



17th October 2023

In accordance with Paragraphs 8 & 10(2) (b) of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 I hereby summon you to attend a Meeting of PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL to be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, SHOTTON HALL, PETERLEE, SR8 2PH on MONDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2023 at 6.30pm

Ian Morris, M.A., F.S.L.C.C
Town Clerk (Proper Officer of the Council)

Members of the Council and members of the public are reminded that the public part of the meeting may be recorded in both audio and video, and photographs may be taken.

Members of the public are very welcome to attend our meetings. We have a limited amount of designated public seating and so any members of the public wishing to attend Shotton Hall to observe the meeting are advised to contact the Council in advance so that we can reserve a seat for you: council@peterlee.gov.uk or 0191 5862491

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Public Participation Session
Will be held to allow Members of the public an opportunity to put questions to the Council. This item of business to last no more than 15 minutes, as per Council Standing Orders. A member of the public has indicated they intend to come along to speak to the meeting. (Brian Deluce – Lowhills Road Allotment site)
3. Police
To welcome a representative from the local Neighbourhood Policing Team to the meeting.
4. To receive declarations of interest

Members are reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on this agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise. Please seek advice from the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk prior to the meeting if in doubt. Members are reminded that they can check their published declaration of interests here: <https://bit.ly/2wVyeLA>

5. To Approve the Minutes of the last meeting of the 25th September 2023
The minutes of the previous meeting are attached for consideration and approval as a true and correct record. (attached)
To note Councillor R Scott was in attendance at the meeting.
6. Notes of the Finance Sub Committee of the 25th September 2023
To confirm and endorse the resolution of the Finance Sub Committee to approve BACS payments paid (attached)
7. The Minutes of the Community & Environment Meeting held on Monday 9th October 2023
The minutes of this meeting are attached for information (attached)
8. The notes of the Scrutiny Meeting held on Monday 16th October 2023
(copy to follow)
9. External Audit for 2022/23 completion
To receive and accept the notice of completion of the 2022/23 Audit from the council's External Auditor
(attached)
10. Lowhills Road allotments - vandalism and thefts
This item has been requested by Councillor Rob Moore
To discuss the issue of vandalism and thefts from the allotments at lowhills road and the need for security cameras.
11. East Durham AAP Neighbourhood Budget Funding
 - (a) Santa's Wish/Toy Appeal
 - (b) Peterlee's Unsung HeroesTo agree the Council's support with these two initiatives

12. Policies

To consider and review the Flexible working Policy that was discussed and recommended for approval at the Scrutiny Committee meeting of 16th October 2023 (attached)

13. Circus Eden Lane 2024

To consider the request from Planet Circus to use the site at Eden Lane on 2-9th June 2024

14. Budget Setting Priorities

Referred from the Scrutiny Meeting held on 16 October 2023, to further consider future service provision by PTC.

15. Spokesperson of the Independent Party's Report

16. Spokesperson of the North East Party's Report

17. Spokesperson of the Labour Political Party's Report

The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting. Space in the public gallery is limited and you are advised to contact the council in advance if you do wish to attend.

Contact: Ian Morris, Chief Officer & Town Clerk, Peterlee Town Council, Shotton Hall, Peterlee Co Durham SR8 2PH

e mail: council@peterlee.gov.uk

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, SHOTTON HALL, PETERLEE

ON MONDAY 25th SEPTEMBER 2023 at 6.30PM

PRESENT: - Cllr D Howarth (Chair)

K Liddell, M McCue, S Simpson, R J Burnip, S McDonnell, R Moore, K Hawley, B Fishwick & D Quinn

51. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were offered from Councillors A Stockport, T Duffy, K Duffy, J Black, M A Cartwright & M Sanderson. **RESOLVED Council note the apologies that had been submitted.**

52. Public Participation Session

There was one member of the public present at the meeting. A resident from Helford Road addressed the meeting about issues with dog fouling in and around his neighbourhood. He had reported this to Durham County Council on several occasions but felt frustrated that the problem seemed to be increasing and nothing was being done to tackle the issue. The County Councillor for the Passfield Ward assured the resident that she would take this up with Durham County Council on the resident's behalf. **RESOLVED the information given, be noted.**

53. To receive declarations of interest

Members were reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on this agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise. No interests were declared.

