

Finance & Governance Committee

Draft Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct

Purpose

To manage all aspects of the Town Council's finances responsibly and lawfully.

Principles

That the Finance & Governance Committee will undertake its duties in a transparent and fair fashion, to preserve and improve the Council resources in the best interests of the Town and its residents.

It will seek to assist community groups and events that supports the town or increases footfall.

The Committee will operate in accordance with the Council's overarching General Matters & Code of Conduct Policies.

The committee must proactively identify Neighbourhood Plan action points relevant to its areas of responsibility, and actively seek to deliver them in a timely manner within their overall action plans. The Committee will be required to report on the progress of its planned delivery.

Responsibilities

Precept: To recommend to full Council the level of precept requirements for the following financial year by the first meeting in January (of the current year).

Budget: To recommend to full Council, by the first monthly meeting in January (of the current year), the annual budget requirement for the following financial year, to which the precept calculation is based upon. Budget preparations will begin no later than November and will be based on the standing committee's budget requirements and all other financial considerations.

Accounts: To ensure that the Council's accounting system, for all income and expenditure, is maintained and regularly updated for budgeting purposes and is fit for purpose for use by all committees and for the annual audit preparation.

Banking: To review and maintain the Council's Bank Accounts to ensure the effective and timely authorisation of accounts for payment and to ensure best value for the Council.

Grants: To determine and implement a policy and application process for the allocation of grant monies.

CIL: To determine and implement a policy and strategy for allocation of (Neighbourhood) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds, based on projects identified by the standing committees. To maintain the accounts separately from the Council's normal business and to report the annual expenditure and income to East Suffolk Council.

Staff: To oversee all matters relating to the staff including salaries, welfare, Health & Safety, contracts of employment, complaints or grievances, equipment, payroll services and payroll liabilities. The Committee will appoint an advisory Personnel sub-committee to carry out the annual staff reviews and to make recommendations for all or any of these matters.

Annual Audit: The Committee will appoint an internal auditor and will consider any recommendations from the internal audit on an annual basis. The Clerk/RFO will submit all relevant information in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, to the external auditors and will report the conclusion to the Committee.

Subscriptions: The Committee will review and determine all the Council's subscriptions for insurance, professional services, insurance, and utilities up to £5,000 per annum. Where any ongoing subscriptions relate directly to the interests of other committees, the F&A Committee will consider any recommendations but will retain overall responsibility.

Contracts: The Committee will review any contracts that extend beyond the current financial year in order to make an informed budget recommendation to the Council

Payment of accounts: The Committee may consider approval of any invoice that is in accordance with a contract or purchase agreement already approved and any other invoice for goods or services up to and including £5,000 and for grants up to and including £5,000 per year to a single organisation.

HMRC: To ensure an adequate third-party Payroll service is maintained and all liabilities paid to HMRC as required by law and that VAT is properly accounted for and reclaimed annually or quarterly as necessary. The Committee will consider whether the Council should register for VAT at any point in the future.

Income: The Committee will, after considering any committee recommendations, review and determine all income from rents, leases, and services.

Council Policies: Develop and recommend policies relevant to the committee and submit to full council for approval.

Communications: To prepare reports on specific items or general progress for the Council and public documents/website.

General Matters & Code of Conduct

Membership

The membership of the Committee will automatically be populated by the Chairs of the other Standing Committees and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council (if different) and two other positions determined by Full Council in accordance with Standing Order 4. The Chair of the Committee will be appointed by the Full Council and the Vice Chair by the Committee but membership would exclude non-councillors in accordance with Standing Order 4 (b).

In accordance with Standing Order 4 unless the Council determines otherwise, the Committee may create working groups and sub committees of which members may be non-Councillors provided it complies with Standing Order 4 (b).

Method

The Finance & Governance Committee will engage and consult with any representatives of relevant authorities, interested parties, user groups, professional bodies, land owners and the public, as necessary to further the responsibilities listed.

The Finance & Governance Committee meetings (including meeting dates, co-opting members of the public) are governed by the normal rules and procedures as set out in HTC's Standing Orders and by NALC/SALC recommendations for such meetings.

The Finance & Governance Committee may from time to time and as required engage the services of professional bodies to further its responsibilities.

The Committee has the authority to make decisions within the scope of its responsibilities and its agreed annual budget.

The Committee may not exceed the budget without approval of the Council.

All decisions and actions of the Committee will be implemented by the Town Clerk and/or delegated to the relevant staff unless the Committee has appointed a councillor for a specific task.

Code of Conduct

All Committees members, including those of sub committees and working groups, are expected to abide by the principles and practice of the Town Council Code of Conduct including declarations of interest, both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, a copy of which will be supplied to all members.

The Committee will abide by the following principles:

- i. Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are relevant or in conflict with the matter under discussion.
- ii. Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion and belief;
- iii. All communications from the Committee and individuals on the Committee should be via the Clerks' Office and in line with the relevant Council policy. Individuals on the Committee may not independently issue any information or personal views of any kind related to the Committee and its responsibilities through the use of any kind of media.
- v. The Committee has the authority to remove non-Council members on sub committees or working groups of the committee found in breach of the Code of Conduct.
- vi. The Council has the authority to remove Council members of the Committee found in breach of the Code of Conduct.

Changes to the Terms of Reference

This constitution may be amended with the support of at least two-thirds of the current membership at a committee meeting and with the approval of the Town Council.

Dissolution of Committee

The Finance & Governance Committee will only be dissolved by agreement by the Town Council if all of its legal functions can be adopted by the Council or other committees.