

Report subject	Adoption of Initial Governance and Policy Documents
Meeting date	24 March 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	Poole Town Council will be established on 1 April 2026 and must have key governance arrangements in place to operate effectively from vesting day. This report seeks approval to adopt an initial set of governance and policy documents: Standing Orders (to govern how meetings are convened and decisions are made), Financial Regulations (to provide financial control and accountability, supported by the Responsible Finance Officer), the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct (aligned with BCP Council to provide clarity for dual-hatted Members and a consistent approach to standards complaints), and a Scheme of Delegation. The proposed Scheme provides proportionate officer delegation from day one, including authority for the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to take necessary operational actions and to enter into Service Level Agreements with BCP Council for support services relating to allotments and civic support. The recommended option is to adopt the appended documents, with subsequent adoption alongside other policies at the first Annual Poole Town Council meeting in May, and a review during the first year to reflect the Council's agreed committee structure and ways of working.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: (a) the Standing Orders, as set out in appendix 1 to this report, be adopted; (b) the Financial Regulations, as set out in appendix 2 to this report, be adopted; (c) the LGA Model Code of Conduct, as set out in appendix 3 to this report, be adopted; (d) the Scheme of Delegation to Committees and Officers, as set out in appendix 4 to this report, be adopted;
Reason for recommendations	The recommended approach is to adopt the appended governance and policy documents now so that Poole Town Council has an agreed framework in place from vesting day to lawfully convene

	and conduct meetings, make decisions, and manage its finances with clear controls and accountability. Adopting the LGA Model Code of Conduct (aligned with BCP Council) provides clear and consistent standards for Members, including potential dual-hatted councillors, and supports a consistent approach to the handling of complaints. Adoption of the Scheme of Delegation will also ensure business continuity by enabling the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to take necessary operational actions and to enter into SLAs with BCP Council for support services relating to allotments and civic support, pending the Council's later decisions on its detailed committee structure.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Richard Jones, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. Poole Town Council will be formally established on 1 April 2026. To support the Council to operate effectively from day one and to meet legislative and good practice requirements, this report asks Members to adopt initial governance and policy documents, including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, a Member Code of Conduct and a Scheme of Delegation.

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

2. Standing Orders are the Council's rules for how meetings are run and decisions are made. They also set out key internal administrative arrangements and may refer to related policies.
3. Financial Regulations are a separate set of rules that govern the Council's financial management and accounting procedures, including key requirements for the Responsible Financial Officer.
4. Both documents are based on the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) model Standing Orders and model Financial Regulations, with local amendments to reflect the size and needs of the new Council.
5. The new Council will adopt these documents during at the Annual Council Meeting in May. The new Council will review these documents as it develops during its first year. The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer will advise on the timing and any amendments required.

Model Code of Conduct

6. The Town Council must adopt a Code of Conduct for Members. It is proposed that the Council adopts the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct.
7. Adopting the same Model Code as Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council will provide a consistent set of expectations for Members, particularly for “dual-hatted” councillors who serve on both authorities.
8. It will also support a consistent approach to the assessment and handling of complaints, by aligning the standards expected of Members with the arrangements already in place at BCP Council.

Scheme of Delegation

9. The Council is asked to adopt a Scheme of Delegation to enable day-to-day decisions to be taken efficiently and within an agreed framework.
10. The detailed committee structure and any sub-committee terms of reference will be matters for the new Town Council to consider and agree. The proposed Scheme of Delegation is intended to provide an initial and proportionate level of officer delegation from day one.
11. In particular, the Scheme delegates authority to the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to take necessary operational actions and to agree and enter into Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council for support services connected with the operation of allotments and the provision of civic support.

Options Appraisal

12. **Option 1 (Recommended): Adopt the proposed initial governance and policy documents (appendices).** This provides the new Town Council with a clear and compliant framework from day one, supports effective decision-making and financial control, and enables timely operational arrangements (including SLAs with BCP Council) to be agreed under the Scheme of Delegation. *Disadvantage:* minor local amendments may be needed once the Council's committee structure and ways of working are confirmed; this can be addressed through a review during the first year.
13. **Option 2: Defer adoption until after the Town Council elections/first annual meeting.** *Advantage:* allows Members to shape documents once the full governance arrangements are agreed. *Disadvantages:* creates a significant risk of governance failure in the period immediately after vesting day. Without adopted procedural rules (Standing Orders) the Council could be unable to convene and conduct meetings with confidence, and would be reliant on general/common law principles and ad hoc practice. This increases the risk of challenge, delay and inconsistency in early decisions, and weakens financial control and accountability at the point the Council first becomes operational.

Summary of financial implications

14. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Summary of legal implications

15. Town and parish councils are required to have appropriate arrangements in place for the transaction of business and the proper administration of their financial affairs. Standing Orders provide the procedural rules for convening and conducting meetings and making decisions; Financial Regulations (together with the appointment of a Responsible Financial Officer) set the framework for budgeting, accounting, payments and internal control; and the Council must adopt a Members' Code of Conduct and maintain arrangements for the registration and declaration of interests and the consideration of standards complaints. The Council may delegate functions to committees, sub-committees and officers, and the adoption of a Scheme of Delegation supports the lawful and efficient discharge of functions from vesting day, including authorising the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to take operational actions and to enter into Service Level Agreements with BCP Council for support services relating to allotments and civic support, within the limits set out in the appended scheme.

Summary of human resources implications

16. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

17. There are no sustainability impacts arising from this report.

Summary of public health implications

18. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

19. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Summary of risk assessment

20. The principal risks relate to the Council not having an effective governance framework in place from vesting day, which could lead to delay, inconsistency and challenge in early decision-making and financial administration. Adoption of the proposed documents mitigates these risks by providing clear procedural and financial controls, a standards framework and defined officer delegations to support business continuity (including agreeing SLAs with BCP Council for allotments and civic support). There remains a risk that minor amendments will be required once the Council's committee structure and working arrangements are confirmed; this will be managed through an early review in the first year, supported by Member/officer briefings and ongoing advice from the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer.

Background papers

Published works

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Standing Orders
- Appendix 2 – Financial Regulations
- Appendix 3 – Code of Conduct
- Appendix 4 – Scheme of Delegation