



DRAFT Unapproved Minutes of the Policy & Finance Meeting

Monday 21st September 2026

Present in Person: Councillors D Davies, N Dix, C Erasmus, J Griffiths

Present Online: Councillors D Box, P Cook, G Etheridge, R Mills

Observer; Councillor K Etheridge

Also in Attendance: Clerk M Betts

Chairperson: Councillor D Davies (Vice Chair)

The Chair explained that items 9 and 10 would be taken before item 8 so that the Clerk only had to leave the meeting once.

1.To Receive Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Councillor C Clark and R Davies, deputy clerk

2.1 To Receive Declaration of interests or dispensations on any item(s) on this Agenda if appropriate.

There were no declarations or requests for dispensation

2.2 Press and Public Participation.

There were no enquiries

3. To review and approve Town Council Policies.

Financial Regulations

The financial regulations were overdue for review. The Clerk had circulated One Voice Wales Model Regulations prior to the meeting and had highlighted the differences between the Town Council current regulations and the model regulations produced by One Voice Wales. Throughout the review the Clerk gave thorough explanations

3.1.1 It was agreed to **note the following (numbers in brackets relate to the clause of the Model Regulations)**

Town Council currently has no Risk Management Policy; agreed a risk management policy be drafted for agreement at a future meeting (2.2).

The requirements for the internal auditor (3.8).

Agreement of Council needed to add or withdraw from earmarked reserves (4.11).

The Clerk is the RFO and should ensure that the legal power for new or infrequent purchases is reported to meetings and recorded in the minutes (5.2.)

3.1.2 It was agreed that further discussion was required for the following: -

To review the clause in the current regulations against the model regulations in respect of bank reconciliations (2.6).

Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions, in respect of where this would be best discussed and at what time of the year. It was suggested that Policy and Finance Committee review in October and make recommendation to Full Council (4.2).

To consider the authority for smaller purchases, and to explore what could be put in place in terms of a fallback position if the Clerk/Deputy Clerk were unavailable (5.10).

To review the whole clause in the model regulations against what was in the current regulations. There are some additional clauses in the model regulations, for example, reference to grants (5.15).

To review the clause in current regulations against the model regulations in respect of official orders and who may issue them or agree to contracts (5.16).

To review the threshold (currently £1,000) for raising official orders or letters for all work, goods and services. Clerk will provide information on amounts paid for these items in the last 12 months so an appropriate level can be set (5.20.)

To amend the existing regulations to the Clerk/RFO only (5.21).

To further discuss the number of people that would be able to authorise payments and the scope for involving Councillors in payment authorisation on Scribe (6.2).

To review and agree the additional clauses in the model regulations regarding payments (6.7 & 6.8).

To review sections I, ii, iii in clause 6.9 of the model regulations, 6.7 in existing regulations, re the amount that the Clerk has delegated powers to authorise.

In respect of number of people to authorise electronic payments (7.2).

Regarding the requirement for payments to be sent to two authorized signatories (7.4).

Regarding changing the payments information to go to Policy and Finance but these would be appended to full council minutes (7.8).

3.1.3 It was agreed to accept the following: -

That committees should notify Council of budget requirements for the following financial year not later than end of October each year (4.5).

To add annually to the sentence that banking arrangements shall be reviewed for security and efficiency (6.1).

The removal of telephone banking as a payment method (6.5).

The addition of Policy and Finance Committee in respect of reporting of regular payments (6.6).

The model regulations regarding the level of bank transfers that the Clerk can authorise (6.9 iv).

A lower limit for a single transaction by debit card of £500 (9.1).

A change to the petty cash float amount from £50 to £100 (10.1).

The addition of a specific reference to accounting software (13.6).

3.2 Standing Orders

One Voice Wales issued new model standing orders this month. The main changes are in Section 19, Handling Staff Matters, which had been significantly expanded in comparison to what was in the current Standing Orders. **It was agreed to review for inclusion in Standing Orders as soon as the Staffing Committee and its Terms of Reference have been established.**

3.3 Internal Controls

The Clerk explained that there was no current overall policy but there were obviously internal controls in place. This document brought everything together and acts as a good checklist for the areas to be considered when reviewing /establishing internal controls. **The policy was approved.**

3.4 Publications Scheme

It was reported that some of this information on the website, but this expands and updates the information. **The policy was approved. It was noted that a schedule of charges needed to be prepared.**

4.Civic Awards 2026

It was agreed that there would be five categories this year. Volunteer of the Year, Business of the Year, General Contribution to the Blackwood Community, Sporting Excellence Award, Young Person Award (under the age of 21).

Publicity would go out on 30th September to invite nominations, and the closing date would be Monday 26th October to give time to check the applications before bringing them to full Council on Monday 2nd November for discussion and decision. Nominations can be made online, on paper or by coming into the Town Council Offices. Councillors would be allowed to nominate but must follow the strict criteria that they should not have a close personal association to the nominee. If in doubt, another Councillor could make the nomination.

