



FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

October 2017

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Financial Regulations are the regulatory framework within which the financial affairs of the Authority operate; they apply to all of the Authority's activities. The regulations identify responsibilities in full but can be summarised as follows:

- Major financial decisions, including setting the annual revenue and capital budgets, must be taken by the Members of the Authority, as advised by the Chief Finance Officer.
- The Authority encourages the Chief Fire Officer and his staff to take day-to-day responsibility for financial management of the service within the agreed budget.
- The Chief Finance Officer (for financial matters) and the Monitoring Officer have statutory responsibilities and should be consulted on significant issues or where members or officers have any doubt about the correctness of a possible action.
- Expenditure must be regularly monitored to ensure that it stays within approved budgets.
- Members, as advised by the Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Chief Fire Officer, are responsible for identifying significant risks to the Authority and for putting in place strategies to deal with them.
- Payments, including to staff, can only be made through arrangements approved by the Chief Finance Officer.
- All partnership arrangements must take account of appropriate financial and legal matters.

1.2 The Scope of the Financial Regulations

The regulations and procedures apply to all staff (including temporary staff) and members of the Authority. They identify the financial responsibilities of Members, the Chief Fire Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer and other officers with financial responsibility.

Members and officers should maintain a written record of any decision-making that has been delegated to members of their staff, including seconded staff. When decisions have been delegated or have been devolved to other bodies or responsible officers, references to members or officers in the regulations should be read as referring to them.

1.3 The Purpose of Financial Regulations

Financial Regulations control the way the Fire Authority manages its business. They clarify responsibilities and provide a framework for decision-making. Where there are specific statutory powers and duties the financial regulations seek to ensure that these are duly complied with as well as setting out best professional practices and processes for all activities and decisions of the Fire Authority, its committees and staff.

Rather than a barrier to action they should be viewed as providing the framework within which action can be taken, setting out best practice throughout the Authority and ensuring a high quality of financial information, enabling better decision making and improved service delivery.

1.4 Awareness of Financial Regulations

The Chief Fire Officer is responsible for ensuring that all staff with financial responsibilities are made aware of and have access to these Regulations.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff in their departments are aware of the existence and content of the Authority's Financial Regulations and other internal regulatory documents and that they comply with them.

All members and staff have a general responsibility for taking action to provide for the security of the assets under their control and for ensuring that the use of these resources is legal, is properly authorised, provides value for money and achieves best value.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for issuing advice and guidance to underpin the Financial Regulations that Members, Officers and others acting on behalf of the Authority are required to follow.

1.5 Non-compliance with Financial Regulations

Failure to comply with these regulations and any accompanying financial instructions may have the following consequences:

- For staff, these regulations supplement the code of conduct for employees, so a breach will normally be considered a disciplinary offence that will invoke disciplinary procedures (and can lead to dismissal).
- For Members, these regulations supplement the code of conduct for Members, so a breach may be reported to the Monitoring Officer, which may lead to sanctions being imposed upon the Member.
- For the Authority, there is an overriding duty to secure value for money by conducting its business in an economical, efficient and effective manner. Failing to comply with the regulations will have wider implications which could result in the misuse or waste of funds received from tax payers and the Government.

These Regulations provide clarity about the financial accountabilities of everyone acting on behalf of the Authority, individually or as a whole. To conduct its business efficiently, the Authority needs to ensure that it has sound financial management policies in place and that they are strictly adhered to.

1.6 Review and Amendment of the Financial Regulations

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for reviewing the Financial Regulations and their amendment from time to time and will submit any additions or changes necessary to the Audit and Governance Committee for approval. The Audit and Governance Committee will then recommend such amendments to the Fire Authority for adoption. The Chief Finance Officer is also responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the financial regulations to the Authority.

2. Financial Accountability and Management

2.1 Overview

Financial management covers all financial accountability in relation to the running of the Service, including the policy framework and budget.

2.2 The Fire Authority

The Members of the Authority are responsible for:

- approving the Financial Regulations and Contract Regulations as recommended by the Audit and Governance Committee;
- approving the Medium Term Financial Plan, Annual Revenue Budget and Strategic Capital Investment Programme;
- approving the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Borrowing Limits.

