

NOTICE OF MEETING

Finance & General Purposes Committee

7.45pm on Tuesday 23 March 2021 (Virtual meeting)

To Councillors

Mrs Barnard, Ms Dulieu, Fitzwilliams, Strudley and Mrs Wallen

You are summoned to attend a virtual meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 7.45pm

The meeting will take place on the Zoom platform. Please use the link in the e-mail or use the following details

Meeting ID: 819 9405 1371

Passcode: 987774

Any apologies for absence should be communicated to the Clerk ahead of the meeting.



Jason Mawer

Clerk to the Council

The seven principles of public life

Selflessness | Integrity | Objectivity | Accountability | Openness | Honesty | Leadership

AGENDA

Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee

7.45pm on Tuesday 23 March 2021 (Virtual meeting)

Sound recording, photography, filming and use of social media at meetings that are held in public are permitted. Those wishing to record proceedings are however advised to contact the Parish Clerk for further information before the start of the meeting. **This meeting will be recorded by the Clerk through the Zoom platform to assist with the production of the minutes of the meeting.**

| No. | Item | Page |
|------------|--|-------------|
| 001. | Apologies for absence | |
| 002. | Declarations of interest Members are asked to declare any disclosable interest or affected interest in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting. | |
| 003. | Minutes of the previous meeting To approve the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee of 16 February 2021 | 3 |
| 004. | Matters arising from the previous meeting | 5 |
| 005. | Finance update to end February 2021 To receive an update on the finances to the end of February 2021. | 6 |
| 006. | Potential funding for a response to the Bracknell Forest Local Plan | 7 |
| 007. | Policy Development Framework To consider and recommend the Policy Development Framework | 9 |
| 008. | Complaints Policy To consider revised proposals for the operation of the Staffing Committee following the annual meeting. | 19 |
| 009. | Financial management supporting documents A summary of new financial management supporting documents to provide certainty and transparency for decision making and operations. | 28 |
| 010. | Future agenda items and date of the next meeting The next meeting will be on Thursday 22 April 2021. | 30 |
| 011. | Closure of the meeting | |

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

held **virtually** on **Tuesday 16 February 2021** at **7.45pm**

Present: Councillors Strudley (Chair), Mrs Barnard, Ms Dulieu and Fitzwilliams

In attendance: The Parish Clerk and Cllr-elect McCracken

001. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Wallen

002. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

003. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 13 January 2021 were circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Approval of the minutes was proposed by Cllr Ms Dulieu and seconded by Cllr Fitzwilliams and the minutes were **APPROVED** by members present.

The Clerk checked the notes from the meeting of 13 January and corrected the minutes to show that Cllr Mrs Barnard tendered apologies and was not present.

004. Matters arising from the previous meeting

The Clerk advised members that the Complaints Policy would be presented at the March meeting of the committee.

005. Financial Report

The Financial Report to the end of January 2021 was circulated to members ahead of the meeting. An update on debt would be presented at the March meeting.

The Clerk chased the VAT refund and expected this shortly.

The report was noted.

006. Risk Register

The risk register was circulated to members ahead of the meeting. Members had made comments ahead of the meeting and the Clerk informed members of changes made resulting from this.

It was agreed that the draft would be recirculated with other minor points raised at the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr Ms Dulieu that the risk register be recommended to full council, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Barnard and APPROVED by members present.

007. Staffing Committee

Proposals for restructuring the Staffing Committee to be independent of the Finance & General Purposes Committee were circulated to members ahead of the meeting along with terms of reference.

Members agreed that the proposals should go to full council ahead of the annual meeting in May. This was proposed by Cllr Ms Dulieu, seconded by Cllr Fitzwilliams.

The creation of the Staffing Committee would be included in the updated standing orders.

008. Responsible Financial Officer update

The Clerk updated on the appointment of the new Finance Officer, who would take up their role on 1 March. The Clerk discussed with members a protocol of contact moving forward when the Finance Officer took over day to day processing from April. The Clerk would look to clarify roles splitting financial policy and strategy from transactional activity.

009. Future agenda items and date of the next meeting

Items for future agenda items were circulated to members. The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 7.45pm.

010. Closure of the meeting

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

MATTERS ARISING

Asset Register

The Clerk is completing the asset register as part of the year end process and this will be presented at the next meeting.

FINANCIAL UPDATE TO THE END OF FEBRUARY 2021

The report will follow separately.

FUNDING A PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE BRACKNELL LOCAL PLAN

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report proposes that the committee make funding available to the Planning & Transport Committee to commission advice from planning consultants to help develop a response to the Bracknell Forest Local Plan.

1.2 The basis on whose funding from the 2021-22 budget are included in this report.

2.0 Background

2.1 The pre-submission version of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP) will begin a consultation period on 26 March. The parish council is a consultee and will consider a response to the plans.

2.2 The BFLP proposes two sites in Warfield, 2,000 homes and a science park at Jealott's Hill and 33 homes in land north of Herschel Grange.

2.3 The Jealott's Hill proposal includes the removal of green belt status under the principle of 'exceptional circumstances'. During the last consultation period on the BFLP the council was unconvinced that exceptional circumstances as required by the NPPF para. 136 were met as well as other elements of the proposals.

