

## **RISK ASSESSMENTS**

**Norton-on-Derwent Town Council**

REVIEWED AND UPDATED COUNCIL MEETING 19<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023

### **Risk Management**

#### **A. FINANCE**

##### **1. Cash receipts**

Each individual payment made to the Council by cheque or cash is recorded in a "Cash In" book and the Accounts Ledger.

Other than allotment and garage site rents all payments received are paid against an invoice issued by the Council. The date the payment is received is recorded on the Council's copy of the invoice together with the number of the receipt issued by the Council to the payer. The invoice and receipt numbers are recorded with the entry of the payment in the Accounts Ledger.

Payment of cash receipts into the Council's current account with the Co-operative Bank is made within a month or within five working days if major sums (over £250 in total) are received. The amounts paid into the bank account are recorded in three places:-

- (i) in the "Cash In" book;
- (ii) in the "Credit" book; and
- (iii) on the bank statements.

##### **2. Other receipts**

Receipts by BACS transfer are recorded in the Accounts Ledger and on the bank statement.

##### **3. Payments by the Council**

All payments made by the Council are paid by cheque, bank transfer, direct debit or bank standing order. A petty cash account is not kept. Sundry cash payments made by the Clerk are supported by receipts and claimed on a monthly basis with the Clerk's salary. All payments are recorded in three places:-

- (i) in the Accounts Ledger;
- (ii) in the report presented to each monthly meeting of the Council for ratification or approval; and
- (iii) on the bank statements.

All cheques are signed by any two of four authorised signatories (all councillors mandated at the annual meeting of the Council in May each year) and the counterfoils initialled by those members.

Regular payments to staff are approved retrospectively and any significant differences between one payment and another, e.g. over-time, will be explained by the Clerk at the next Council meeting.

Other payments approved retrospectively are those made by direct debit or standing order. Any such payments being approved by the Council prior to their commencement.

#### **4. Bank Transfers**

Transfers from the current account to the deposit account and vice versa are recorded on the bank statements. Transfer requests are made by telephone and secured by a PIN.

Bank statements are reconciled to the Accounts Ledger on a monthly basis and a note made of any un-cleared receipts and un-presented cheques.

#### **5. Balances**

At each monthly meeting the Council receives from the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer a report on receipts and payments for the preceding calendar month together with the total of the balances in the various accounts reconciled against the bank statements. In this way the Council is able to monitor month on month how the balances are changing.

#### **6. Budgetary Control**

The Council has a special meeting in November/December prior to the normal monthly meeting specifically to consider draft estimates for the forthcoming financial year, prepared by the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer. In a covering report the Clerk highlights any significant variations in particular heads of expenditure in the current year and provides a year-end forecast. The Clerk indicates where and explains why there may be some significant increase in expenditure in the coming year. The Clerk also indicates if there are any new items of capital expenditure, which the Council should consider.

Once approved and the precept set the budget is monitored on a monthly basis at each Council meeting. The primary purpose of the monitoring report is to forewarn members of any anticipated significant variations in expenditure from the approved budget, which might arise and necessitate action to address a potential problem.

#### **7. Internal Audit**

In addition to its own procedures the Council appoints an independent internal auditor to undertake on a twice-yearly basis a series of checks to comply with Section 4 of the Annual Return to the external auditor.

#### **8. Insurance**

The Council's insurance policy includes a Fidelity Guarantee in respect of all members and employees

#### **9. Conclusion**

The Council undertakes on a yearly basis a review of the system of internal control and the system of internal audit.

The Council is satisfied that the risk of financial misadministration is negligible with the above procedures in place.

## **B. CEMETERY**

### **1. Risks to employees**

#### **(i) Grave digging**

The principal hazard is the collapse of the earth walls of a grave during the digging thereof. Graves can be categorised as either single or double. The former are generally dug to a depth of 1.40 metres (4'6"), the latter to a depth of 1.80 metres (6'0"). Historically, ground conditions in Norton Cemetery have been very stable and not subject to collapse. Nonetheless, the Council acknowledges the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 for a health and Safety policy which recognises and accepts its responsibility to take all reasonably practicable steps to protect employees. To this end, the Council has resolved to:-

**Provide the caretaker (grave digger) with a mobile phone to enable easier and mutual communication with the clerk and undertakers, and for use in an emergency in connection with his grave digging activity; and**

Require a second person to be in attendance when graves deeper than 1.50 metres are required to be dug.

In the interests of his own safety, and irrespective of the safety of the public (see section 2.(ii) below) the caretaker has been instructed to board over an open grave at any stage in the digging thereof during any period spent away from the grave for any reason (overnight, lunch break, etc.).

