls

The key controls for authority partners are:

- (a) if appropriate, to be aware of their responsibilities under the authority's financial regulations and the code of practice on tenders and contracts
- (b) to ensure that risk management processes are in place to identify and assess all known risks
- (c) to ensure that project appraisal processes are in place to assess the viability of the project in terms of resources, staffing and expertise
- (d) to agree and accept formally the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners involved in the project before the project commences
- (e) to communicate regularly with other partners throughout the project so that problems can be identified and shared to achieve their successful resolution.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To advise on effective controls that will ensure that resources are not wasted.

To advise on the key elements of funding a project. They include:

- (a) a scheme appraisal for financial viability in both the current and future years
- (b) risk appraisal and management
- (c) resourcing, including taxation issues
- (d) audit, security and control requirements
- (e) carry-forward arrangements.

To ensure that the accounting arrangements are satisfactory.

Responsibilities of Directors

To maintain a register of all contracts entered into with external bodies in accordance with procedures specified by the Borough Treasurer.

To ensure that, before entering into agreements with external bodies, a risk management appraisal has been prepared for the Borough Treasurer.

To ensure that such agreements and arrangements do not impact adversely upon the services provided by the authority.

To ensure that all agreements and arrangements are properly documented.

To provide appropriate information to the Borough Treasurer to enable a note to be entered into the authority's statement of accounts concerning material items.

To ensure that partnerships are established and operated having regard to the Council's partnership toolkit.

5.2 EXTERNAL FUNDING

Why is this important?

External funding is potentially a very important source of income, but funding conditions need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are compatible with the aims and objectives of the authority. Local authorities are increasingly encouraged to provide seamless service delivery through working closely with other agencies and private service providers. Funds from third parties such as the National Lottery or Developers (S106) provide additional resources to enable the authority to deliver services to the local community. However, in some instances, although the scope for external funding has increased, such funding is linked to tight specifications and may not be flexible enough to link to the authority's overall plan.

Key controls

The key controls for external funding are:

- (a) to ensure that key conditions of funding and any statutory requirements are complied with and that the responsibilities of the accountable body are clearly understood
- (b) to ensure that funds are acquired only to meet the priorities approved in the policy framework by the Full Council
- (c) to ensure that any match-funding requirements are given due consideration prior to entering into long-term agreements and that future revenue budgets reflect these requirements.

Responsibilities of the Borough Treasurer

To ensure that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the authority's accounts.

To ensure that the match-funding requirements are considered prior to entering into the agreements and that future revenue budgets reflect these requirements.

To ensure that audit requirements are met.

Responsibilities of Directors

To inform the Borough Treasurer of all claims for funds and that they are made by the due date.

To ensure that the project progresses in accordance with any agreement with the third party and that all expenditure is properly incurred and recorded.

To ensure that future financial commitments arising from external funded schemes are incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

5.3 WORK FOR THIRD PARTIES

Why is this important?

Current legislation enables the authority to provide a range of services to other bodies. Such work may enable a unit to maintain economies of scale and existing expertise. Arrangements should be in place to ensure that any risks associated with this work is minimised and that such work is intra vires.

Key controls

The key controls for working with third parties are:

- (a) to ensure that proposals are costed properly in accordance with guidance provided by the Borough Treasurer
- (b) to ensure that contracts are drawn up using guidance provided by the Borough Solicitor and that the formal approvals process is adhered to
- (c) to issue guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third party contracts.

Responsibilities of Borough Treasurer

To issue guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third party contracts.

Responsibilities of Directors

To ensure that the approval of the Executive is obtained before any negotiations are concluded to work for third parties.

To maintain a register of all contracts entered into with third parties.

To ensure that appropriate insurance arrangements are made.

To ensure that the authority is not put at risk from any bad debts.

To ensure that no contract is subsidised by the authority unless approved by the Executive or the Full Council.

To ensure that, wherever possible, payment is received in advance of the delivery of the service.

To ensure that the department/unit has the appropriate expertise to undertake the contract.

To ensure that such contracts do not impact adversely upon the services provided for the authority.

To ensure that all contracts are properly documented.

To provide appropriate information to the Borough Treasurer to enable a note to be entered into the statement of accounts.

SECTION 10 – CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

These Contract Standing Orders are made under section 135 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Guidance regarding the use of these Standing Orders and further explanation as to how they operate can be found in the Procurement Manual.

DEFINITIONS

In these Standing Orders, the following expressions have the following meanings:

“Corporate Contract”	A contract relating to the procurement of supplies, works or services that has been tendered and managed by the Council
“Corporate Finance System”	Agresso or it’s replacement
“Director”	The Chief Executive or the most senior officer in a department of the Council or the Governing Body of a school with delegated responsibilities under the Local Management of Schools Regulations
“Executive Member”	Means the Member of the Executive with responsibility for the service for which a procurement is being carried out
“Executive”	Means a meeting to which the Leader and all those Members that are serving as Executive Members have been invited, or in the case of non-executive functions references to “the Executive” are deemed to be references to the Council or the committee or sub-committee to which the Council has delegated responsibility for that function
“Framework Agreement”	Means an agreement or other arrangement between one or more contracting authorities and one or more suppliers which establishes the terms (in particular as to price and, where appropriate, quantity) under which suppliers will enter into one or more contracts with the Council in the period during which the framework agreement applies

“Grant”	Means a grant as defined and described in paragraph 2.5 of these Contract Standing Orders
“Non Commercial Considerations”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. whether contractors employ self-employed individuals, 2. any involvement of the business activities or interests of the contractor with irrelevant fields of Government policy, 3. the conduct of the contractor in industrial disputes, 4. the country of origin or location of suppliers, 5. any political, industrial or sectarian interest of the contractor, 6. financial support or lack of financial support by the contractor for any institution, 7. use or non use by a contractor of technical or professional services provided by the Council under the Building Act 1984.
“Procurement Plan“	Means the Procurement Plan available from the Procurement pages on the Council’s intranet
“Procurement Manual”	The manual containing guidance on the procurement of all supplies services and works and any further matters referred to in these Contract Standing Orders
“Public Contracts Regulations”	The Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No 5) as amended
“Responsible Officer”	The Director or a person to whom the Director has given clear written delegated responsibility to exercise a function which these Contract Standing Orders identify may be performed by a Responsible Officer, to the extent of such delegation
“Supplies and Services Threshold”	£139,893, or any different figure that may be substituted by Statutory instrument from time to time
“Total Contract Value”	The whole of the estimated value net of value added tax which the Council expects to give under the contract, calculated according to the valuation rules set out in the Procurement Manual

“Threshold”	Means the Supplies and Services Threshold or the Works Threshold as the case may be
“Works Threshold”	£3,497,313 or any different figure that may be substituted by statutory instrument from time to time

1 Introduction and application of Standing Orders

These Contract Standing Orders set out the framework for the procurement of supplies, works and services. They are an essential set of rules and compliance with them will ensure that officers both seek and obtain good value for money and that public money is properly spent and accounted for. **These Standing Orders apply to all contracts for the procurement of supplies, the provision of services or the execution of works whether to or by the Council or on its behalf.**

- 1.1 In any procurement where quotations or tenders are required no matter what the value may be, officers must always apply procedures that allow a fair and non-discriminatory competitive process, and equal treatment of all potential suppliers and contractors.
- 1.2 Contracts must not be artificially split to avoid the application of the key thresholds contained in these Standing Orders.
- 1.3 Officers dealing with the procurement of standard or repetitive supplies and services should always consider the use of Framework Agreements and corporate contracts and should seek guidance from the Head of Procurement or from the Borough Solicitor.
- 1.4 These Contract Standing Orders do not apply to the following:
 - A contract for service for the employment of staff by the Council
 - The engagement of Counsel
 - The acquisition disposal or transfer of land or an interest in land and property
 - Hire of premises
 - Grants made by the Council.

2 Roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 Directors are responsible for ensuring that chief officers and all staff with procurement responsibilities within their directorates fully understand and comply with these Standing Orders.
- 2.2 Directors are responsible for all purchase orders and contracts tendered and let by their directorates, are accountable to the Executive for the performance of their duties in relation to contract letting and management and must ensure that all council officers comply with these Standing Orders. The duties set out in paragraph

2.3 also apply to a Responsible Officer (except for paragraphs 2.3.5, and paragraphs 2.3.13 to .15 which are duties to be complied with by a Director personally)

- 2.3 Their duties are as follows:
- 2.3.1 To seek and obtain value for money and secure continuous improvement in all procurements.
- 2.3.2 To ensure no contract is entered into by their Directorate without there being adequate and agreed budget provision.
- 2.3.3 To ensure compliance with all applicable UK and EU legislation, seeking advice from the Borough Solicitor or the Head of Procurement at an early stage in the process whenever appropriate.
- 2.3.4 To ensure that Non Commercial Considerations do not influence any decision to seek quotations or tenders or to enter into any contract.
- 2.3.5 To ensure all staff dealing with procurement for their directorate are fully aware of these Standing Orders the Procurement Manual and any Council documents that are referred to in it and to arrange adequate training on their operation.
- 2.3.6 To declare to the council any pecuniary interest whether direct or indirect they personally have in any contract to be let, and to make that declaration in writing to the Borough Solicitor.
- 2.3.7 In the event of any breach of these Standing Orders to take immediate action and report it to the Borough Solicitor and/or the Borough Treasurer.
- 2.3.8 To ensure every contract over £100,000 has a named officer with responsibility for it.
- 2.3.9 To ensure that where a person who is not a council employee supervises a contract he or she complies with these Standing Orders as if he or she were an employee of the Council.
- 2.3.10 To keep securely proper records of all purchase orders, contracts and copies of all relevant documentation so as to provide a full audit trail of actions taken.
- 2.3.11 To comply with the Council's arrangements for the obtaining and opening of quotations and tenders.
- 2.3.12 To ensure that the council's seal is affixed to any contract with a total contract value of £400,000 or more and to ensure that all other contracts are signed by a Director or by a person authorised under delegated powers to act on his or her behalf or placed through the Corporate Finance System.
- 2.3.13 To keep a record of any waivers of these Standing Orders.
- 2.3.14 To keep a written record of any delegations they make of their powers under these Standing Orders.

2.3.15 To ensure that records are kept in a manner that ensures reviews of contracts are undertaken in good time ideally at least one year in advance of termination dates and that appropriate action is taken.

2.4 These Standing Orders do not apply to grants awarded by the Council. A grant is an arrangement where money is given for the benefit of all or for a section of the local community for a stated purpose other than for the procurement of services whether the services are to be given to the council or to third parties. An arrangement where payments are made to secure the provision of services whether to the Council or to some third party is a contract for services to which these Contract Standing Orders apply.

3 Steps to be taken in all procurements before inviting quotations or tenders.

3.1 **Officers must take advice from the Head of Procurement or the Borough Solicitor on the relevance of the Public Contract Regulations for any procurement where the Total Contract Value is estimated to be more than £100,000.**

3.2 When it can reasonably be anticipated that the Total Contract Value might exceed £100,000 the Director must ensure that an estimate of the anticipated Total Contract Value is prepared and recorded in writing. The estimate should not be more than twelve months old when tenders or quotations are invited and is to be exclusive of Value Added Tax.

3.3 For all procurements of supplies and services with an estimated Total Contract Value in excess of £100,000 but less than the Threshold, a Procurement Plan must be prepared for the approval of the Director.

