SHARLSTON

Parish Council

RESERVES POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Parish Council is required to maintain adequate financial reserves to meet the needs of the organisation. The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will determine and review the level of reserves.

1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended requires) local authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. However, there is no specified minimum level of reserves that an authority must hold. It is the responsibility of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) to advise the Council about the level of reserves and to ensure that there are procedures for their establishment and use.

1.3 Reviewing the Council's Financial Risk Assessment is part of the budgeting and year end accounting procedures and identifies planned and unplanned expenditure items and thereby indicates an appropriate level of reserves.

1.4 Any decision to set up a reserve must be given by the Council.

1.5 Expenditure from reserves can only be authorised by the Council

1.6 Reserves can be categorised as 'general' or 'earmarked'

2. TYPES OF RESERVE

The Council will hold reserves for these three main purposes:

- A working balance – this forms part of the general reserves.
- A contingency fund– this also forms part of general reserves.
- A means of building up funds, sometimes called 'earmarked' to meet known or predicted requirements.

3. GENERAL RESERVES

3.1 The general reserves are a balance on the Council's revenue account which is not held for any specific purpose other than to cushion the council's finances against any unexpected short-term problems in the council's cash flow, or to allay the impact of unexpected events or emergencies.

3.2 The general reserves are to be maintained at a level based upon a risk assessment carried out annually by the RFO when setting the budget for the forthcoming year. Any surplus on the general reserves above the required balance may be used to fund capital expenditure, be appropriated to nominated reserves or used to limit any increase in the precept.

3.3 The current level with respect to general reserves is that: "The Parish Council should endeavour to maintain its revenue reserve balances at a level of 3-12 months of net expenditure.

4. EARMARKED RESERVES

4.1 Nominated reserves represent:

- ring-fenced balances of grant funds or third-party allocations reserved for specific purposes;

- amounts generally built up over a period of time which are nominated for specific items of expenditure to meet known or anticipated liabilities or projects and intended to reduce the impact of meeting the full expenditure in one year.

4.2 The Council, when establishing an earmarked reserve, will set out:

- The reason / purpose of the reserve.
- How and when the reserve can be used.
- Procedures for the management and control of the reserve.
- A process and timescale for review of the reserve to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy.

4.3 As part of the calculation of an earmarked reserve, consideration must be given as to when the projected expenditure will fall due. If the earmarked reserve is to be built up over a period of years, annual increases in the relevant reserve should be on a proportionate incremental rather than a fixed annual basis (i.e. the sum set aside increases by a set percentage each year), so that the financial liability falls progressively on those taxpayers more likely to benefit from the final implementation of the relevant asset or service.

5. GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 The Reserves Policy will be reviewed annually by the Council.

5.2 The Clerk/RFO will consider the likely needs of the general and nominated reserves for the forthcoming financial year as part of the process of setting the revenue budget, having regard to the predicted outturn of the current year income & expenditure. However, the reserves budget as such will be presented for the Council's approval and at that point the Council will have the opportunity to review the levels of reserves held in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and may make proposals for the creation of additional nominated reserves as part of the budgeting process.

Adopted by Sharlston Parish Council on 13th May 2024 & reviewed on 12th May 2025

Signed: *Cllr P Belbin* *E King*
Chairman Clerk