



EPPING TOWN COUNCIL

EPPING HALL, ST JOHNS RD, EPPING, ESSEX CM16 5JU

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TO ALL MEMBERS of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CGAC)

Cllr C Burgess (Chairman & Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllr G Scruton (Finance Key Member)
Cllr N Avey (Administration Key Member)
Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk) (Non-voting member)

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE** to be held in the Conference Room, Epping Hall, on Tuesday, 21st February 2023 at 8pm for the purpose of transacting the business as set out in the agenda below.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beverley Rumsey".

Beverley Rumsey
Town Clerk
15th February 2023

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies and reasons for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are invited to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests, along with the nature of those interests, in relation to any item on this agenda.

3 DISPENSATIONS

To receive requests for dispensations from members concerning any item of business on this agenda.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTION TIME

The Chairman will invite public comments and responses in relation to items on this agenda. *Individuals will be permitted a maximum of three minutes each (total time for this session is limited to ten minutes).*

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**(Attachment A)**

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2022. **Please note:** these were presented at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th November 2022.

6 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (CGAC) from their meeting on 1st November 2022 (Minutes #232–247 of 22/23) were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th November 2022 (Minute #271 of 22/23):

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The amended Statement on Internal Control should be **APPROVED** ~~as per Attachment L;~~
- (ii) The amended Risk Management Statement should be **APPROVED** ~~as per Attachment L;~~
- (iii) The revised Employee Handbook should be **APPROVED**.

7 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT REVIEW

Council **APPROVED** a review of policy and governance documents at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th March 2016 (Minute #478 of 2015/16).

The list of policies for annual review and the dates for review are as follows:

Internal and External Audits: **February 2023** & October 2023 (Dealt with under items 10 & 11)

Internal Audit Programme: October 2023

Statement on Internal Control: October 2023

Insurance Inventory: **February 2023** (Dealt with under agenda item 22)

Asset Register: **February 2023** (Dealt with under agenda item 12)

Internal Risk Register: **February 2023** (Dealt with under agenda item 9)

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **February 2023** & October 2023 (Dealt with under 24 & 25)

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations: **February 2023** (Dealt with under agenda item 8)

Employee Handbook: October 2023

Risk management statement: October 2023

Please note these are the current recommended review dates, but legislation may amend the dates if an earlier review is required.

Changing regulations and audit comments may add further items to this list.

The CGAC review process leads to recommendations to Council for amendments to documents to be made.

Committee are requested to **NOTE** the above information.

8 STANDING ORDERS & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**(Attachments B & C)**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, sch 12, para 42 ; Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The model Standing Orders were updated in April 2022, affecting Standing Order 18: Financial Controls and Procurement. The model change is (f). (g) and (h) no longer appear to be in the model Standing Orders and so have been crossed out. The Town Clerk would recommend that d (iv) is amended to that proposed, including the ability to tender by email. **(Attachment B)**

The model Financial Regulations have not been updated since the last review. The Town Clerk has suggested however that Financial Regulations 11 (e) and (f) are amended to permit tenders by email, to mirror the revised Standing Order above. **(Attachment C).**

RECOMMENDATION 1: The amended Standing Orders should be **RECOMMENDED** for ADOPTION by Council.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The amended Financial Regulations should be **RECOMMENDED** for ADOPTION by Council.

9 **INTERNAL RISK REGISTER** **(Attachment D)**

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The Town Clerk has reviewed the Internal Risk Register and made no amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: The current Internal Risk Register should be recommended for ADOPTION by Council.

10 **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS**

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

Committee is requested to **NOTE** the first visit of the internal auditor was on 24th January 2023.

The internal audit report (first interim) was NOTED by Council on 7th February 2023.

Committee is requested to **NOTE** this information.

11 **EXTERNAL AUDITS**

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 27th September 2022 (Minute #182 of 2022/23), Epping Town Council resolved to 'opt in' to the External Audit arrangements (which was recommended in this sector) and whereby Council would be allocated an external auditor from 2022-2027.