2.4 The council was opposed to the proposals for land north of Herschel Grange during the last consultation period as the site was outside of the settlement boundary and the proposed development would have an urbanising impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

2.5 At the Planning & Transport committee meeting of 16 March proposals on how to respond to the consultation were discussed and it was agreed the Clerk would undertake initial work and report back to the committee at the meeting of 6 April.

3.0 Professional support

3.1 The Clerk identified that the audience for the pre-submission response would be the planning inspector considering the BFLP rather than BFC. Having considered options since the committee meeting of 16 March the Clerk concluded that some professional advice from planning specialists would assist the response to the BFLP, particularly when building a case around exceptional circumstances and the justification for continuing to include the land at Herschel Grange.

3.2 The Clerk has spoken with the chair of the Planning & Transport committee who has agreed this would be a sensible approach to take if the remainder of the committee agree.

3.3 The Clerk has approached the consultants advising the council on the Warfield Neighbourhood Plan to identify if they could support the council if formally requested. The consultants were identified because of their knowledge of the area from their work on the plan and for their expertise as one of the leading consultants in this area of work. They have indicated that they could support us and that we would probably need three days of support, to review the evidence, draft a response and finalise this once considered by council.

3.4 A proposal will go to the next Planning & Transport committee to commission this work if the funding is identified.

4.0 Authorising funding

4.1 A decision for funding would usually be made to full council, but with the next meeting not taking place until 14 April, which leaves little time for the work to be completed ahead of the consultation period ending.

4.2 Financial regulation 11.1 ii permits the awarding of a contract for specialist services (planning consultants are listed) without the need for the other financial regulations to be applied (i.e., obtaining quotes or tenders from multiple providers).

4.3 Financial regulations section 4 (budgetary control and authority to spend) allows an a duly authorised committee to spend up to £25,000.

4.4 As there is no budget for this expenditure, the committee is asked to permit funding from the unused funding for the 2021 Village Fete. This approach does not increase the total budget for the year, as it comes from existing funding.

4.5 If approved, the Clerk will perform a budget virement for the local plan response. The Planning & Transport committee can then agree the project with the consultants.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 The committee permit a budget virement of £2,000 to fund the local plan response if requested by the Planning & Transport committee.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report contains the draft Policy Development Framework for consideration. The framework sets out the approach the council will follow in the development and review of policies. The aim of the framework is to deliver consistency and transparency and identify the role of officers and members in the process.

2.0 The framework

- 2.1 The framework has been developed to provide members, officers and the public with a clear process and approach to policy development within the council. As the council continues to grow and in the delivery of services as well as requirements of government or legislation, policies will continue to be required and development.
- 2.2 The framework sets out the differences between policy, strategy and procedure and the roles played by officers and members in their development. Councillors are responsible for setting policy and strategy, with officers producing initial drafts and writing documents to meet the policy wishes of members. Policies and strategies must be lawful, and the Clerk will advise members accordingly during development. Officers will be proactive in their support to members during the development of policy.
- 2.3 Policies and strategies may be developed for the council (e.g., HR, data protection, complaints) or for specific operational activity (investments, lettings, allotments).
- 2.4 The framework is designed to create consistency across policies and ensure members have sufficient information on the impact of policies on the council. This will be delivered through impact assessments that will be presented alongside a policy when it is considered. Impact assessments are an important tool in decision making and should assist members in review and consideration.
- 2.5 As the document makes clear, impact assessments will be in a basic form. Appendix 1 contains information on Equality Impact Assessments. The council has a duty to consider equality duty, the recorded assessment will demonstrate this has been carried out, thus demonstrating compliance with the law. The impact assessments will also consider other important considerations for members such as does it relate to the parish plan, financial and resource impacts, risk, and sustainability impacts.
- 2.6 The framework also defines the format of policy documents, so they follow a standard format. The Clerk will be responsible for ensuring a house style is applied to policies in terms of written form and visual presentation to provide consistency across documents.
- 2.6 The framework also sets out the approval process for policies. The process involves the responsible committee chair early in the process. This means the chair knows policy development is taking place and that they can act as a policy champion following review and present and propose the policy to full council for approval. This has been proposed as a way of demonstrating the responsibility members have for setting policy and strategy.

3.0 Recommendation

Members are asked to review the Policy Development Framework and to recommend consideration by full council.

Policy Development Framework

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Warfield Parish Council requires a robust framework for the development, approval and management of policies and other associated documents. This framework aims to ensure that:

- There is a consistent and clear approach to policy development, consultation, approval, dissemination / communication, access to documents and review
- The council complies with relevant legislation, governance, audit, and controls assurance requirements
- Policy processes are appropriate for existing or new organisational arrangements
- The impact of policies is fully assessed and understood
- Policies in use are current, relevant, and up to date
- The council meets its commitments including equalities into its functions.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy sets out the route to be followed when developing or updating policies, strategies and procedures and introducing them within the organisation. The following broad definitions are applied:

Policy - statement of intent, describing the approach or course of action the organisation is taking in respect of a particular issue.