#### **(ii) Plant and Machinery**

The caretaker's other principal duty is the maintenance of the cemetery grounds which primarily entails grass cutting using petrol powered mowers and strimmers. The Council provides the caretaker with protective clothing, including safety footwear, gloves and goggles on a regular basis. All mechanical equipment is serviced on at least an annual basis.

#### **(iii) Hazardous materials**

The materials most frequently used are petrol (for mowers and strimmers) and weedkiller. Whenever petrol is purchased (from a local garage) it is conveyed in an approved container and immediately transferred to either the machine requiring it or to a locked and sealed container specific for the storage of such material. When not in use mowers and strimmers are kept in locked storage. Weedkiller is purchased from a local supplier, on an as and when needed basis and stored in the supplier's container inside a locked and sealed container specific for the storage of such material when not in use. The caretaker is under instruction to wear goggles and gloves whenever weedkiller is being transferred from the supplier's container to the "back-pack" spraying equipment.

The caretaker has attended a safety training course in the use and handling of hazardous materials and the Council authorise his attendance at refresher courses and approved training courses for any new hazardous materials which may be introduced.

#### **(iv) Insurance**

The Council has the compulsory Employers Liability insurance cover with a limit of indemnity of £10m.

## **2. Risks to the public**

### **(i) General**

The cemetery is open during daylight hours every day of the year. Many of the footpaths are used by the general public en route between different parts of the town. The cemetery gates are locked each evening at dusk and opened each morning at 8.00am. The condition of footpath surfaces is checked on a regular basis and the Council has a programme of on going replacement of concrete footpaths by precast paving slabs. Any risk of tripping on uneven paving slabs is attended to as quickly as practicable. Because of the number of large trees overhanging some of the footpaths the Council has their condition checked every five years and takes any action recommended by professional advisers. The surfaces of footpaths under trees can be slippery when wet with sap. The Council has placed notices at the entrances to the cemetery advising pedestrians to take care.

People visiting graves are advised that the ground away from footpaths may be uneven due to subsidence associated with grave digging or changes in the water table.

### **(ii) Open graves**

As indicated (see section 1(i) above) open graves are covered by boards whenever the gravedigger is not present and working on the grave. Graves are refilled immediately after the interment.

### **(iii) Memorials**

The Council has introduced a requirement that the approval of a memorial is conditional upon the proprietor (i.e. the purchaser of the Exclusive Right of Burial and owner of any memorial erected thereon) giving a written undertaking acknowledging sole responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the memorial in a safe condition, such undertaking to be equally applicable to the Proprietor's successor(s).

The cemetery caretaker is under instruction to inspect all memorials on a quarterly basis and to submit a written report (including a nil return if applicable) to the town clerk after each check. He is also under instruction to lay on the ground any unsafe memorials. The public is asked on notices at the entrances to the cemetery not to tamper with such memorials. Where the owner can be readily traced he/she will be required to arrange the re-erection or agree to pay the Council if replacement by the Council is preferred. Any old memorials where ownership is likely to be difficult or impossible to establish will be re-erected by the Council as soon as practicable.

### **(iv) Hazardous materials**

The only hazardous material with which the public could come into contact is weedkiller and the cemetery caretaker posts notices at all entrances when he is carrying out weedkilling operations.

### **(v) Insurance**

The Council has Public Liability insurance with a limit of indemnity of £10m.

## **C. PLAY AREAS AND OPEN SPACES**

### **1. Risks to employees**

The majority of the routine maintenance, e.g. grass and hedge cutting and litter collections are carried out by a contractor, and his employees are deemed to have been given appropriate warning of the risks associated with the operations undertaken on behalf of the Council. The Council's employees have been made aware of the risks associated with handling drug related artefacts, which are found on play areas from time to time. A report is required by the clerk on the findings of such artefacts.

### **2. Risks to the general public**

It has to be recognised that in any human activity there is an element of risk and, in play in particular, risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. The principal risk of injury to the general public in designated play areas with items of play equipment is likely to arise from dangerous or unsafe play equipment or misuse of equipment.

So far as the former is concerned the Council takes out a contract on a yearly basis for annual engineering inspection checks on all play equipment provided by the Council. A written report is provided and if necessary remedial action is taken. Between the contracted inspection checks the Council employees make weekly visual inspections and fortnightly recorded inspections of the play equipment, and report any damage or undue wear and tear to the clerk. Unfortunately, the risks associated with misuse of equipment are considered by the Council to be impossible to eliminate completely.

### **3. Insurance**

The Council holds Employers Liability insurance with a limit of indemnity of £10m. and Public Liability insurance with a limit of indemnity of £10m.