



1st October 2024

Dear Councillor,

I hereby summon you to attend a meeting of **Peterlee Town Council** on **Monday 7th October 2024** In the **Council Chamber, Shotton Hall, Peterlee, SR8 2PH** at **6.30pm**

Mr I Hall
Town Clerk

Members of the public are very welcome to attend our meetings. We have a limited number of designated public seating in our Council Chamber and so any members of the public wishing to attend 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.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. 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>

3. Public Participation

Members of the public will have 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) Brian Brown - EDCST

4. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the following meeting:-

(a) Council held on 23rd September 2024

5. Completion of Audit year ending 31 March 2024

- a. Auditors Letter
- b. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24
- c. Notice of Conclusion of Audit

6. Review of the Dismissal Policy

Members are asked to approve the new policy (attached)

7. Review of Authorised Officers Signatories List

Report of the Town Clerk (attached)

8. Exclusion of Press and Public

To resolve that in view of the confidential nature of the items to be discussed, the committee pass the formal resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 & the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, Part 1, due to the commercial and personal information contained in the report

9. Staffing Restructure – HR Support

Report of the Town Clerk (attached)

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Town Council** meeting held on **Monday 23rd September 2024** at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Shotton Hall, Peterlee.

Present: Councillor D. Howarth (Mayor) and Councillors R. Burnip, K. Duffy, S. Franklin, K. Hawley, M. McCue, R. Moore, and S. Simpson.

Also, Present: Ian Hall, (Chief Officer and Town Clerk), David Anderson (Locum Democratic Services Manager) and Louise Hudson (Democratic Services Assistant)

Two members of the public

C.55/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were offered from Councillors T. Duffy, B. Fishwick, D. Hawley A. Laing, K. Liddell, S. McDonnell, S. Meikle, R. Scott and A. Stockport

RESOLVED: That the apologies be noted.

C.56/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on the agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise.

No interests were declared.

C.57/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No questions were raised during public participation.

C.58/24 MINUTES

- a) Council meeting held on 19th August 2024
- b) Resources Meeting held on 9th September 2024
- c) Events Working Party held on 12th September 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the above meetings be approved as a correct record and recommendations contained therein be adopted.

C.59/24 FUTURE EVENTS

Consideration was given to a number of possible future events which had been listed on the agenda.

It was noted that the Children's Halloween Party would not be able to be held as there were no entertainers available.

RESOLVED: That the following events be approved:-

- a. Best Dressed Halloween House (Wed 30th October 2024)
- b. Christmas Tree Light Switch on and Christmas Fayre, Shotton Hall. (Fri 29th November to Sun 1st December 2024)
- c. Children's Christmas Party, Pavilion (Fri 13 December 2024)
- d. Nursing Homes Christmas Party, Pavilion. (Possibly 18 or 19th Dec)
- e. Peterlee Music & Food Festival 2025, subject to budget allocation for 2025/26. (Date TBC)

C.60/24 DISMISSAL POLICY

Consideration was given to a dismissal policy, which had been circulated with the agenda.

Members requested that this item be deferred to a future Council meeting to give additional time to consider the wording of the document.

RESOLVED: This item be deferred to a future Council meeting.

C.61/24 SERVICE REVIEW

The Town Clerk provided Members with an update on progress on the Service Review and associated staffing structure. It was anticipated that a report would be submitted to Council in October 2024 to formally agree the revised staffing structure and context statement.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

C.62/24 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT DECISIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, which had been circulated with the agenda, setting out a complaint against two Town Councillors that had been investigated by the Monitoring Officer at Durham County Council. The Monitoring Officer had concluded that no further action was required.

RESOLVED: Decision of the Monitoring Officer be noted.

C.63/24 SECTION 106 MONEY PROJECT AT LOWHILLS ROAD

Consideration was given to a report, which had been circulated with the agenda, proposing the refurbishment of an unused building and resurfacing of an internal road at Lowhills Road Allotments at an estimated cost of £22,000 funded by s106 grant.

