



Policy for Managing the Absence of the Clerk/RFO

Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures the Council will follow to ensure continuity of operations and robust internal control during any extended period of absence (4 weeks or more) of the Clerk/RFO.

Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), and any interim or temporary staff appointed during the Clerk's absence.

Policy Objectives

- To maintain effective financial oversight and internal control.
- To ensure lawful decision-making and statutory compliance.
- To safeguard public funds and resources.
- To provide clarity of roles and responsibilities during Clerk absence.

Planned Absences

At least 3 months before a planned absence, the Council will review and agree on temporary arrangements. An interim Clerk/RFO will be appointed if necessary.

A full handover will be carried out, including:

- Key contacts and contracts.
- Ongoing tasks, meeting schedules, and deadlines.
- Financial procedures and access.

Unplanned Absences

- The Chair (or if the Chair is unavailable, the Vice-Chair) will act immediately to assess the situation and inform the Council.
- Emergency cover will be arranged via either local Council networks (e.g. YLCA, neighbouring councils) or temporary administrative or locum support.

- A review of ongoing priorities and financial matters will be carried out within 10 working days.

Financial Controls During Planned or Unplanned Absences

To ensure robust oversight during any absence of the permanent Clerk:

- **Bank reconciliations** will be reviewed and signed off monthly by a nominated Councillor prior to the meeting, where they will also be presented. Any non-presentation of the bank reconciliations and accompanying statements and invoices will be questioned and, if necessary, managed according to the Capability Procedure.
- **Dual authorisation** for payments will be enforced (at least two signatories).
- An **internal controls review** will be carried out **monthly** by two designated Councillors.
- **Meeting minutes and decisions** will be documented and monitored by a Councillor as well as the interim Clerk, if there is one.

Capability Management of Interim Staff

The Chair and/or Staffing Committee will regularly monitor the performance of the Clerk against expected duties. Concerns will be documented with specific examples.

If the interim Clerk fails to meet performance expectations or neglects key statutory or administrative tasks, the Council's Capability Policy will be followed. This may result in termination of the interim role.

The Council will act promptly to secure alternative cover if the interim Clerk is unable or unwilling to fulfil the role. SLCC, neighbouring councils or locum agencies may be contacted for emergency support.

Communication

Councillors will be informed promptly of interim arrangements.

The public will be notified via the Council website if there is a temporary change in contact or service level.

Review and Accountability

The effectiveness of interim arrangements will be reviewed monthly by the Council during any period of Clerk absence.

At the return of the Clerk, a debrief and review will be conducted to assess continuity of operations, any issues encountered, and improvements for future planning.

This policy will be reviewed following any Clerk absence to ensure it remains effective and up to date.

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Approving committee: Full Council

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Date for next review: May 2027 / following any extended period of Clerk absence