

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Responsible Financial Officer / Deputy Clerk Application Pack

January 2025

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The Responsible Financial Officer Role

We are seeking an experienced finance professional to join our council team to act as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and Deputy Clerk.

The Responsible Financial Officer is a role that is a legal requirement. This role has been fulfilled by the existing Clerk but is ready to be passed to this new role. This person will have sufficient knowledge and experience to work effectively with Officers and Councillors and ensure that all accounts adhere to the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of VAT and public sector finances and have appropriate experience in a finance role at a similar level. This person will be the primary person responsible for the creation of reports and information to the Council's Finance & Staffing Committee along with attendance at other relevant Council meetings. This person will be the lead officer for preparation and liaison of the Council's internal and external audit processes.

West Swindon Parish Team

Key Roles

Clerk

The Clerk has overall responsibility for all aspects of the Council's democratic and business responsibilities, ensuring the Council's delivery is both legal and in the best interests of its residents.

Responsible Financial Officer / Deputy Clerk

This role is the Responsible Financial Officer for the Council. They are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council's finances, including recording all income and expenditure, managing payments and payroll and producing and presenting reports and data analysis. They are responsible for leading on applications for loans and grants, data for capital projects, risk management, insurance renewal and record keeping, and supporting the other members of the office team. They will also deputise for the Clerk across all functions in their absence.

Operations Manager

The Operations Manager is responsible for the management and maintenance of the Council's buildings, assets, machinery, tools and the delivery of all outdoor services. They oversee a team of delivery staff. They lead on grounds income generation, update records relating to tools, machinery and vehicles. They will work closely with the RFO to ensure that there is effective management of risk and the recording of information relating to the business side of the Parish Council.

Operations Supervisor

The Operations Supervisor is responsible for the day to day supervision and support of the delivery staff. This includes general problem solving, allocation of resources, delegation of work tasks, repair of tools, machines or vehicles. They also lead on the creation of outdoor project designs, play repairs/installation and adherence to health and safety regulations.

Communications & Support Officer (p/t)

The Support Officer is responsible for Council's back office systems including the website, social media platforms, Youmanage HR software, sharepoint and data recording tools.

Administrator. (p/t)

The Admin Assistant provides administrative support to Council staff, as well as being primarily

responsible for overseeing the Council reception and taking in-coming calls. They also take responsibility for managing the letting of allotment plots.

Events and Engagement Officer (to be appointed)

This is a new role that will be aimed to support the Council with local engagement, attendance at events, networking, publicity and participation in consultation and events. It will link with business sponsorship and partnership working.

Parish Team Operatives

There is a team of 11 Parish Operatives delivering a wide range of outdoors services covering play maintenance, grass cutting, litter bin emptying, collection of flytipping and shrub cutting.

West Swindon Parish Council – Overview

West Swindon Parish Council was initiated in 2017 as part of a town-wide reorganization.

The Parish Council has 15 Councillors serving a population c. 28,000. West Swindon is a green urban parish and as a result, the Parish Council strives to maintain and improve public open spaces and outdoor amenities. The Parish Council is responsible for maintenance of allotments, 21 play areas, grounds maintenance (grass cutting, shrub cutting and planting), and flytipping and street bins, with further services such as weed control being reviewed by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council has set a precept for 2025/26 of £1,299,395.00. Budget information is as follows

Table 1. EXPENDITURE	2024/25	2025/26	% Difference
ADMINISTRATION	£29,325.00	£29,377.00	0.18
BUILDING RESERVES	£0.00	£50,000.00	
DELIVERY COSTS	£316,763.00	£263,425.00	-16.84
ELECTION EXPENSES	£7,000.00	£7,000.00	0.00
GRANTS & COMMUNITY	£32,550.00	£35,750.00	9.83
LEGAL & INSURANCE FEES	£34,200.00	£34,200.00	0.00
PARISH IMPROVEMENTS	£19,300.00	£52,500.00	172.02
PLAY AREAS	£94,700.00	£126,700.00	33.79
STAFFING	£631,475.00	£718,468.00	13.78
	£1,165,313.00	£1,317,420.00	13.05
Precept	£1,145,463.00	£1,299,395.00	13.44

The RFO/Deputy Clerk will have key role in managing the expenditure. The Parish Council uses Rialtas – Omega Accounting Software for monthly reporting and reconciliation. The successful candidate will ideally have working experience of this or will be able to transfer their existing skills and knowledge.

