1. Objectives

The Council aims to collect all debt owed to the Council promptly, effectively, efficiently and economically, while ensuring unbiased and fair treatment to all debtors.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out the Debt Recovery Policy for the Council. It's purpose is to set out working practices to ensure that all sundry debts and income of the Council are managed, administered and collected in a transparent, efficient and cost effective manner. In delivery of this policy, the Parish Council will also comply with ethical best practice and legislative requirements appropriate to each individual debt or debtor.

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) will provide regular updates to the Parish Council of any debt(s) deemed unrecoverable and for 'write-off', as appropriate.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Responsible Financial Officer shall ensure debt recovery is undertaken in accordance with current legislation and the Council's Financial Regulations.

4. Collection of Income

The collection of income in respect of invoices raised must follow a standard course, which fully documents the efforts made to settle the debt:-

1. The RFO will take steps to collect the debt in the first instance;
2. If no payment is received within the stated terms, the RFO will send a first stage reminder letter and a payment statement, requesting payment within the next 14 days;
3. If possible this will be followed with either a telephone call or email to negotiate settlement;
4. If no payment is received after a further 7 days, a final demand notice, will be sent;
5. The provision of further services or facilities hire will be ceased immediately.

All action taken will be fully documented by the RFO.

9. Disputed Invoices

The RFO will retain responsibility for monitoring outstanding invoices and for dealing with any debtor disputing an invoice. If the debtor wishes to dispute the invoice they should write to the RFO setting out setting out their reasons. Every effort should be made, by the RFO to:

- Resolve the dispute at the earliest opportunity and within two weeks;
- Explore any obstacles for partial or full payment within a reasonable timescale.

10. Recovery Action

If after exhausting all the reminder stages the debt remains outstanding, the RFO must decide if the debt requires further enforcement action consulting with the Full Council at the first available opportunity. Should the total value of the customer's debt(s) be less than £100 and it is considered by the RFO uneconomic to pursue further, the invoice will be reported to the Council with a recommendation for 'write off'.

Adopted 21st July 2026
Review Date: July 2029

For all other debts over £100, the following action may be considered, by Council:

1. Refer the debt to the Small Claims Court.
2. If the court is unable to collect the debt, all options are exhausted, the RFO will report to Council for consideration to write-off the debt.

11. Part Payments

Where part payment has been received for a series of invoices, then the payment is attributed to the oldest invoices first (unless the payment is for a specific invoice).

12. Writing Debts Off

If the debt remains unpaid, after exhausting all appropriate recovery methods, the debt should be considered for 'write off'. All requests to write off debts must be agreed by the Parish Council.

It would normally be expected that debts be considered for write off for: -

- Cumulative debts under £100 where no payment has been received within six months of sending the final demand;
- All debts where the court advises they are unable to collect and all options are exhausted; in these circumstances the RFO will deem it not cost-effective to pursue.
- All debts where the RFO advises the debt is irrecoverable or that legal action is unlikely to be cost effective.

The debtor remains liable to pay for up to six years. Therefore, if the debt has been written off and a further installment is received, the income will be credited as appropriate.

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