54. To Approve the Minutes of the last meeting of the 26th June 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were attached for consideration and approval as a true and correct record. **RESOLVED the minutes be approved and duly signed.**

55. The notes of the Scrutiny Meeting of the 21st August 2023

The notes of this meeting were attached for information. **RESOLVED the contents be noted.**

56. Notes of the Finance Sub Committee of the 21st August 2023

Members confirmed and endorsed the resolution of the Finance Sub Committee to approve BACS payments paid.

57. The Minutes of the Resources Meeting held on Monday 11th September 2023

The notes of this meeting were attached for information. **RESOLVED the minutes be noted.**

58. Notes of the Events working party held on 7th September 2023 (attached)

The notes of this meeting were attached for information. **RESOLVED the contents be noted. FURTHER RESOLVED arrangements be made to seek the return of Mr & Mrs Claus Outfit to the Town Council for dry cleaning etc. prior to the Christmas period.**

59. Building Valuations – for insurance purposes

Members discussed the report from the Town Clerk recommending the award of a contract to provide insurance valuations for the Council's buildings. **RESOLVED Members note the contents of the report and approve the award of contract for on-site RCA insurance valuations for the council's property portfolio to Barrett Corp & Harrington Ltd for the value of £4,120 + VAT**

60. DCC Website Cessation of SLA Contract

It was reported that DCC had given notice that their support for the Council's website shall end on 31 March 2024 and to consider options for provision from 1st April 2024. The Town Clerk advised this would be an opportunity to seek a new provider although this may be at an increased rate. It was suggested East Durham College be approached and it was confirmed other parish and town councils were also being approached for a possible joint approach. **RESOLVED further progress with the provision of web site support be awaited.**

61. Policies

To consider and review the following policies: -

- (a) Flexible working Policy
- (b) Information and information Management Policy
- (c) Lone Working Policy

The policies were attached for Member's consideration and approval. It was

RESOLVED the Information and Information Management Policy and Lone Working Policy, be approved. FURTHER RESOLVED the flexible working policy be referred to the Scrutiny Committee for further discussion.

62. Spokesperson of the Independent Party's Report

Councillor K Hawley reported on the successful re-opening of the Peterlee & Horden Rugby Club following a refurbishment and how the decision made by Peterlee Town Council to alter the lease and support the club's extension had been the right thing to do, both in terms of the development of the Club itself and also the wider benefits to the Eden Hill and wider Peterlee areas. She reported that the Warm Welcome Café at Shotton Hall had now been open again for two weeks and was once again busy. She hoped the Council would support being the lead in the Toy Appeal for Peterlee once the grant funding bid's outcome was confirmed. **RESOLVED the information given be noted.**

63. Spokesperson of the North East Party's Report

Councillor S McDonnell reported COVID cases seemed to be on the increase again and encouraged everyone to take up the vaccination if offered. There was also a prevalence of shingles. She reported an apparent increase in anti-social behavior in the Town with off road bikes and youths and a joint meeting had been held with the Police and Believe Housing to try and identify problems areas and suggest solutions. There was work being carried out by Durham County Council identifying areas that were prone to flooding prone in the Town. She reported that the school uniform shop that had been running in the town centre had received over 3,000 donated items which she was sure would have helped out many families. The Leek Club at the Catholic Club and the allotments at Lowhills Road were also working to support East Durham Foodbank. **RESOLVED the information given be noted.**

64. Spokesperson of the Labour Political Party's Report

Councillor R Scott reported on the recent Mayor's Event – "Proms at the Church" which he said had been excellent, especially the catering provided by Councillor K Hawley. He mentioned contact made with PTC regarding the events and funding for the Peterlee 75 celebration. He reported the Warm Hub at the Methodist Church had stated that after the summer break they were even busier than before. He reported the sad news of the recent passing of a County and Seaham Town Councillor Leanne Kennedy with her funeral being held that week. **RESOLVED the information given be noted.**

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

MONDAY 25th SEPTEMBER 2023

Present:-

K Liddell, S Simpson & R Burnip

5. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members were provided with the accounts and invoices for September 2023 to be paid by BACS in the sum of £41,560.94 Following checking of the documents provided, it was **RECOMMENDED that the accounts presented be paid.**

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
SHOTTON HALL, PETERLEE ON MONDAY 9th OCTOBER 2023 AT 6.30PM

PRESENT: R MOORE (CHAIR)
R Burnip, S McDonnell, S P Franklin, D Hawley, R Scott, B Fishwick, A E Laing,
M A Cartwright & M Sanderson

The Chairman advised Members of the committee that part of the meeting may be recorded by both audio and video, and that photographs may be taken.

5. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted by Councillors M McCue, K Liddell, A Stockport, K Hawley, M A Cartwright, T Duffy, K Duffy, E Watson & D Howarth. RESOLVED the Council note the submitted apologies.

6. To receive declarations of interest

Members were reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on this agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise. None were given.

7. To Approve the Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 13th February 2023, a copy of which had been previously circulated, were approved and signed as a true and correct record.

8. Community Grant Scheme

(a) Peterlee Community Garden – Public Open Day, 16th August 2023

(b) Peterlee Cricket Club - Juniors Presentation Event, 14th October 2023

RESOLVED the action taken in awarding grants of £250.00 each to these organisations towards organising community events, as per the Town Council's community grant scheme policy, be endorsed.

9. Health & Safety Site Visits

RESOLVED the notes of the two site visits to Eden Lane and Hill Rigg House, be noted.

10. Proposed Fireworks Display – Hearts of Oak Public House, Oakerside Drive on Friday 3 November 2023

Members were asked to consider a request for the use of PTC's land for this privately arranged charity event. The Council's Corporate Services Manager was in attendance at the meeting and gave a summary advising that there were still some outstanding issues relating to traffic management and submission of all of the required paperwork to both PTC and DCC Safety Advisory Group. She suggested that by not having the marquee/dance tent on site that may assist with the approval of the application.

The Organisers of the event had been invited to the meeting by a local Member and they spoke on the event, stressing it was to raise monies for two charitable causes that were very personal to them and their families.

One of the Local Members said she was minded to agree to the use of the land, as long as all of the authorities/partners in particular the Fire Service and Police gave their approval to the event going ahead. It was also agreed a meeting should be held with the Organisers, Police/Fire Brigade and PTC's Corporate Services Manager to fully discuss and make sure all was in place that needed to be for a safe event.

The Organisers assured they would not proceed with the event without the approval of the Police and Fire Brigade.

Following discussion it was RESOLVED PTC give approval in principle to the use of the land include the fenced area of the cricket pitch for a firework display to be held by The Hearts of Oak Public House, subject to all of the necessary documents being submitted and approved by both the Fire Brigade and Police. With the event application details submitted to PTC.

11. Keep Peterlee Tidy

Members were asked to consider a request from the 'Keep Peterlee Tidy' community group to work in partnership with PTC on community events in March 2024. RESOLVED this request be approved.

DRAFT

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** must be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2023**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2023**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2023 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2023 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2023.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2022) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2023).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2023**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.	✓	

**Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices*, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL
RECEIVED
20 JUN 2023

Peterlee Town Council

www.peterlee.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

22/10/2022 06/06/2023 06/06/2023

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Nicola Cooke

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

07/06/2023

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

Peterlee Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

	Agreed			
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>
			✓	

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

26/04/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

33

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

Clerk

De Lany
Rae

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

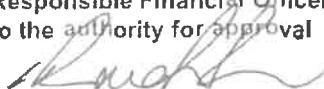
Peterlee Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	365,418	317,712	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,294,911	1,401,425	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	611,611	904,632	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	1,200,229	1,240,264	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	50,452	50,452	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	703,547	910,706	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	317,712	422,347	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	358,079	306,237	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	6,488,820	6,598,860	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	897,720	887,554	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval



Date

26/06/2023

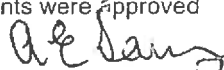
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

26/06/2023

as recorded in minute reference:

33

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Peterlee Town Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>.

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

We were required to return the Annual Governance and Accountability Return to enable the Council to correct the following:

- Loan interest and repayments at Section 2 Box 5 for the year ending 31 March 2022 were initially overstated by £500,000 causing an addition error at Box 7. The correct Box 5 figure was £50,452.

