NEW BRADWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Regulations

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on 1st June 2026

Key Highlights

- Key decisions such as the budget, precept, borrowing, AGAR approval and auditor recommendations must remain with full council.
- The council must maintain sound internal control arrangements and review their effectiveness every year.
- Bank reconciliations must be checked at least quarterly by a member who is not the Chair or a cheque signatory.
- Procurement thresholds apply: formal tenders over £60,000 incl. VAT; advertising requirements over £30,000 incl. VAT; at least 3 fixed-price quotes over £3,000 excl. VAT; and 3 estimates where possible for £500–£3,000 excl. VAT.
- Contracts must not be split to avoid procurement rules.
- Payments are made mainly through online banking with at least two authorised people involved in approvals.
- Supplier bank detail changes must be verified carefully because they are a fraud risk.
- The council will not maintain petty cash.
- Borrowing, investments, assets, insurance and charitable funds must all be properly authorised, recorded and reviewed.
- The Financial Regulations must be reviewed annually and after any change of Clerk or RFO.

1. General

1.1 These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.

1.2 Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.

1.3 Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.

1.4 In these Financial Regulations:

- 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.
- "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
- "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
- 'Proper practices' means those set out in The Practitioners' Guide.
- 'Practitioners' Guide' refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England.
- 'Must' and bold text refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
- 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.

1.5 The Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO:

- acts under the policy direction of the council;
- administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
- determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
- ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
- ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
- seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
- produces financial management information as required by the council.

1.6 The council must not delegate any decision regarding:

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

1.7 In addition, the council shall:

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or single commitment in excess of £5,000.

2. Risk management and internal control

2.1 The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.

2.2 The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by New Bradwell Parish Council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

2.3 When considering any new activity, the Clerk shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.

2.4 At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.

2.5 The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:

- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**

- **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
- **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
- **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
- **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
- **ensure division of responsibilities.**

2.6 At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair or a cheque signatory shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the council.

2.7 Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. The council shall put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

3. Accounts and audit

3.1 All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.2 The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonable accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:

- **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
- **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council.**

3.3 The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

3.4 The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.5 The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.

3.6 Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit and shall, as directed by the council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.

3.7 The internal auditor shall be appointed by New Bradwell Parish Council and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.

3.8 The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:

- is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
- reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
- can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
- has no involvement in the management or control of the council.

3.9 Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:

- perform any operational duties for the council;

- initiate or approve accounting transactions;
- provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
- direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.

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

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

3.12 The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

4. Budget and precept

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

4.2 Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions, shall be reviewed by New Bradwell Parish Council at least annually in October for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the Council.

4.3 No later than October each year, the Clerk and Chair shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.

4.4 Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward (by placing them in an earmarked reserve) with the formal approval of the full council.

4.5 Each committee (if any) shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the council not later than the end of November each year.

4.6 The draft budget forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the full council.

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

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

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

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

4.11 Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by the council.

5. Procurement

5.1 Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.

5.2 The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.

5.3 Every contract shall comply with the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations, and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.

5.4 For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or any superseding legislation must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.

5.5 Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall obtain prices as follows:

5.6 For contracts estimated to exceed £60,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers agreed by New Bradwell Parish Council or advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.

5.7 For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation regarding the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices about the award of contracts.

5.8 For contracts greater than £3,000 excluding VAT the Clerk shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes.

5.9 Where the value is between £500 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.

5.10 For smaller purchases, the Clerk shall seek to achieve value for money by obtaining at least 2 prices from different suppliers, unless it is impracticable to do so.

5.11 Contracts must not be split to avoid compliance with these regulations.

5.12 The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations does not apply to the following:

- payments made under statutory powers;
- utility costs and other items where a sole supplier is available;
- emergency purchases not exceeding £500;
- purchases from established contracts.

5.13 When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to allow for a direct award, the Clerk should report to council the reasons why the regulations cannot be observed and the council shall, wherever possible, seek additional assurance of value for money.

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

5.15 Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by the Clerk up to a limit of £500.

6. Banking and payments

6.1 The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and approved by the council; banking arrangements may not be delegated to the Clerk. They shall be regularly reviewed for safety and efficiency.

6.2 The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments. All payments made by the council shall be made in accordance with these Financial Regulations.

