

## HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL

**I HEREBY GIVE NOTICE THAT** a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee will be held in the Council Office, St Andrew's Cemetery, Hexham on 24 January 2018 at 6.45pm, when the following items will be discussed:

### **A G E N D A**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To receive minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 2 January 2018, enclosed.
3. Matters arising, if any.
4. Declarations of interest (see enclosed).
5. To receive bank reconciliation and budget income and expenditure report to 31 December 2017 (attached).
6. To appoint Stokoe Rodger as internal auditor for 2017/18.
7. To consider making a financial subsidy in conjunction with Ponteland Town Council and adjoining Councils towards Bus Service 74 (see enclosed).
8. To review and adopt the Dispensations Policy (enclosed).
9. To review and adopt the Equal Opportunities Policy (enclosed).
10. To review and adopt the Equality and Diversity Policy (enclosed).
11. To review and adopt the Grievance Policy (enclosed).
12. To agree a date for the next meeting of the Committee.
13. To consider and recommend Council adopt the revised Financial Risk Assessment (see attached).
14. Any urgent matters at the Chairman of the meeting's discretion. (*Matters to be raised under this item should be written out (if possible) and handed to the Chairman of the meeting or the Clerk before the meeting begins.*)



Jane Kevan  
Town Clerk  
18 January 2018

Hexham Town Council  
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St Andrew's Cemetery  
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H agenda 0118 no. 2 FandGPCcommittee

## **HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** **MEETING HELD ON 2 JANUARY 2018**

413.	PRESENT: Councillor T G E Gillanders in the Chair and Councillors R Hull and T Cessford.
414.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillors J Ord, J M Graham and Mrs C R Homer.
415.	MINUTES of the meeting held on 11 December 2017, having been circulated, were AGREED.
416.	MATTERS ARISING: PRESENTATIONS FROM HEXHAM COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND HEXHAM YOUTH INITIATIVE (minute 409 refers). It was noted that writing to these organisations to provide a short report each year on what the grant had been used for should be added to the action log.
417.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were no declarations of interest declared.
418.	STREET CLEANSING BUDGET: It was noted that a partnership agreement may be made with Northumberland County Council for the provision of a person to be based in Hexham with a street cleansing machine to be used only in Hexham. The proposal is that the annual cost will be £30,000 for a dedicated worker and machine, including running costs. This is in addition to the County Council's standard street cleansing in Hexham so an enhancement to the existing cleanliness scheme. It was AGREED to write to NCC to accept this proposal for a formal partnership agreement, subject to written confirmation of the detail and that this worker can carry out other work such as winter maintenance at the discretion of the Town Council. It was further AGREED to amend the 2018/19 draft budget from £22,000 (partnership working) and £20,000 (contingency) to £28,000 (partnership working) and £14,000 (contingency).
419.	NEXT MEETING: It was AGREED that the next Committee meeting will be held on 24 January 2018 at 6.45pm in the Council Office, St Andrew's Cemetery, Hexham.

**Action Log**

Ask about other Town Councils' business banking at the next NALC meeting.	Councillor Gillanders
Research financial risk assessments adopted by other Town Councils (✓ emailed to Councillor Graham 12/12/187)	Clerk
Write to HCP and HYI re: Grant Aid (✓ 3/1/18)	Clerk
Write to Peter Jackson, NCC Leader, re: partnership agreement on street cleansing and related work (✓ 3/1/18)	Councillor Gillanders

Chairman .....

**HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 3 September 2012 Councillors must declare if they have a disclosable interest in any matters under consideration.

To do so Councillors must use one of the following statements:-

1. "I have a disclosable pecuniary interest  
in..... (for example:) Agenda item 3,  
Planning application number 13/1234".  
(NOTE: Code of Conduct paragraphs 11&15 apply).
  
2. "I have a disclosable personal interest  
in..... (for example:) Agenda item 4,  
Grant aid application by Hexham Youth Initiative  
(NOTE: Code of Conduct paragraph 13 applies).

Councillors should familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct regarding the definitions of (A) pecuniary interest and (B) other personal interest and their obligations when declaring any interest.

To ensure Councillors interests are correctly minuted please use one of the above statements when declaring an interest.

NB. Should a Councillor wish to take part in the consideration and voting on a matter or matters in which he/she has a disclosable interest then they may request a dispensation be granted to enable them to take part in the discussion and voting on it but at least 10 days' notice must be given for any dispensation request.

**HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE 24 JANUARY 2018**

**BUS SERVICE 74**

On 14 February 2017 the Committee considered making a financial subsidy in conjunction with Ponteland Town Council and adjoining Councils towards this bus service. It was agreed to pay a subsidy of £150.00 from the 2016/17 donations (one time only) budget as a gesture of goodwill as this had not been budgeted for (minute 327 refers).

On 12 December 2017a request was received from Ponteland Town Council regarding the continued provision of the Saturday evening bus service 74. The request states:

*“The Town Council wish to extend their grateful thanks to Hexham Town Council for their contribution in support of this service in 2017/18 and respectfully ask once again for your Councils support, towards the cost of continued provision in 2018/19.*

*Following a review of bus services in 2015, it was established that the service 74 no longer qualified for support from Northumberland County Council. The area’s most affected by the removal of this service were, Ponteland, Stamfordham and Matfen, and as such their Town and Parish Council’s agreed to fund the Saturday evening ‘Tynedale Links’ bus between Hexham, Matfen, Stamfordham, Ponteland and Newcastle for a year, starting from 30th January 2016.*

*Ponteland Council, believe that the service is an important social link, enabling people in Ponteland, Stamfordham, Matfen and Hexham to enjoy a late night out in Newcastle, or to get a later bus back from Matfen.”*

*The cost per annum for the service is £4973 per annum; and this was covered jointly by Ponteland Town, Matfen, Hexham and Stamfordham Parish Council’s in 2017/18. There is no change in cost for 2018/19.*

*The Town Council along with Hexham, Matfen and Stamfordham Parish Councils have subsidised the service since January 2016, and like to satisfy themselves that the service is A) still required and improving, B) of benefit to their community and C) value for money. To assist your Council in making their decision, I have received the following information regarding patronage numbers from Mr Mark Ellis - Go North East.*

*‘.....we’ve carried an average of 11.6 passengers per trip so far this year, and the average revenue is £15.88 per night in fares.’”*

For information, £400.00 remains in the 2017/18 donations (one time only) budget.

Jane Kevan  
Town Clerk  
January 2018

**HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**  
**24 JANUARY 2018**

**REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF DISPENSATIONS POLICY**  
**REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**  
**REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**  
**REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF GRIEVANCE POLICY**

The attached policies were all previously adopted in May 2013 and (with minor amendments and updated to include a reference to the Staff Handbook where appropriate) are recommended for re-adoption.

Jane Kevan  
Town Clerk  
January 2018

**HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**THE GRANTING OF DISPENSATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

NOTE: This document may be revised if and when additional information is received following any legal proceedings or Government clarifications.

1. The Council adopted its Code of Conduct on 3 September 2012 (readopting it on 3 July 2017). Under this code, if Councillors wish to take part in the consideration and voting on a matter or matters in which they have a personal and/or prejudicial disclosable interest then they may request a dispensation be granted to enable them to take part in the discussion and to vote on it. (A Councillor must continue to declare his or her interest, be it personal or personal and prejudicial.)
2. As the Code adopted by the Council is based upon the NALC code of conduct, the Town Clerk is responsible, as the statutory officer, for granting dispensations under the Localism Act 2012 c7 s33.
3. A request for a dispensation must be in writing and provide factual evidence as to why a dispensation is required and to what business it relates to (a planning application, a grant application, etc.)
4. A request for a dispensation should be made at least ten days before a meeting. It is not practical to request a dispensation on receipt of the agenda. It may also be necessary to request further information before a dispensation can be granted.
5. A file will be kept of all relevant paperwork for each Councillor requesting a dispensation. This will be open to public scrutiny.
6. Once all documentation is available then a dispensation may be granted and will only be granted on one of the following basis:
  - a. Without dispensation the Council would be unable to consider, discuss and decide upon an issue as it would not be quorate (LA 2012 c7 s33 (2a)).
  - b. The political balance of the Council would be distorted and this could alter the outcome of the decision (LA 2012 c7 s33 (2b)).
  - c. A dispensation is in the interests of the residents living in the area (LA 2012 c7 s33 (2c)).
  - d. It is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation (LA 2012 c7 s33 (2e)).
7. When a dispensation is granted:
  - a. The reason for selecting a specific basis will be recorded in case there are any subsequent challenges, legal or otherwise.
  - b. The date of and the period of the dispensation will be recorded and the dispensation will be minuted.
  - c. The Councillor requesting the dispensation will be advised in writing of the decision and the basis for it.