The Parish Council has a rigorous internal and external audit. This role will lead on the sharing and compiling of information for the audits. As part of this process they will need to make sure that all policies and procedures are up to date and have been adopted/readopted by the Council.

Property, Facilities and Services

Unit 25 Westmead Industrial Estate.

The Parish Council currently has one property that is home to the Parish Office and depot. All staff start and finish from this site. There is ample parking and a secure environment to work within. Greggs and other vendors are on the Industrial Estate and supermarkets are a short walk away.

The Parish Council maintains public open space across the Parish and West Swindon is often referred to as 'the greenest Parish'. As a result a primary focus of intention and service delivery is on the outdoor spaces.

Community Engagement

During the last 12 months, Councillors have been interested in more engagement activities such as attendance at school fetes alongside the installation of new defibrillators in public places. There is a will to have stronger links with local businesses and partnerships. The newly created Engagement Officer role will support the initiation of new events and lead on creating sustainable links and networks.



Play and Recreation

A significant proportion of the Parish Council's budget is focused on play and play maintenance. The Parish Council deploys a mix of tendered and self installed play improvements.

Volunteers

The Parish Council has been blessed with a significant number of residents who are dedicated to improving green open spaces within the Parish. These residents work as groups taking care of local green spaces and some work as individuals focused on litter picking. Councillors also create and lead litter picking group activities.



Blagrove Allotments

This small allotment site is the only provision for West Swindon residents. Work is underway to consider the development of a second site within the Parish.

Income Generation

The Parish Council team generates income from the sale of grounds maintenance services to Swindon Borough Council, schools and local businesses. This is potentially a key area for growth.

Community Buildings

West Swindon Parish Council is in the process of negotiation of future premises. It is also considering the transfer of additional community buildings to the Parish Council. This role will be key to ensuring that the relevant processes are created for any new business ventures and assets.

Council Committees

The Council currently operates two Standing Committees; these are the Finance & Staffing Committee and the Planning, Leisure & Environment Committee.

Finance & Staffing Committee (F&S)

This committee oversees and manages the Council's resources and is scheduled to meet monthly. It is responsible for:

- Considering the budget expenditure, adherence to the Financial Regulations, overview of banking and reconciliations
- Determining all matters of general council policy and risk management
- Reviewing and approving the Council's loans, reserves and investments
- Authorising additional expenditure during the financial year; for example, to fund individual projects
- Reviewing staffing matters
- Advising on recruitment and staffing policy matters
- Approving appointments to certain management posts

Planning, Leisure & Environment Committee (PL&E)

This committee oversees all the Council's leisure and environment issues, youth provision and general service delivery. It is scheduled to meet monthly. It is responsible for:

- Planning for refurbishment of Parish Council play areas
- Planning for planting schemes and parish improvements
- Providing responses to planning applications
- Reviewing volunteering
- Consideration of projects and events
- Consideration of youth provision and youth engagement
- Setting standards and priorities for the outdoor team

Working Groups

The Parish Council has a number of working groups who meet to plan, prepare and discuss issues in more detail than is available at a Committee. The working group list and membership is agreed at the Annual Parish Council meeting. These include Staffing Working Party, Backlands Working Party, Allotments Working Party and Vehicle Working Party.

A working party is a non decision making group and will make recommendations to the relevant Committee or Council.

