



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

(NB: The Town Mayor to be called upon as a voting member if the Committee would not otherwise be quorate.)

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, 22nd October 2024 at 8pm** for the purpose of transacting the business as set out in the agenda below.

Beverley Rumsey
Town Clerk
16th October 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 27th February 2024.

6 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Governance Advisory Committee met on 27th February 2024 (Minutes #416-445 of 2023/24 refer) and made the following RECOMMENDATIONS, which were APPROVED at the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th March 2024 (Minute #467 of 2023/24).

- (i) Epping Town Council's Standing Orders should be APPROVED, with no amendments;
- (ii) Epping Town Council's Financial Regulations should be RE-APPROVED, with one amendment (~~Attachment C~~);
- (iii) The Internal Risk Register should be RE-APPROVED by Council (~~Attachment D~~);
- (iv) The Asset Register 2024 (~~Attachment E~~), should be APPROVED as a correct record of Council's assets at this time;
- (v) Council should continue to record assets as individual items with a value equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register;
- (vi) The Complaints Procedure (~~Attachment F~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (vii) The Recruitment Policy, with minor amendments (~~Attachment G~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (viii) The Health & Safety Policy, with minor amendments (~~Attachment H~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (ix) The Health & Safety Policy, with minor amendments (~~Attachment H~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (x) The Grant Awarding Policy, with minor amendments (~~Attachment I~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (xi) The Procurement Policy, with minor amendments (~~Attachment J~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (xii) The Training and Development Statement, with no amendments (~~Attachment K~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (xiii) The Market Policy, with no amendments (~~Attachment L~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (xiv) The Tree Management Policy, with minor amendments, (~~Attachment M~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;

- (xv) The Investment Strategy Policy, with amendments, (~~Attachment N~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (xvi) The Balance of Trade Policy (Market), with minor amendments, (~~Attachment O~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (xvii) The Climate & Environmental Awareness Policy, with minor amendments, (~~Attachment P~~) should be RE-APPROVED as a policy of Council;
- (xviii) The insurance policies & reconciliation would be brought to Council in advance of the July 2024 meeting;
- (xix) The situation regarding a Data Protection Officer should be monitored and someone engaged at point of need;
- (xx) Staff matters and terms and conditions should be APPROVED (**please note:** these were reported under agenda item 21 – in an exclusion of press and public item).

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act 1972, sch 12, para 42; Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014, Local Government Act 1972, s111, Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members & Officers) order 2004, Local Government Act 1972, s112, Local Government Act 1972, s101 ;

*Please note: Attachments with a line through refer to the Attachment number that was issued at the relevant meeting discussed (eg ~~Attachment K~~)

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

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: **October 2024** & February 2025

(Dealt with under agenda items 8 & 10)

Internal Audit Programme: **October 2024 (Dealt with under agenda item 9)**

Statement on Internal Control: **October 2024 (Dealt with under agenda item 11)**

Risk Management Statement: **October 2024 (Dealt with under agenda item 11)**

Insurance Inventory: February 2025

Asset Register: February 2025

Internal Risk Register: February 2025

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **October 2024** & February 2025

(Dealt with under agenda item 16)

Standing Orders: February 2025

Financial Regulations: ~~February 2025~~ **October 2024 (Dealt with under agenda item 14).**

Please note: this would normally be reviewed at the February Corporate Governance meeting, but there have been new Model Financial Regulations issued in May 2024

Employee Handbook: **October 2024 (Dealt with under agenda item 12)**

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 is requested to **NOTE** the above information.

8 INTERNAL AUDIT

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Committee are requested to **NOTE** that the first work of the internal auditor will be on 27th and 28th November 2024.

The internal audit report (first interim) will be brought to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 10th December 2024, once received.

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

9 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRAMME (Attachment B)

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

In 2020, the internal auditing programme of works covering 2020-2025 was APPROVED at the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th November 2020 (Minute #299 of 2020/21), as per **Attachment B**. Council requested that Auditing Solutions Ltd change the particular auditor that covers Epping Town Council's work, halfway through this five-year programme (2022-23) and this was done at the end of the 2022/23 financial year. In 2025, it will be necessary to consider the programme again when the current five-year programme expires.

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

10 EXTERNAL AUDIT (Attachment C)

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Members are requested to **NOTE** the externally audited Annual Return for 2023/24. The AGAR has previously been NOTED by Full Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 10th September 2024. (Minute #188 of 2024/25).

The Town Clerk was pleased to report there are no qualifications or comments on the Annual Return (and therefore no matters needing attention).

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

11 **REVIEW OF STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL & RISK MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**
(Attachments D & E)

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Council is required to maintain a Statement of Internal Control (**Attachment D**) and a Risk Management Statement (**Attachment E**) and ensure that each is reviewed annually. The Town Clerk has made some additions to both documents.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** these statements and additions and make appropriate **RECOMMENDATIONS** to Council.