The external auditor for 2022-2023 and 2026-2027 for Essex will remain as PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Committee is requested to **NOTE** this information.

12 ASSET REGISTER

(Attachment E)

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The current form of the Asset Register was ADOPTED following advice from Peter Lacey of NALC/SLCC and advice from the Audit Commission on 29th March 2010.

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th March 2022, Council RESOLVED to record individual items equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register (Minute #460 (v) of 2021/22).

PLEASE NOTE: The Asset Register records all individual items of £1000 or greater. Council have many assets whose value is less than £1000 and these are recorded in Council's inventories which are updated annually. This is standard practice.

There have some acquisitions and disposals during 2022/23 which are reflected in the Asset Register 2023, as per **Attachment E**.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** the following RECOMMENDATIONS and make appropriate **RECOMMENDATIONS** to Council:

- (i) Council should continue to record assets as individual items with a value equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register;
- (ii) The Asset Register 2023, as per **Attachment E**, should be APPROVED as a correct record of Council's assets at this time;
- (iii) Any revisions to the draft will be presented to full Council in March.

13 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

(Attachment F)

Epping Town Council's complaints procedure was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (vi) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk is pleased to report that Epping Town Council receive very few formal complaints and the office team try to deal with any issues efficiently, so they do not become a complaint. The Town Clerk has made no amendments to the complaints procedure, as this was revised in March 2022.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Complaints Procedure should be APPROVED as the Complaints Procedure for Epping Town Council, with no amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

14 EQUALITY POLICY

(Attachment G)

Epping Town Council's Equality Policy was APPROVED on 11th March 2021 (Minute #471 (ix) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made no amendments. The Equality Policy is provided as per **Attachment G**.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Equality Policy should be APPROVED as the Equality Policy for Epping Town Council.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

15 **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY** (Attachment H)

Epping Town Council's Health & Safety Policy was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (viii) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made no amendments at this time.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Health & Safety Policy should be APPROVED as the Health & Safety Policy for Epping Town Council, with no amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

16 **MEDIA POLICY** (Attachment I)

Epping Town Council's Media Policy was APPROVED on 11th March 2021 (Minute #471 (x) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk considers the policy to be appropriate at the current time and has made no amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Media Policy should be APPROVED as the Media Policy for Epping Town Council, with no amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

17 **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY** (Attachment J)

Epping Town Council's Social Media Policy was APPROVED on 11th March 2021 (Minute #471 (xi) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk considers the policy to be appropriate at the current time and has made one minor amendment.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Social Media Policy should be APPROVED as the Social Media Policy for Epping Town Council, with the minor amendment.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

18 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY** (Attachment K)

Epping Town Council's Community Engagement Policy was APPROVED on 11th March 2021 (Minute #471 (ii) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk considers the policy to be relevant to the Council's aims at the current time, but has made some amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Community Engagement Policy should be APPROVED as the Community Engagement Policy for Epping Town Council, with these amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

19 **DATA PROTECTION POLICY** (Attachment L)

Epping Town Council's Data Protection Policy was APPROVED on 11th March 2021 (Minute #471 (xiii) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made a minor amendment.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Data Protection Policy should be APPROVED as the Data Protection Policy for Epping Town Council, with the minor amendment.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

20 **PUBLICATION SCHEME** (Attachment M)

Epping Town Council's Publication Scheme was APPROVED on 11th March 2021 (Minute #471 (vii) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made some amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Publication Scheme should be APPROVED as the Publication Scheme for Epping Town Council, with these amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

21 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

22 **INSURANCE POLICIES (CONTRACTS) & RECONCILIATION**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972 s111; Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members & Officers) order 2004

Council awarded a three-year contract to Zurich Insurance direct (and a one-year contract to ERS Motor Insurance) on 1st July 2022 (Minute #90 of 2022/23). This used to be reviewed on 1st April each year but was moved to 1st July in 2018. Council review the

policy annually to ensure it is adequate for Council's needs and covers assets, but the provider and policy will remain the same for these three years, apart from operational changes and amendments. The Town Clerk will provide an insurance reconciliation in June 2023 at full Council. Insurance Premium Tax is currently 12% (standard rate, set by Government). The insurance premium for the main policy 2022/23 was £16,508.11. The insurance premium for the motor fleet insurance for 2022/23 was £2481.16.