- d. The Councillor will be advised how long the dispensation will last (the dispensation period will never exceed the term of the Council).  
However, a dispensation will also only be granted for the length of time that the issue, over which the dispensation is being granted, will exist.
- 8. 'Blanket' dispensations will not be granted.
- 9. Councillors should note in particular paragraph 4 above. This period is the minimum and will be adhered to.

January 2018 – Date for Review: January 2020  
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## **HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL** **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

### **THE LEGAL POSITION**

It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds which, under the Equality Act 2010, are known as “protected characteristics”: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex or sexual orientation.

### **THE PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities to all employees, irrespective of their characteristics (unless there are genuine occupational qualifications or objectively justified reasons for a different approach to be taken). The Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination whether it is direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

### **THE SCOPE**

All employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed term contract, agency workers or temporary staff will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Council.

### **THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT**

Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

The commitment to equal opportunities in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense as it seeks to utilise the talents available from the local community, representing society as a whole.

Breaches of the Council's equal opportunities policy will be regarded as serious misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. Employees are entitled to complain about discrimination or harassment or victimisation through the Council's Grievance procedure.

This policy is fully supported by all members of the Council and adopts the model contract as devised by the employee professional body in the local government sector (the Society of Local Council Clerks).

This policy will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis and at least once every two years. Any other personnel policies will be reviewed against the values stated in this main Equal Opportunities policy to ensure that the Council strives to remain an Equal Opportunities employer.

**(NOTE:** This document is an appendix to the Staff Handbook, given to all employees when commencing employment with the Council.)

January 2018 – Date for Review: January 2021  
[clerk@hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk)

## **HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL** **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

Hexham Town Council recognises that it functions at a fundamental level of democracy and that its services affect, both directly and indirectly, the lives of all those who work for the Council and all those who visit the Council's Cemetery, play areas, allotment sites and elsewhere. It recognises it has a role in the pursuit of access and opportunity for all.

The Council acknowledges that certain groups and individuals within society are discriminated against and wishes to declare its commitment to working towards equality in employment and delivery of its services.

In particular, the Council will work to combat discrimination and to ensure that prospective and present employees and those who may use or wish to use the Council's properties and services are not treated less favourably on the grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, culture, religion or nationality or are disadvantaged by the application of other conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justified. In doing so, the Council will work within its resources and the appropriate legislative framework.

In employment the aim is to provide a non-discriminatory working environment where discrimination, harassment or bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Employment policies, procedures and practices will promote equality of opportunity and all decisions regarding recruitment, selection, training, promotion and career management will be based solely on objective and job related requirements.

In access to services at the Cemetery, play areas, allotment sites and elsewhere the aim is to ensure that all those who receive a service from the Council or wish to use a Council service can do so without fear of discrimination or disadvantage.

Translating this policy and ethos into practice is the responsibility of all employees (no matter how employed) and members of the Council.

People are entitled to be treated fairly, in a consistent manner and with dignity and respect.

**(NOTE:** This document is an appendix to the Staff Handbook, given to all employees when commencing employment with the Council.)

**First adopted by Hexham Town Council on 2 March 2009**

January 2018 – Date for Review: January 2021

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## **HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL** **GRIEVANCE POLICY & PROCEDURE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. This procedure applies to all employees of the Council.

1.2. The objectives of the procedure are:

- To foster good relationships between the Council and its employees by discouraging the harbouring of grievances;
- To settle grievances as near as possible to their point of origin;
- To ensure the Council treats grievances seriously and resolves them as quickly as possible; and
- To ensure that employees are treated fairly and consistently throughout the Council.

1.3. Matters excluded from this procedure are as follows:

- Appeals against salary or gradings;
- Appeals against disciplinary actions;
- Income tax, national insurance matters, rates of pay collectively agreed at the national or local level;
- Rules of pension schemes; and
- A grievance about a matter over which the Council has no control.

### **2. INFORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

In the interests of maintaining good working relations the employee is encouraged to first discuss any grievance with the Town Clerk with a view to resolving the matter informally if appropriate. If the employee feels that this is not appropriate or he or she wishes to pursue a formal grievance they should follow the procedure detailed below.

