



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 McCredie (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, 27th February 2024 at 8pm** for the purpose of transacting the business as set out in the agenda below.

Beverley Rumsey
Town Clerk
21st February 2024

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 24th October 2023. **Please note:** these were presented at the Ordinary Council meeting on 14th November 2023.

6 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (CGAC) from their meeting on 24th October 2023 (Minutes #253–269 of 23/24) were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 14th November 2023 (Minute #272 of 23/24):

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

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 2024** & October 2024 (Dealt with under items 10 & 11)

Internal Audit Programme: October 2024

Statement on Internal Control: October 2024

Insurance Inventory: **February 2024** (Dealt with under agenda item 25)

Asset Register: **February 2024** (Dealt with under agenda item 12)

Internal Risk Register: **February 2024** (Dealt with under agenda item 9)

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **February 2024** & October 2024 (Dealt with under item 27)

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations: **February 2024** (Dealt with under agenda item 8)

Employee Handbook: October 2024

Risk management statement: October 2024

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

There have been no recommended changes to the model Standing Orders (**Attachment B**) since the last review. The Town Clerk has therefore made no changes to this document.

There have been no recommended changes to the model Financial Regulations since the last review, but the auditor has highlighted the need to review Financial Regulation 2.2. (**Attachment C**). The Town Clerk has highlighted this FR and Committee should determine the detail.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Standing Orders (with no amendments) should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Financial Regulations (with no general amendments) should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council, but revision/clarification of Financial Regulation 2.2 should be RECOMMENDED to Council for ADOPTION.

9 INTERNAL RISK REGISTER (Attachment D)

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The Town Clerk has reviewed the Internal Risk Register and made some 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 second visit of the internal auditor will be on 28th February 2024.

The internal audit report (second interim) will be brought to Council once received.

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 2022-2027 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. It was reviewed by Council in October 2012 (Minutes #201 & #222 of 2012/13).

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 7th March 2023, Council RESOLVED to record individual items equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register (Minute #449 (iv) of 2022/23).

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 been no major acquisitions or disposals during 2023/24 which is reflected in the Asset Register 2024, 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 2024, 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 7th March 2023 (Minute #449 (vi) of 2022/23) 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 a very minor wording amendment.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Complaints Procedure should be APPROVED as the Complaints Procedure for Epping Town Council.

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

14 RECRUITMENT POLICY

(Attachment G)

Epping Town Council's Recruitment Policy was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (vii) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made some minor wording changes to the policy. The Recruitment Policy, with these minor revisions, is provided as per **Attachment G**.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Recruitment Policy should be APPROVED as the Recruitment Policy for Epping Town Council, with the amendments made.

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 7th March 2023 (Minute #449 (viii) of 2022/23) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made some amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Health & Safety Policy should be APPROVED as the Health & Safety Policy for Epping Town Council, with these amendments.

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

16 **GRANT AWARDING POLICY** (Attachment I)

Epping Town Council's Grant Awarding Policy was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (ix) of 2022/23) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk considers the policy to be relevant to the Council's aims at the current time and has made only minor wording amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Grant Awarding Policy should be APPROVED as the Grant Awarding Policy for Epping Town Council, with the minor wording amendments.

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

17 **PROCUREMENT POLICY** (Attachment J)

Epping Town Council's Procurement Policy was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (x) of 2022/23) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk considers the policy to be relevant to the Council's aims at the current time and has made no amendments.

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

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

18 **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT** (Attachment K)

Epping Town Council's Training and Development Statement was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (xi) of 2022/23) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk

considers the statement to be relevant to the Council's aims at the current time, but has made some minor amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Training and Development Statement should be APPROVED as the Training and Development Statement for Epping Town Council, with these minor amendments.

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

19 **MARKET POLICY** (Attachment L)

Epping Town Council's Market Policy was APPROVED on 1st December 2021 (Minute #327 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 and has made only minor amendments.

20 **TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY** (Attachment M)

Epping Town Council's Tree Management Policy was APPROVED on 9th October 2018 (Minute #275 of 2018/19) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk considers the policy to be relevant to the Council's aims at the current time and has made a minor wording amendment.