Strategy – long term plan setting out the organisation’s major objectives and broad actions to achieve them

Procedure - detailed steps taken to fulfil a policy

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Primary roles

Councillors are responsible for setting policy and strategy

Parish Clerk and officers are responsible for operations and procedural arrangements

3.2 Defined roles

Parish Clerk - Overall responsibility for policy framework. Author and lead for the policy development including the approvals process and appropriate assessments.

Responsible committee – responsible for reviewing and commenting on new or updated policies and the impact assessment and making recommendations to full council.

Responsible committee chair – initially work with the Parish Clerk to bring policies to the lead committee and to take the policy to council as part of the approval process.

Full council – the approval body for policies and strategies.

Staff members – All staff must ensure their practice is in line with current policies, strategies, and procedures.

- 3.3 The Parish Clerk as part of the impact assessment will identify the responsible committee, this will include the circumstances where the policy suggestion has come from a specific committee.
- 3.4 As procedures are operational documents, the Parish Clerk will liaise with the responsible committee chair to consider if the document requires oversight by the responsible committee.

4.0 Policy Development

- 4.1 Policies, strategies and procedures may be developed for one of the following:
 - The council as a whole
 - For specific operational activity
- 4.2 There should be no duplication of policies.
- 4.3 All policies, strategies and procedures should have an identified lead member and responsible officer.
- 4.4 Policies, strategies and procedures should meet the following standards:
 - Be evidence based
 - Have a clear rationale for change
 - Be based on robust information about any affected group and the likely impact
 - Be clear about the scope
 - Include (where appropriate) consultation and engagement with affected parties
 - Be based on any available assessment of existing policy and systems and the likely impact of the proposed new policy, strategy, or procedure.
 - Meet the requirements set out in this Policy Development Framework in relation to impact assessment, format and style, approvals, communication and dissemination, audit, and review
 - Able to be monitored and evaluated

5.0 Impact assessment

- 5.1 Impact assessment is an integral part of the process of developing policy, strategy, and procedure. As a minimum, all policies should consider the following:
 - Financial implications
 - Staff and resource requirements
 - Service delivery implications
 - Risk (financial and reputational)
 - Impact on environment
 - Equalities impact (EQIA)*. see Appendix 1
- 5.2 A checklist to guide impact assessment is attached at appendix 2. The completed checklist should be made available to the group or committee approving the policy.
- 5.3 Equalities Impact Assessments should be published alongside the policy when approved.

6.0 Format

- 6.1 Policies should be in a standard format which meets disability access standards, in accordance with the template at Appendix 3. Drafts should clearly state version number.
- 6.2 All policies should be in Source Sans Pro font with a preferred font size 12. Type should be justified on the left. All sentences should be in lower case. Policies should be printed in a black font on a plain background.
- 6.3 Policies should clearly state the following:
 - Date of approval
 - Date for review
- 6.4 Consideration should be given to the expected audience for the policy and the level of understanding of technical terms. Policies should be written in plain English avoiding the use of jargon where possible and with acronyms set out in full.
- 6.5 Alternative formats will be made available upon request.
- 6.6 Electronic versions of policies should be in pdf files where possible or read only files to prevent alteration.

7.0 Approval process

- 7.1 New or updated policies will initially be discussed between the Parish Clerk and Responsible committee chair ahead of presentation to the responsible committee for initial scrutiny, review, and comment. The committee may decide one of the following:
 1. The committee require further work and review of the policy or requires a specific consultation exercise to be conducted
 2. The committee recommends the policy be presented to full council with minor changes, not requiring further review
 3. The committee recommends the policy in its final presented version
- 7.2 Policies, strategies and procedures presented for approval should include information on the impact assessment and implications of the policy to enable informed decisions to be made – using the template at Appendix 2.
- 7.3 Policies should receive final approval from the full council. Documents submitted for approval should have completed all necessary revisions and include the impact assessments. The responsible committee chair will propose the policy for approval by members. Full council can either approve the policy or ask the responsible committee to review the policy further.

8.0 Communication and dissemination

- 8.1 The intranet site will be the primary location for all policies, strategies, and procedures. Relevant policies, strategies and procedures will also be published on the council's public website.
- 8.2 The Parish Clerk will be responsible for disseminating the policy to staff and contractors and for publishing the documents as per 8.1.

9.0 Review

- 9.1 All policies, strategies or procedures should be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum, or sooner if there is a specific legislative or service requirement or change in guidance, law, or practice.
- 9.2 Reviews should take account of:
- the evaluation or audit of the current policy, strategy, or procedure
 - changes to organisational and national policy and context
 - the ongoing requirement for the policy, strategy, or procedure
- 9.3 The Parish Clerk is responsible for ensuring that review takes place at the appropriate time.

10.0 Implementation of the policy development framework

- 10.1 The Parish Clerk will be responsible for the implementation of this framework.
- 10.2 This framework will be reviewed 3 years from the date of approval.