RESOLVED: That the project be agreed and s106 funding be sought to finance the works.

C.64/24 SHOTTON HALL FIRE ALARM

Consideration was given to a report, which had been circulated with the agenda, setting out issues identified with the fire alarm at Shotton Hall.

Members noted that the fire alarm was operative, but the isolation of part of the control panel meant that the system no longer communicated direct with monitoring company, Phoenix Eye. Alternative arrangements had been put in place with Phoenix Eye to ensure monitoring when the building was not occupied. The Council's insurance provider had confirmed that the Council was still covered due to the monitoring that had been put in place.

Members considered options to renew the system or to delay an upgrade until the outcome of the sale of the building was known.

RESOLVED:

1. That the information be noted and action taken be endorsed.
2. That the upgrading of the fire alarm system be reconsidered when the outcome of the sale of Shotton Hall was known.

C.65/24 REVIEW OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES

At the request of members, consideration was given to a review of the committee structure and frequency of meetings.

The report setting out the terms of reference of committees, which had been considered by Council at the Annual Meeting held on 20th May 2024, had been circulated with the agenda.

Following detailed consideration members proposed suspending meetings of the Resources Committee and Community & Environment Committee and instead holding Council meetings on the first and third Monday of the month.

A review of the committee structure was to be undertaken in due course.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That meetings of the Resources Committee and the Community & Environment Committee be suspended and instead Council meetings be held on the first and third Monday of the month.
 2. That a review of the committee structure be undertaken in due course.

C.66/24 PARKING FOR FISHING OUTSIDE OF SHOTTON HALL

This item was included on the agenda at the request of members due to complaints being received regarding damage to the grassed area adjacent to the entrance gate which had been installed for Shotton Hall Angling Club.

Concerns were expressed that the grassed area would deteriorate if parking persisted during the winter months.

Following detailed consideration members proposed that a 'No Parking' sign be placed on the gate to prevent further deterioration of the grassed area.

- RESOLVED:** That a 'No Parking' sign be placed at the gate and the Angling Club be advised of the parking restrictions.

C.67/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- RESOLVED:** That in accordance with the provision of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded for the remaining item by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

C.68/24 SALE OF THE LAND AT THE WARDEN'S HOUSE

The Town Clerk updated Members with regard to the progress of the sale of land at the former Warden's House, Lowhills Road. Members were reminded that it had previously been agreed in principle to sell the land at market value with the purchaser paying the Council's legal costs. (Minute No C.43/24 refers).

Market Value had been independently established and agreed with the purchaser. The sale of the land was proceeding on the basis agreed.

- RESOLVED:** That the information be noted.

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Direct line: +44 (0)191 383 6348
Email: local.councils@mazars.co.uk
Date: 19 September 2024

Dear Mr Hall

Completion of the audit for the year ended 31 March 2024

We have completed our audit for the year ended 31 March 2024 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) 2023*". 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 **on or before 30 September to confirm:**

- that the audit has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
- 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 2024/2025

The Internal auditor has left objective O as well as the dates the internal audit was undertaken blank in the Annual Internal Audit Report Section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). In future, the Council should ensure all boxes are filled in, marking nil or not applicable where appropriate.

Email management

There have been amendments to the requirements of the Practitioner's Guide in relation to email management and the use of '.gov.uk' domains. The March 2024 version of the Practitioner's Guide, points 5.210 and 5.211, state that:

- All Parish, Town and Community Councils are eligible to use, and are advised to use, a .gov.uk domain for their websites and email communications. Your community, suppliers and partners will now reasonably expect a local council to have a .gov.uk domain name.
- To assist with compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), it is advised that clerks provide official .gov.uk email accounts to their councillors, which must only be used for official council business.

While the Practitioner's Guide 2024 does not mandate the use of '.gov.uk' email addresses, we would expect the Council and its councillors to have a generic email address to use for official Council correspondence. If the Council and councillors are not using generic email address by 31 March 2025, then this could result in either a qualification or other matter on the 2024/2025 AGAR.