12 **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK** **(Attachments F & F1)**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk has reviewed the current Employee Handbook (**Attachment F**) and has made a number of amendments. The broad content is currently adequate for the staffing situation and structure at Epping Town Council, but the Handbook would benefit from an external review.

RECOMMENDATION: The Employee Handbook should be **APPROVED** with the amendments highlighted, as per **Attachment F1**.

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

13 **HALF-YEAR FINANCIAL SUMMARY POSITION** **(Attachment G)**

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th October 2024, the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer advised that the draft budget, first estimates, would be considered at the Ordinary Council meeting in December 2024. It will be unlikely that the tax base figure arrives in time for the November meeting (from Epping Forest District Council). The second, more finely tuned accurate figures would be provided at the January Council meeting as usual, when the final budget is set, in line with legislation.

The overview summary position showing the first half of the financial year (1st April 2024-30th September 2024) was presented to full Council at the meeting on 8th October 2024. This showed Council have performed fairly well against the income and expenditure budget, with no immediate causes for concern.

The Clerk/RFO has highlighted the need for attention to reserves in the forthcoming budget setting process.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** what **RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS** should be made to Council, if any.

14 NEW FINANCIAL REGULATIONS: 2024 (Attachments H & H1)

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

In May 2024, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) advised of new model Financial Regulations, as per **Attachment H**. NALC have explained that due to significant revisions and updates, the new regulations should be treated as a new document rather than a mere revision of the previous version. The existing Financial Regulations are provided as per **Attachment H1** for reference.

The Town Clerk has analysed the current and new documents to ensure Epping Town Council's Financial Regulations October 2024 are the latest version covering everything required.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** if they are happy to **RECOMMEND** the new Financial Regulations (as per **Attachment H**) to Council for ADOPTION.

15 CEMETERY REGULATIONS (Attachment I)

Statutory Basis: Open Spaces Act 1906, s9,10

Epping Town Council allow dogs to visit the cemetery providing they are kept on a lead at all times. The Cemetery Regulations do not reflect this. The Town Clerk has amended the Cemetery Regulations to include this point.

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

16 STALL ALLOCATION POLICY (Attachment J)

Statutory Basis: Food Act 1984, s50, s60

In order to allocate stalls in a uniform manner, the Town Clerk has drafted a Stall Allocation Policy for seasonal (Christmas) markets, which protects Epping's Monday Market, but promotes competition and variety. The policy is provided as per **Attachment J**.

Committee is requested to **RECOMMEND** the policy as a Policy of Council.

17 INVESTMENTS (Attachments K & L)

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

(i) Investment Strategy (Attachment K)

Epping Town Council's Investment Strategy was APPROVED on 12th March 2024 (Minute #467 (xiv) of 2023/24) following suggestions from Council's internal auditor. It would now be due for its periodic bi-annual review. The Town Clerk has made no amendments at the current time.

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

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

(ii) **Investing: CCLA (Churches, Charities & Local Authorities)** (Attachment L)

In accordance with the Investment Strategy (Part B (iii) and conversations with the auditor, the Town Clerk has provided some information from CCLA, as per **Attachment L**.

Council hold a Nationwide 95 Day Business Saver with a current annual interest rate (02-10-24) of 4.3%.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** whether to pursue **Attachment L/DECIDE** what to do.

18 **SAFEGUARDING POLICY** (Attachment M)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

Epping Town Council's Safeguarding Policy was rewritten and APPROVED on 8th August 2022 (Minute #138 (of 2022/23) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made no amendments. The Safeguarding Policy is provided as per **Attachment M**.

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

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

19 **VOLUNTEERING POLICY** (Attachment N)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

Epping Town Council's Volunteering Policy was APPROVED on 8th August 2022 (Minute #139 (of 2022/23) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made no amendments. The Safeguarding Policy is provided as per **Attachment N**.

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

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

20 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.

21 STAFF TERMS & CONDITIONS/PAYSCALES (Attachment O)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Epping Town Council staff are governed by the terms of conditions set by the NJC (National Joint Council) (set by NALC and SLCC). The current spine points are included as per **Attachment O**.

At the time of writing, there has been no staff pay award for 2024/25. This means year on year staff are working for less. The Clerk is expecting a staff pay award for 2024/25 and if this is the case, this will be very late again and backdated. The Clerk/RFO will build 4% into the income and expenditure budget setting process to mirror previous increases.

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

22 STAFFING MATTERS (Attachment P)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

An overall staffing update is provided as per **Attachment P**.

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

23 HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)/STAFF SUPPORT AND HEALTH & SAFETY SUPPORT (Attachment Q)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk has provided some information about HR/staff support and Health and Safety support, as per **Attachment Q**.

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

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