5. Grant Applications

It was mentioned that a new policy and application form had previously been agreed by Council but the application 'windows' had not been set. Rather than accept applications at any time, it had been agreed to have specific times in the year to accept the grant applications.

It was agreed that applications would be invited in April and October each year and that there would be a four-week period each time for applications to be submitted. It was noted that these dates should be well

publicised on social media, website, noticeboard and should be promoted by Councillors. It was also agreed that this would come into effect in April 2027, until then grant applications could be accepted at any time.

6. Bank Reconciliation

Copies of the reconciliation for both accounts at the end of August were circulated in the room. Copies would be provided for those who attended online. At the end of August, the amount in the Charity and Community Account was calculated by the Scribe software to be £109,422.64 and this was also the amount shown on the bank statement and in the cash book.

It was noted that at the end of August the Scribe software calculated that the amount in the Business Instant Access account should be £138,665.54 and this was verified as the amount shown on the bank statement.

It was mentioned that Reports can be run by Scribe showing the income and expenditure amounts for the month. **It was agreed** that it would also be useful to have these included for circulation at future meetings.

7. Probationary Reviews

7.1 Deputy Clerk

The Clerk reported that the review had been undertaken at the end of April and that after consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, a letter had been issued to the Deputy Clerk stating successful completion of the probationary period.

The Clerk left the meeting for discussion of the agenda items on Clerk's probationary review, annual increments and annual pay award.

7.2 Clerk

It was mentioned that to date there was no system in place to monitor staff performance against agreed targets and that as such there was nothing to assess against. A probationary review form had been established and used for the purpose of the review process and as such was used for both the Deputy Clerk and the Clerk's review meetings.

It was noted that a probationary review meeting had taken place on the 4th August with the Clerk as it was long overdue as it should have taken place at the end of April. In attendance at the review were Cllr G. Etheridge, Cllr C. Erasmus and Cllr J. Griffiths. There was concern shown that the Council had nothing to monitor against and the fact that the Deputy Clerk's review was conducted without a proper performance management system in place.

It was agreed that to be consistent and fair the Clerk be notified in writing that she had successfully completed her probationary period.

A discussion took place about the Council as an employer and now the P&F committee has been given delegated powers from Full Council, staff management structures should be put in place. These would include management and supervision on a day-to-day basis, performance management and regular reviews (including time frameworks), clear objectives (SMART) with targeted outcomes that are reasonable and practicable with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are in line with the Town Council's Strategic Plan.

Overall, **it was agreed** that plans be put in place to formulate and set objectives with achievable targets that would be in agreement with the Clerks and to ensure regular reviews take place.

9. Annual Increments

A discussion took place about annual incremental points with regards to salary increases for the Clerks. The terms and conditions of employment for the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk make reference to annual increments within the scale points 18 to 24 for the Deputy Clerk and scale points 24 to 28 for the Clerk. The terms and conditions state that this would be subject to satisfactory performance with the first increment payable on the 1st April 2026.

Cllr G. Etheridge explained that he had taken advice from Paul Egan, OVW and had since learned that the advice given was inaccurate.

It was agreed that incremental point salary increases be paid and noted that for the Deputy Clerk it would increase to scale point 21 taking her hourly rate from £16.90 per hour to £17.75 per hour and back dated to the 1st April 2026.

It was also agreed that the Clerk's new incremental point be increased to scale point 25 taking her hourly rate from £18.35 per hour to £19.47 per hour and back dated to 1st April 2026.

10. Annual Pay Award

The Clerk had previously circulated information about the Local Government National Salary Awards for the period 2026 – 2027 with notification that a 3.3% increase had been settled and would be payable from 1st April 2026 resulting in back pay being owed to both the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

The Clerk rejoined the meeting

8. Operational Meetings.

It was reported that there had been internal meetings held with the Mayor/Deputy Mayor, Clerk and Deputy Clerk and that other Councillors had attended when in the office. They were held to discuss day-to-day matters. It was agreed that these continue on a fortnightly basis, provisionally on a Wednesday with the same participants. In terms of supervision, the Clerk supervises the Deputy Clerk, and the Mayor supervises the Clerk. With regard to a nominated Councillor for staff matters and feedback, it was agreed that this would be the Chair of Policy and Finance.

11. Office Opening August Recess and Christmas Holidays

It was agreed that the office would close on Wednesday 23rd December 2026 and re-open on Tuesday 5th January 2027. During this time there will be 2.5 days that will need to be taken as leave. Clerk/Deputy Clerk have the option to work if they prefer, on a working from home basis, so that the office would remain closed for the Christmas holiday period.

The August recess wasn't discussed so this would need to be discussed and agreed at a future meeting.

12. Date of Next Meetings

- **Council, Monday 5th October, 6.30pm, Town Council Offices**
- **Policy and Finance Committee, Monday 19th October ,6.30pm, Town Council Offices**

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.28pm.

Signed

Dated