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 [Audit Fees | Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments \(saaa.co.uk\)](https://www.saaa.co.uk) will follow.

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

Yours sincerely



James Collins

Director

For and on behalf of Forvis Mazars LLP

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 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 2023/24

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 2024**.
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 2024**. 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 2024
 - 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 2023/24

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 2024 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 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 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) 2023/24

- 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 2024.
- 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 Chair, 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 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
- 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 2024**.

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 Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024 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.	N/A	

**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 2023/24

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

www.peterlee.gov.uk **ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS**

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, 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 2023/24 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 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 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 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 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 2022/23 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable

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

DD/MM/YYYY DD/MM/YYYY DD/MM/YYYY

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

D.M. FRETHER INTERNAL AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

D.M. Fretcher

Date

3 June 2024

*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 2023/24

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 2024, that:

	Agreed			'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓			prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓			made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
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.	✓			has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
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.	✓			during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
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.	✓			considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓			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.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓			responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
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.	✓			disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
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	has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
			✓	

***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:

24/06/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

MIN C.29/24

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

Chair

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

 SIGNATURE REQUIRED


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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	317,712	422,348	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	1,401,425	1,570,996	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	904,632	602,723	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	1,240,264	1,271,465	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	910,706	789,878	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	422,347	484,272	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	306,237	506,831	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	6,598,860	6,606,360	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	887,554	876,925	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 exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 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

Car Hall
SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

24/6/2024

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

24/06/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

MC/29/24

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

[Signature]
SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

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 2024; 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 2023/24

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:

The Council have provided an Internal auditor's report but this did not include documentation and compliance testing of controls in respect of the award of contracts in 2023/24. In future, the Council should ensure this high risk area is covered in the Internal Audit report

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

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 2024.

*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable.

External Auditor Name

Forvis Mazars LLP, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1DF

External Auditor Signature

Forvis Mazars LLP

Date

18 September 2024

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

Notice of Conclusion of the Audit

Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2024

Section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014
Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015

1.	The audit of accounts for the Council for the year ended 31 st March 2024 has been concluded.
2.	The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of the Council /Meeting (a) on application to Ian Hall, Chief Officer and Town Clerk Peterlee Town Council Shotton Hall Peterlee Co Durham SR8 2PH
3.	Copies of the Annual Return will be provided to any local government elector at no charge for the first copy and thereafter on payment of £1.00 per copy.
	Announcement made by: Ian Hall, Chief Officer and Town Clerk, Peterlee Town Council
	Date of announcement: 23 rd September 2024

You can download a free copy of the audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023/24 by [clicking this link to the AGAR 2023/24](#). Please note that due to the legal requirement for wet signatures on this form it is not available in an accessible format.

You can download a free copy of the External Auditor's completion letter by [clicking this link to the EA letter](#).



DISMISSAL POLICY

Version 1: October 2024

ABSTRACT

This policy sets out the Council's procedure on the process of employee dismissal.

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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Introduction

What is the policy about?

This policy is designed to ensure that managers conduct dismissals in a fair and equitable manner. Employers are required to follow a fair procedure to end an employee's contract that allows for notification and consultation although this is no longer a statutory requirement.

The three-step procedure enables notification and consultation to take place and consists of a written statement, a hearing and an appeal meeting. This process should be followed for dismissals outside the disciplinary procedures. Failure to follow the correct procedure when bringing a contract to an end would not result in the dismissal being deemed to be automatically unfair at an Employment Tribunal. However, it could lead to compensation if a tribunal determines that the employer acted unreasonably in the circumstances.

Who does the policy apply to?

This policy covers all employees of Peterlee Town Council.

The procedure applies to all employees who have been continuously employed for two years, however Peterlee Town Council recommends that the procedures are followed as best practice, even where the employee has less than two year's continuous service.

