

Debenham Parish Council

Internet Banking Policy

Background

The Legislative Reform (Payments by Parish Council, Community Councils and Charter Trustees) Order 2014 came into effect on 12th March 2014. This legislative Reform order repealed the statutory requirement for two elected members to sign cheques and other orders for payment.

The removal of this particular legal requirement enables Parish Councils to take an overall approach to how it controls its money as well as taking advantage of modern technology including internet banking.

Debenham Parish Council acknowledges the need to maintain robust controls on payments as an integrated part of its overall financial control system and the Internet Banking Policy will form part of its Financial Regulations.

Bank Account Overview

Debenham Parish Council currently have four accounts open with Barclays Bank.

- Community Current Account is maintained for day-to-day transactions and has both cheque book and online banking payment options available.
- Business Premium Deposit Account is for Reserve funds.
- Woodlands accounts (Community and Business Premium) are administered by Debenham Parish Council on behalf of The Hoppit Woodland and Waterways Group.

Currently, three Parish Councillors are listed as Authorised Signatories for all the above accounts. The RFO will be added to the Bank Mandate in 2026.

Cheques can be signed by any two of the authorised signatories (however the use of cheques is largely redundant now).

Online payments can be authorised by any two of the authorised signatories (input and verify basis).

Procedures for Payment Authorisation

In general, all payments are listed in a monthly Payments Schedule prepared by the RFO. This sits alongside the Debenham Parish Council Meeting Agenda which includes an Agenda item specifically to review and approve these payments (plus note significant Receipts and consider both Grant Funding Requests and CIL Funding Requests).

The RFO presents the Payments Schedule and all supporting Invoices/Emails/Notices/Forms for Parish Councillors to review at the Parish Council Meeting. The supporting documentation is also uploaded to the Slack system on a regular basis during the month.

The Payments Schedule is distributed to all Parish Councillors on the Slack system ahead of each meeting. A copy is also uploaded to the Parish Council website and a copy displayed on the Debenham Village noticeboard.

All payments approved at the meeting are passed to one of the Bank Mandate authorised signatories for inputting into the Barclays Bank online system (using the Payments Schedule and all supporting documentation provided at the Parish Meeting). Once completed, all information is passed to a second Authorised Signatory to verify each payment and release these items for processing by Barclays Bank.

Payments requiring Approval in-between Parish Council meetings

Any payment(s) requiring approval after the Meeting Agenda has been circulated/published can be:

- Discussed at the Parish Council Meeting, a vote will be undertaken and if approved, the payment(s) will be added to the Payment Schedule. The decision will be appropriately recorded in the Parish Council meeting Minutes, or
- Authorised by Parish Councillors (via Slack or Email), at the request of the RFO. Approval is required from the Parish Council Chair and an additional three Parish Councillors. The payment(s) can only be processed, once all four Councillors have approved these payments and no objections have been received from the remaining members of the Parish Council.

Each quarter the RFO provides Parish Councillors with a Budget Report showing Actual Payments vs Annual Budget. This report provides a quick overview of the agreed Budget for the year, when approving Payments under this Policy. The report will be shared on Slack and uploaded to the website.

Risk Management

The above Policy adds to the risk control framework of Debenham Parish Council by:

- Ensuring payments can be approved outside of Parish Council meetings to cover times where Parish Council meetings are cancelled or where there is not a scheduled meeting (i.e. August).
- Ensures all financial commitments can be settled in a timely fashion for employees, Councillor expenses, suppliers, contractual arrangements and insurance.
- Protects against reputational risk associated with late or delayed payments.
- Provides flexibility to the Parish Council for managing emergency situations within Debenham village.
- Transparency of financial processes for Auditors and Parishioners.

Originally adopted by the Debenham Parish Council at the meeting held on 15th September 2025.