



## **Report on Adoption of Revised Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and a New Scheme of Delegation**

### **Background**

Under Section 135 of the Local Government Act 1972, a council may adopt Standing Orders to regulate the conduct of its business and proceedings at meetings.

Councils are also required to be able to demonstrate sound financial management, through the adoption and operation of robust Financial Regulations, in line with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the principles of proper practice.

In comparison with a number of councils of similar size, operational complexity and budget, Minehead Town Council currently operates with a relatively low level of delegated authority to officers, limited to £500 per transaction. This figure has not been reviewed or increased since at least 2022, despite inflationary pressures and rising operational costs.

Since May 2025, the Town Council has also significantly expanded its operational responsibilities through the devolution of amenities and asset management functions. The existing low threshold for officer delegation has, at times, resulted in delays to essential repairs and operational purchases, as matters have had to be referred to a committee or to Full Council for approval.

As the workforce and asset base have expanded, routine and compliance-related expenditure, such as statutory building compliance, health and safety requirements and staff training, has often required committee or council approval, despite being non-discretionary in nature.

At present, the Finance and General Purposes Committee has delegated authority to approve expenditure of up to £1,500 (excluding VAT). While higher than officer delegation, this still results in a volume of routine items being escalated to Full Council.

Consequently, council agendas have increasingly contained large schedules of payments and relatively minor operational decisions, contributing to lengthy meetings and diverting councillor time away from their key strategic and policy-setting role.

### **Needs**

It is worth noting that the Town Council has, in recent years, become increasingly robust and compliant in its financial governance arrangements. Where some councils may occasionally operate flexibly around their own regulations, Minehead Town Council has consistently applied its Financial Regulations and Standing Orders strictly and transparently.

The Council is required to publish all expenditure over £500 in accordance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, and, in order to promote complete transparency, routinely publishes all expenditure on a monthly basis through the Finance and General Purposes Committee and subsequently notes this at Full Council.

It is recognised that there may be some councillor concern about increasing delegated authority to officers or committees. These concerns have been carefully considered and the

proposals set out in this report have been developed sensitively, balancing appropriate oversight and control with operational efficiency and responsiveness to community needs.

However, it has become increasingly clear that the current levels of delegated authority are no longer proportionate to the size, responsibilities, or operational complexity of the Council.

Many councils adopt a formal Scheme of Delegation, which clearly sets out decisions and expenditure that may be undertaken by officers and committees within the framework of the approved budget and Financial Regulations. The Town Clerk has therefore prepared a draft Scheme of Delegation designed to operate alongside the Council's Financial Regulations.

The Financial Regulations themselves have been reviewed and updated, based on the most recent NALC model Financial Regulations. They differ only minimally from the Council's current regulations. The key changes relate to:

- A Clear reference to delegated authority contained within a Scheme of Delegation;
- The authorisation to pay an invoice in full, provided the amount invoiced matches the sum previously approved by the Council;
- An increase in day-to-day officer delegated expenditure from £500 to £800; and
- An increase in delegated authority to the Finance and General Purposes Committee from £1,500 to £2,000 (excluding VAT).

The Standing Orders presented are likewise based on the most recent NALC model Standing Orders, with only minor amendments reflecting local arrangements, including items to be conducted at the Annual Town Council Meeting.

The proposed Scheme of Delegation is a new document for Minehead Town Council but is well established in local government practice. The Scheme identifies routine and operational expenditure that may be exercised by the Clerk or Deputy Clerk within approved budget headings. It specifies individual cost codes and limits, including (but not limited to):

- Equipment and machinery for the amenities team;
- Staff training and professional development;
- Legal and professional fees;
- Uniform and personal protective equipment (PPE); and
- Other routine operational requirements.

Most delegated items are subject to a maximum single-transaction limit of £1,500 excluding VAT, ensuring that control and proportionality are maintained.

### **Financial and Legal Considerations**

The Town Council approved its 2026/27 budget at Full Council in January 2026. All expenditure undertaken under the proposed Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation will be strictly contained within the approved budget.

Standing Orders may be adopted under Section 135 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The adoption and maintenance of robust Financial Regulations support the Council's duty to demonstrate proper financial administration under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and recognised standards of good governance.

The delegation of functions to officers and committees is expressly permitted under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Recommendations**

That the Council:

- Approve the revised Standing Orders;
- Approve the updated Financial Regulations; and
- Approve the Minehead Town Council Scheme of Delegation.

Ben Parker

Town Clerk

April 2026