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

- 1.0 The Equality Duty is a duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It ensures public duties consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.
- 1.1 Schedule 19 of the Equality Act 2010 includes parish councils in the public bodies list.
- 1.2 The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment, nor is there is any practical need to conduct one. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making. That will entail understanding the potential effects of the organisation’s activities on different people, but there is no prescribed process for doing this. Keeping a simple record of how decisions were reached will help public bodies show how they considered the Equality Duty. The simple Equality Impact Assessment included in the impact assessment will be part of that record.
- 1.3 The Equality Duty is outlined in the Warfield Parish Council Equality and Diversity policy (September 2019)

Appendix 2 – Approvals cover sheet

This sheet will show appropriate details including the Impact Assessment

Name of Policy, Strategy or Procedure

Name of Responsible committee

Name of Lead officer and Responsible committee chair

Previous policy version (if applicable)

| Impact Assessment | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| | Requirement | Comment |
| Equalities | A simple equalities impact assessment has been carried out | <i>Any relevant comments</i> |
| Financial | Cost and resource implications are fully understood, and budgets identified | <i>include details of likely cost and source of any funding</i> |
| Parish Plan | Does the policy relate to the Parish Plan | <i>include details where relevant</i> |
| Risk | Any risks to the organisation are fully understood and agreed | <i>confirm that appropriate risk assessment and controls are in place</i> |
| Service Delivery | Implications for service delivery are fully understood and agreed. | <i>include details where relevant</i> |
| Staffing | Implications for staff are fully understood and agreed. | <i>confirm that this has been considered</i> |
| Sustainability | Impact on the environment (e.g. carbon emissions; travel) is understood and agreed. | <i>confirm that impact and any action to minimize impact have been considered</i> |
| Consultation | Where applicable, there has been consultation with those affected by the policy, including those with responsibility for implementation. | <i>include information on who was consulted with and response to any significant issues raised</i> |

Title

Sub-title if required

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduces the topic and includes reference and applicability of relevant legislation, definitions, and context. This section should also include detail of the purpose and objectives.

2.0 Scope

2.1 The target audience for the policy or procedure.

3.0 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 expectations of staff as a whole and any specific roles and responsibilities associated with specific posts

