

STEEPLE MORDEN PC - On-line Banking Procedures

Adopted on 09 August 2021

Introduction

These procedures are an addendum referred to in the Financial Standing Orders adopted by the Steeple Morden Parish Council (Council) and add operating details for on-line banking activities. In particular, section 6 of the Financial Standing Orders allows for these operational practises.

The Council has agreed to allow operation of its main Barclays operational bank account through on-line access on the understanding that these procedures are followed.

Arrangements have been made with Barclays Bank with a mandate that allows any one of four people authorised by the Council to operate the account and at this time the four "authorised persons" are:

- Sally Walmesley (RFO)
- Jeremy Clayton (Chairman, Councillor)
- Sacha Wheatley (Vice-chair, Councillor)
- Malcolm Bird (Councillor)

These people have signed an undertaking to follow the financial procedures defined for the Council. The format is per **Appendix I** and signed undertakings are held on file by the RFO or Clerk.

On-line access

The authorised persons are all able to access the Barclays portal to view and make transactions. They undertake to:

- Regularly access, at least once per quarter, the portal and gain confidence that the account status is in line with expectations.
- Not undertake any transactions unless supported by authorisations as defined in these procedures.
- Keep safe all the information necessary to access the bank portal and not share the information with anyone.
- If required, only use a specialist password vault approved by the council or Finance Committee. At this time LastPass.
- Only use secure, private computers to access the bank portal and not use browser storage to retain any access details.
- Return all access tools, clear computer history and refrain from any portal access as soon as authorisation to access the account(s) are removed by decision of the Council.

Anything other than viewing the status of accounts will involve a transaction and can include transfers between accounts, setting up payees and making payments to third parties.

Transfers

Should any of the authorised persons consider it beneficial for funds to be moved between accounts operated by the council by a single bank, they will raise their suggestion with the other authorised persons and as long as two are in agreement the transfers can be initiated and authorised on-line. Should any of the authorised persons feel it necessary to take a transfer decision to the full council then it will be so raised for a decision. Transfers between accounts run with different banks will be treated as a regular third party payment and follow the usual authorisation process.

Payees

Once a new payee is identified, the Clerk will set the person/business up on-line and inform the other authorised persons of this along with evidence of the new payees account name, number and sort code. This will usually be in the form of an attachment to an email. Any one of the authorised persons can undertake the check that all is correct and current with the payee set-up and inform the others. ***This is a significant responsibility and a crucial step as many scams occur due to legitimate payments being made to scam accounts.*** Once this process has been completed, the payee can be used for as long as the details remain constant. Should any of the details of the payee change then they should be treated as a new payee.

Payments

All payments will need to be authorised and the necessary records will need to be clearly on file. Until an authorised person is confident that the necessary records are in place no payments should be made.

The current Financial Standing Orders define how approval can be gained for a payment in the first instance. Typically, this will be by agreement at a Council meeting but it is possible that an urgent requirement will need a faster response and the mechanisms below help support this requirement.

Once a need for a payment has been identified:

- The RFO/Clerk will check the payee details and run through the new payee procedure should this be necessary.
- The RFO/Clerk will set up the payment details for each payment, making sure that the correct payee is selected and matches all supplied information.
- A notification will be prepared by the RFO/Clerk. This notification can be a physical paper record or an electronic record distributed by email but will contain the name of the payee and amount of the payment along with a brief description of the transaction. An example email format is shown in **Appendix II**.
- One notification can cover several transactions. However, note that a problem with one transaction could hold up other transactions.
- The transaction notification will be sent TO one of the authorised councillors and CC'd to the other authorised councillors. All authorised councillors should check to see that the transaction is proceeding according to the current Financial Standing Orders and immediately respond back to all the authorised persons if they have any concerns. As long as there have been no concerns raised within 24hrs, the authorised councillor named in TO should further access the banking portal and authorise the payment, if possible within the next two working days.

- Any transactional activity on the bank account by any authorised person(s) other than the RFO/Clerk must be reported immediately to the RFO/Clerk along with the transaction approval form. This can be by copying the email thread or a scan/photo of an approval sheet to the RFO/Clerk.

It is good practice to check the on-line status of the account after a transaction has been executed to see that all remains as expected.

Procedure read, approved and adopted by the Parish Council on 09 Aug 2021

Appendix I – Financial procedures undertaking

I recognise that maintaining strong financial control in the operation of the SMPC bank accounts is vital. I have read the Financial Standing Orders and the On-Line Banking Procedures and undertake to follow these and also exercise due care and attention in working with the finances of the Council.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Appendix II – Example transaction notification email

From: clerk@steeplemordenpc.org.uk

To: councillor1@steeplemordenpc.org.uk,

cc: councillor2@steeplemordenpc.org.uk,
councillor3@steeplemordenpc.org.uk

Date: dd/mmm/yyyy

Subject: ** SMPC Barclays authorisation request **

Authorised Councillors – if you have any concerns regarding this payment please respond within 24hrs to all circulated with this email.

Councillor1name

The following bank transaction(s) require your attention. Please access the Barclays Bank portal and respond to the notification of outstanding payment(s) that correspond as below:

WAVE	
Sewage water charge Nov-May 21	£1895.23
SUMMERS ELECTRICAL AND PARTNERS	
Repair to disabled toilet light (inc £12.00 VAT)	£ 72.00
LGS SERVICES	
Internal Audit 2020/21 (inc £19.00VAT)	£ 114.00

Please respond to the notification on the Barclays portal and complete the payment authorisation process for this transaction.

Thanks, Sally