In future the Council should ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is accurate and complete.

As part of its Annual Governance and Accountability Return submission the Council is required to provide for audit explanations for significant variances between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 figures in Section 2. Such explanations support the Council's own understanding of its financial performance. For 2022/23 the Council provided insufficient explanation of its variances because not all variances above £100,000 were initially explained. Although explanations were subsequently obtained in future, the Council should provide an explanation for all significant variances as part of its AGAR submission.

During 2022/23 the Council approved an increase in the precept for 2023/24 that exceeded the maximum 2% permitted by a 2016 resolution without a referendum. Although it is doubtful that a resolution could legally bind a council 7 years later and the reason for the increase is understandable given current inflation we recommend that in 2023/24 the Council should ensure that it considers formally rescinding the 2016 resolution.

The Council agreed a new 3 year contract for internal audit from 2022/23 but did not formally approve the decision to re-appoint the existing internal auditors. In future, the Council should ensure that each new internal audit contract is explicitly approved in advance of signing the SLA and agreeing the audit plan and the decision recorded in council minutes.

3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable.

External Auditor Name

Mazars LLP, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1DF

External Auditor Signature

Mazars LLP

Date

26 September 2023

Mr I Morris
Peterlee Town Council
Council Offices
Shotton Hall
Old Shotton
Peterlee
County Durham
SR8 2PH

Direct line: +44 (0)191 383 6348
Email: local.councils@mazars.co.uk

Date: 27 September 2023

Dear Mr Morris

Completion of the audit for the year ended 31 March 2023

We have completed our audit for the year ended 31 March 2023 and I have pleasure in enclosing the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The External Auditor's Certificate and Report is given in Section 3.

If there are any significant matters arising from the audit, they are summarised in the External Auditor's certificate in Section 3. If we have identified minor scope for improvement we have recorded this on page 2 of this letter. The Council must consider these matters and decide what action is required. In most cases this will be self-evident. In some instances we have referred to further guidance available, in particular, in the publication "*Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners' Guide (England) 2022*". This can be obtained via your NALC or SLCC branch, or downloaded free of charge.

Action you are required to take

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what you must do at the conclusion of the audit. In summary, you are required to:

Publish (which must include publication on the authority's website) a statement:

- that the audit has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
- of the rights of inspection conferred on local government electors by section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
- the address at which, and the hours during which, those rights may be exercised.
- Keep copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return remains available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was first published.

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 do not specify the period the Completion Notice needs to be on the council's website but this period must be reasonable.

Minor scope for improvement in 2023/24

No minor issues identified.

Accessibility Regulations

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

Audit fee

Our fee note for the audit, which is in accordance with the audit fee scales set by SAAA, and available at <http://www.localaudits.co.uk/fees.html> will follow.

We would be grateful if you could arrange for this to be paid at the earliest opportunity.

We have made an additional charge as we were required to either write to you or send back your Annual Governance and Accountability Return for amendment and undertake additional work. This charge is shown separately on our fee note.

Yours sincerely



Cameron Waddell

Partner

For and on behalf of Mazars LLP



FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

Version 3: October 2023

ABSTRACT

This Policy sets out guidance for employees requesting flexible working and the process and procedure for requesting the various options.

Janet Hugill

Corporate Services Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided
and in greyscale.

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1. Introduction

This policy aims to encourage staff to consider flexible working arrangements. The organisation recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore, the organisation wants to support its employees achieve a better balance between work and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities, further learning and other interests. The organisation is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the organisation and the employee can be met.

It is the organisation's policy to encourage open discussion with employees. An employee that thinks they may benefit from flexible working is encouraged to contact their line manager to arrange an informal discussion to talk about the options.

2. What is flexible working?

Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works.