### **STANDARD COUNCIL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

3.1. The employee must set out his/her grievance in writing ("Statement of Grievance") and provide a copy to the Clerk.

3.2. Once the Council has had a reasonable opportunity to consider its response to the information provided in the Statement of Grievance the employee will be invited to attend a grievance meeting to discuss the matter. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. Grievance meetings will normally be convened with 14 days of the Council receiving the Statement of Grievance. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance meeting by a fellow employee, by a Trade Union representative or by a friend. If the meeting is inconvenient for either the employee or his or her companion, the employee has the right to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

3.3. A grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated, or to afford the Clerk time to consider the decision.

3.4. After the meeting the employee will be informed of the Council's decision within 5 working days (the meeting may be reconvened for this purpose). The Council's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

3.5. If the employee wishes to appeal against the Council's decision he or she must inform the Council within 5 working days of receiving the decision.

3.6. If the employee notifies the Council that they wish to appeal, the employee will be invited to attend a grievance appeal meeting before the Council's Staff Committee. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend that meeting.

The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance appeal meeting by a fellow employee, by a Trade Union representative or friend.

3.7. A grievance appeal meeting will normally be convened within 7 working days of the Council receiving notice that the employee wishes to appeal as outlined in 3.5 above. If the meeting time is inconvenient for the employee or his or her companion, the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

3.8. After the grievance appeal meeting the employee will be informed of the Council's final decision within 5 working days (the meeting may be reconvened for this purpose). The Council's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

#### **4. A MODIFIED COUNCIL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE (FOR FORMER EMPLOYEES)**

4.1. If an ex-employee wishes to raise a grievance, he or she must set out their grievance and the basis for that grievance in writing and provide a copy to the Chairman of the Council's Staff Committee.

4.2. Following receipt of a statement of grievance as in 4.1 above, the Council will either write to the ex-employee inviting him or her to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance or to ask for the ex-employee's agreement to the Council responding to the grievance in writing.

4.2.1. If the ex-employee does not agree to the matter being dealt with by correspondence within 7 working days of the Council writing to them as in 4.2 above, steps 3.1 to 3.4 of the standard Council grievance procedure will be followed. The meeting will be conducted by the Council's Staff Committee.

4.2.2. If the ex-employee does agree to the matter being dealt with by correspondence, the Council's Staff Committee will consider his or her grievance and will respond to the ex-employee in writing within 14 days of the receipt of such confirmation setting out the basis for the Council's decision.

#### **5. GENERAL PROCEDURAL INFORMATION**

5.1. Grievances raised under the standard Council grievance procedure will normally be investigated and any meetings to discuss the grievance will be conducted by the Clerk.

5.2. If an employee's grievance is about the Clerk they should raise the matter with the Chairman of the Council. All investigations and any grievance meeting will be conducted by the Council Staff Committee and any grievance appeal meeting will be conducted by 3 members of the Council who do not sit on the Council's Staff Committee.

5.3. A copy of the Statement of Grievance, a note of the decision taken at the first stage of the procedure, any notice of appeal and appeal decision will be placed on the employee's/ex-employee's personnel file, together with any notes or evidence taken or compiled during the course of the procedure.

**(NOTE:** This document is an appendix to the Staff Handbook, given to all employees when commencing employment with the Council.)

January 2018 – Date for Review: January 2021  
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**HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING 24 JANUARY 2018**

**FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Council (not a Committee) must review and agree a financial risk assessment every year. The assessment below is a slightly revised version of the previous assessment which was accepted by the external auditors.

The Committee is asked to consider this proposed financial risk assessment and recommend it for adoption by the Council.

### FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

AREA	RISK(S) IDENTIFIED	RISK LEVEL	POTENTIAL IMPACT	MANAGEMENT/ CONTROL OF RISK	ACTION	AUDIT FREQUENCY (months)
<b>PRECEPT</b>	HTC failure to submit precept requirement by the deadline	Low	High	Minuted	Diary (Clerk)	12
	Precept not paid by NCC	Low	High	Checked, report to Council	Minuted	6
	Was the precept adequate?	Low	High	Finance & General Purposes Committee review and receive reports for budget monitoring at least 3 times per year.	Diary	12
<b>CEMETERY</b>	Allocation of incorrect grave plot	Low	Medium	Burial register is updated for each burial.	RFO verify entry	6
	Are the charges reasonable?	Low	Low	Reviewed annually by the Planning & Infrastructure Committee.	Diary	12
	Incorrect invoice(s) issued	Low	Low	Invoice details are recorded in the burial register and cemetery records database.	RFO verify	12
<b>ALLOTMENTS</b>	Are the rents reasonable?	Low	Low	Reviewed annually by the Planning & Infrastructure Committee.	Diary	12
	Incorrect invoices issued	Low	Low	A copy of each invoice is kept in the allotment register.	Diary	12
	Incorrect income recorded	Low	Low	Details of payment are made on the copy invoice in the register.	RFO verify	12
	Income paid by cash lost/stolen	Low	High	Cash payments are recorded and bank records subsequently	RFO verify	6