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

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

21 **INVESTMENT STRATEGY** (Attachment N)

Epping Town Council's Investment Strategy was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (xii) of 2022/23) and would be due for review in October 2024. The auditor has made some RECOMMENDATIONS in terms of investments, so the Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) has brought this forward for review at the earliest meeting of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee and made some revisions based on the auditor's comments, as per **Attachment N**.

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

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

22 BALANCE OF TRADE POLICY (MARKET)**(Attachment O)**

Epping Town Council's Balance of Trade Policy for Epping Market was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (xiii) of 2021/22) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made some amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Balance of Trade Policy (Market) should be APPROVED as the Balance of Trade Policy for Epping Town Council's Market, with these amendments.

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

23 CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS POLICY**(Attachment P)**

Epping Town Council's Climate & Environmental Awareness Policy was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (xiv) of 2021/22). The Town Clerk has made no amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** the Climate & Environmental Awareness Policy as per **Attachment P** and **DECIDE** if any amendments or additions are required at the current time.

24 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.

25 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 Municipal on 1st July 2022 (Minute #105 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 2024 at full Council. The policy will renew on 1st July 2024, but as this is a mid-term review, Council have previously AUTHORISED this to be completed by the Town Clerk/RFO in consultation with the Key Member for Finance (Minute #413 of 2022/23) and the Clerk would RECOMMEND this is APPROVED for renewal each year in the same way in the interim (non renewal years). If so, this will be reported to Council at the July 2024 meeting. Insurance Premium Tax is currently 12% (this is expected to remain at 12% for this financial year; it is set by Government). The insurance premium for 2023/24 was £19,820.62, this includes the main insurance policy

and motor fleet insurance. In addition, £387 for engineering inspections and £1262.12 for cyber insurance.

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 9th July 2019 (Minute #129 of 2019/20), Epping Town Council RESOLVED to take out cyber insurance. Council's income and expenditure exceeds £500,000 so the cyber insurance policy required for Epping Town Council is more complex than basic cover. This cost £1262.12 in July 2023 (per annum), including IPT at 12%, and will be due for renewal in July 2024. Cyber insurance information will be included in the documentation brought to Council in June 2024.

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 2024/25 is £26,030.

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

26 **DATA PROTECTION (GDPR) OFFICER** (Attachment Q)

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 the position year on year since. **Please note:** if such a DPO were necessary, the Town Clerk has recommended an independent person, perhaps a retired Clerk or similar, employed on a retaining or ad hoc basis. The Clerk has taken some further advice on this and this should be a suitably qualified person (advice detailed as per **Attachment Q**).

The Town Clerk would RECOMMEND that continuing to monitor the situation should be sufficient at the current time, but if a DPO were necessary in the future, they should be suitably qualified.

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

27 **STAFF PAY SCALES & TERMS & CONDITIONS** (Attachments R & R1)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

(i) **Pay scales**

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 R**.

The pay scales which came into effect on 1st April 2023, were received in November 2023 and backdated. It is very common for any pay awards to arrive up to November of the relevant financial year 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 2024-25 budget.

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 2024 is 24.8% and this applies for 2025 (1st April 2023-1st April 2026). This was raised from 23.3%. 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: 4% from the employee, 1% tax relief) (from 6th April 2019 onwards). This is the rate for 2023. We have not received any alternative NEST rates for 2024 at the time of writing.

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

(ii) Terms and conditions

The Town Clerk has provided some information about staff terms and conditions, as per **Attachment R1**.

Committee is requested to **APPROVE** this **RECOMMENDATION**.

28 STAFFING MATTERS (Attachment S)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

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

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

29 COMPUTER SOFTWARE (Attachment T)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

The Town Clerk has provided some information regarding computers as per **Attachment T**.

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

30 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 2015/16). 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 2024. The Review and Development process for the Town Clerk will be completed by the Chairman of Council (Cllr C Burgess: 2023-24).

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.)