3.4 For all procurements of supplies and services over the Threshold a Project Initiation Document must be prepared by the Responsible Officer in consultation with Head Of Procurement.

3.5 For all contracts estimated to have a Total Contract Value of more than £400,000 the Responsible Officer shall not proceed to invite quotations or tenders without having first secured the written agreement of the Director and Executive Member having obtained any appropriate advice from the Borough Treasurer and the Borough Solicitor.

3.6 Contracts may not be artificially split to avoid the application of these Standing Orders or the Public Contracts Regulations or any other legislation.

4 Obtaining and accepting quotations and tenders

4.1 Where any procurement of supplies or services has an estimated Total Contract Value of less than the Supplies and Services Threshold, the required number of quotations or tenders must be sought in accordance with the financial limits and procedures set out in Appendix 1. Where the estimated Total Contract Value of any procurement of supplies or services is for more than £100,000, invitations to tender must be issued in accordance with the procedures set out below and in the Procurement Manual.

- 4.2 Where any works contract is to be let the required number of quotations or tenders must be sought in accordance with the financial limits and procedures set out in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 When the estimated value of the Total Contract Value of any procurement is greater than the appropriate Threshold the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations must be observed in full to the extent they apply to the procurement. If the Public Contract Regulations do not apply the procurement must be carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in the Procurement Manual.
- 4.4 The Responsible Officer must ensure that the selection of suppliers from whom tenders or quotations are sought is carried out openly, fairly and transparently. The requirements for advertising, which are made to ensure compliance with legal requirements for transparency and freedom from discrimination, are set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and must always be followed.
- 4.5 When required by the appendices the Responsible Officer must ensure that a specification is drafted. Guidance on the preparation of specifications is given in the Procurement Manual.
- 4.6 Every request for written tenders shall state that tenders must be received in a plain envelope which shall bear the word "Tender" followed by the subject to which it relates, and the date and time for opening. The envelope must not bear any name or mark identifying the sender.
- 4.7 All tenders or quotations are to be received and opened in accordance with the procedures set out in the Procurement Manual.

5 Contract documentation and standard contract conditions

- 5.1 The provisions of any Statute, Regulation, Treaty or Directive of the European Union take precedence over anything said in these Standing Orders, and all contracts entered into by the Council must comply with all of those requirements.
- 5.2 All contracts entered into by the Council shall be completed (subject to delegated financial limits) in accordance with the following requirements.

Total Value	Method of Completion	Signed By
Up to and including £5,000	Oral or Council's official written order	Responsible Officer
£5,000 to £100,000	Council's official written order	Responsible Officer
£100,000 - £139,893	Signed contract and Council's official written order	Responsible Officer
£139,893 - £400,000	Signed Contract or Deed as advised by the Borough Solicitor	Director or in accordance with the requirements for sealing of contracts

Over £400,000	Deed executed under seal	Borough Solicitor and Mayor
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5.3 All contracts must be signed or sealed before the supply, service or construction work begins.

5.4 The Council's standard conditions of contract shall always be employed unless,

(1)

- (a) the total value exceeds the Threshold,
- (b) Leasing arrangements are involved,
- (c) the requirement is particularly complex and the use of the standard conditions is inappropriate

and in each such case the formal advice of the Borough Solicitor has been given, or

(2) the supplier requires the Council to contract on terms supplied by it, and the total value is no more than £35,000.

6 Approval and acceptance of quotations and tenders

6.1 All requests for quotations and tenders for works, services or supplies must be carried out according to the procedures set out in the Procurement Manual

6.2 The evaluation of written quotations and tenders and any pre-qualification of bidders must be carried out according to the procedures set out in the Procurement Manual, clearly documented and, if above the Threshold, advice must be sought from the Head of Procurement or the Borough Solicitor.

6.3 Where the estimated Total Contract Value is more than £100,000 and only one tender is received the Director must take advice from the Head of Procurement and the Borough Solicitor on the appropriate action.

6.4 The Director may accept a tender or quotation for **works, supplies or services** (or delegate in writing to another officer the power to accept a quotation) where the quotation together with all associated fees and costs is not more than £400,000. Where the tender is above £100,000, a report should be submitted by officers to the Director, but if a Director has not delegated power to a Responsible Officer to accept a quotation the Director must prepare a report on the acceptance of the tender or quotation and keep it available for auditing.

6.5 The Director shall not accept tenders for supplies, services or works where the quotation or tender price together with all associated fees and costs is more than £400,000 and less than £1,000,000 without securing the written agreement of the Executive Member.

6.6 For all contracts where the tender price is greater than £1,000,000, acceptance of the tender must be approved by the Executive upon a report by the Director.

- 6.7 Where the Director wishes to accept a tender other than the lowest acceptable tender, full supporting documentation must be kept to evidence why the lowest acceptable tender was not accepted. If the tender is one to which paragraphs 6.5 or 6.6 applies, the Director shall report the values of all tenders received and the reasons for selecting the preferred tender.

7 Waiver of Contract Standing Orders

- 7.1 If there are special circumstances to waive or suspend any section or sections of Contract Standing Orders, the following approvals must be obtained depending on contract value:

1. for all contracts up to £35000, the Director may approve.
2. for contracts in excess of £35,000 but less than £400,000 the Borough Solicitor and the Chief Executive (taking advice as they may feel appropriate from the Borough Treasurer or the Head of Procurement) may approve.
3. for contracts over £400,000 a report must be made to the Executive for approval save that where the Borough Solicitor and Chief Executive have confirmed that there is genuine urgency and it is not possible to obtain approval from the Executive in time, the Leader may approve, but shall report his decision to the next meeting of the Executive for information.

- 7.2 A standard exemption form is to be used and the approval must be retained by the Director.

- 7.3 The Director must ensure that a record of all cases where Contract Standing Orders have been waived or suspended is sent to the Head of Procurement, recording the reasons for waiver and the approvals obtained.

8 Contract extensions and variations

- 8.1 Where a contract, which was not required to be advertised by the Public Contracts Regulations or any preceding Regulations, does not have any provision for an extension, one extension, where similar terms and conditions will apply, may be agreed for a maximum period of one year, but the written approval of the Director, who must consult with the Borough Solicitor and the Treasurer, must be given.

- 8.2 Where a contract does provide for an extension, the extension may be implemented, subject to the prior written approval of the Director being given.

- 8.3 If a contract has already been extended under a provision for extension it contains, it may not be extended further under 8.1 above.

- 8.4 If a contract has been extended in accordance with 8.1 or 8.2 above any further request for an extension must be made in a report to the Executive Member.

8.5 Contract variations

- 8.6 A contract variation can be only be approved where the proposed variation does not materially alter the terms of the contract. The Director must obtain advice from the Borough Solicitor before proceeding to agree to a variation and must ensure there is an adequate budget for the variation.

9 Framework Agreements

- 9.1 Framework Agreements may only be used in accordance with the requirements set out in the Procurement Manual.

Appendix 1

SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

Minimum Requirements

✓ = Mandatory

	Total Contract Value	Up to £5K	>£5K to £10K	>£10K to £35K	>£35K to £100K	>£100K to £400K	>£400K to £1m	>£1m	External Framework
Procurement Plan	Director to approve, with advice from Head of Procurement				Optional	✓	✓	✓	Optional
	Executive Member to approve						✓	✓	
Format	Request for Quotation (RFQ)	✓ oral	✓	✓	✓				✓
	Invitation to Tender (ITT)				Optional	✓	✓	✓	
Specification		✓ oral	✓ outline	✓ outline	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Terms	BFC terms and conditions	Preferred	Preferred	Preferred	✓				
	Special terms - contact Legal Services				Optional	✓	✓	✓	✓
Competition	Minimum 1 quote	✓ oral	✓						✓ mini competition of all suppliers
	Minimum 3 quotes			✓	Advertise	Advertise	Advertise	Advertise	
Advertising	Local and/or national press			Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	
	Regional website (SECE)			Optional	Optional	Optional	✓	✓	
	European website (TED)					✓	✓	✓	
Contract SO Waiver	Director to record reasons on file	.	✓	✓					
	Chief Executive and Borough Solicitor to approve				✓	✓	.	.	
	The Executive to approve						✓	✓	
Contract Award	Director (by approval of purchase order)	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	Report to Director for approval				Optional	✓			Optional
	Report to Director and Executive Member for approval						✓		
	Report to the Executive for approval							✓	
Contract Award Notice	Regional website (SECE)			Optional	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	European website (TED)					✓	✓	✓	
Form of Contract	Purchase Order	✓ oral	✓	✓	✓				✓ in accordance with total contract value
	Contract signed by Director				Where used	✓			
	Deed signed under seal by Mayor and Borough Solicitor						✓	✓	

Appendix 2

Minimum Requirements

WORKS

✓ = Mandatory

	Total Contract Value	<£400K	>£400K to £1m	>£1m	External Framework
Procurement Plan	Director to approve, with advice from Head of Procurement	.	✓	✓	Optional
	Executive Member to approve		✓	✓	
Format	Request for Quotation (RFQ)	✓			✓
	Invitation to Tender (ITT)		✓	✓	
Specification (or equivalent)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Terms	BFC terms and conditions	Approved standard terms and amendments to the employed			
	Special terms - contact Legal Services, if any are required	✓	✓	✓	✓
Competition	Minimum 3 quotes	✓			✓ mini competition of all contractors
Invitation to tender	Minimum 5 tenders to be sought	.	✓	✓	.
Advertising	Local and/or national press	Optional	Optional	Optional	
	Regional website (SECE)	Optional	✓	✓	
	European website (TED)		Optional	✓	
	Chief Executive and Borough Solicitor to approve	✓			
	The Executive to approve		✓	✓	
Contract Award	Director (by approval of purchase order)	✓			
	Report to Director for approval	Optional			Optional
	Report to Director and Executive Member for approval		✓		
	Report to the Executive for approval			✓	
Form of Contract	Contract signed by Director	✓			✓ in accordance with total contract value
	Deed signed under seal by Mayor and Borough Solicitor		✓	✓	

SECTION 11 – OFFICER EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURE RULES

1. Recruitment and Appointment

(a) Declarations

- (i) the Council will draw up a statement requiring any candidate for appointment as an Officer to state, in writing, whether they are the parent, grandparent, partner, child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece of an existing Councillor or Officer of the Council; or of the partner of such persons, or are otherwise known to them in any capacity.
- (ii) no candidate so related to a Councillor, or an Officer, will be appointed without the authority of the relevant Chief Officer or an Officer nominated by him or her.

(b) Seeking Support for Appointment

- (i) the Council will disqualify any applicant who directly, or indirectly, seeks the support of any Councillor for any appointment with the Council. The content of this paragraph will be included in any recruitment information.
- (ii) no Councillor will seek support for any person for any appointment with the Council.

2 Recruitment of Head of Paid Service, Directors and Chief Officers

Where the Council proposes to make an appointment to the designated posts listed in Table 1, and it is not proposed that the appointment be made exclusively from among their existing Officers, the Council will:

- (a) draw up a statement specifying:
 - (i) the duties of the Officer concerned; and
 - (ii) any qualifications or qualities to be sought in the person to be appointed;
- (b) make arrangements for the post to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for it; and
- (c) make arrangements for a copy of the statement mentioned in paragraph (1) to be sent to any person on request.

