

STRATTON ST MARGARET PARISH COUNCIL



CREDIT MANAGEMENT CODE OF PRACTICE POLICY

Financial Policy Number Six		
Issue No.	Date completed	Details of amendments
Draft	07/12/2010	Reviewed by the Audit & Governance Sub Committee

CREDIT MANAGEMENT CODE OF PRACTICE

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document presents a basic set of good practice guidelines for the sale of Stratton St Margaret Parish Council's goods and services.

These guidelines have been drawn up in consultation with the Internal Audit provider, Auditing Solutions Ltd, and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Financial Regulations.

2 Charging for Goods and Services

- 2.1 Goods/services should only be provided on receipt of an official order, or booking form from the customer.
- 2.2 Charges will be reviewed at least every twelve months. Staff should be notified of any changes and customers made aware in writing where appropriate.
- 2.3 Before undertaking any additional works or supplying any supplementary goods/services, it is essential to obtain written authority from the customer, including acceptance of the additional costs involved.
- 2.4 An invoice should be raised on completion. If the charge is to include Value Added Tax (VAT), this must be made clear to the customer. All VAT charges will conform to the requirements of the HMRC.

3 Raising Invoices.

- 3.1 If payment can be secured before goods or services are supplied, then this should be done. If payment is received in advance, it is not necessary to raise an invoice, unless requested. If payment has not been received in advance an invoice must be raised so that the debt is accounted for.
- 3.2 All sales of goods/services must be identified and charges raised accordingly. Managers must ensure that all income due has been claimed and that appropriate invoices have been raised. There must be a valid, documented reason for any un-invoiced work/service and these must be approved by the Council.
- 3.3 Unless stipulated otherwise, all invoices must be raised within 30 days of the supply of the goods/services.
- 3.4 No manual invoices should be issued. All invoices must be in the format adopted by the Council and be actioned using the accounting and booking systems in place.

- 3.5 If the goods/services are subject to VAT, this must be shown and coded separately on the invoice.
- 3.6 All invoices should be checked for accuracy, as this will reduce the number of credit notes that the Council will need to issue.

4 Credit Notes

- 4.1 If an invoice is raised in error it must be cancelled with a credit note. Adequate documentation or information should be supplied to support the credit note.
- 4.2 A credit note should only be raised to cancel the invoice in full or to reduce the value. Do not raise a credit note if the invoice has been paid in full. If money has to be returned, a refund should be made.

5 Write Offs

- 5.1 A debt should only be written off when it is a valid debt and the Council is unable to secure payment.
- 5.2 If a debt is to be written off it has to be approved by Council if over a certain value, determined by the financial regulations.
- 5.3 All write offs should be supported by the relevant documentation/information as to the reason for write off.
- 5.4 In accordance with HM Revenue and Customs regulations, VAT will be reclaimed by the VAT return six months after the date of the invoice.

6 Debt Recovery

- 6.1 All staff must recognise the importance of recovering outstanding debts.
- 6.2 Reminder letters are printed and despatched by the responsible officer/manager to the debtor using first class post.
- 6.3 Unless alternative procedures have been agreed. The first reminder letter is produced 14 days from the due date. The letter states payment is required within seven days and that any further provision of services/goods will be cancelled until payment is received in full.
- 6.4 After a further seven days, a second reminder letter is sent, notifying the customer that, unless payment is made within seven days, the debt will be referred to the Council's collection agents.

- 6.5 If, after this period has elapsed, no payment has been received, the debtor will be notified that the debt has been passed on for recovery action or legal action, normally court action to be commenced immediately.
- 6.6 It is recommended that debts of less than £100 are not referred for legal action.
- 6.7 At every stage of the collection process, full records must be kept of any discussions or correspondence between you and the debtor.
- 6.8 If a dispute or query is raised in respect of the invoice then further recovery should be suspended, until the matter is resolved. This should be done as swiftly as possible
- 6.9 Any requests for repayment on an instalment basis should result in full settlement within six months.

7 Overpayments

- 7.1 When a payment in excess of the invoice value is received, the balance should be refunded to the customer. Unless the customer agrees it can be used against another outstanding invoice.

8 Review and Amendment of Practice

- 8.1 This practice will be reviewed annually, to ensure it complies with updated regulations and presented for approval by the Finance, Staffing & Performance Management Committee.
- 8.2 The Council reserves the right to make variations to the guidelines at any time, subject to the approval of the full Council.

Recommendation of Collection Methods

- The Council will not use oppressive or intrusive collection methods.
- The Council will not act in a manner intended to embarrass the debtor.
- The Council will be discreet when attempting to contact the debtor, whether by telephone, letter, or by personal visit.
- The Council will ensure that all attempted contact with debtors is made at reasonable times and at reasonable intervals.
- Unless instructed otherwise by the debtor, the Council will not discuss or disclose to anyone the customer's information.

- The Council will not use improper means to obtain the telephone number or address of the debtor.
- The Council will not pressure debtors to sell property or raise funds by further borrowing.

9 Alternative Formats

- 9.1 Copies of this document in large print (A3 Format) or larger font size, or recorded onto tape as a 'talking book' can be made available for those with sight impairment on request from the Council Office or by telephoning 01793 823761 or by emailing clerk@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk
- 9.2 The Council can also arrange to provide versions in other languages.