

SLYNE WITH HEST PARISH COUNCIL BANKING POLICY

Adopted on: 21 July 2025

Review due: July 2026

1. Purpose & Scope

This policy sets out the procedures and controls for managing the Parish Council's bank accounts, including electronic payments using Unity Trust Bank. It ensures the Council complies with its Financial Regulations and the requirement for two-member authorisation on all payments, while maintaining security, transparency and good financial governance.

This policy applies to all payments made from Council funds, including those relating to: Cemetery, Recreation Fields, salaries, utilities, suppliers etc.

2. Banking Arrangements & Mandate

The Council banks with Unity Trust Bank, which supports secure online banking with dual authorisation. We also hold two accounts with Nat West Bank, a reserve account and a current account that will be closed by the end of 2025.

The Unity Trust bank mandate shall:

- Name the Parish Clerk/RFO as the *Service Administrator*, with authority to input payment instructions but no authority to approve payments.
- Include at least three councillors as authorised signatories. Two councillors must authorise every payment online before funds are released.
- Be reviewed annually at the Annual Council Meeting or earlier if any signatory leaves office.

3. Service Administrator (Clerk/RFO)

The Clerk/RFO is responsible for:

- Inputting payment instructions onto the Unity Trust platform
- Uploading supporting documents for councillor review (e.g. invoices, salary breakdowns) into Scribe Software
- Scheduling payments in line with council-approved decisions or pre-agreed budget lines
- Retaining records of all transactions
- Ensuring system access is secure and up-to-date with current councillors mandate privileges

Note: Unity Trust will make endeavours to change the mandate held quickly if any problems occur so that access to the account remains available at all times.

The Clerk has no authority to approve or release payments and may not act as a signatory.

4. Authorised Signatories

Councillors who have internet access at home shall be appointed as either authorised signatories or authorised to authenticate payments. At least two of them must approve every online payment via Unity Trust before it is processed.

Authorised signatories are responsible for:

- Reviewing the supporting documents attached to each transaction
- Logging into the bank system independently to approve payments
- Seeking clarification from the Clerk if any discrepancies or concerns arise
- Ensuring that payments align with council-approved expenditure

Signatories must not approve any payments for which they are a direct beneficiary.

5. Payment Workflow & Dual Approval

The approved workflow is as follows:

1. The Clerk prepares a Schedule of Payments, supported by original invoices or payroll records.
2. This schedule is approved at a council meeting or, in the case of standing payments, as part of the annual budget approval.
3. The Clerk inputs the payment batch into the Unity Trust Bank system.
4. Two signatories log in to review and approve the payments independently.
5. Payment confirmation and audit evidence (screenshot or report) is retained.

The Clerk will report all payments approved between meetings at the next available meeting under the Finance item.

6. Recurring Payments Protocol

For regular suppliers or recurring payments (e.g. Wages, HMRC, pension, utility bills, Unity Trust bank charges, Envirocare), the Council may approve a standing arrangement in advance, provided:

- The payment is within an agreed contract or budget
- It is authorised by two councillors online each time
- It is reviewed annually by the Council

Recurring payments will be clearly listed on the Schedule of Payments and in the Annual Budget.

7. Security & IT Safeguards

The Clerk and authorised councillors must:

- Use strong passwords and keep login credentials secure
- Avoid saving login details in browsers or on shared devices
- Ensure antivirus and anti-malware software is active on all devices used for council banking
- Never approve or initiate payments on public Wi-Fi
- Immediately notify the Clerk and bank if any suspicious activity is detected

Where possible, 2-factor authentication (2FA) must be used for online banking access.

8. Delegated Authority

The Council delegates the following authority to the Clerk:

- To initiate (but not approve) payments in accordance with decisions minuted by the Council
- To authorise emergency expenditure up to **£1,000** in consultation with the Chair and one other councillor, under **s.4.5 of the Financial Regulations**. Such spending must be reported at the next council meeting.

No payment can be made without dual authorisation by councillors.

9. Record-keeping & Reporting

All payment records shall be retained in line with the Council's retention policy. For each payment, the Clerk shall file:

- The original invoice or supporting documentation

The monthly payment summary will be reviewed and minuted at each ordinary council meeting.

10. Review Schedule

This policy shall be reviewed **annually** by the Council in May or at any time deemed necessary due to changes in:

- Banking provider or mandate
- Financial Regulations
- Councillor signatories
- Identified security concerns