3 Appointment of Head of Paid Service

The full Council will approve the appointment, or dismissal, of the Head of Paid Service, following the recommendation of such an appointment by a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council. That Committee or Sub-Committee must include at least one Member of the Executive.

4 Appointment to Designated Posts

Chief Officer Posts

Unless otherwise directed by the Council, a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council, the Council will appoint Chief Officers listed in column 1 of Table 1. That Committee or Sub-Committee must include at least one Member of the Executive.

Deputy Chief Officer Posts

The Head of Paid Service, or his or her nominated representative, in consultation with the relevant Executive Member, or Members, and the Leader of the Council, may determine whether any appointment to a Deputy Chief Officer post, listed in column 2 of Table 1, is to be made exclusively from the Council's existing Officers. Where the Head of Paid Service, or his or her nominated representative, determines that such an appointment is to be made exclusively from the Council's existing Officers, such an appointment may be made by the Head of Paid Service, or his or her nominated representative.

Where a recruitment process is undertaken involving external candidates, a Committee or Sub-Committee will be appointed to interview the short-listed candidates and to make the final appointment. That Committee or Sub-Committee must include at least one Member of the Executive.

5 Assistants to Political Groups.

Appointment of an assistant to a political group shall be made in accordance with the wishes of that political group.

Appointment and Dismissal of Staff and Disciplinary Action

6. Subject to Paragraphs 7 and 11 below, the function of appointment and dismissal of, and taking disciplinary action against, a member of staff of the Council must be discharged by the Head of Paid Service or by an Officer nominated by him or her.
7. Paragraph 6 shall not apply to the appointment, or dismissal of, or disciplinary action against –
 - (a) the Officer designated as the Head of the Council's Paid Service;
 - (b) a statutory Chief Officer within the meaning of Section 2(6) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
 - (c) a non-statutory Chief Officer within the meaning of Section 2(7) of the 1989 Act;
 - (d) a Deputy Chief Officer within the meaning of Section 2(8) of the 1989 Act; or
 - (e) a person appointed in pursuance of Section 9 of the 1989 Act (assistants to political groups).
8. Where a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council is discharging, on behalf of the Council, the function of the appointment or dismissal of any Officer referred to in (a), (b), (c) or (d) of Paragraph 7 above, at least one Member of the Executive must be a Member of that Committee or Sub-Committee.

- 9 (1) In this Paragraph “Appointor” means, in relation to the appointment of a person as an Officer of the Council, the Council or, where a Committee, or Sub-Committee or Officer is discharging the function of appointment on behalf of the Council, that Committee, Sub-Committee or Officer, as the case may be.
- (2) An offer of appointment as an Officer referred to in sub-paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d) of Paragraph 7 above must not be made by the Appointor until –
- (a) the Appointor has notified the Proper Officer of the name of the person to whom the Appointor wishes to make the offer, and any other particulars which the Appointor considers are relevant to the appointment;
- (b) the Proper Officer has notified every Member of the Executive of the Council of –
- (i) the name of the person to whom the Appointor wishes to make the offer
- (ii) any other particulars relevant to the appointment which the Appointor has notified to the Proper Officer; and
- (iii) the period within which any objection to the making of the offer is to be made by the Executive Leader, on behalf of the Executive, to the Proper Officer; and
- (c) either –
- (i) the Executive Leader has, within the period specified in the Notice, under sub-paragraph (b)(iii), notified the Appointor that neither he nor any other Member of the Executive has any objection to the making of the offer;
- (ii) the Proper Officer has notified the Appointor that no objection was received by him within that period from the Executive Leader; or
- (iii) the Appointor is satisfied that any objection received from the Executive Leader within that period is not material or is not well-founded.
- 10 (1) In this paragraph, “Dismissor” means, in relation to the dismissal of an Officer of the Council, by the Council or, where a Committee, Sub-Committee or another Officer is discharging the function of dismissal on behalf of the Council, that Committee, Sub-Committee or other Officer, as the case may be.
- (2) Notice of the dismissal of an Officer referred to in sub-paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d) of Paragraph 7 above, must not be given by the Dismissor until –
- (a) the Dismissor has notified the Proper Officer of the name of the person who the Dismissor wishes to dismiss, and any other

particulars which the Dismissor considers are relevant to the dismissal;

- (b) the Proper Officer has notified every Member of the Executive of the Council of –
 - (i) the name of the person to whom the Dismissor wishes to dismiss;
 - (ii) any other particulars relevant to the dismissal which the Dismissor has notified to the Proper Officer; and
 - (iii) the period within which any objection to the dismissal is to be made by the Executive Leader, on behalf of the Executive, to the Proper Officer; and
- (c) either –
 - (i) the Executive Leader has, within the period specified in the Notice, under sub-paragraph (b)(iii), notified the Dismissor that neither he, nor any other Member of the Executive has any objection to the dismissal;
 - (ii) the Proper Officer has notified the Dismissor that no objection was received by him within that period from the Executive Leader; or
 - (iii) the Dismissor is satisfied that any objection received from the Executive Leader within that period is not material or is not well-founded.

- 11 Nothing in Paragraph 6 shall prevent a person from serving as a Member of any Committee or Sub-Committee established by the Council to consider an appeal by –
- (a) another person against any decision relating to the appointment of that person as a member of staff of the Council; or
 - (b) a member of staff of the Council against any decision relating to the dismissal of, or taking disciplinary action against, that member of staff.
- 12 In Paragraph 13, “Chief Finance Officer”, “disciplinary action”, “Head of the Paid Service” and “Monitoring Officer”, have the same meaning as in Regulation 2 of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 and “designated independent person” has the same meaning as in Regulation 7 of those Regulations.
- 13 No disciplinary action in respect of the Head of the Council’s Paid Service, its Monitoring Officer or its Chief Finance Officer, except action described in Paragraph 14, may be taken by the Council, or by a Committee, a Sub-Committee, a Joint Committee on which the Council is represented, or any other person acting on behalf of the Council, other than in accordance with a recommendation in a report made by a designated independent person under Regulation 7 of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (investigation of alleged misconduct).
- 14 The action mentioned in Paragraph 13 is suspension of the Officer for the purpose of investigating the alleged misconduct occasioning the action; and any such

suspension must be on full pay and terminate no later than the expiry of two months beginning on the day on which the suspension takes effect.

TABLE 1

The following posts are designated for the purpose of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
The Chief Executive and all Director posts	Chief officers remunerated on the Senior Salary Scale
	The Head of Performance and Scrutiny

SECTION 12 – MEMBERS’ CODE OF CONDUCT

SCHEDULE

THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

Part 1

General Provisions

Introduction and Interpretation

1. (1) This Code applies to **you** as a member of an authority.
- (2) You should read this Code together with the general principles prescribed by the Secretary of State (a).
- (3) It is your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code.
- (4) In this Code –
“meeting” means any meeting of –
 - (a) the authority;
 - (b) the executive of the authority;
 - (c) any of the authority’s or its executive’s committees, sub-committees, joint committees, joint sub-committees, or area committees;“member” includes a co-opted member and an appointed member.
- (5) in relation to a Parish Council, references to any authority’s Monitoring Officer and an authority’s Standards Committee shall be read, respectively, as references to the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee of the District Council or Unitary County Council which has functions in relation to the Parish Council for which it is responsible under Section 55 (12) of the Local Government Act 2000.

Scope

2. (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (5), you must comply with this Code whenever you –
 - (a) conduct the business of your authority (which, in this Code, includes the business of the office to which you are elected or appointed); or
 - (b) act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting as a representative of your authority,and references to your official capacity are construed accordingly.
- (2) Subject to sub-paragraphs (3) and (4), this Code does not have effect in relation to your conduct other than where it is in your official capacity.

- (3) In addition to having effect in relation to conduct in your official capacity, paragraphs 3(2)(c), 5 and 6(a) also have effect, at any other time, where that conduct constitutes a criminal offence for which you have been convicted.
- (4) Conduct to which this Code applies (whether that is conduct in your official capacity or conduct mentioned in sub-paragraph (3)) includes a criminal offence for which you are convicted (including an offence you committed before the date you took office, but for which you are convicted after that date).
- (5) Where you act as a representative of your authority –
 - (a) on another relevant authority, you must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority's code of conduct; or
 - (b) on any other body, you must, when acting for that other body, comply with your authority's code of conduct, except and insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

General obligations

- 3. (1) You must treat others with respect.
- (2) You must not –
 - (a) do anything which may cause your authority to breach any of the equality enactments (as defined in section 33 of the Equality Act 2006(a));
 - (b) bully any person;
 - (c) intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or is likely to be –
 - (i) a complainant,
 - (ii) a witness, or
 - (iii) involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings, in relation to an allegation that a member (including yourself) has failed to comply with his or her authority's code of conduct; or
 - (d) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your authority
- (3) In relation to police authorities and the Metropolitan Police Authority, for the purposes of sub-paragraph (2)(d) those who work for, or on behalf of, an authority are deemed to include a police officer.
- 4. You must not –
 - (a) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where –
 - (i) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;

- (ii) you are required by law to do so;
 - (iii) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - (iv) the disclosure is –
 - (aa) reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - (bb) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority; or
 - (b) prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.
5. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.
6. You –
- (a) must not use or attempt to use your position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage; and
 - (b) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority –
 - (i) act in accordance with your authority's reasonable requirements;
 - (ii) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
 - (c) must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986(a).
7. (1) When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by –
- (a) your authority's chief finance officer; or
 - (b) your authority's monitoring officer,
- where that officer is acting pursuant to his or her statutory duties.
- (2) You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your authority.

Part 2

Interests

Personal Interests

8. (1) You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where either –

- (a) it relates to or is likely to affect –
 - (i) any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority;
 - (ii) any body –
 - (aa) exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (bb) directed to charitable purposes; or
 - (cc) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union),
of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management;
 - (iii) any employment or business carried on by you;
 - (iv) any person or body who employs or has appointed you;
 - (v) any person or body, other than a relevant authority, who has made a payment to you in respect of your election or any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties;
 - (vi) any person or body who has a place of business or land in your authority's area, and in whom you have a beneficial interest in a class of securities of that person or body that exceeds the nominal value of £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital (whichever is the lower);
 - (vii) any contract for goods, services or works made between your authority and you or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi);
 - (viii) the interests of any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25;
 - (ix) any land in your authority's area in which you have a beneficial interest;
 - (x) any land where the landlord is your authority and you are, or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi) is, the tenant;
- (b) a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of a relevant person to a greater extent than the majority of –
 - (i) (in the case of authorities with electoral divisions or wards) other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral division or ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision;

- (ii) (in the case of the Greater London Authority) other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the Assembly constituency affected by the decision; or
 - (iii) (in all other cases) other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of your authority's area.
- (2) In sub-paragraph (1)(b), a relevant person is –
- (a) a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association; or
 - (b) any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;
 - (c) any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or
 - (d) any body of a type described in sub-paragraph (1)(a)(i) or (ii).