The Authority aims to delegate financial management to the Chief Fire Officer so that, as far as possible, the financial affairs are managed by Authority staff. The Members of the Authority, advised by the Chief Finance Officer, must be satisfied that the Chief Fire Officer exercises delegated financial responsibilities in a proper and effective manner.

The Authority will:

- agree the annual budget requirement and set a precept after receiving the advice of the Chief Finance Officer;
- identify and agree indicative longer term spending commitments.

2.3 Management Committee

The Terms of Reference of the Management Committee are

- to make recommendations to the Authority as to its Revenue Budget and Strategic Capital Investment Programme;
- to consider and determine the annual programme for the replacement of vehicles and other major capital schemes;
- to consider and advise the Authority on the financial effects of significant development strategies, plans, major acquisitions, contracts etc.;
- to oversee the use of land and property and other significant resources (e.g. information technology, vehicles and communications equipment);
- to deal with any other urgent business that cannot reasonably be held over to the next full meeting of the Authority;
- to deal with such other matters of financial significance that the Authority or other committees may refer to it.

2.4 Audit and Governance Committee

The Terms of Reference of the Audit and Governance Committee are

- to consider and recommend to the Fire Authority amendments to the Financial Regulations and Contract Regulations;
- to receive, consider and sign off the Fire Authority's statutory statement of accounts;
- to consider the Authority's arrangements for corporate governance and make recommendations to ensure compliance with best practice;
- to monitor the Authority's compliance with its own and other published standards and performance indicators;
- to monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance within the Authority;
- to consider and make recommendations for action plans arising from internal and external audit reports, including arrangements to ensure that processes which deliver value for money are maintained and developed;
- to oversee investigations arising out of fraud and corruption allegations in relation to members of the Senior Leadership Team;

- to determine insurance matters not delegated to officers, or another committee;
- to consider and determine as appropriate such other matters as are required in legislation or guidance and make recommendations to the Management Committee as appropriate.

2.5 The Chief Fire Officer

The Chief Fire Officer of the Authority acting as the Chief Executive to the Authority together with the Monitoring Officer, is responsible for the system of record keeping in relation to all Authority decisions and is responsible for the corporate and overall strategic management of the Authority as a whole. The Chief Fire Officer must report to and provide information to the Authority and its committees and is responsible for establishing a framework for management direction, style and standards and for monitoring the performance of the organisation.

2.6 The Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer for the Authority

- is responsible for the system of record keeping in relation to all Authority decisions and must ensure that all decisions and the reasons for them are as transparent as possible;
- has a statutory duty to report to the Authority if it appears that any action could cause the Authority to act unlawfully or in such a manner as to constitute maladministration;
- is responsible for advising all members and officers about who has authority to take a particular decision;
- is responsible for advising the Authority committees about whether a decision is likely to be considered contrary or not wholly in accordance with the policy framework;
- is responsible (together with the Chief Finance Officer) for advising the Authority about whether a decision is likely to be considered contrary or not wholly in accordance with the budget;
- has a duty to ensure all reports to the Authority and its committees must set out the full financial and legal implications arising from the proposals contained within the report.

The Authority is required to provide the Monitoring Officer with sufficient staff, accommodation and other resources to carry out his or her duties.

2.7 The Chief Finance Officer

The Head of Finance and Procurement acts as Chief Finance Officer for the Authority. The Chief Finance Officer has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the Authority. This statutory responsibility cannot be overridden. The duties arise from:

- The Local Government Act 1972
- Sections 112 -114 Local Government Finance Act 1988
- Local Government and Housing Act 1989
- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- seeking approval for any changes to the Authority's Financial Regulations from the Audit and Governance Committee;
- the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs;
- setting and monitoring compliance with financial management standards;
- advising on the corporate financial position and on the key financial controls necessary to secure sound financial management ;
- ensuring the provision of financial information;
- preparation of the Revenue Budget and the Strategic Capital Investment Programme;
- the Authority's insurance arrangements;
- treasury management.

Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the Chief Finance Officer to report to the Authority and the external auditor:

- if the Authority or one of its committees or officers has made a decision or taken an action, or is about to do so, which involves incurring unlawful expenditure;
- if it appears that the Authority's expenditure is likely to exceed available resources;

Section 114 also requires the Chief Finance Officer to nominate a properly qualified member of staff to deputise should he or she be unable to perform these duties.

The Authority is required to provide the Chief Finance Officer with sufficient staff, accommodation and other resources to carry out the duties under section 114.

The Chief Finance Officer has a responsibility for ensuring that adequate systems and procedures exist to account for all income due and expenditure disbursements made on behalf of the Authority and that controls operate to protect the Authority's assets from loss, waste, fraud or other impropriety. The Chief Finance Officer shall discharge that responsibility in part by the issue and maintenance of Financial Instructions with which all staff of the Authority shall comply.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising the Authority on all financial matters. All reports to the Authority and committees must contain a financial appraisal setting out the full financial implications arising from the proposals contained within the report. The financial appraisal must be agreed with the Chief Finance Officer. He or she must be consulted on all financial matters and given sufficient opportunity to provide written comments on any report with financial implications.

2.8 Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Members of SLT are responsible for ensuring that Authority members are advised of the financial implications of all proposals and that the financial implications have been agreed by the Chief Finance Officer.

It is the responsibility of SLT members to consult with the Chief Finance Officer and seek approval on any matter liable to affect the Authority's finances before any commitments are incurred.

2.9 All Managers and Officers with Financial Responsibilities

All managers are responsible for complying with the Financial Regulations within their service area and for the training of staff to enable them to comply with these Regulations.

Each manager is individually responsible for the proper financial management of resources allocated to his/her service area through the budget making process and for the identification of income arising from activities within his/her operational areas. Good financial management requires managers to be responsible for the control of staff and the security, custody and management of assets including plant, equipment, buildings, materials, cash and stores. Officers who have been issued with fuel cards or procurement cards must use these in line with policy and failure to do so will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

Managers, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, may delegate responsibilities to their staff. These shall be clearly documented and reviewed. The manager will be responsible for ensuring that all staff are adequately trained prior to delegation, to carry out these roles. The competence of staff in these matters should be assessed as part of the Authority's performance management framework.

2.10 Other financial accountabilities

i Budget Virements

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for agreeing procedures for virements of expenditure between budget headings.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for agreeing in-year virements within delegated limits in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer. The Chief Finance Officer must sign off all virements.

ii Reserves

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the management and reporting of the reserves position and movements in year-end balances.

iii Accounting Policies, Records and Returns

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for selecting accounting policies and ensuring that they are applied consistently. He or she shall determine the accounting procedures and records for the Authority. Accounting and other related records must be retained for periods which comply with relevant legislation.

iv Annual Statement of Accounts

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that the annual Statement of Accounts is prepared and certified in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's 'Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

v Grants and Other External Contributions

The Fire Authority is responsible for agreeing additional budgets over and above the approved budget for the year, including match-funding requirements. The Management Committee and/or Directors have delegated responsibility for ensuring that any funding conditions are compatible with the aims and objectives of the Authority prior to acceptance of the grant. Directors have delegated responsibility for agreeing additional expenditure budgets with 100% grant funding in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. The Chief Finance Officer must sign off all grant applications.

The Chief Finance Officer must examine and certify where required any submission, estimate or claim for payment of a grant by a Government Department or funding from any other body. Officers responsible for the administration of such grants, funds and spending associated with them must ensure compliance with the conditions of the grant/funding.

The Chief Finance Officer must examine and certify all financial returns to government departments or other bodies.

vi Pensions

It is the responsibility of officers preparing to outsource or insource activities of the Fire Authority that involve the transfer of pension rights and liabilities to notify the Chief Finance Officer of any proposal prior to substantive negotiations taking place with third parties.

In consultation with the Chief Finance Officer the full cost and implication of the transfer of pension rights and liabilities must be disclosed in the financial appraisal that is prepared in relation to the outsourcing proposal.