4.0 BODY OF POLICY OR PROCEDURE

5.0 Review

5.1 Arrangements for review, including review date or any triggers for review (e.g. expected legislation)

6.0 References

6.1 Supporting Information (may be included in main policy document, or in separate supporting documentation)

6.2 In addition to the policy there will be (if required)

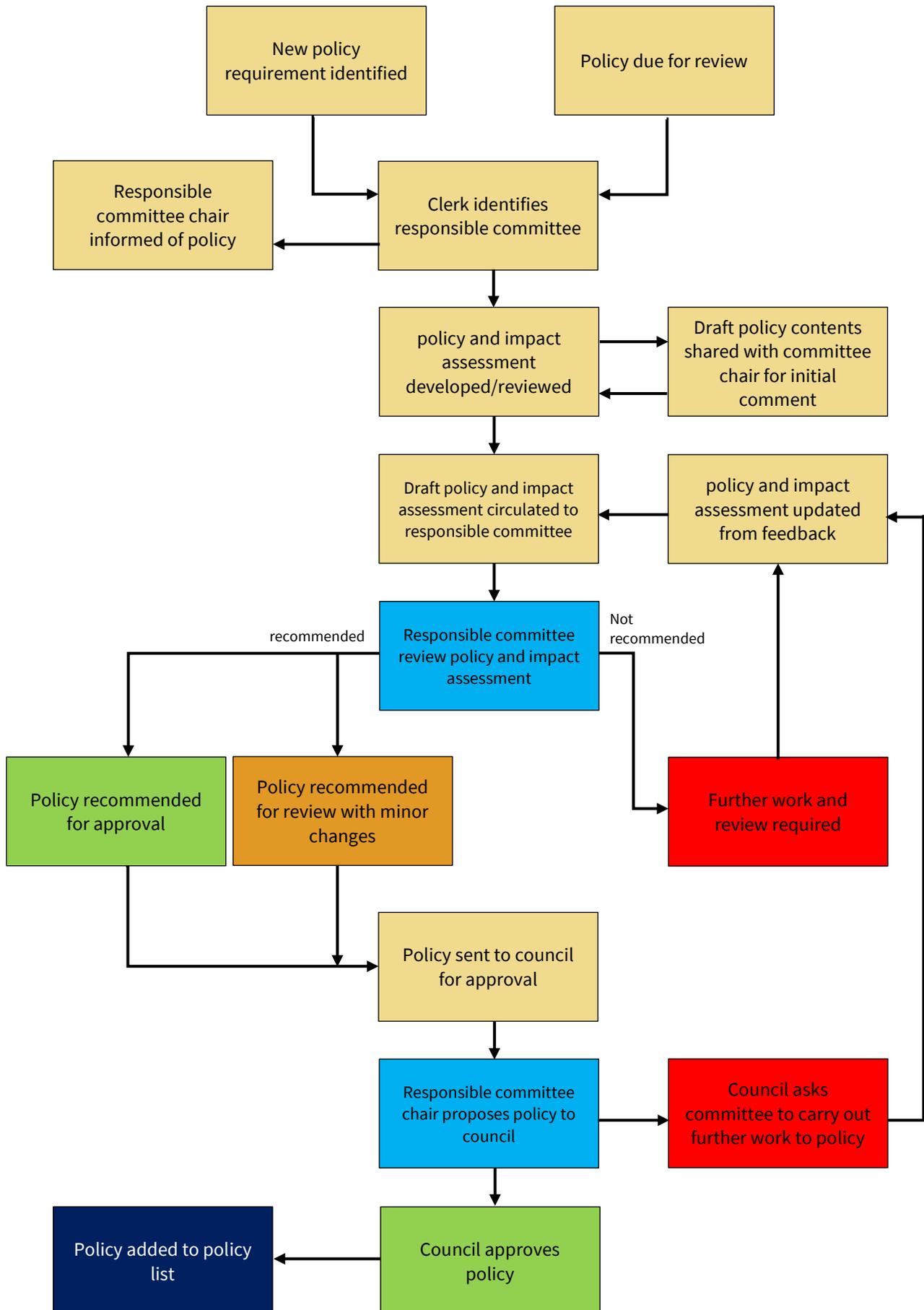
Implementation Plan

To include any training required and clear plan for communications with anyone expected to be aware of or implement the policy

Impact Assessment

Details of the implication of the policy including risk assessment, EQIA and other impacts as set out in the policy development framework

Appendix 4 – Policy process



COMPLAINTS POLICY

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report contains the draft Complaints Policy for approval by committee.

2.0 Updates

2.1 The policy has been updated to remove references to comments and compliments, except to say they welcome where appropriate.

2.2 Other language has been tidied up as per the committees wish.

2.3 The draft policy has been reviewed by the chair of the committee as per members wishes.

4.0 Recommendation

The committee recommend the draft policy to full council.

Appendix 1 - Impact Assessment

| | Comment |
|-------------------------|---|
| Equalities | <i>The written policy will be made an accessible document on the council’s website and will be accompanied by a ‘plain English’ guide to the process. Complaints may be made in writing or verbally.</i> |
| Financial | <i>This policy has no impact on the council’s finances.</i> |
| Parish Plan | <i>include details where relevant</i> |
| Risk | <i>The policy reduces risk to the council by putting in place a clear process to be followed.</i> |
| Service Delivery | <i>This policy has no impact on service delivery.</i> |
| Staffing | <i>There is no direct affect on staff or staff requirements</i> |
| Sustainability | <i>This policy has no impact on sustainability.</i> |
| Consultation | <i>This policy has been considered and reviewed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee and will be subject to review by full council.</i> |

Complaints Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Warfield Parish Council aims to deliver high quality services where the customer is at the heart of everything it does. The council welcomes all customer feedback and aim to deal with customers' concerns in a fair and consistent way. We learn from best practice, your experiences, and our mistakes to improve in the future.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all parties that have a relationship with the parish council, including members of the public, hirers of facilities, suppliers of goods and services and contractors. For the purposes of this document these parties are referred to as customers.

3.0 The Policy

3.1 A customer has a right to:

- Complain
- Be listened to
- Have their complaint investigated and resolved as quickly as possible
- Have their concerns taken seriously

3.2 We aim to:

- Be accessible and uncomplicated
- Promote customer satisfaction
- Identify areas where services can be improved
- Learn from good practice
- Learn from mistakes
- Implement improvements in processes and procedures

3.3 Warfield Parish Council promotes the right of its customers to raise a concern or make a complaint if they think something has been done incorrectly or if they feel it has been addressed poorly. Similarly, customers may complain if they feel something that ought to have been done has not been done.

3.4 Complaints will be investigated objectively, fairly, and thoroughly. The aim will be to resolve the complaint. Mechanisms will be in place to ensure that lessons are learnt, and improvements implemented.

3.5 The council also promotes the right of customers to comment on a policy or council decision which may affect them and express a compliment if things have gone well for them. These should be forwarded to the Parish Clerk.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 Complaint:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet with the quality of a service or with a failure to provide a previously agreed service, or with the attitude or behaviour of a member of staff or councillor

4.2 Comment:

A comment is a general statement about policies, practices, or a service, which have an impact on everyone and not just one individual. A comment can be positive or negative in nature. Comments may question policies and practices, make suggestions for new services or for improving existing services.

4.3 Compliment:

An expression of praise. It is a positive statement about a service provided by or on behalf of the Council, or about the helpfulness, attitude, or approach of a member of staff.

5.0 When the Complaints Procedure is Not Appropriate

5.1 The council's complaints procedure will not be used in respect of the following types of complaint:

5.2 Financial irregularity

5.2.1 The Parish Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) will provide an explanation of the item.

5.2.2 If the complainant is not satisfied, the Parish Clerk will advise the complainant of their statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts pursuant to Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. On any matter, it may be necessary for the Parish Clerk to consult the auditor.

5.3 Criminal activity

5.3.1 The Parish Clerk should refer the complainant to the police.

5.4 Member conduct

5.4.1 In the event of a complaint relating to a Member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, the complainant will be advised to make their complaint to the Monitoring Officer at Bracknell Forest Council.

5.5 Employee conduct

5.5.1 A complaint relating to the conduct of an employee will be dealt with via the council's Disciplinary Policy by the Parish Clerk, or, if the Parish Clerk is implicated, through the Chairman of the council.

5.5.2 Complaints that an employee may have about a colleague will be dealt with in accordance with the council's Grievance Policy. Complaints that an employee may have about a Member will be referred to the Parish Clerk or, if the Parish Clerk is implicated, through the Chairman of the council.

