



## Reserves Policy

### Introduction

Haversham-cum-Little Linford Parish Council (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') is required to maintain adequate financial reserves to deliver its services. The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will determine and review the level of reserves.

Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require 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 should hold and it is the responsibility of the Responsible Financial Officer to advise the Council about the level of reserves and to ensure that there are procedures for their establishment and use.

### Types of Reserves

Reserves can be categorised as general or earmarked. Earmarked reserves can be held for several reasons:

- Renewals – to enable the planning and financing of equipment and infrastructure or maintenance. These reserves are a mechanism to smooth expenditure so that a sensible replacement programme can be achieved without the need to vary budgets.
- Carry forward of underspend - some services commit expenditure to projects but cannot spend the budget in year. Reserves can be used as a mechanism to carry forward these resources.
- Insurance reserve – to enable the Council to meet the excesses of claims not covered by insurance.
- Other earmarked reserves may be set up from time to time to meet known or predicted liabilities.

General Reserves are funds which do not have any restrictions as to their use. These reserves can be used to smooth the impact of uneven cash flows, offset the budget requirement if necessary or can be held in case of unexpected events or emergencies.

### Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked reserves will be established on a "needs" basis, in line with anticipated requirements. Any decision to set up a reserve must be made by the Council.

Expenditure from reserves can only be authorised by the Council.

Reserves should not be held to fund on-going day-to-day expenditure. This would be unsustainable as, at some point, the reserves would be exhausted. To the extent that reserves are used to meet short term funding gaps, they must be replenished in the following year. However, earmarked reserves that

have been used to meet a specific liability would not need to be replenished, having served the purpose for which they were originally established.

All Earmarked Reserves are recorded on a central schedule held by the Responsible Financial Officer which lists the various Earmarked Reserves and the purpose for which they are held.

For the avoidance of doubt, where interest is gained from Earmarked Reserves, whether they be held in a separate account or not, such interest is to be transferred to General Reserves. The amount of the Earmarked Reserve does not increase due to interest.

### **General Reserves**

The required level of General Reserves is a matter of judgement. The primary means of building general reserves will be through an allocation from the annual budget. This will be in addition to any amounts needed to replenish reserves which have been used in the previous year. Setting the level of General Reserves is one of several related decisions in the formulation of the medium-term financial strategy and the annual budget.

The Council must build and maintain sufficient working balances to cover the key risks it faces, as expressed in its annual risk assessment.

If in extreme circumstances General Reserves were exhausted due to major unforeseen spending pressures within a particular financial year, the Council would be able to draw down from its Earmarked Reserves to provide short term resources. Even at times when extreme pressure is put on the Council's finances the Council must keep a minimum balance sufficient to pay one month's salaries to staff in General Reserves at all times.

### **Current level of financial reserves**

The level of financial reserves held by the Council will be agreed by the Parish Council during the discussions held regarding the setting of the budget for the next financial year and reviewed on a quarterly basis throughout the financial year.

The minimum level of General Reserves to be held by the Council is three twelfths of the annual precepted figure, i.e. to fully cover three months' expenditure. However, it is the Council's intention that it aims for six months' expenditure in General Reserves.