				checked.		
<b>GRANTS via S106</b>	Failure by HTC to submit valid claim	Low	High	NCC instructions must be followed.	Clerk/RFO verify	12
	Non-receipt of grant from NCC when due	Low	High	Check bank records, contact NCC and report to Planning & Infrastructure Committee.	Clerk/RFO verify	6
<b>SALARIES</b>	Paying the wrong salary	Low	High	Check relevant minute/ staff contract and advise NCC.	Member verify	12
	False documents provided by employee	Low	High	Check documents and references.	Member verify	12
	Making incorrect deductions	Low	Medium	Salaries paid via NCC.		
<b>DIRECT COSTS AND EXPENSES AND ALL PAYMENTS MADE</b>	Goods not supplied or received	Low	Medium	Review ordering system if necessary.	RFO verify	12
	Invoice is for incorrect amount	Low	Medium	Sign the invoice and check the total.	Two Members to verify	12
	Cheque made out incorrectly	Low	Medium	Sign the cheque stub and check the invoice total.	Two Members to verify	12
	Cheque made payable to wrong party	Low	Medium	Sign the cheque stub and check the payee.	RFO verify	12
	Cllr overpaid allowance	Low	Medium	Claims must be in writing.	RFO verify	12
<b>GRANT AID</b>	Using the wrong power to pay	Low	Low	Minute the relevant legislation (NB General Power of Competence adopted in 2017).	Member verify	12
	No record of agreement to pay	Low	Medium	All grants agreed to be minuted.	Member verify	12
	Agreement of grant conditions (if any)	Low	Medium	Must be reasonable and minuted.	RFO verify	12
	Follow up of grant	Low	Medium	Minute	RFO confirm	12

	conditions (if any)					
<b>ELECTION COSTS</b>	Invoice not at agreed rate	Low	Medium	RFO check and consider budget.	RFO verify	12
<b>VAT RECOVERABLE</b>	Vat analysis incorrect	Low	Medium	Checked when received, approval given monthly for accounts for payment, and by internal audit.	RFO verify	12
	Incorrect VAT charged on purchases	Low	Medium	Check to cash book.	RFO verify	12
	Failing to make claim within time limit	Low	High	Submit a return every 6 months.	RFO verify	12
<b>RESERVES</b>	Not being adequate	Low	High	Consider level when budget setting.	RFO opinion	12
<b>ASSETS</b>	Loss, damages	Medium	Medium	Annually inspect assets. Review insurance cover, and check against asset register.	Diary	12
	Damage to third parties	Low	High	Annually review insurance cover.	Diary	12
<b>STAFF</b>	Loss of personnel	Low	High	Monitor hours, stress, sickness, management training, early departure.	Diary + Staff subcommittee keep under review	12
	Staff fraud, Cash loss	Low	High	Review fidelity insurance cover and any insurer conditions.	Diary	12
<b>LOSS</b>	Consequential loss due to damage or third party actions	Low	Medium	Review liability insurance cover and any insurer conditions.	Diary	12
<b>BORROWING</b>	Inadequacy of finances to repay loans	Low	Medium	Check against income and outflow.	RFO opinion	12
<b>LEGAL POWERS</b>	Illegal activity or payment	Low	Medium	Town Clerk is CiLCA qualified. General Power of Competence adopted.	Clerk/RFO verify	12

				Use of advice from NALC and SLCC. Members follow the Code of Conduct.		
<b>FINANCIAL RECORDS</b>	Inadequate	Low	High	RFO check 3 monthly. Financial Regulations reviewed annually. Annual internal and external audit. Two signatures on all cheques.	RFO opinion	12
<b>MINUTES</b>	Inaccurate or illegal	Low	Low	Review and signed by Chair at following meeting.	Clerk	12
<b>MEMBERS INTERESTS</b>	Not maintained in accordance with Code of Practice or conflict of interest.	Low	Medium	Register of interests filed with NCC. Update as and when changes occur. Code of Conduct advice and declarations of interest on all agendas.	Clerk	12