Please note: the motor fleet insurance contract is only one year in length, but in 2022, Council were not able to leave as they were unable to obtain a Certificate of No Claims from the insurer. This is proving difficult again in 2023.

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 9th July 2019 (Minute #129 of 2019/20), Epping Town Council RESOLVED to take out cyber insurance. Historically this cost £299.99, but this was not sufficient for Council's recent income and expenditure. In July 2022, an augmented policy was agreed (£1012.48 per annum), including IPT at 12%, and will be due for renewal in July 2023. This will be included in the documentation brought to Council in June 2023.

Council's assets must be recorded in an Asset Register which forms part of the externally audited Annual Return each year. It is necessary to ensure the current levels of insurance are adequate for Council's assets on an annual basis. **Please note:** the total approved budget for insurance 2023/24 is £21,970.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** if any further action is required at the current time.

23 DATA PROTECTION (GDPR) OFFICER

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th November 2019 (Minute #312 of 2019/20), following the RECOMMENDATION of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (Minute #279 of 2019/20), Council decided to monitor the situation regarding Data Protection and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and possibly appointing a Data Protection Officer (DPO) at point of need. This has been monitored annually since and REAPPROVED year on year so far. **Please note:** if such a DPO were necessary, the Town Clerk would recommend an independent person, perhaps a retired Clerk or similar, employed on a retaining or ad hoc basis.

The Town Clerk would RECOMMEND that continuing to monitor the situation should be sufficient at the current time.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** whether to **RECOMMEND** to Council continuing with the monitoring of the situation and appointing someone should it be necessary.

24 STAFF TERMS & CONDITIONS/PAYSCALES

(Attachment N)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Epping Town Council staff are governed by the terms and conditions of the NJC (National Joint Council) (set by NALC and SLCC). The current staff pay scales are listed as per **Attachment N**.

The pay scales for 2022 were a flat rate increase of £1925 per member. This represented a higher percentage increase for those on lower salaries than those on higher and 4% was budgeted for.

The pay scales for 2023 have not yet been received. This is quite common and when they are received after the 1st April, salaries are backdated accordingly. The Town Clerk has built an increase of approximately 4% into the 2023/24 budget to reflect this year's increase. The Clerk would not expect to receive any information on pay increases for 2023/24 until towards the end of 2023.

The Essex Pension Fund (which relates to all relevant staff employed with Epping Town Council prior to 2018) employer pension contribution rate from 1st April 2023 is 24.8%. This was 23.3% in 2021 and was set until 2023. The Essex Pension Fund rates for 2024/25 and 2025/26 are 24.8%.

The employer pension contribution rate for NEST (which relates to all relevant staff employed with Epping Town Council after 2018) is currently 8% (a minimum of 3% from the employer, 5% from the employee) (from 6th April 2019 onwards). This is the rate for 2022 and we understand 2023. We have not received any alternative NEST rates for 2023 or beyond at the time of writing.

Committee is requested to **NOTE** this information.

25 STAFFING MATTERS

(Attachment O)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk has provided an update on staffing matters as per **Attachment O**.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** if any further action is required.

26 TOWN CLERK APPRAISAL

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk was formally appointed Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer on 1st February 2016 (Minute #392 of 2016/17). The Town Clerk joined Epping Town Council as Deputy Town Clerk on 5th January 2015 and was made Interim Town Clerk on 14th July 2015 (Minute #100 of 2015/16).

The Town Clerk's Review and Development is now due and will be undertaken in February 2023. The Review and Development process for the Town Clerk will be completed by the Chairman of Council (Cllr B Scruton: 2022-23), who is also the Chairman of the Task & Finish Personnel.

Committee are requested to **NOTE** this information.

(NB: The matters on this agenda have a statutory basis under the Local Government Act 1972 in sections 101 and 111, in addition to those stated.)