This policy should be used to make dismissals in the following circumstances:

- Non-renewal of a temporary contract e.g. maternity or sickness absence cover
- End of fixed term contract by reason of redundancy e.g. end of funding or completion of a specific task (but only where the employee has less than two year's continuous service*)
- Unsatisfactory probationary period

* Where an employee has more than two year's continuous service, the manager should seek advice from the HR Advice and Support Team.

Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for informing employees that a contract is due to come to an end. Managers should consult with the employee about the proposal to terminate the contract and give them an opportunity to discuss the situation.

Managers are also responsible for notifying via the Corporate Services Manager the Pay, Reward and Employment Services Team (PES) of the termination of the contract.

Informal stage

Temporary/Fixed term contracts

Managers should review fixed term and temporary contracts on a regular basis and make a determination regarding whether a contract will continue or come to an end at least two months prior to the end date of the contract to allow sufficient time for consultation with the employee to take place.

The manager should ensure that they informally notify the employee as soon as possible if it is not possible to renew the contract.

Where managers are not sure whether the contract will cease (e.g. waiting for the outcome of a grant application), the manager should begin the formal process and pull back on the proposal rather than fail to properly consult with the employee if the funding is not approved

Unsatisfactory probationary period

Before considering using this process, it is essential for the manager to have raised the issue of poor performance with the employee and to have put the necessary support mechanisms in place to help the employee improve to a satisfactory standard. Poor performance could include poor attendance or conduct issues which may have an impact on their suitability for the post, although this is not an exhaustive list. Managers may want to consider extending an employee's probationary period if they feel they need further time to assess their suitability in the post. Further information can be found in the Probationary Period Policy.

Where there are concerns with employee's attendance regarding a condition under the Equality Act then reasonable adjustments must have been considered to help the employee during their probationary period.

If, despite this additional support, the employee has failed to reach a satisfactory standard of performance by the end of their six-month probationary period, or the end of the extension of the probationary period, then this process should be followed.

Formal stage (3 step process)

There are three main stages that should be followed when dismissing an employee using this process:

- Written statement
- Formal meeting
- Right of appeal

It is important that managers follow this procedure correctly, as failure to follow the process may result in a grievance being submitted or subsequent financial penalties at an Employment Tribunal.

Step 1 – Written statement

The manager will write to the employee advising them of the proposal to terminate their contract and detailing all the reasons and circumstances leading to this proposal. Where the dismissal is as a result of an unsatisfactory probationary period, the manager should include as much evidence as possible to explain why it is proposed to terminate the employment contract e.g. action plan.

The letter will include an invitation to a meeting to discuss the proposal in more detail. It is recommended that the employee is given 7 calendar days' notice of the meeting to provide the employee with the opportunity to prepare a response and to arrange representation, if required.

The employee has the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a trade union representative or a work colleague. If the person accompanying the employee cannot attend on the date suggested, the manager should suggest another date, not more than 5 working days after the original date.

Step 2 – Formal meeting

The manager will meet with the employee (and their representative, if required) to discuss the reasons for the proposal to terminate the employee's contract of employment and will give the employee the opportunity to respond to the information provided by the manager and raise any concerns.

Following the meeting, the manager will write to the employee confirming the outcome of the meeting and the termination date of the contract. Contractual or statutory notice must be given whichever is the greater. A leaver form must be sent via the Corporate Services Manager to the DCC Payroll Team.

Step 3 – Right of appeal

An employee who is dismissed under these procedures has a right to appeal, in writing, to the appropriate line manager, detailing the grounds of appeal, within 10 working days of receipt of the decision.

The appeal will be heard by the Town Clerk, who has had no previous involvement in the case. The Town Clerk will write to the employee inviting them to discuss their concerns. It is recommended that the employee is given 7 calendar days' notice of the meeting to provide the employee with the opportunity to prepare a response and to arrange representation, if required.

Following the meeting, the Town Clerk will write to the employee confirming the outcome of the meeting. The decision of the Town Clerk is final.