Disclosure of personal interests

9. (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (7), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you attend a meeting of your authority at which the business is considered, you must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.
- (2) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect a person described in paragraph 8(1)(a)(i) or 8(1)(a)(ii)(aa), you need only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest when you address the meeting on that business.
- (3) Where you have a personal interest in any business of the authority of the type mentioned in paragraph 8(1)(a)(viii), you need not disclose the nature or existence of that interest to the meeting if the interest was registered more than three years before the date of the meeting.
- (4) Sub-paragraph (1) only applies where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest.
- (5) Where you have a personal interest but, by virtue of paragraph 14, sensitive information relating to it is not registered in your authority's register of members' interests, you must indicate to the meeting that you have a personal interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to the meeting.
- (6) Subject to paragraph 12(1)(b), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must ensure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of that interest.
- (7) In this paragraph, "executive decision" is to be construed in accordance with any regulations made by the Secretary of State under Section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000(a).

Prejudicial interest generally

10. (1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority you also have a prejudicial interest in that business where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.
- (2) You do not have a prejudicial interest in any business of the authority where that business –
- (a) does not affect your financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in paragraph 8;
 - (b) does not relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in paragraph 8; or
 - (c) relates to the functions of your authority in respect of –
 - (i) housing, where you are a tenant of your authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
 - (ii) school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
 - (iii) statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
 - (iv) an allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
 - (v) any ceremonial honour given to Members; and
 - (vi) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Prejudicial interests arising in relation to overview and scrutiny committees

11. You also have a prejudicial interest in any business before an overview and scrutiny committee of your authority (or of a sub committee of such a committee) where
- (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by your authority's executive or another of your authority's committees, sub committees, joint committees or joint sub committees; and
 - (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken, you were a member of the executive, committee, sub committee, joint committee or joint sub committee mentioned in paragraph (a) and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken.

Effect of prejudicial interests on participation

12. (1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority –
- (a) you must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting considering the business is being held –
 - (i) in a case where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence;
 - (ii) in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at that meeting;unless you have obtained a dispensation from your authority's standards committee
 - (b) you must not exercise executive functions in relation to that business; and
 - (c) you must not seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.
- (2) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority, you may attend a meeting (including a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee of your authority or of a sub-committee of such a committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.

Part 3

Registration of Members' Interests

Registration of members' interests

13. (1) Subject to paragraph 14, you must, within 28 days of –
- (a) this Code being adopted by or applied to your authority; or
 - (b) your election or appointment to office (where that is later),
- register in your authority's register of members' interests (maintained under Section 81(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 details of your personal interests where they fall within a category mentioned in paragraph 8(1)(a), by providing written notification to your authority's monitoring officer.
- (2) Subject to paragraph 14, you must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any new personal interest or change to any personal interest registered under paragraph (1), register details of that new personal interest or change by providing written notification to your authority's Monitoring Officer.

Sensitive information

14. (1) Where you consider that the information relating to any of your personal interests is sensitive information, and your authority's monitoring officer agrees, you need

not include that information when registering that interest, or, as the case may be, a change to that interest under paragraph 13.

- (2) you must, within 28 days of becoming aware of any change of circumstances which means that information excluded under paragraph (1) is no longer sensitive information, notify your authority's monitoring officer asking that the information be included in your authority's register of members' interests.
- (3) In this Code, "sensitive information" means information whose availability for inspection by the public creates, or is likely to create, a serious risk that you or a person who lives with you may be subjected to violence or intimidation.

SECTION 13 – OFFICERS’ CODE OF CONDUCT

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for Bracknell Forest Borough Council. This Code provides guidance as to the Standard of Conduct, which the Council expects of its employees to assist them in their day-to-day work. Any breach of this Code may be investigated under the Council’s Disciplinary Procedure and action taken appropriately. The Code of Conduct for Members is underpinned by seven “General Principles”. Not all of those General Principles are of relevance to officers but those which are relevant are set out below and should be used in the interpretation and application of this Code.

Selflessness

Officers should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

Honesty and Integrity

Officers should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

Objectivity

Officers should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

Accountability

Officers should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

Respect for Others

Officers should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority’s statutory officers, and its other employees.

Duty to Uphold the Law

Officers should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

Stewardship

Officers should use the authority’s resources prudently and in accordance with the law.

The Council expects high standards from its employees because:

- Council services can affect the health, wealth and well-being of local people

- the Council is subject to democratic control and is accountable to the electorate
- local people fund Council spending and take an interest in the way money is spent

STATUS OF THE CODE

The aim of the Code is to establish guidelines for Bracknell Forest Borough Council employees which will help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism. It may be supplemented and clarified by additional guidance where necessary.

WHO THE CODE IS AIMED AT

Inevitably, some of the issues covered by the Code will affect senior, managerial and professional employees more than it will others. The Code is intended to cover all employees under any contract of employment within the Council, including office holders such as Registrars. Employees serving as representatives of the Council as a Director of a company, as a Trustee or on the management committee of a voluntary organisation will be expected to abide by the provisions of this Code when acting in such a capacity unless to do so would create a conflict of interest in their role as Director, Trustee or management committee member; any employee who believes that such a conflict of interest may arise should consult the Borough Solicitor.

STANDARDS

Council employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to Councillors and fellow employees with impartiality. Employees will be expected, through agreed departmental procedures and, without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety, unless an employee has reasonable grounds to believe that their manager is party to the impropriety (in such cases the Council's Whistleblowing Procedure may be used).

DISCLOSURE AND USE OF INFORMATION

Although the Council endeavours to practice "open government" some information is by necessity confidential and should not be disclosed. Information which the Council, a Council committee, the Executive or an Executive Committee has determined as "Exempt Information" (i.e. information appearing in pink papers on the agenda) should not be disclosed to the public without the prior permission of the Borough Solicitor. Other information which an employee receives which might reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential nature should not be disclosed to anyone else except in the following circumstances:-

- the person imparting the information has given their consent to the disclosure
- the information is disclosed to another employee or to a Councillor on a "need to know" basis for the proper fulfilment of their responsibilities
- the disclosure is required by law.

Employees should not prevent another person from gaining access to information which that person is entitled to by law.

Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. Any particular information received by an employee from a Councillor which is personal to that Councillor and does not belong to the Council should not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of that Councillor, except where such disclosure is required by law.

CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

Employees subject to Criminal Record Bureau checks who are subsequently convicted of an offence which may impact on their work with the Council are required to report that conviction to their management and/or Human Resources. Failure to do so may become a disciplinary matter, the seriousness of the matter being dictated by the nature of the offence and the role of the employee.

POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

Employees must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise their own political impartiality, or that of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Council. Without Prejudice to the generality of that principle this means that employees should:-

- provide appropriate advice to all Councillors with impartiality
- serve the Council as a whole i.e. all Councillors and not just those of, for example, a particular political group
- observe the individual rights of all Councillors (e.g. to have access to relevant information).

Some employees may also be required to advise political groups. They must do so in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality.

Employees, whether or not politically restricted, must have proper regard to every lawful expressed policy of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

Employees must not infringe the requirements of legislation not to publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.

RELATIONSHIPS

Councillors

Employees are responsible to the Council through its senior managers. For some, their role is to give advice to councillors and senior managers and all are there to carry out the Council's work. Mutual respect between employees and councillors is essential to good local government. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual councillors can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to other employees and councillors and should therefore be avoided.

The Local Community and Service Users

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community as defined by Council policies.

Contractors

Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors should declare that relationship to the appropriate manager.

Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, normally by fair competition against other tenders or quotations, and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives. No part of the local community should be discriminated against. By law, if it comes to the knowledge of an employee that a contract in which they have a financial interest, whether direct or indirect, has been or is proposed to be entered into the employee must as soon as practicable give notice in writing of that interest to the Council; failure to do so constitutes a criminal offence; any such notice should be given to the Director of the department in which the employee works.

Relatives and Partners

Employees should not be involved in decisions relating to partners, relatives or close friends; If it comes to the knowledge of an employee that they are involved in any decision which could result in a particular advantage or disadvantage to a partner, relative or close friend the employee must, as soon as practicable, inform the appropriate manager.

APPOINTMENT AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. It would be unlawful for an employee to make an appointment that was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with him or her.

Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner etc.

APPLICATIONS

Employees making applications to the Council (for example, for planning permission, purchase of land or an improvement grant) on their own behalf should notify their Director. However, employees may not make any applications on behalf of a member of the public.

Employees may not gain financial benefit by way of fees or gratuities or receive any other consideration for advice given to others who submit applications to the Council.

OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS

All employees must consult their Director before engaging in any other work (whether as an employee or on a self-employed basis). All employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take outside work which may conflict with the Council's interests.

Employees should follow departmental rules on the ownership of intellectual property or copyrights created during their employment.

Employees must not use any of the Council's facilities or equipment, which may include premises, materials, transport, telephones, stationery and secretarial services, other than for Council business or other approved purposes.

PERSONAL INTEREST

Employees must declare to the appropriate manager any non-financial interests which might reasonably be considered could bring about conflict with the Council's interests.

Employees must declare to the appropriate manager any financial interests which could conflict with the Council's interests.

An employee should declare to their Director membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct.

The Council welcomes the involvement of employees in voluntary organisations. However, in order to ensure that public confidence is maintained an employee should inform the appropriate manager in writing if the service which the employee gives to any such organisations could conflict with the work which the employee carries out for the Council or if the organisation receives a grant from or has a contract (or service level agreement) with the Council.

Employees must not use their position as employees of the Council to favour any voluntary or other bodies which they give service to. If an employee's job involves assessing a funding application or assessing an application for a consent or permission for a voluntary body which they give service to they should inform the appropriate manager in writing and seek their guidance of the manager.

EQUALITY ISSUES

All members of the local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. All employees are required to observe the law and the policies of the Council regarding non-discrimination.

TENDERING AND FAIRNESS TO CONTRACTORS

Senior employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness. Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.

Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders quotations or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

CORRUPTION

Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity. If an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.

USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the authority.

EXPENSES

Expenses should only be claimed in accordance with the Council's Expenses Policy.

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Gifts and hospitality given to an employee must be recorded in the appropriate gifts/hospitality register. Similarly, gifts and hospitality given to external organisations or individuals must, as also required by the Council's rules in force at the time, be recorded in the appropriate gifts/hospitality register; these must be approved by the appropriate manager.

Giving Hospitality and Gifts

- Offers of hospitality should only be given if the event to which an external organisation or its representative is invited is directly related to the Council's business.
- Where employees issue invitations to external organisations or individuals, these must be properly authorised by the appropriate manager and must be recorded in the appropriate register when the cost exceeds £25.
- Significant personal gifts to contractors and/or outside suppliers must never be given or offered, although small insignificant items of token value may be acceptable. Examples could include Council mouse mats, book marks, pens, mugs etc.
- When offering authorised hospitality, all employees should be particularly sensitive to the timing of possible decisions which the Council may be taking which could affect those accepting the hospitality offered. The extent of the hospitality offered must be reasonable and proportional to the event/activity for which it is being offered. For example, the provision of a buffet lunch at an event which runs over the lunch period would be likely to be considered reasonable but a multi course lunch at an expensive restaurant would not.
- The use of Council resources to fund or part fund internal parties e.g. a retirement party for a long serving employee would not be considered a suitable use of Council resources and could lead to disciplinary action against the person who authorised such expenditure. However, specific activities such as the Long Service Award annual event are authorised and approved as an acceptable use of the Council's financial resources.
- Each Director may, however, identify a separate budget from which they can incur expenditure, in exceptional circumstances, associated with "celebratory" events, such as the attainment of ISO accreditation or other awards, or to promote staff morale.