6.0 Time limit for making a complaint

6.1 The council's aim is to put things right if they go wrong as quickly as possible, so it is important to recognise there is a six-month time limit (from the date of the incident giving cause for the complaint) for making a complaint. However, the time limit may be extended if it is still possible to consider the complaint effectively and efficiently or if there are other circumstances which may enable resolution of the complaint.

7.0 Confidentiality

7.1 The council will take care to maintain confidentiality where circumstances demand, e.g. where matters concern sensitive information or where third parties are concerned.

7.2 The name, address and other details of any complainant will remain confidential and only shared with those investigating any complaint. The council will not disclose your details to any party outside of the council without the consent of the complainant.

8.0 Unreasonable or vexatious complaints

8.1 There will be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to proceed when the complaint clearly has no reasonable basis, or where the council has already taken reasonable action in response, or some other action has been taken.

8.2 The Parish Clerk may, in such circumstances, decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complainant and will inform the complainant to this effect, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response. If such a step is taken, it will be reported to the Chairman of the council.

9.0 Anonymous complaints

9.1 Anonymous complaints will be reviewed by the Parish Clerk but cannot be progressed through the Complaints Policy.

10.0 How to make contact

10.1 A customer can make a complaint, compliment, or comment either in person or by:

- By post to the Parish Clerk at the Parish Council office
- By e-mail to clerk@warfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk
- By telephone - 01344 457777
- In person at the Parish Office, 7 County Lane, Warfield, RG42 3JP

The preferred method of receiving complaints is in writing by post or e-mail.

11.0 The Complaints Procedure

11.1 Unfortunately things do not always go as planned or people feel upset or aggrieved by an action taken. It is for these reasons that the Parish Council operates a complaints procedure, to ensure that we always serve our customers fairly, courteously, professionally and in a non-discriminatory way. The council's aim is to put things right if they go wrong as quickly as possible. All staff are trained to deal with routine difficulties as they arise.

11.2 The process consists of three stages, which will follow these steps:

- **Recording your complaint:** the person receiving your complaint will record it. This enables us to monitor the number and type of complaints.

- **Acknowledging your complaint:** whenever possible your complaint will be dealt with at the first point of contact. If this is not possible your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days and you will be given the details of the person looking into the matter.
- **Responding to your complaint:** the person responsible for responding to your complaint will contact you to agree the best way to deal with your complaint. The council's aim is to give you a full response within 14 working days. If for any reason we cannot do this, we will let you know when you can expect to receive a response. In any event we would endeavour to respond within 21 working days.
- **Room for error:** if we have made a mistake we will apologise and try to put things right. We will explain what actions we intend to take as a result of your complaint.
- **Your right to respond:** on receipt of a response, you will have up to 21 working days in which to decide whether to accept or reject the actions/ recommendations we have stated to resolve your complaint.

11.3 Stage 1

11.3.1 Many complaints can be dealt with quickly and satisfactorily at stage 1. In the first instance, please contact the Parish Clerk, tell them your complaint and in most cases the complaint can be dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties.

11.4 Stage 2

11.4.1 If you are not happy with the outcome or response at stage 1, you can request a review by the Parish Clerk and the appropriate chair of the relevant supervisory committee or (depending on the nature of the complaint) the Chairman of the council. There will be a thorough review and where necessary further investigation of your case following the deadlines in the guidance and timescale outlined above.

11.5 Stage 3

11.5.1 If you are still not satisfied with the response from the outcome at stage 2, you should contact The Parish Clerk who will arrange for the complaint to be dealt with by a panel of three members drawn from the council. Any member involved at stage 2 may not participate as a panel member.

11.5.2 The Complainant will be invited to attend a meeting and to submit copies (at least 7 clear working days in advance) of any correspondence or details that they wish the panel to be informed of. The Council will provide the Complainant with copies of any documentation which it wishes to rely on at the meeting (at least 7 clear working days in advance of the meeting).

11.5.3 The Complainant may be accompanied by or represented by one other person at the meeting if they wish.

11.5.4 The panel may not be able to reach a decision at this meeting as more information may be required to make a fully informed decision. The Complainant will be advised of this, along with details of how the matter will be further considered.

11.5.5 The decision of the Committee will be confirmed in writing to the complainant within seven working days of the decision being reached.

11.6 Stage 3 completes the parish council's complaints procedure.

12.0 How will we put things right?

12.1 If we have made a mistake we will apologise and tell you what action we will take to ensure the same situation does not arise again for you or other customers.

15.0 Freedom of information requests

15.1 If your complaint makes any requests for provision of documents or information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, then this act will be followed and the appropriate rules, regulations and schedule for the act will be followed (either instead of or as well as the complaints policy).

16.0 Evaluation and monitoring

16.1 The council will ensure that full records are kept of the nature and treatment of every complaint considered under this procedure. Particular attention will be paid to the lessons learnt, nature of complaints and trends, the timeliness of responses and resolutions.