How to Apply

We hope that the information in this pack has helped you gain a better understanding of who we are and what we do. If you would like to continue to the application stage, we look forward to hearing from you. For this role, we will have an open competitive process receiving applications on a rolling basis.

To apply, please submit a CV and an accompanying letter which details

- Why you are applying?
- Your previous skills and experience that you think are important to this role

Stand alone CV's will not be considered to be a complete application and will not be entered into the process.

Please visit www.westswindon-pc.gov.uk where you will find the job description and more information about the Parish Council.

Applications can be submitted by

Email: work@westswindon-pc.gov.uk

Post: Applications – West Swindon Parish Council, Unit 25 Westmead Industrial Estate, Bridgemead Close, Swindon, SN5 7YT

The Interview process will include an in person interview with a small panel including the Chair of the Council and Clerk. You will be asked to prepare a short presentation, and complete a number of practical skills tests. It would be estimated to last no longer than 1.5 hours.

Closing Date	Open Process
Interviews	Date to be confirmed

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL JOB DESCRIPTION

RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER & DEPUTY CLERK

Scale LC2: (24 to 36) £34,314 to £45,718

dependent on skills and experience with an annual salary review

Job Purpose

- To perform all duties required of the Responsible Financial Officer and deputise for the Clerk/Parish Manager in their absence
- Responsible for providing consistent and accurate financial and administrative support to the Clerk/Parish Manager and the Council.
- To produce relevant reports and information for Council committees and ensure that agendas and minutes are prepared, approved and published in accordance with policy and legal requirements
- To review, update and monitor adherence to risk management and Financial Regulations across all aspects of the business
- To initiate and maintain relevant recording and policy procedures to ensure work is carried out in an efficient and accurate manner.

Reporting to: Clerk/Parish Manager

Responsible for: Other office staff: Support Officer, Administrative Officer (depending on experience)

General Duties:

1. To run the office in the absence of the Clerk/Parish Manager deputising as appropriate dealing with issues arising e.g Councillor and public enquiries as required
2. To attend and minute meetings of the Council, supporting the Chair in the absence of the Clerk/Parish Manager or in support of decision making that has been led by the work of the RFO/Deputy Clerk
3. To attend other meetings as directed by the Clerk/Parish Manager
4. To prepare in consultation with the Clerk/Parish Manager agendas, reports and minutes of the Council and its Committees
5. To handle incoming and outgoing correspondence and documents, particularly those relating to financial matters and to bring such items to the attention of the Clerk/Parish Manager and deal with correspondence or documents as appropriate

6. To conduct research, prepare and produce documents and papers including anticipating what information would be required ahead of scheduled committee meetings
7. Oversee electronic record and database system maintenance including the team absence reporting, and, team service reporting
8. To lead on grant applications to external bodies and any related reporting to funders
9. To provide day to day supervision of other office/administrative staff within the Parish Council office as determined by the Clerk/Parish Manager supporting all team members as and when required with the relevant financial information
10. To undertake additional duties as required by the Clerk/Parish Manager

Financial Administration:

Human Resources and Payroll

11. Support the Parish Manager/Clerk with any time recording systems ensuring they are received and correctly authorised
12. Maintain accurate records on the HR Youmanage software for self and staff managed by the role.
13. Use Brightpay software in order to maintain payroll records for audit purposes, with reconciliations of payments made to staff and HMRC
14. Monitor and submit monthly payments to HMRC for PAYE & NI and maintain and submit monthly Pension payments
15. Ensure proper documentation for starters and leavers including contracts of employment issued before the start date.
16. Maintain and report on staff and Councillor mileage & expense records
17. Take a lead to resolve any pay issues and queries
18. Ensure payroll documentation is prepared and provided to the Clerk/Parish manager for authorisation

Finance/Risk Management

19. Working alongside the Clerk/Parish Manager to ensure effective Governance and Risk Management at all times.
20. Process quarterly VAT online for all areas of the organisations
21. To ensure cash and cheques are banked at appropriate intervals and monitor the use of credit card/store card/smartpay card payments.