Exit interviews

Managers should follow the process and complete an exit interview with the employee leaving the council.

Maternity and sickness absence

When an employee is on maternity, adoption or long-term sick leave, it is essential that all stages of the dismissal procedure are followed carefully.

In such circumstances, please contact the Corporate Services Manager in advance of the contract end date for guidance on the appropriate method of conducting the consultation process.

Author of Policy;	Corporate Services Manager
Date effective from;	October 2024
Policy review;	October 2026
Version Control;	V1

Report to: Peterlee Town Council

Date: 7th October 2024

Report of: Ian Hall, Chief Officer & Town Clerk

Subject: **Review of Authorised Officers Signatory List**

Report Purpose: To review the list of officers authorised to use a Council debit card, authorise invoices, purchase orders, contracts and timesheets.

A review is necessary as a significant number of senior posts are currently vacant. (Shaded blue). A review is necessary to allow the Council to function in the interim period while the new staffing structure is agreed, implemented and people are appointed and take up the posts.

Further amendments will be required to reflect the new staffing structure, when approved.

Current List:

	Debit Card ¹	Invoices ²	Purchase Orders ³	Contracts ⁴	Timesheets ⁵
Chief Officer/Town Clerk	x	x	x	x	x
Deputy Town Clerk	x	x	x	x	x
Corporate Services Manager	x	x	x	x	x
Facilities Manager	x	x	x		x
Pavilion Manager	x	x	x		x
Neighbourhood Services Manager	x	x	x		x
Sports & Wellbeing Manager	x	x	x		x
Facilities & Pavilion Deputy Managers	x	x	x		x
Facilities & Pavilion Duty Managers	x	x	x		x
Communications & Marketing Officer (as directed by Corporate Services Manager)	x		x		
Maintenance & Repairs Operative (SC4) (as directed by a Senior Manager)	x				
Neighbourhood Services Team Leaders (SC6) (in Neighbourhood Services Manager's absence or as directed by Manager)	x		x		

1. Invoices can only be authorised in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
2. Purchase Orders can only be authorised in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
3. Contracts can only be authorised in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
4. Counter-signing of timesheets is subject to the Council's policy i.e no subordinate or peers to counter-sign timesheets.

Proposed List: It is proposed that the posts described as 'Acting' below be given delegated authority of those posts as detailed below. These delegations will be in place for the period that the postholder is acting up.

	Debit Card ¹	Invoices ²	Purchase Orders ³	Contracts ⁴	Timesheets ⁵
Chief Officer/Town Clerk	x	x	x	x	x
Deputy Town Clerk	x	x	x	x	x
Acting Corporate Services Manager	x	x	x	x	x
Facilities Manager	x	x	x		x
Acting Pavilion Manager	x	x	x		x
Acting Neighbourhood Services Manager	x	x	x		x
Sports & Wellbeing Manager	x	x	x		x
Facilities & Pavilion Deputy Managers	x	x	x		x
Facilities & Pavilion Duty Managers	x	x	x		x
Communications & Marketing Officer (as directed by Corporate Services Manager)	x		x		
Maintenance & Repairs Operative (SC4) (as directed by a Senior Manager)	x				
Neighbourhood Services Team Leaders (SC6) (in Neighbourhood Services Manager's absence or as directed by Manager)	x		x		

1. Invoices can only be authorised in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
2. Purchase Orders can only be authorised in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
3. Contracts can only be authorised in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
4. Counter-signing of timesheets is subject to the Council's policy i.e no subordinate or peers to counter-sign timesheets.

- Recommendations:**
1. That the proposed list of delegated authorisations be approved.
 2. That a further review be undertaken following the approval of the new staffing structure.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance No direct implications

Staffing No direct implications

Risk No direct implications

Equality and Diversity, Cohesion and Integration – No direct implications

Crime and Disorder – No direct implications

Consultation & Communication – No wider consultation required

Procurement No direct implications.

Legal No direct implications