DRAFT

Complaints Process

STAGE 1



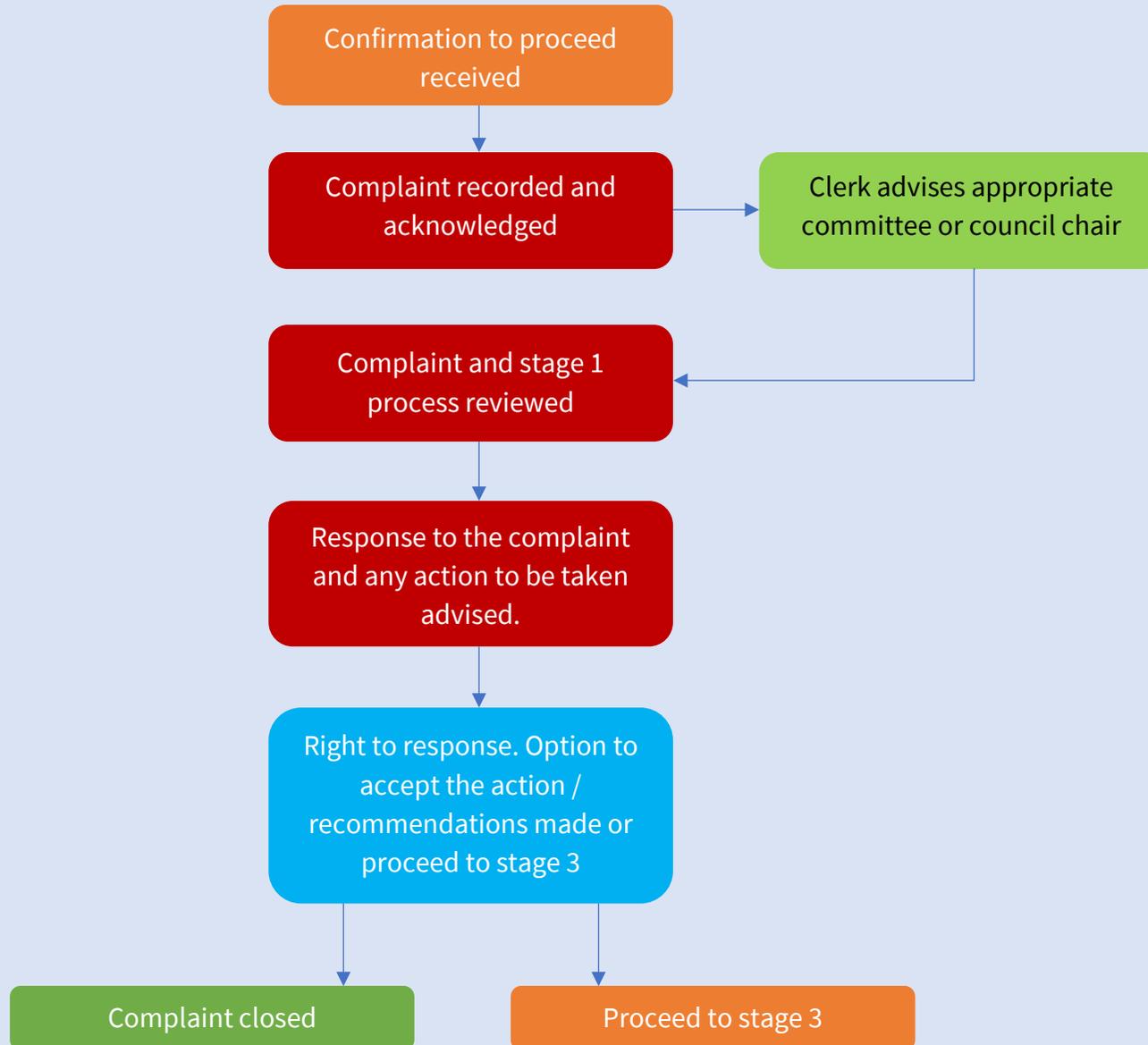
Within 5 working days

Usually within working days 14 working days

Within 21 working days of issue of response. If

Complaints Process

STAGE 2



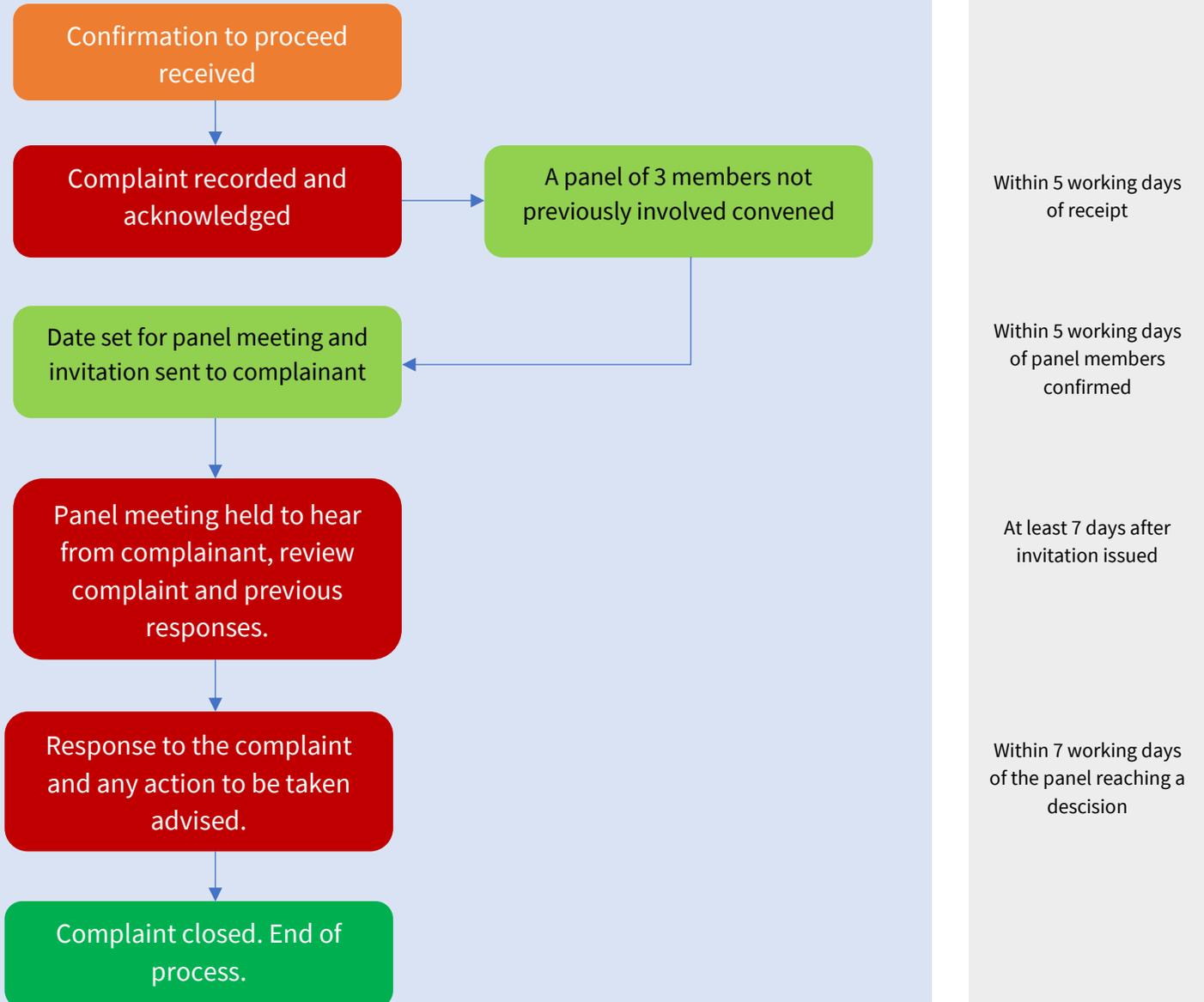
Within 5 working days of receipt

Usually within working days 14 working days

Within 21 working days of issue of response.

Complaints Process

STAGE 3



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This report lays out a series of documents that are in preparation to assist in the financial management of the council. These documents are:

- Investment Strategy 2021-22
- Financial Management Procedure
- Reserves and Balances Policy
- General Reserve Requirements 2021-22
- Medium Term Financial Plan

1.2 These documents are designed to provide clarity and guidance on the approach to be taken with regards to short and medium-term planning. They provide a level of transparency in the financial management of the council's funds.

2.0 Documents in preparation

2.1 Investment Strategy 2021-22

2.1.1 The council is required to have an investment strategy for each year it holds investments of greater than £100,000.

2.1.2 The Investment Strategy has been reviewed for 2021-22. A section has been added on account management arrangements which outlines the minimum and maximum balances that may be held in each account during the financial year.

2.2 Financial Management Procedure

2.2.1 This document is produced for transparency purposes and sets out various aspects of the council's financial management. It covers an overview of the audit regime, precept and funding, the budgeting process, monitoring and reporting, an overview of reserves and investments, assets, insurance, banking, and risk management.

2.3 Reserves and balances policy