Receiving Hospitality and Gifts

- Cash and monetary gifts should always, without exception, be refused.

- Offers of hospitality or gifts should only be accepted if there is a genuine need to impart information or it is appropriate that the Council should be represented at a particular function. This would only be considered as appropriate or required where the functions of the Council were to be associated with the event.
- Offers to attend purely or mainly social or sporting functions should only be accepted when:-
 - the function is part of the life of the community or where the authority should be seen to be represented, and
 - attendance would not, taking into account all relevant circumstances, give rise to suspicion by any reasonable member of the public.
- Attendance must be properly authorised and recorded in the hospitality register for the Department (usually held by the Director's PA).
- Where hospitality has to be declined, this should be done in a courteous, polite and firm manner whilst informing those making the offer of the Council's procedures.
- Significant personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers must never be accepted, although small insignificant items of token value may be accepted. Examples could include pens, diaries etc with an estimated monetary value of less than £10.
- When receiving authorised hospitality, all participants should be particularly sensitive to the timing of possible decisions which the Council may be taking which could affect those providing the hospitality.

Employees, cannot, under colour of their office or employment, personally accept any fee or reward whatsoever other than their proper remuneration.

SPONSORSHIP – GIVING AND RECEIVING

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a local government activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service, neither an employee nor any partner, relative or close friend must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to the appropriate manager of any such interest. Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

Employees must observe the Council's rules on contact with the media as set out in the section of the Employee Handbook entitled "Press Contacts and Reporting of Council Business". In particular:-

- only those employees who are in the list of officers for press contact held by the Communications Section may give information to or answer questions from the Press

- employees on the authorised list are only permitted to release factual information in reply to questions from journalists. All comments of a political nature are for Councillors only.
- employees should not use the media as a vehicle to promote personal grievances; the Council's proper processes should be used.

APPEARANCE

The appearance which Council employees present to the public, Councillors and to each other is important. Although many styles of dress are acceptable, employees must dress appropriately for their job and give a positive image of the service they provide. Any special clothing or identification provided by the Council should be worn where required.

WORKING SAFELY

The Council is committed to promoting good health, welfare and safe working among its employees. Each employee has a legal obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and for the safety of others who may be affected by his/her acts or omissions. Employees should ensure that they:-

- follow safety policies, instructions, guidance etc
- comply with hygiene requirements
- wear any safety clothing supplied by the Council
- report any accidents or near misses at work
- never risk injury or danger to themselves or others.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Except for medical reasons, employees must not take any substances that may affect their work. Employees must not consume alcohol when they are on duty or whilst wearing Council supplied uniforms which mean they can be clearly identified as a Council employee unless agreed beforehand for a specific occasion by their manager. Employees must ensure that any alcohol which they consume out of working hours (including lunchtime) will neither impair their work nor cause them to conduct themselves so as to damage the good reputation of the Council. Employees and Managers affected by this issue should refer to the Council's Substance Abuse Policy.

NO SMOKING POLICY

Employees must comply with the Council's "No Smoking" Policy.

WORKING TOGETHER

Employees are expected to show loyalty to the Council and support its managers. A climate of mutual confidence, trust and respect between managers, employees and other partners is critical to achieving the Council's aims and providing high quality services. Within the workplace, employee behaviour should be conducive to a productive and harmonious work environment, with all employees having a right to be treated with courtesy and fairness. Unless there are good reasons why not (e.g. for legal reasons or in accordance with the

Whistleblowing Procedure) employees should always first follow recognised internal procedures to resolve problems.

Employees should carry out any reasonable and lawful instructions given by their manager. If an employee disagrees with or wishes to query an instruction the employee should express their concern to, or seek clarification from, the manager who gave the instruction.

Employees should work reliably and diligently. They should complete accurately and honestly any document form or record needed for work.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SECURITY

Employees must ensure that they follow the Council's rules and procedures in relation to the use of computers and the proper use and management of data. Particular care should be taken to observe procedures in the use of passwords. The Data Protection Act 1998 requires the Council and its employees to abide by "Data Protection Principles" in the use of data. Those principles are encapsulated within the Council's ICT Security Policy and should be observed at all times.

SECTION 14 – MEMBER AND OFFICER PROTOCOL

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council exists to administer local government (together with Parish and Town Councils) in the Borough. Members and Officers have a joint responsibility to ensure that they work collaboratively to ensure an efficient, transparent and democratic Council.
- 1.2 Members and Officers will, from time to time, review the current culture and practices of the Authority, to ensure that we all continue to maintain high standards in our mutual contacts.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another.
- 1.4 Given the variety and complexity of such relations, this Protocol does not seek to be either prescriptive or comprehensive. It seeks simply to offer guidance on some of the issues which most commonly arise. It is hoped, however, that the approach which it adopts to those issues will serve as a guide to dealing with other issues.
- 1.5 The Council also has in place additional guidance for Members about their role in relation to specific functions or areas of the Council. Examples of this additional guidance include the Planning Protocol, additional guidance for Members regarding Social Services and Housing and guidance to Members about the Corporate Parenting role. Further guidance and protocols may be adopted by the Council.
- 1.6 This Protocol is supplemental to, but subject to, the Members' Code of Conduct.

2 ROLES OF MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

- 2.1 Members and Officers are servants of the public and they depend upon each other in carrying out the work of the Council. Members are responsible to the electorate and serve so long as their term of office lasts, whilst Officers are responsible to the Council. Officers give advice to the Council (whether in the form of full Council, Committees of the Council, including the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Panels, or the Executive) as well as to individual Members, and carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council and its various bodies.
- 2.2 Members undertake many different roles. Broadly, these are:-
 - Politician
In expressing political values and, in the case of Members belonging to a political group represented on the Council, usually supporting the Policies of the Group to which he or she belongs.

- **Policy and Strategic Direction** They set the policy and direction for the Council; are responsible for ensuring that adequate management arrangements are in place; develop and allocate the Council's physical, financial and human resources and monitor the performance, development, continuity and overall well-being of the Organisation.
- **Ward Members** Subject to constraints arising from the Members' Code of Conduct and the law, Members represent their communities and bring their views into the Council's decision-making process. They deal with individual case work and represent constituents in resolving particular concerns or grievances.
- **Champion** Individual Members may be designated to act as a positive focus for a particular section of the community or range of activities

2.3 Legislation requires the Council to designate some Members with specific responsibilities, these include:-

- **The Mayor** – to act as the Chairman of the Council and to fulfill certain civic functions (see Section 12)
- **The Deputy Mayor** – to act as the Chairman of the Council in the absence of the Mayor
- **The Leader of the Council** – under the system of Executive Arrangements introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 the Leader has the overall responsibility for the Executive and the performance of the Executive functions
- **The Lead Member for Children's Services** – to have responsibility at Member levels for the discharge of the Council's functions as local education authority and those Social Services functions which relate to children.

2.4 Officers have the following main roles:-

- managing and providing the Services and Functions for which the Council has given them responsibility. They are accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of those Services and for proper professional practice in discharging their responsibilities and taking decisions, within agreed policies.
- providing advice to the Council, and to individual Members, in respect of the Services provided
- initiating policy proposals
- implementing agreed Policy
- ensuring that the Council acts lawfully, and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management

- representing the Council on external organisations

2.5 By law, the Council is required to designate Officers with the following responsibilities:-

- **Head of Paid Service** – the Head of the Officer Corps, who has overall responsibility for advising the Council on the matter in which the Council's functions are discharged, and the organisation and proper management of the Council's staff. The Chief Executive is the Head of Paid Service.
- **Monitoring Officer** - The role of the Monitoring Officer is, essentially, to ensure that the Council acts lawfully, to bring any Ombudsman reports with findings of maladministration to the attention of the Council and to discharge certain responsibilities under the statutory framework relating to Member conduct. The Borough Solicitor is the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- **Responsible Financial Officer** – designated as the Section 151 Officer who is responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs, ensuring that the Council does not incur unlawful expenditure and that the Council's expenditure does not exceed its resources. The Borough Treasurer is the Council's Section 151 Officer
- **Director of Children's Services** – designated as having responsibility for (inter alia) those functions exercisable by the Council in its role as local education authority and for social services functions so far as those functions relate to children.
- **Director of Adult Social Services** – designated as having responsibility for those social services functions so far as those functions relate to adults.
- **Traffic Manager** - to have responsibility for the management of traffic under the Traffic Management Act 2004.

3 RESPECT AND COURTESY

3.1 The Council's vision is set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. For that vision to be realised, Members and Officers must work together in a harmonious relationship based upon mutual respect, courtesy, trust, honesty and understanding of each others roles. This should prevail in all meetings and contacts, whether formal or informal.

3.2 Neither Members nor Officers should seek to take unfair advantage of their position in their dealings with each other. Members should be aware that Officers, especially junior Officers, may sometimes be overawed and feel at a disadvantage. Such feelings can be intensified where Members hold official and/or political office.

3.3 A Member should not apply pressure on an Officer either to do anything that he or she is unwilling to do or is not empowered to do. If a Member considers that an officer has behaved unreasonably in response to the Member he/she should take the matter up with the officer's Director. Similarly, an Officer must not seek to use influence on an individual Member to make a decision in his or her personal favour. They (Officers) should not raise personal matters to do with their job or make claims or allegations about other employees except through the Council's formal personnel

procedures for consultation, grievances, whistle blowing and so on. Officers who wish to pursue issues of this nature must do so through the appropriate procedure.

- 3.4 Close personal familiarity between individual Members and Officers can damage the perception of disinterested mutual respect. It could also, intentionally or unintentionally, lead to the passing of confidential information which should not properly be passed between them, such as personal details. Such familiarity could also cause embarrassment to other Members and/or other Officers and could even give rise to suspicions of favouritism. It should, therefore, be avoided.

4 OFFICER SUPPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE

- 4.1 It is clearly important that there should be a close working relationship between Executive Members and the Officers who support and/or interact with them. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question the Officers ability to deal impartially with other Members and other Party Groups. Officers must ensure that even if they are predominantly supporting the Executive, their political neutrality is not compromised.
- 4.2 Whilst Executive Members will routinely be consulted as part of the process of drawing up proposals for consideration on the Agenda of a forthcoming meeting, it must be recognised that, in some situations, an Officer will be under a professional duty to submit a report. The Chief Executive, Director or other senior Officer will always be responsible for the contents of any report submitted in his or her name. This means that any such report will be amended only where the amendment reflects the professional judgement of the author of the report. Any issues arising between an Executive Member and a Director in this area should be referred to the Chief Executive for resolution, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.
- 4.3 Officer advice must be full and impartial and should include all relevant options. It should not seek to second-guess the decisions of Members, for example by excluding presumed unpalatable options. Members are entitled to reject Officer advice and to give effect to their lawful policies even if these are clearly at variance with the views of Officers. Members should be particularly careful if they propose not to follow advice given in a capacity as Monitoring Officer or Section 151 Officer.
- 4.4 Where functions which are the responsibility of the Executive are delegated to Officers or other structures outside the Executive, the Executive will, nevertheless, remain accountable to the Council, particularly through the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Panels, for the discharge of those functions. This is to say, the Executive will be held to account for both its decision to delegate a function and the way that the function is being carried out.
- 4.5 Under Executive arrangements, individual Members of the Executive are allowed to take formal decisions. The Executive, Executive Members and Officers must satisfy themselves that they are clear what exactly they can and cannot do. The Council has put in place a protocol for Executive decision-making which stipulates that no Executive decision shall be made by a Member without a written report, incorporating advice from the Borough Solicitor and Borough Treasurer, being submitted by the appropriate Director to the Member.
- 4.6 Executive Members should appreciate that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or one of its Panels, may require an Officer to attend before them to explain advice

which the Officer has given to the Executive (or an individual Executive Member) and/or to give advice to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission or the Panel, as the case may be. Accordingly, Executive Members should not assume that the advice which they receive from Officers will not be disclosed and/or subject to scrutiny.

