Adopted May 2025
Review cycle: Annual
Last reviewed: May 2025

BURNHAM MARKET PARISH

COUNCIL INTERNAL

CONTROL POLICY

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Burnham Market Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is designed to ensure that the council's activities are carried out properly and as intended. Internal controls are set up by the Clerk who is the Responsible Financial Officer but the Council members must ensure that they have an understanding of those controls and that they are operated effectively.

3. PERSONNEL INVOLVED WITH THE INTERNAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

3.1 The Council

General:
The Council has appointed a Chairman who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings and for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful. The Chairman signs each page of the minutes at the Council meetings (or by other arrangement as necessary).

Decisions are made in accordance with the Standing Orders and the Financial Regulations approved by the Council.

The full council meets every other month weeks and monitors progress against its aims and objectives at each meeting by receiving relevant reports from the parish clerk and/or other relevant parties.

All decisions are made by either:

- Full council
- Delegated powers as per the Delegated Powers Policy and then ratified by council.
- Committee as per their council prescribed terms of reference and then ratified by council.

Transparency is always adhered to and decisions are minuted

In months where a meeting is not held, the Financial and Planning groups provide recommendations to the clerk to ensure that business operations can continue and deadlines are met. The Planning group does this on an ongoing basis, while the Finance group does so once a month, following the regular meeting schedule. All decisions are reported at the next available full meeting for ratification.

Finance:
Finance decisions on budget and precept setting must be taken at Full council.

The council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems and procedures.

The Council approves a budget for the following year at the November meeting which forms the basis for the level of precept for the following financial year, approved in December or January.

The Council receives a budget report each quarter and at each Council meeting receives a bank reconciliation, and annually at the AGM an end of year account report.

Two Councillors (out of three named signatories) sign all cheques or authorise an online payment.

The Council will endeavour to have a minimum of three Councillors as authorised signatories at any one time to include the Chair

Online Banking: TheResponsible Financial Officer may ‘view and submit’ online but may not authorise a payment. Signatories may ‘view and authorise’ what the RFO has entered but may not set up a beneficiary or a payment themselves.

ensures that the cheque/online bank payment agrees with the amount of the invoice and the payee named on the invoice. The invoices are initialed and if a cheque is completed the cheque stubs are initialed at the agenda meeting with the clerk.

The Clerk / RFO does not authorise payments.

The Council agrees the receipts and payments made at each Council meeting.

3.2 Clerk to the Council / Responsible Financial Officer

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing risks. The Clerk also ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and polices are maintained.

The duties of the Clerk / RFO are laid down in a Job Description which is reviewed from time to time.

The RFO submits all the requested information to the Internal and External Auditor by the required date.

The RFO arranges for the public notices to be displayed.

The RFO retains all relevant documents relating to finances for 10 years (Annual Return, VAT Returns, PAYE/NIC information, Public notices, Fixed Asset register, Risk assessments, accounts and supporting information)

3.3 Internal Auditor

The Council has appointed an Independent Internal Auditor who reports to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- records
- procedures
- systems
- internal control
- regulations
- risk management
- reviews

The effectiveness of the internal audit is reviewed annually, and the council agrees to the appointment of the Internal Auditor.

The scope of the work of the Internal Auditor is reviewed annually and the review and the appointment are minuted.

The Internal Auditor inspects the accounts at the year-end (prior to completion of the Annual Return pages 2 and 3) and completes page 5 of the Annual Return.

The findings of the Internal Auditor are copied to all members of the Council and considered at the next Council meeting.

3.4 External Audit

The Council's External Auditors submit an External Auditor's Report, which is considered at the next Council meeting.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

The Council conducts an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control.

Date of policy: February 2021 Approving committee: FULL COUNCIL Date of committee meeting: 15.03.2021 Policy version reference: V1 Policy effective from: 15th March 2021 Dates reviewed:
March 2022 /
August 2023/ 24