2.3.1 This policy sets out how the council will manage its reserves including the general reserve and earmarked reserves.

2.4 General Reserve Calculation 2021-22

2.4.1 This document shows the assessment of the general reserve requirements for the year based upon the calculation method set out in the Guidance on Governance & Accountability for smaller authorities in England. This will ensure the council meets the minimum requirements by publishing the figure annually.

2.5 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

2.5.1 A three-year financial plan will be prepared to assist in medium term financial planning. This will be updated annually.

3.0 Timescales

- 3.1 The first four documents with the agreement of the Chair, will be brought to the April meeting of the committee. The MTFP for the period 2022-25 will be presented to the committee by July.
- 3.2 The Investment Strategy and Reserves & Balances Policy will require approval by council. The Financial Management Procedure and the General Reserve 2021-22 will be information only and will be noted by full council as they are operational documents that set out how the Responsible Financial Officer will conduct the council's financial affairs. The MTFP will be overseen by the committee and reported through to council.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to note this report.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

1.0 Future agenda items

In addition to the standard agenda items the following items will be on the coming meeting agendas

Asset Register as at 31 March 2021

Office accommodation

Financial Regulations

Investment Strategy 2021-22

Financial Management Procedure

Reserves and balances policy

General reserve calculation 2021-22

2.0 Next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be on Thursday 22 April 2021 at 7.45pm. This meeting will be conducted via Zoom.