5. OFFICERS SUPPORT FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION AND ITS PANELS

5.1 It is clearly important that there should be a close working relationship between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of its Panels and those Officers who support and/or interact with them. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question the Officers' ability to deal impartially with other Members and other Party Groups. Officers must ensure that even if they are predominately supporting the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and/or its Panels, their political neutrality is not compromised.

5.2 It is not the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or its Panels, to act as a Disciplinary Tribunal in relation to the actions of Members or Officers. Neither is it the role of Officers to become involved in what would amount to disciplinary investigation on behalf of the Commission or a Panel. In relation to staff, such matters must be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedures whilst Members are accountable for their behaviour through the Code of Conduct for Members, local protocols and the respective frameworks established to secure compliance.

6 OFFICER SUPPORT FOR THE CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF OTHER COMMITTEES

6.1 The Council has a range of Committees which deal with "Non-Executive" matters. The main ones are:-

- the Planning and Highways Committee
- the Licensing and Safety Committee
- the Employment Committee

6.2 Some Officers, as part of their normal duties, will be in regular contact with the Chairman and Members of those Committees. Much of what is said in Section 4 about the relationship between Officers and the Executive will also apply, allowing for the different circumstances, to the relationship between Officers and Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen and Members of Non-Executive Committees.

6.3 To summarise, the main principles are:-

- relevant Officers will need to maintain a close working relationship with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen concerned
- that relationship must not be such as to call in to question Officers' impartiality
- there should be dialogue between relevant senior Officers and the Chairman
- it is the author's responsibility to ensure that reports include only proper advice and correct information

- Members must not put Officers under pressure to give advice or information in any other way
- Officer advice should be full and impartial
- the decision whether or not a report should be submitted to a Committee is for the Chief Executive, Director or relevant senior Officer

7 DELEGATED DECISION-MAKING BY OFFICERS

- 7.1 The Executive, a Committee of the Executive or an individual Executive Member may decide to delegate a decision to a Director, in consultation with one or more Members. Directors must consider carefully any comments made to them by the Members concerned, but Members must bear in mind that it is the Officer, not the Member, who takes the decision in these circumstances and is responsible for it. It needs to be borne in mind that no Officer can be compelled to take a decision with which he or she does not agree, or which he or she considers to be wrong or inequitable; an Officer must take any such decision in accordance with his or her professional judgment.
- 7.2 If a Non-Executive function is delegated to an Officer, he or she is not obliged to take a decision on the matter; and may refer the matter to the appropriate Committee for a decision. Indeed, a Director should refer the matter to the Committee if they feel that the matter raises some new point of principle which was not contemplated when the delegation was first agreed.

8 MEMBERS ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

- 8.1 Members' legal rights to inspect Council documents are covered partly by statute and partly by common law. Members, generally, have a statutory right to inspect Agendas, Minutes and Background Papers of the Council, the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Panels and Committees. However, this does not apply to certain items which contain "exempt information", for example because they relate to individual employees, to contractual negotiations or applicants for Council's services. The statutory rights are set out more fully in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution.
- 8.2 The common law right is based on the principle that any Member has, on the face of it, a right to inspect Council documents if access to those documents is reasonably necessary to enable the Member properly to perform his or her duties as a Member of the Council. This is often referred to as the "need to know" principle. However, Members do not have a "roving commission" to examine any documents of the Council. Mere curiosity is not sufficient.
- 8.3 A Member requesting access to documents should direct his or her enquiry to the relevant Director, Assistant Director or Head of Service. Officers will be concerned to furnish a Member with such information, advice and access to documents which he or she requires for the proper performance of his or her duties as a Councillor. There may be occasions, though, when an Officer believes that the Member does not have a right of access to a document and that it would be inappropriate, on that occasion, for the Member to see the document. Examples of when it might be considered

inappropriate to disclose a document to a Councillor who does not have a right of access, include sensitive Social Services cases or where there is a special need to secure commercial confidentiality in a proposed transaction. If that were the case, the Officer shall advise the Member that, in the Officer's view, disclosure is neither required, nor appropriate, and the reasons why disclosure would not be appropriate. Any dispute regarding a Member's access to a document should be referred to the Monitoring Officer.

9 INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO MEMBERS

9.1 Any Council information provided to a Member must only be used by the Member for the purpose for which it was provided, namely in connection with the Member's duties as a Councillor, unless the information is already in the public domain.

9.2 The Code of Conduct for Members provides that Members must not disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone (this includes the Council), or information acquired by the Council which they believe or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature except where:-

- the Member has the consent of a person authorised to give it,
- the Member is required by law to disclose,
- the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person, or
- the disclosure is reasonable and in the public interest **and** made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council

9.3 In relation to the last stated exception (disclosure thought to be reasonable and in the public interest) disclosure should not be made unless at least three clear working days has elapsed from the Member notifying the Monitoring Officer in writing (which includes e-mail) that the Member proposes to disclose the information and setting out his/her reasons why the disclosure is considered to be in the public interest. Both Members and officers should be aware that the disclosure of confidential information may constitute a breach of Data Protection legislation; generally, personal information cannot be released without the consent of the person to whom it relates. Improper disclosure of confidential information can put the Member and the Council at legal and financial risk.

9.4 Regular contact between Members and senior Officers is necessary to ensure the efficient working of the Council. In this context it is the responsibility of Directors to identify within their Departments the senior Officers who should have regular contact with Members. This will depend upon the nature of the Service they provide and the nature of the Member contact envisaged. In identifying which Officers will have regular contact with Members, Directors should take into account that, with some Services, which regularly impact upon Ward interests, it may be appropriate to designate Officers at a relatively less senior level than for other Services. Members should always bring major concerns about issues affecting a Department directly to the attention of the Director concerned.

9.5 In the following circumstances, information or advice provided by an Officer to a Member will be disclosed:-

- if the information or advice relates to a matter in the Forward Plan, to the relevant Executive Member
- if the information or advice relates to a matter to be considered at a Committee, to the Chairman of the Committee
- if the information or advice relates to a matter being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, or one of its Panels, to the Chairman (or in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman) of the Commission or the relevant Panel

10 OFFICERS AND POLITICAL GROUPS

- 10.1 Officers are politically neutral and must be seen to be so. They serve the whole Council and not a political group. However, it is recognised that, from time to time, there will be occasions, particularly on major policy matters, when it is in the Council's interests that a political group should receive the professional advice of Officers on a specific matter.
- 10.2 Officers cannot be required to attend party group meetings. Any request for an officer to attend a party group meeting should be directed to the Chief Executive or relevant Director and indicate the subject upon which information and/or advice is to be sought. If the Chief Executive or Director is of the opinion that it would be inappropriate for there to be an Officer in attendance, his or her decision shall be final. If Officer attendance is appropriate, the Chief Executive or Director shall determine which Officers should attend. Normally it would not be appropriate to request any Officer to attend other than the Chief Executive, a Director, Assistant Director or Head of Service.
- 10.3 If an Officer does attend a political meeting, the following points should be borne in mind:-
- Officer support must not extend beyond providing information and advice in relation to matters of Council business. Officers must not be involved in advising on matters of party business. Both Members and Officers should refrain from any conduct which could lead to the political impartiality of Officers being seriously called into question
 - political group meetings, whilst they form part of the preliminaries to Council decision-making, are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council. Conclusions reached at such meetings do not, therefore, rank as Council decisions and it is essential that they are not interpreted or acted upon as such
 - Officers may, at their discretion, decline to disclose exempt information
 - any advice given to a political group will be treated with strict confidentiality by the Officers concerned and will not be accessible to any other political group. It is acknowledged, however, that information upon which any advice is based will, if requested, be available to all political groups

- it must not be assumed by any political group, or Member, that an Officer is supportive of any Policy or Strategy developed because of that Officer's assistance in the formulation of that Policy or Strategy
- Officers must respect the confidentiality of any political group discussions at which they are present in the sense that they should not relay the content of any such discussion to another political group
- where Officers provide information and advice to a political group meeting in relation to a matter of Council business, it should be understood that the Officers have a duty to provide all necessary information and advice to a relevant decision-making body of the Council whenever the matter in question is considered
- special care needs to be exercised by Officers involved in providing information and advice to political group meetings where there are non-Members of the Council present. Persons who are not elected Members will not be bound by the Code of Conduct for Members, in particular, the provisions relating to the Confidentiality of Information. For this, and other reasons, Officers may not be able to provide the same level of information and advice as they would to a Members only meeting

11 CORRESPONDENCE

- 11.1 Save in exceptional circumstances, all correspondence (letters, faxes or e-mails) on official Council business should be sent out only in the name of the appropriate Officer (exceptions might be, for example, the Leader of the Council raising an issue on behalf of the Council with a Government Minister or special circumstances where it would be appropriate for correspondence setting out the Policy of the Council to be sent in the name of an Executive Member or Committee Chairman). This does not, of course, prevent a Member responding in his or her own name to correspondence addressed to him or her in his or her official capacity (e.g. Executive Member, Chairman of the Committee) or as a Ward Member such as a letter of complaint.
- 11.2 Correspondence which creates obligations, or give instructions on behalf of the Council, should never be sent out under the name of a Member.

12 THE MAYOR

- 12.1 The Mayor presides at meetings of the Council and takes the leading role in the civic life of the Borough, representing the Borough at civic engagements, within and outside Bracknell Forest. The role of Mayor, as the leading resident of the Borough, although largely ceremonial, is important to the public perception of the Authority and enjoys the respect of Bracknell Forest residents. Officers and Members should treat the Mayor with the respect due to his or her office on all occasions when the Mayor is acting in that capacity. Officers and Members must do everything appropriate to ensure that the dignity of the Office is upheld. The Mayor is entitled to receive support and advice from all levels of the Organisation in carrying out his or her Mayoral duties. As a matter of good practice, Members should, when appropriate, advise the Mayor's Office in advance if they propose to attend a function at which they know the Mayor will be present.

- 12.2 The provisions of Paragraph 12.1 above apply in respect of the Deputy Mayor when he or she deputises for the Mayor.

13 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PRESS RELEASES

- 13.1 The Communications Team within the Chief Executive's Office serves the Council as a whole and must operate within the limits of the Local Government Act 1986, which prohibits the Council from publishing material which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. The legislation provides that in determining whether or not the publication of any material is prohibited, regard shall be had to (inter alia):-

- the content and style of the material
- the time and other circumstances of publication (particular caution is required during an Election period)
- the likely effect on those to whom the material is directed
- whether the material refers to a political party or to persons and/or points of view associated with a political party

- 13.2 Council press releases are drafted by Officers and will often contain quotations (within the limits of the Local Government Act 1986) from the Leader, the Deputy Leader, Executive Member or Chairman of a Committee whose service is involved as well as from the Mayor or Deputy Mayor about ceremonial events. Such press releases are issued on behalf of the Council and it would not, therefore, be appropriate when repeating quotations from Members to indicate their party political affiliation.