6.3 All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy and checked against the order, delivery note and specification where applicable. Where any corrections are made to amounts, these shall be initialled by the Clerk.

6.4 Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment in respect of a contract) shall not be made to an officer or councillor without prior approval of the council or duly delegated committee.

6.5 All payments shall be made by online banking, in accordance with a resolution to that effect.

6.6 For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments of fixed sums, listing each regular payment due, its payment date, payment method and, in the case of an online payment, banking details. This schedule shall be approved by resolution of the council.

6.7 A copy of this schedule of regular payments shall be signed by two members as evidence that the council has approved such payments.

6.8 A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate council meeting.

6.9 The Clerk and RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise the payment of items only in the following circumstances: a) If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, and the Clerk and RFO have successfully chased a councillor for authorisation, the Clerk and RFO may authorise payment. b) An expenditure item which is contained in the approved budget for the current year and is of a type which would normally be authorised at council, but where it is not convenient or cost-effective to wait for a meeting. c) Out of scope payments which may be authorised by a councillor only under a resolution allowing such payments. d) Payments to contractors and suppliers in accordance with a contract.

6.10 The RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring council approval to each council or committee meeting. The council or committee shall approve all payments, and a list shall be recorded in the minutes. The approved schedule shall be signed by the Chair of the meeting.

7. Electronic payments

7.1 Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Service Administrator shall be appointed by the council. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. The Clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.

7.2 All authorised signatories shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online.

7.3 No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.

7.4 In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator, an authorised signatory shall set up any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.

7.5 Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment using the online banking system.

7.6 Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment online and a printout of the transaction confirming that the payment has been made shall be appended to the invoice for audit purposes.

7.7 A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next council meeting and appended to the minutes.

7.8 With the approval of New Bradwell Parish Council in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are approved online by two authorised members. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by New Bradwell Parish Council at least every two years.

7.9 Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of New Bradwell Parish Council provided that each payment is approved online by two authorised bank signatories, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to New Bradwell Parish Council at the next meeting.

The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.

7.10 If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are signed or approved online by two members, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by New Bradwell Parish Council at least every two years.

7.11 Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by two of the Clerk and a member. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.

7.12 Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.

7.13 Remembered password facilities, other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification, should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

8. Cheque payments

8.1 Cheques or orders for payment in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two members.

8.2 A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.

8.3 To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.

8.4 Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at, or immediately before or after a council meeting. Any signatures obtained away from council meetings shall be reported to the council at the next convenient meeting.

9. Payment cards

9.1 Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and the RFO and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council in writing before any order is placed.

9.2 A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by New Bradwell Parish Council. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to New Bradwell Parish Council and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of New Bradwell Parish Council.

9.3 Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and any balance shall be paid in full each month.

9.4 Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used except for expenses of up to £250 including VAT, incurred in accordance with council policy.

10. Petty Cash

10.1 The council will not maintain any form of cash float. All cash received must be banked intact. Any payments made in cash by the Clerk (for example for postage or minor stationery items) shall be refunded on a regular basis, at least quarterly.

11. Payment of salaries and allowances

11.1 As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.

11.2 Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.

11.3 Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or a duly delegated committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council.

11.4 Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.

11.5 Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.

11.6 Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook. Payroll reports will be reviewed to ensure that the correct payments have been made.

11.7 Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.

11.8 Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

12. Loans and investments

12.1 Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.

12.2 Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.

12.3 The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

12.4 All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.

12.5 All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

12.6 Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

13. Income

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

13.2 The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk. The RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.

13.3 Any sums found to be irrecoverable, and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.

13.4 All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the Clerk considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.

13.5 Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.

13.6 The RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.

13.7 Where significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the Clerk shall ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control record such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken for the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works

14.1 Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the Clerk shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.

14.2 Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

15. Stores and equipment

15.1 Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.

15.2 The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.

16. Assets, properties and estates

16.1 The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.

16.2 The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

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

16.4 No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property together with a proper business case.

16.5 No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £500.

17. Insurance

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

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

17.3 The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to New Bradwell Parish Council at the next available meeting. The Clerk shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers.

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

18. Charities

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

19. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations

19.1 The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of clerk or RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.

19.2 The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.

19.3 The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

App 1. Tender process

A1.1 Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.

A1.2 The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.

A1.3 Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.

A1.4 Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.

A1.5 Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to the relevant Standing Order and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.

A1.6 Where the council does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.

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