22. Ensure all bank accounts are reconciled monthly and reported to the Finance & Staffing Committee.
23. Take a lead on the creation of reports advising on financial matters such as loans and investments
24. Produce quarterly income and expenditure reports for the Committee
25. To manage cashflow between accounts
26. Overseeing an ordering system for the organisation including ensuring that a Purchase Order register is maintained and updated.
27. Maintain accurate accounting records using the Omega Accounting system including Bank Reconciliations and VAT reclaims.

Accounts Year End/Audit

28. Prepare all documentation relating to year end including
 - Accruals/Prepayments are recorded
 - Omega database is up to date for submission to the internal auditor
 - Working alongside the Clerk/Parish Manager, ensure that spreadsheet requirements provided by the Internal Audit are met
 - Respond to any queries or clarifications from the Internal Auditor.
 - Prepare the papers for the annual external audit including papers to be signed and approved by Council

Working with Councillors and the Community:

29. To maintain effective and positive public relations and help to promote the image of the Council within the parish to residents, visitors and outside bodies.
30. To provide a courteous and helpful response to Councillors and members of the public seeking information and advice.
31. To draw on own initiative and to find practical solutions to local issues.
32. To liaise and develop relationships with external bodies, residents, businesses and local organisations.

Essential	Preferred
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial Relevant experience of working within a local council or business finance setting in a senior advisory role • Demonstrable experience of being able to use financial systems and spreadsheets • Experience of preparing financial reports • Experience of working within corporate financial systems/regulations • High level of competence in producing documents and reports using Microsoft Office • Experience of dealing with complex or difficult enquiries • Effective verbal communication skills • Excellent organisation skills • Financial qualification and/or Cilca qualification (or equivalent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working for a Parish Council • Experience of financial processes within a local government setting e.g. processing invoices, payments or grants • Experience of pensions and payroll • Experience of internal/external audit • Experience of staff management and supervision • Experience of working with partners or contractors • Local knowledge of West Swindon Parish and parish council service delivery
Personal Qualities	
<p>This role requires someone who can work effectively under pressure. It requires a problem solving approach and a drive to get things done. Accuracy and attention to detail is essential. It requires someone who can work independently without supervision. The successful candidate will be able to build trust and confidence across the team and Council.</p>	
Other Requirements	
<p>The majority of Parish Council meetings are held in the evenings so evening working will be required. The calendar is set for the year in advance to allow for personal arrangements to be put into place.</p> <p>The post holder will need to be able to travel across the Parish to attend site visits and meetings.</p>	

Note: This job description outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the position and is designed for the benefit of both the post holder and the Council in understanding the primary functions of the post. Other duties may be specified as and when required.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Post	RFO/Deputy Clerk
Responsible to	Clerk
Conditions	Scale LC2: (24 to 36) £34,314 to £45,718 Membership of local government pension scheme.
Working Hours	<p>A flexible working arrangement is negotiable and to be agreed with successful candidate</p> <p>Majority of hours to be office-based to support the other members of the team and the parish office opening times Monday-Thursday 8-4 and Fridays 8-12.30.</p>
Evening and weekend working	<p>Attendance at evening meetings will be required throughout the year, with time off in lieu given</p> <p>Occasional Saturday, Sunday and working outside of core hours will be required as and when necessary to support civic and other events, with time off in lieu given to be used</p>
Probation period	The post is subject to completion of a probationary period of six months
Place of work	<p>Based at the Parish Council offices, currently Unit 25 Westmead Industrial Estate, Swindon, SN5 7YT</p> <p>You may be required to work at and visit other sites in West Swindon. Attendance at meetings or for training in locations as advised.</p>
Leave entitlement	28 days' annual leave per annum plus bank holidays
Interview	The interview process will involve some skill tests