- 13.3 The Member's Code of Conduct stipulates that Members must not use Council resources improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes). "Resources" includes the time, skills and assistance of anybody employed by the Council. Accordingly, when drafting press releases or any other publication with the assistance of Officer advice, the provisions of the Code of Conduct should be observed. There is, of course, nothing to prevent any Member from communication with the Media in a personal or political capacity using their own resources or those of their political party.

14 COUNCIL PROPERTY, SUPPORT SERVICES TO MEMBERS, USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- 14.1 Support Services (such as typing, printing, photocopying and transport) and resources (such as stationery and lap-top computers) can lawfully be provided to Members to assist them in discharging their role as Councillors. However, such services and resources should only be used for Council business and not for personal or political use. In relation to the use of computer and other ICT equipment supplied by the Council, Members should observe the terms of any agreement between the Member and the Council and should also ensure that they comply with all relevant Council policies relating to such equipment. Members have a responsibility to ensure that any such resources made available to them are not used by any other person.

- 14.2 Photographs supplied to Members or taken on behalf of the Council shall not be reproduced (nor permitted to be reproduced) in any form whatsoever or be used in any publication without the express consent, in writing, of the Monitoring Officer.

15 INVOLVEMENT OF WARD MEMBERS

- 15.1 It is important to all Members that they should be kept particularly informed of, and have an input into, matters of Council business which affect their Wards, including the Mayor's official engagements. Therefore, whenever a public meeting is arranged by the Council to consider an issue local to a Ward, or one or more Wards in a part of the Borough, the Ward Member(s) should normally be invited to attend the meeting. Similarly, whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultative exercise on an issue local to a Ward or particularly affecting a part of the Borough, the appropriate Officers should normally notify the Ward Members of the consultation and request their views on the matter in issue.

16 MEMBERS ACTING AS ADVOCATE FOR OR SUPPORTING THIRD PARTIES IN APPEALS AGAINST COUNCIL DECISIONS

- 16.1 Members have the same rights to represent third parties on appeals against Council decisions or to support third parties in such appeals as any member of the public. However, it is important to ensure that when acting in either role, Members should not seek to take improper advantage of their position as a Member of the Council and that Council Officers are not deterred from defending the Council's decision as vigorously as in any other case. For those reasons, Members should, in such circumstances, be particularly careful:-
- (a) not to disclose any information which they have received from the Council in their capacity as a Member which would not be available to a member of the public
 - (b) not to disclose, or make reference to, briefings on the relevant matter which they have received from Officers (other than in a part of a Committee meeting which the public are not excluded from)
 - (c) to ensure that in the conduct of the appeal they do not seek or appear to seek preferential treatment
 - (d) not to present themselves as representing the views of the Council.
- 16.2 Members acting as an Advocate or as a supporter of an appeal against a Council decision must expect to be treated by Officers in exactly the same way as any other Advocate or supporter

17 VISITS TO ESTABLISHMENTS

- 17.1 In some circumstances, it will be inappropriate for Members to visit an establishment, such as for example, a Social Services care facility, without prior notification being given to a Director, Assistant Director or other designated Officer. Each Department may prepare guidance for Members on when prior notification is required. In the

event of the Council giving approval to any such guidance, Members shall abide by the same. Pending the preparation and approval of any guidance, Members should give consideration to whether prior notification is appropriate before visiting an establishment.

18 DISPUTES

- 18.1 With goodwill, respect and integrity on both sides, there ought to be very few occasions when a disagreement between an Officer and a Member cannot be resolved amicably. If there is a serious dispute of substance it should be discussed, in the first instance, between the Member and the Officer concerned, involving the Officer's Director, if appropriate. If such discussions should not produce an acceptable settlement, reference may be made to the Chief Executive, but this should be seen as a last, rather than a first resort. If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily after reference to the Chief Executive, it may be referred to the Monitoring Officer who shall, in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee, determine whether the matter should be brought before the Standards Committee.

SECTION 15 – PROTOCOL FOR MEMBERS IN DEALING WITH PLANNING MATTERS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 One of the key purposes of the planning system is to control development in the public interest. In performing this role, planning necessarily affects land and property interests, particularly the financial value of landholdings and the quality of their settings. It is important, therefore, that the Council should make planning decisions affecting these interests openly, impartially, with sound judgement and for justifiable reasons. The process should leave no grounds for suggesting that a decision has been partial, predetermined, biased or not well founded in any way.
- 1.2 **The key purpose of Planning** is to control development in the public interest.
- 1.3 **Your role as a Member of the Planning Authority** is to make planning decisions openly, impartially, with sound judgement and for justifiable planning reasons. When planning applications are reported to Committee, the report will contain an Officer recommendation as to whether planning permission should be granted or refused. Members are entitled to bring their own judgment to bear on planning applications and to make a decision contrary to Officer recommendation but it is important that such decisions are taken on sound planning grounds which will withstand scrutiny at a possible appeal (if planning permission is refused) or if the decision is referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 1.4 Planning decisions taken by local authorities in Committee are liable to be quashed if it can be justifiably alleged that a Member participating in the decision-making process has predetermined the issue (i.e. approached the matter with a closed mind) before the Committee or if a fair minded observer, knowing the relevant background, would consider that there was a real danger of bias.
- 1.5 **When the Code applies:** This Code of Good Practice applies to **All** Members, at all times, when involving themselves in the planning process (including, where applicable, decision-making meetings of the Council whenever it exercises the functions of the Local Planning Authority in determining applications and other issues). It applies as equally to planning enforcement matters and to planning functions which are the responsibility of the Executive, as it does to planning applications.
- 1.6 **If you have any doubts about the application of this Code to your own circumstances, you should seek advice early from the Borough Solicitor or the Director of Corporate Services.**

2. Relationship to the Members' Code of Conduct: General

- 2.1 **Do** apply the rules in the Members' Code of Conduct first and then the rules in this Planning Code of Good Practice, which explain and supplement the Members' Code of Conduct for the purposes of planning.
- 2.2 A breach of this Protocol may also, in some circumstances, constitute a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct. Having regard to the obligation upon Members to make a written allegation to the Standards Board for England if they reasonably believe that another Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, such breaches

must be determined in accordance with the legislative framework set out by the Local Government Act 2000 and regulations made thereunder.

- 2.3 However, in various respects, this Protocol goes beyond the requirements set out in the Code. Therefore, in some instances, a breach of the Protocol will not constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct. In those cases, a complaint may be made to the Council's Monitoring Officer who will determine whether or not there are reasonable grounds for believing that there has been such a breach and, if so, to refer the matter to the Council's own Standards Committee. The Standards Committee will investigate and adjudicate upon such alleged breach in accordance with the Council's local procedures.

3. Development Proposals and Members' Interests

- 3.1 **Do**, if you have a Personal Interest (as defined by paragraph 8 of the Members' Code of Conduct), disclose the existence and nature of your interest at any relevant meeting, including informal meetings or discussions with Officers and other Members. Preferably, disclose your interest at the beginning and not just at the commencement of discussion on that particular matter.

- 3.2 **Do** consider whether a Personal Interest is one which a member of the public would regard as so significant that a member of the public would reasonably consider that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest. If so, it is a Prejudicial Interest.

- 3.3 *There can be no hard and fast rules to determine when a Member's interest in a matter is so significant that it is a Prejudicial Interest. A judgment has to be made in the individual circumstances of the case. Applications for planning permission, or an enforcement matter concerning immediately neighbouring properties, are almost certainly likely to constitute a Prejudicial Interest. How far this may extend, would depend upon the development proposed, and the location of the properties. Relevant factors could include:-*

- *visual impact on the Member's property*
- *financial impact on the Member's property*
- *generation of a significant amount of more or less traffic locally*
- *whether a precedent for the area might be established which could affect the Member's property*

- 3.4 *Paragraph 10(2) of the Code of Conduct sets out circumstances in which a Member with a Personal Interest in a matter may regard him or her self as not having a Prejudicial Interest. In particular, a Member **may** regard him or her self as not having a Prejudicial Interest if the matter relates to:-*

- *another relevant Authority (e.g. a Parish Council) of which h or /she is a Member*
- *another Public Authority in which h or /she holds a position of general control or management*

- *a Body to which he or she has been appointed or nominated by the Council as its representative.*
- 3.5 *However, it will not always be appropriate for a Member with such an interest to participate. If a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard the interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgment of the public interest, then the Member should not participate.*
- 3.6 **Do** if you are a Member of a lobbying group, consider whether you should declare an interest in a matter if it is one which the Group has expressed an opinion upon
- 3.7 *Although not in all cases Members are precluded from participating in decisions where a lobbying group of which they are a Member has publicly expressed a view, there will be circumstances when such participation would be inappropriate. If the circumstances are such that a fair minded member of the public would conclude that the Member was partial towards promoting the aims of the lobbying group and disinclined to vote inconsistently from the Members of the Group, then the Member should not participate. Relevant factors to be taken into consideration are:-*
- *the role of the Member in formulating the views of the lobbying group*
 - *the perceived importance of the lobbying group in the matter to be decided*
 - *the issues on which the Group lobbies and the relationship of those issues to the matter for decision*
- 3.8 *Where a lobbying group has been vociferous on the merits of a planning application or matter, the risk increases of a decision being tainted by bias. Membership of a lobbying group formed specifically to achieve a given result is a clear example e.g. a residents' association formed to oppose a particular development.*
- 3.9 Where your interest is prejudicial:-
- 3.9.1 **Don't** participate, or give the appearance of trying to participate, in the making of any decision on the matter by the Council
- 3.9.2 **Don't** try to represent ward views, get another Ward Member to do it instead.
- 3.9.3 **Don't** get involved in the processing of the Application.
- 3.9.4 **Don't** seek or accept any preferential treatment, or place yourself in a position that could lead the public to think you are receiving preferential treatment, because of your position as a Councillor.
- 3.9.5 **Don't** make representations in connection with any matter in which you have a Prejudicial Interest except in writing to the Officer having conduct of the matter and/or to the relevant Ward Member appointed to the Planning and Highways Committee (or to the relevant Executive Member if the matter in issue is an Executive responsibility). If there is no Ward Member, you may make your written representations to such other Member of the Planning and Highways Committee as you may nominate but the Monitoring Officer should be advised, in writing, of any such nomination. All such correspondence should expressly state that you have a Prejudicial Interest and indicate the nature of the interest.