The following flexible working options are considered to be the typical arrangements that employees will request but the organisation recognises that there may be alternatives or a combination of options which are suitable to both the organisation and the employee:

- Home/hybrid working
- Job-sharing
- Part-time working

3. Types of flexible working

- **Home/hybrid working** is when an employee regularly carries out all, or part of, their duties from home or another location rather than the employer's premises. The organisation can consider home/hybrid working being an occasional agreed day, a mix of home and office based work each week or a full time arrangement (See Homeworking Policy).
- **Job-sharing** is an arrangement where a full-time post is divided into two part-time roles. The two job holders then share the overall duties and responsibilities. Their skills and the hours each employee wishes to work must be compatible, and meet the needs of the organisation. Pay and

benefits are shared in proportion to the hours each works. Job sharing can be considered where the creation of a single part-time post is difficult, or where two individuals wish to work part-time. The suitability of posts for job-sharing will be stated in any internal or external advertisements.

- **Part-time working** covers any arrangement where an employee is contracted to work anything less than typical full time hours for the type of work in question. For example, an employee who only works Monday to Wednesday. The organisation believes that all posts will be available on a part-time basis, except where a critical examination by line management proves this to be impracticable. The suitability of posts for part-time working will be stated in any internal or external advertisements.

4. The needs of the organisation

The organisation is committed to providing a range of appropriate working patterns. However, employees and management need to be realistic and to recognise that not all flexible working options will be appropriate for all roles.

Where a flexible working arrangement is proposed the organisation will need to take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:

- the costs associated with the proposed arrangement
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- the need for, and effect on, supervision
- the existing structure of the department
- the availability of staff resources
- details of the tasks specific to the role
- the workload of the role
- whether it is a request for a reasonable adjustment related to a disability
- health and safety issues

5. Eligibility

Any employee with at least 26 weeks of employment service has a statutory right to request flexible working.

6. Submitting a flexible working request

An eligible employee is entitled to submit one flexible working request in a 12 month period (an employee is entitled to additional requests if they relate to a statutory entitlement, for example the Equality Act 2010 right to request reasonable adjustments).

All requests must be made by completing the application form that is available from line managers and Corporate Admin. Any request made must include:

The date of the application

The changes that the employee is seeking to their terms and conditions

The date from when the employee would like the proposed change to come into effect

What effect the employee thinks the requested change would have on the organisation

How, in their view, any such effect could be dealt with

Whether this is a statutory or non-statutory request

Whether a previous application for flexible working has been made

The dates of any previous applications

If the employee is making the request in relation to the Equality Act, e.g. as a reasonable adjustment relating to a disability, this should be made clear in the application.

If an application does not contain all of the required information the line manager will explain to the employee what additional or amended information they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.

7. Meetings regarding flexible working

Upon receiving a written request for flexible working the line manager will usually seek to arrange a meeting with the employee to:

- discuss the request
- find out more about the proposed working arrangements
- how it could be of benefit to both the employee and organisation

If a meeting is arranged it will be held within 28 days of the organisation receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic then one further date will be proposed. If a face to face meeting is difficult to arrange then, if agreed by the employee and line manager, the meeting may be held over the telephone.

At the meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.

If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their application will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

Where a request can, without further discussion, be approved as stated in the employee's written application a meeting to discuss the request may not be necessary. The employee will be informed of the organisation's agreement to the request by a confirmation letter as outlined in the section 'Responding to a flexible working request' within 28 days of the organisation receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

8. Responding to a flexible working request

The line manager and Town Clerk will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements, looking at the potential benefits and adverse effects to the employee and to the organisation in implementing the proposed changes.

Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

The employee will be informed in writing of the organisation's decision as soon as is reasonably practicable, but no later than 14 days after the meeting.

The request may be granted in full, in part or refused. The organisation may propose a modified version of the request, the request may be granted on a temporary basis, or the employee may be asked to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period. If the request is agreed then the employee will be sent a confirmation letter which will include details of the new arrangements. The employee should contact the line manager within 14 days if they wish to discuss the new arrangements further or have any concerns.

9. Right to appeal decision

The employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused or is only agreed in part.

The employee may lodge an appeal within 14 days of being notified of a decision on their application. This should be done in writing and clearly state the grounds on which they are appealing. The appeal will be heard within 28 days. The employee will then be informed of the outcome to their appeal within 14 days of the appeal meeting. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the line manager.

10. Trialling new working arrangements

Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practicable for an employee and/or the organisation a trial period may be agreed. If a trial period is arranged the organisation will allow sufficient time for an employee and their manager to implement and become used to the new working practices before taking any decisions on the viability of a new arrangement.