The Chief Finance Officer must be consulted about and approve revised pension arrangements before formal agreements are made.

vii Disposals and Capital Receipts

All receipts from the sale of assets which were originally purchased from capital financing will be treated as capital receipts and must be notified to the Chief Finance Officer. The Chief Finance Officer must be notified of all proposed disposals of assets. All assets with a value over £3,000 must be disposed of by competitive quotations, by auction or by other means, such as land swaps, that have been approved by the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer and demonstrate value for money.

3. Financial Planning

3.1 Overview

The Authority is responsible for approving its policy framework and budget. In terms of financial planning the key elements are:

- the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- the Annual Revenue Budget;
- the Strategic Capital Investment Programme;
- the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Borrowing Limits

3.2 Policy Framework

The policy framework comprises the following plans of the Authority:

- Corporate Plan
- Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Strategic Risk Register

These documents are underpinned by supplementary strategies:

- Property Strategy
- Fleet Strategy
- ICT Strategy
- Information Governance Strategy
- Equipment Strategy
- People Strategy

They are also supplemented by other policies with financial implications:

- Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Whistle blowing Policy
- Contract Regulations
- Procurement Card Policy
- Code of Conduct

In addition, there are procedure notes supporting the correct usage of the Financial System (Sage), and financial training available from the Finance and Procurement Department.

3.3 Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

These plans must be consistent with the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan.

3.4 Medium Term Financial Plan

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for coordinating the four-year Medium Term Financial Plan each year for consideration by the Management Committee before submission to the Authority. The Medium Term Financial Plan should be clearly linked to the Corporate Plan and the Integrated Risk Management Plan. The Audit and Governance Committee may wish to review the Medium Term Financial Plan from a strategic risk perspective and inform the Management Committee of its views as part of the budget setting process.

3.5 Budget Setting

i Budget Format

The Chief Finance Officer will determine the general format of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Annual Budget. These documents should include planning assumptions, an identification of major financial risks to the Authority and proposed taxation levels (precept) as well as the nature and level of contingency funds and reserves.

ii Guidelines

The Chief Finance Officer will issue guidelines for the preparation of the annual Revenue Budget and Strategic Capital Investment Programme. These will take account of

- legal requirements;
- the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP);
- medium-term financial planning prospects;
- available resources;
- spending pressures;
- best value, efficiency savings and relevant government guidelines;
- other internal policy documents.

iii Revenue Budget Preparation

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that a Revenue Budget and Strategic Capital Investment Programme is prepared on an annual basis for consideration by the Management Committee and subsequent submission to the Authority. The Authority may amend the Budget and Strategic Capital Investment Programme before approving it.

It is the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Directors, Heads of Service and other budget holders to provide relevant information to the Finance team, to ensure that budget estimates reflecting agreed service plans are submitted to the Management Committee and that these estimates are prepared in line with the guidance issued by the Chief Finance Officer.

The precept must be notified to the collecting authorities by the end of February in respect of the ensuing financial year. It must be supported by a balanced budget

approved by the Authority in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

iv Strategic Capital Investment Programme Preparation

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that a Strategic Capital Investment Programme is prepared on an annual basis for consideration by the Management Committee and subsequent submission to the Authority. This will include advice to the Authority in setting an affordable borrowing limit and an assessment of the impact on the Prudential Indicators as required by the Prudential Code (the CIPFA professional code of practice for local authorities in taking investment and borrowing decisions).

The draft Strategic Capital Investment Programme for the ensuing year should be submitted to the Authority for approval and include:

- the proposed method of funding;
- an estimate of the revenue implications and confirmation as to whether this can be contained within the agreed revenue budget.

3.6 Budget Monitoring and Control

i Monitoring and Reporting

It is the responsibility of Heads of Service and cost centre managers to control and monitor income and expenditure within their area. They should also take any action necessary to avoid exceeding their budget allocation. The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for providing appropriate financial information to enable budgets to be monitored effectively.

Each month, in accordance with the budget monitoring timescales set out by the Chief Finance Officer, cost centre managers must provide the Chief Finance Officer with budget monitoring information. This will include proposed actions to address any variances against budget together with a forecast of projected outturn at the year end.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for submitting quarterly reports to the Management Committee on the budget position for both revenue and capital expenditure. Financial performance information will also be provided to the Audit and Governance Committee as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

ii Virements

A virement does not create additional overall budget liability. It is a transfer of budget provision either within or between budget headings and can be used as an effective tool to assist in managing budgets effectively within a cash limit.

Cost centre managers and the Chief Finance Officer are responsible for agreeing in-year virements within delegated limits and budget line restrictions. The Chief Finance Officer must sign-off all virements.

The Management Committee is required to approve a virement if:

- it involves a change in policy;
- it results in expenditure on new capital projects;
- the Chief Finance Officer requires it.

3.7 Maintenance of General Fund Balance and Reserves

It is the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer to advise the Authority on prudent levels of reserves.

It is incumbent on the Authority to review the level of reserves each year before deciding the level of Council Tax. Reserves are maintained as a matter of prudence. They enable the Authority to provide for unexpected events and thereby protect it from overspending, should such events occur. Reserves for specific purposes may also be maintained.

All requests for movements to and from non-earmarked reserves must be approved by the Management Committee on the advice of the Chief Finance Officer.

4. Risk Management and Control of Resources

4.1 Overview

It is essential that robust, integrated systems are in place and maintained for identifying and evaluating all significant operational and corporate risks to the Authority. This should include the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.

4.2 Risk Management

The Management Committee is responsible for approving a Corporate Risk Management Policy statement and strategy and for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management, after considering recommendations from the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Chief Fire Officer is responsible for preparing the Authority's Corporate Risk Management Policy and for promoting it throughout the Authority. He/she is responsible for maintaining the corporate risk register, which will be reviewed by the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for identifying and reporting corporate risks of the Authority to the Management Committee and for monitoring and reviewing corporate risks on a regular basis. The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing the Corporate Risk Management Policy and is also responsible for providing assurance on the robustness of the governance processes around risk management.

All managers are responsible for identifying and reporting to the Chief Fire Officer risks in their area which need to be included in the corporate risk register and for risk management within their areas of responsibility.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising the Authority on insurance matters and for ensuring that proper insurance cover exists.

4.3 Internal Control

Internal Control refers to the systems of control implemented by management to help ensure achievement of the Authority's objectives in a way that promotes economical, efficient and effective use of resources. In addition, the systems of control ensure that the Authority's assets are kept secure and interests are protected.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Authority to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and to include an approved Annual Governance Statement, prepared in accordance with proper practices, with its Statement of Accounts.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising on effective systems of internal control. These arrangements must ensure compliance with all relevant statutes and regulations and other relevant statements of best practice. They should ensure that public funds are properly safeguarded and used economically, efficiently and in accordance with the statute.

It is the responsibility of Directors and Heads of Service to establish sound arrangements for planning, appraising, authorising and controlling their operations in order to achieve continuous improvement, economy, efficiency and effectiveness and for achieving their financial performance targets.

4.4 Audit Requirements

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Authority to undertake an adequate and effective internal audit of controls. A review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit should be conducted at least once a year and the findings considered as part of the consideration of the system of internal control, referred to above.

The Internal Audit function is outsourced. The Internal Auditors comply with all of the relevant codes and standards.

The Internal Auditors have the authority to enter land or any premises used by the Authority at any time and have access to all Authority correspondence, systems, documents, books, property or other records related to the Authority's business. The Chief Finance Officer shall be entitled to receive an explanation as s/he considers necessary to establish the correctness of any matter under examination.

The external auditor audits and certifies the Statement of Accounts and provides a value for money judgment.

The Authority may be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies such as HM Revenues and Customs, who have statutory rights of access.

The Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer should be notified immediately of any financial irregularities or suspected irregularities, or any circumstances which may suggest the possibility of irregularities in any of the Authority's functions. Any investigation should be undertaken in accordance with the Authority's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

4.5 Prevention of Fraud and Corruption

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Authority's Anti Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy. The Director of Support Services is responsible for the Authority's Whistleblowing policy.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for establishing and implementing effective controls to help prevent and/or detect incidents of fraud or corruption, for addressing key business risks, for ensuring that staff are aware of their responsibilities and comply with the Authority's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, and for creating an environment where all staff feel able to raise any concerns they may have.

4.6 Separation of Duties

Financial procedures must be established whenever possible to ensure separation of duties. This means different members of staff should undertake different parts of a sequence of operations in order to ensure that no one individual authorises an entire series of transactions.

4.7 Assets

Directors and Heads of Service should ensure that records and assets are properly maintained and securely held by a method approved by the Chief Finance Officer. They should also ensure that contingency plans for the security of assets and continuity of service in the event of disaster or system failure are in place.

All vehicles and any other assets with a value over £7,000 should be capitalised and entered onto the fixed asset register.

4.8 Investments and Treasury Management

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the arrangements for managing the Authority's cash flow, its borrowing activities and its lending activities, in accordance with policies agreed by the Authority.

The Chief Finance Officer shall undertake Treasury Management activities in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services.

At or before the start of each financial year the Chief Finance Officer will prepare a report on the Treasury Management Strategy for the coming year for consideration by the Management Committee before submission to the Authority for approval. The Chief Finance Officer will also report to the Authority on the performance of the Treasury Management function.

The Chief Finance Officer will maintain the Treasury Management Policy Statement setting out the framework for Treasury Management within the Authority.

4.9 Staff

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for controlling staffing levels by:

- advising the Authority on the budget necessary in any given year to cover estimated staffing levels;
- adjusting staffing to a level which can be funded within approved budget provision and varying the level as necessary within that budget constraint in order to meet changing operational needs;
- the proper use of agreed recruitment procedures.

5. Systems and Procedures

5.1 Overview

Sound systems and procedures are essential to an effective framework of accountability and control.

5.2 Systems

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the operation of the Authority's accounting systems, the form of accounts and the supporting financial records. Any changes made by Directors and Officers to the existing financial systems or the implementation of new systems must be approved by the Chief Finance Officer prior to any new developments or changes.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for the proper operation of financial processes in their own departments. Any changes to agreed financial procedures by Directors and Officers to meet their own specific service needs must be agreed in advance with the Chief Finance Officer.

Directors and Heads of Service should ensure that their staff receive relevant financial training that has been approved by the Chief Finance Officer.

Directors and Heads of Service must ensure that, where appropriate, computer and other systems are registered in compliance with data protection legislation. Directors and Heads of Service must also ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities under any access to information legislation.

The Chief Fire Officer must ensure there is a corporate approach to systems development in line with the ICT and e-government initiatives.

5.3 Devolved Budget arrangements

The Chief Finance Officer will agree standards, systems and procedures for all budget-holding officers within the Service and the Chief Fire Officer will ensure that all budget-holding officers are accountable to the Chief Finance Officer on all financial matters.

5.4 Procurement

Directors, Heads of Service and cost centre managers must ensure that the Authority obtains value for money from procurement and that it is in compliance with the Authority's Contract Regulations.

5.5 Income, Expenditure and Debt Recovery

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the payment of all accounts.

As part of the overall control framework of accountability and control, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for specifying procedures for ordering, making payments and for collecting income.

Directors, Heads of Service and cost centre managers must ensure that all income due to the Authority is identified and charged correctly in accordance with the Authority's current charging policy. They must also ensure that all income due to the Authority is collected in a timely manner. It must also be receipted properly and banked.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring compliance with procedures set out by the Chief Finance Officer on ordering, making payments and for collecting income.

The Chief Finance Officer in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to write off debts up to £5,000 where there is no prospect of recovery. Debt write-offs up to £10,000 can be authorised by the Chief Fire Officer. All write-offs must be logged and will be subject to scrutiny by both internal and external audit. Debt write-offs above £10,000 must be approved by Management Committee.

5.6 Payroll

The Director of Support Services and Chief Finance Officer are responsible for accurately notifying the payroll bureau of all salary payments, including payments for overtime, allowances to members and pensions. The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that robust controls are in place.

5.7 Taxation

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and officers with financial responsibilities on all taxation issues that affect the Authority in the light of guidance issued by appropriate bodies and relevant legislation.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for maintaining the Authority's tax records, making all tax payments, receiving tax credits and submitting tax returns by the due date as appropriate.

5.8 Stocks, stores and inventories

Inventories shall be kept by the relevant department of:

- all items of operational equipment;
- all vehicles and IT equipment with a purchase value of over £100 as well as mobile phones;
- all items of non-operational equipment and moveable furniture with a purchase value over £100.

The Chief Fire Officer is responsible for maintaining proper security of all assets and should aim to achieve the maximum utilisation of such assets in the provision of services.

The advice of the Chief Finance Officer must be sought for the disposal of inventory.

5.9 Leases

Any cost centre manager seeking to put in place lease arrangements must seek the advice of the Chief Finance Officer. All leases must be authorised in accordance with Table 1 in the Contract Regulations.

5.10 Information technology systems

The Chief Fire Officer must ensure there is a corporate approach to systems development in line with the IT and e-government strategy.

6. External Arrangements

6.1 Overview

There are and will continue to be requirements to work collaboratively to increase the efficiency of the Authority's activities. The Authority provides a distinctive leadership role for the community and brings together the contributions of the various stakeholders.

6.2 Partnerships

The Management Committee is responsible for approving partnership arrangements and joint working initiatives with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to address local needs.

The Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer are responsible for promoting and maintaining the same high standards of conduct with regard to financial administration in partnerships that apply throughout the Authority. They must also consider the overall corporate governance arrangements and legal issues when contracts are being arranged with external bodies.

The Chief Finance Officer must ensure that the accounting arrangements to be adopted relating to partnerships and joint ventures are satisfactory and that the risks have been fully appraised before agreements are entered into with external bodies.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members are responsible for:

- ensuring that appropriate approvals are obtained before any negotiations are concluded in relation to work with external bodies;
- ensuring all partnerships entered into are evaluated and contribute to the achievement of the Authority's objectives;
- ensuring that appropriate insurance arrangements are in place;
- ensuring that such agreements and arrangements do not impact adversely upon the services provided by the Authority;
- ensuring that all arrangements comply with any prevailing partnership policy;
- ensuring that such agreements and arrangements have been properly risk-assessed and linked to the Risk Register.

6.3 External Funding

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Authority's accounts.

The Chief Finance Officer must be consulted on the financial and probity implications of all projects involving funding from external sources (e.g. Specific Government Grants, Lottery Grants, and European Social Funds etc).

In promoting or committing the Authority to any externally funded projects Directors must consult with the Chief Finance Officer, where:

- the acceptance of that new grant or contribution would result in costs being incurred prior to receipt; and/or
- the additional cost commitment exceeds the approved budget for the current or future years.

All funding received from external bodies or associated parties must be properly recorded in the Authority's accounts. Key conditions of funding and any statutory requirements must be understood and followed. Any match-funding requirements must be given due consideration prior to entering into long-term agreements and future revenue budgets must reflect those requirements.

6.4 Work for Third Parties

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for approving the arrangements for any officer wishing to work for third parties or external bodies that derives from the position they hold in RBFPS, subject to any advice provided by the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. In the case of Directors working for third parties or external bodies, approval should be sought from the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

6.5 Local Authority Companies and Community Interest Companies

Prior to the Authority, or any officer on behalf of the Authority, taking an interest (e.g. membership, share-holding or directorship) in a company, advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer.

Any clauses required by the Chief Finance Officer and/or the Monitoring Officer to safeguard the Authority's position must be included in the company's constitutional documents.

6.6 Sponsorship and advertising

Prior to entering into any sponsorship arrangements, formal approval should be sought from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which in turn has sought advice from the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. This advice should also be sought for services in-kind arrangements where no or little money changes hands.