- 3.9.6 **Don't** act as an Agent for anyone else in pursuing an application for planning consent, enforcement issue or other planning matter.
- 3.9.7 **Do** inform the Monitoring Officer, in writing, of any application for a planning permission or consent which you intend to seek.
- 3.10 *For the avoidance of doubt, if a Member has a Prejudicial Interest in a matter they may, if they wish to do so, decline to attend the meeting and ask an eligible Member to attend as a substitute. The matter in which the Member has a Prejudicial Interest should not be discussed with the substitute Member.*

4. Avoidance of Pre-determination in the Planning Process.

- 4.1 **Don't** approach a planning decision with a closed mind. Members may offer a particular view in public before a matter is determined but they should not express a decided view which it is apparent they will follow regardless of due consideration of the circumstances when it falls for decision. If a Member actively campaigns for a particular decision, it will be difficult for him or her to show that they have kept a sufficiently open mind. Accordingly, Members who campaign for a particular decision should not be present when the decision comes to be taken. If a Member wishes to remain part of the decision-making process, he or she should ensure that they do remain open to persuasion and that their view is subject to the full consideration of the relevant matter in Committee.
- 4.2 **Don't** participate in a planning decision if you have effectively committed yourself to determining the decision one way or the other in another capacity. For example, if an Executive Member has taken a decision to pursue a particular project, it would be inappropriate for that Member to participate in consideration of the Planning Application. Similarly, Members who have sat on a Panel to determine whether a parcel of amenity land may be disposed of for residential use, should withdraw from the Planning Committee when an application for the change of use of the land to residential purposes is considered. Those Ward Members who have been consulted upon, and expressed their views as to whether or not the amenity land should be sold, may participate in consideration of the Planning Application unless they have a closed mind on the issue when the matter comes to Committee.
- 4.3 **Do**, if you are a Member of a Town or Parish Council which has considered a planning application, consider whether your participation at the Parish Council has effectively indicated that you cannot consider the matter with an open mind when it comes before the Council's Planning and Highways Committee. Merely by speaking, or voting, at the Parish will not usually disqualify a Member from subsequent participation at the Planning and Highways Committee, provided that he or she remains genuinely willing to listen to the debate in Committee and weigh the considerations material to the later decision. However, if the Parish Council decision was reached after lengthy debate and the Member was a leading proponent of the view which the Parish adopted, the Member should not participate at the Planning and Highways Committee.
- 4.4 If a Member is, under the preceding provisions of this Section, considered to have predetermined a planning application before it reaches Committee, then he or she should withdraw from the Council Chamber before the start of the item on the agenda.

5. Lobbying of, and by, Councillors

- 5.1 **Do**, if you wish to vote and/or speak on a matter, explain to those lobbying or attempting to lobby you that, whilst you can listen to what is said, it prejudices your position and that of the Council to express a final point of view or a fixed intention to vote one way or another. It will normally be appropriate to advise those who are lobbying that they should speak, or write, to the relevant Officer, in order that their opinions can be included in the Officer's report to the Committee or the Executive Member(s).
- 5.2 Unless you have a Personal and Prejudicial interest, this does not prevent you from:-
- being able to listen and receive viewpoints from residents or other interested parties;
 - making comments to residents, interested parties, other Members or appropriate Officers, provided they do not consist of, or amount to, pre-judging the issue and you make clear you are not expressing a final view;
 - seeking information through appropriate channels.
- 5.3 **Don't** accept gifts or hospitality wherever possible. If a degree of hospitality is unavoidable, ensure it is of a minimum; its acceptance is declared as soon as possible and do remember to register the gift or hospitality where its value is over £25. The Register of Gifts and Hospitality is open to inspection by the public.
- 5.4 **Do** remember that your overriding duty is to the whole community, not just to the people in your Ward and, taking account of the need to make decisions impartially, that you should not favour, or appear to favour, any person, Company, Group or locality, irrespective of other considerations.
- 5.5 **Don't** impose the Party Whip in connection with a planning matter.
- 5.6 **Don't** accept an instruction from anyone to determine an application in a particular manner. While you may accord appropriate weight to the views of other Members, you must determine planning matters, on their own merits, and should not take into account any factor which you are not prepared to state in Committee.
- 5.7 **Do** inform the Monitoring Officer where you feel you have been exposed to undue or excessive lobbying or approaches (including inappropriate offers of gifts or hospitality), who will in turn advise the appropriate Officers to follow the matter up.

6. Pre-Application Discussions

- 6.1 **Do** refer Applicants and Developers who approach you for planning or procedural advice, to Officers wherever practicable.
- 6.2 **Don't** engage in pre-application discussions with applicants or third parties, except as provided for below. Members may engage in pre-application discussions in respect of minor development but an Officer should be present when such discussions take place. In exceptional circumstances (for example, major developments having Borough wide implications), recorded, in writing, and placed on the relevant case file, the Director of Environment, Culture and Communities or Chief Officer: Planning and Transportation may request the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of

the Planning and Highways Committee, or the relevant Executive Member, to engage in such discussions in connection with development which is not minor development.

- 6.3 **Do** ensure that you report to the Head of Development Management, or the Chief Officer: Planning and Transportation, any significant contact with the Applicant, and other parties, and explain the nature and purpose of the contacts and your involvement in them. Ensure that this is recorded on the planning file.
- 6.4 **Do** make clear at the outset, that any discussions will not bind the Council to make a particular decision and that any views expressed are provisional.
- 6.5 **“Pre-application”** means discussions taking place before a decision is made, not simply those prior to an application being submitted. **“Pre-Application Discussions”** means such discussions where a Member actively participates in exploring the merits of a proposed development and does not encompass the mere receipt of representations in favour or against a proposal. **“Minor Development”** means development falling within either of the following two categories:-
- the construction of, alteration to or material change of use of a single dwelling
 - the provision of, alteration to or material change of use of commercial or industrial premises having a “footprint” of 100 square metres or less.
- 6.6 The term **“third parties”** does not include fellow Members or Officers. It is, of course, perfectly legitimate for a Member to engage in discussions on a planning application with another Member or Officer, whatever the nature or scale of the development (although if a Member wishes to participate in determination of the application, he or she should be careful to avoid pre-determination of the Application)
- 6.7 *The Officer present when any pre-application discussions take place should make a note of the following:-*
- *the major issues raised in the pre-application discussions and any views expressed on such issues by any party to the discussions*
 - *any action points arising*
 - *points of agreement*
 - *points of disagreement*
- 6.8 **In addition, in respect of presentations:**
- 6.8.1 **Don’t** attend presentations unless the arrangements therefore have been agreed by a Planning Officer and a Planning Officer is present or has agreed that the presence of a Planning Officer is not required.
- 6.8.2 **Do** ask relevant questions for the purposes of clarifying your understanding of the proposals.
- 6.8.3 **Do** remember that the presentation is not part of the formal process of debate and determination of any subsequent application. This will be carried out by the appropriate Committee of the Planning Authority.

6.8.4 **Do** be aware that a presentation is a form of lobbying and you must not express a final view or state how you or other Members might vote.

6.8.5 *For the purposes of this paragraph “Planning Officer” means the Case Officer within the Environment, Culture and Communities Department dealing with the matter, or an Officer within that Department senior to the Case Officer.*

7. **Officers**

7.1 **Don’t** put pressure on Officers to put forward a particular recommendation. (This does not prevent you from asking questions or submitting views to the Head of Development Management or the Chief Officer: Planning & Transportation, which may be incorporated into any Committee report).

7.2 **Do** recognise and respect that Officers involved in the processing and determination of planning matters must act in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct for Officers and their professional codes of conduct, primarily the Royal Town Planning Institute’s Code of Professional Conduct. As a result, Planning Officers’ views and opinions will be presented on the basis of their overriding obligation of professional independence, which may, on occasion, be at odds with the views, opinions or decisions of the Committee or its Members.

8. **Decision-Making**

8.1 **Do** ensure that, if you request a proposal to go before the Committee rather than be determined through Officer delegation, that your reasons are recorded and repeated in the report to the Committee.

8.2 **Do** comply with Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and make decisions in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

8.3 **Do** come to your decision only after due consideration of all of the information reasonably required to base a decision upon.

8.4 **Do**, if you wish to move a Motion contrary to the Officer’s recommendation (whether for approval or refusal), contact the Case Officer to discuss the Application as soon as reasonably practicable to discuss your reasons for departing from the Officer recommendation. If you remain of the view that you wish to move a Motion contrary to the Officer recommendation, then formulate reasons for refusal or approval (as the case may be) and ensure that a copy is circulated to all Members of the Committee when the item is considered.

8.5 **Don’t** vote or take part in the meeting’s discussion on a proposal unless you have been present to hear the entire debate, including the Officers’ introduction to the matter.

8.6 **Do** have recorded the reasons for the Committee’s decision to defer any proposal.

8.7 **Do** make sure that if you are proposing, seconding or supporting a decision contrary to Officer recommendations, or the Development Plan, that you clearly identify and understand the planning reasons leading to this conclusion or decision. These reasons must be given prior to the vote and be recorded. Be aware that you may have to justify the resulting decision by giving evidence in the event of any challenge.

9. Site Visits

- 9.1 *This section relates to SITE VISITS arranged by Officers prior to a meeting of the Planning & Highway Committee or made pursuant to a resolution of the Committee; it does not relate to visits made by individual Members (usually Ward Members) to the location of a planning application to assist him/her in formulating his/her views on an application. Individual Members making such visits should not enter on to private land unless they are authorised to do so by the Owner and should bear in mind that no Pre-Application Discussions should be held save in accordance with Paragraph 6.*
- 9.2 **Do** ensure that you treat the site inspection only as an opportunity to seek information and to observe the site.
- 9.3 **Do**, through the Officers present at the site meeting, ask questions or seek clarification of matters which are relevant to the site inspection.
- 9.4 **Don't**, if at all possible, hear representations from the Applicant or third parties.
- 9.5 **Don't** express opinions or views to the Applicant and/or Site Owner.

10. Appeals

- 10.1 An applicant applying for planning permission whose application is refused by the Council, has a statutory right of appeal. Rights of appeal are also afforded in respect of certain types of other refusals (e.g reserved matters consent, listed buildings consent). Such appeals may be determined by way of written representation, informal hearing or public inquiry. Once an appeal is made, the Council ceases to have jurisdiction in the matter and Members are able to make representations on the matter to the Inspector appointed to determine or hear the appeal. However, a Member with a Prejudicial Interest in the matter should disclose that fact and the nature of the interest when making representations.
- 10.2 Although a Member when making representations in connection with an appeal may disclose to the Inspector that they are a Member of the Council care should be taken to avoid the impression that the Member is making representations on behalf of the Council or is authorised by the Council to make such representations.
- 10.3 On rare occasions, notably in some cases where Members have refused permission against Officer advice, it may be appropriate for a Member to give evidence on behalf of the Council.

SECTION 16 – LEGAL PROCEEDINGS ETC

16.1 Legal Proceedings

The Borough Solicitor is authorised to institute, define or participate in any legal proceedings in any case where such action is necessary to give effect to decisions of the Council, or in any case where the Borough Solicitor considers that such action is necessary to protect the Council's interest.

16.2 Authentication of Documents

Where any document is necessary to any legal procedure or proceedings on behalf of the Council, it will be signed by the Borough Solicitor, or other person authorised by him or her, unless any enactment otherwise authorises or requires, or the Council has given requisite authority to some other person.

16.3 Common Seal of the Council

The Common Seal of the Council will be kept in a safe place in the custody of the Borough Solicitor. A decision of the Council, or of any part of it, will be sufficient authority for sealing any document necessary to give effect to the decision. The Common Seal will be affixed to those documents, which in the opinion of the Borough Solicitor should be sealed. The affixing of the Common Seal will be attested by the Borough Solicitor, or some other authorised by him or her, and the Mayor or Deputy Mayor, or in their absence, another Member nominated by either of them.