11. Varying an employee's contract

Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, a variation will need to be made to the employee's contract of employment. A new contract of employment will be sent to the employee within 28 days of the change to the employee's working pattern being agreed.

If the employee has any questions or concerns about the new contract of employment they should contact the Corporate Services Manager to discuss the matter further.

Where a trial period has been arranged the organisation will provide the employee with a document that details their new working pattern and makes clear that it is only a temporary variation to the terms of the employee's contract. The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period (although the organisation may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary with the agreement of the employee). The organisation will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement.

12. Complaints and further information

The organisation is strongly opposed to any form of victimisation of individuals who work, or request to work under flexible working arrangements.

If an employee feels that they have been treated unfairly or are dissatisfied with any stage of the flexible process, they should raise their concerns informally with the Corporate Services Manager.

If informal discussions do not resolve the matter to an employee's satisfaction, they should raise a grievance under the organisation's grievance procedure.

For further information an employee should refer to the documents listed below and/or contact the Corporate Services Manager.

For more advice about flexible working, visit the Acas website
www.acas.org.uk]

Law relating to this document:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Flexible Working Regulations 2014

Author of Policy;	Corporate Services Manager
Date effective from;	October 2023
Policy review;	October 2026
Version Control;	V3

Appendix 1

Peterlee Town Council Flexible Working Application Form

Note to the Employee

You can use this form to make an application to work flexibly under the right provided in law to eligible employees. Before completing this form, read the guidance on the right to request flexible working in the Flexible Working Policy, and check that you are eligible to make a request.

You should note that under the right it may take up to 3 months for your employer to consider a request and possibly longer where you have agreed to a longer decision period with your employer. You should therefore ensure that you submit your application to the appropriate person well in advance of the date you wish the request to take effect.

It will help your employer to consider your request if you provide as much information as you can about your desired working pattern. It is important that you complete all the questions as otherwise your application may not be valid. When completing sections 3 and 4, think about what effect your change in working pattern will have both on the work that you do and on your colleagues.

Once you have completed the form, you should immediately forward it to your employer (you might want to keep a copy for your own records). If the request is granted, this will be a permanent change to your terms and conditions unless otherwise agreed.

Note to the employer

This is a formal application made under the legal right to apply for flexible working and the duty on employers to consider applications in a reasonable manner. You have three months after the day you received this application in which to decide whether to grant the request. This period can be extended if you agree to a longer deadline with the employee; any such agreement must be made either within period in which the decision is to be made or in the three months immediately following the end of that deadline.

You should confirm receipt of this application using the attached confirmation slip.

1. Personal Details

Name:

Staff or payroll number:

Manager:

National Insurance No:

To the employer

I would like to apply to work a flexible working pattern that is different to my current working pattern under my right provided under section 80F of the Employment Rights Act 1996. I confirm I meet each of the eligibility criteria as follows:

☐ I have worked continuously as an employee of the company for the last 26 weeks.

☐ I have not made a request to work flexibly under this right during the past 12 months.

Date of any previous request to work flexibly under this right:

If you are not sure whether you meet any of the criteria, information can be found in the Flexible Working Policy

If you are unable to tick all of the relevant boxes, then you do not qualify to make a request to work flexibly under the statutory procedure. This does not mean that your request may not be considered, but you will have to explore this separately with your employer. Many employers offer flexible working to their staff as best practice.

2a. Describe your current working pattern (days/hours/times worked):

2b. Describe the working pattern you would like to work in future (days/hours/times worked):

2c. I would like this working pattern to commence from:

Date:

3 Impact of the new working pattern

I think this change in my working pattern will affect my employer and colleagues as follows:

4 Accommodating the new working pattern

I think the effect on my employer and colleagues can be dealt with as follows:

Name:

Date:

Job Title:

NOW PASS THIS APPLICATION TO YOUR EMPLOYER



Cut this slip off and return it to your employee in order to confirm your receipt of their application

Employer's Confirmation of Receipt (to be completed and returned to employee)

Dear:

I confirm that I received your request to change your work pattern on:

Date:

I shall notify you of my decision on this application within three months of this date unless we agree a longer deadline for this decision.

From:

Job title: