

Sellack Parish Council Reserves Policy

Adopted: 14 May 2024

Reviewed: 13th January 2026

Next Review Date: November 2026

Background

Local authorities need to plan to hold a certain amount of funds in reserves for a variety of reasons. Often these will be earmarked for specific purposes to help the council save up each year towards the cost of capital projects, replacing equipment, in case of contested elections, etc. However, it is also good practice for a Council to hold general *revenue* reserves for reasonable working capital, although the level of a Council's Reserves should be considered carefully.

General Reserves are funds which do not have any restrictions on their use. They cushion the impact of uneven cash flows, offset budget requirements, if necessary, or can be held in case of unexpected events or emergencies. Setting the level of General Reserves is agreed with the Annual Budget.

The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a Local Council's Reserve (as opposed to its Earmarked Reserves), is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE)

1. Net Revenue Expenditure (subject to any planned surplus or deficit) is effectively Precept less any Loan Repayment and/or amounts included in the Precept for Capital Projects and transfers to Earmarked Reserves¹

2. The reason for the wide range (3 to 12 months) is to cater for the large variation in sizes of individual Councils. The smaller the Council, the closer the figure should be to 12 months Net Revenue Expenditure, the larger the Council, the nearer to 3 months. In practice, a Council with an NRE in excess of £200,000 should plan on 3 – 6 months equivalent General Reserve.²

Application to Sellack Parish Council

As Sellack Parish Council is a small Council with a small Precept, it should be aiming to maintain General Reserves closer to 9 months Net Revenue Expenditure.

¹As per guidance from NALC's Audit and Accounts Advisor Derek Kemp.

²As above.

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Sellack Parish Council and the Responsible Financial Officer will work together to prepare and agree well-thought out, accurate, and detailed Budgets and Precept proposals which take into account, amongst other things:³

- General running costs (including increases in National Pay Award for staff)
- Current and future activities (including the possibility of devolved services)
- Councillor and staff training and development
- Capital projects
- Replacing and repairing equipment and assets
- Contingencies

Level of financial reserves

The level of financial reserves to be held by the Council will be agreed by the Parish Council during the discussions held regarding the setting of the budget for the next financial year.

The aim will be to hold a Reserve Fund of not less than 50% of the net revenue expenditure. Where this reserve is depleted the Council will consider the appropriate period of time over which to replace it to that level.

Earmarked Reserves (EMRs)

EMRs must be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level should be subject to annual review and justification. They should be separately identified to prevent query from internal and external auditors.

EMRs are held for several reasons and shall only be used for the purpose for which they were created:

- Renewals – to enable the planning and financing of an effective program of equipment replacement and property maintenance/refurbishment. The funds required are built up incrementally over several years when taking into account asset conditions and asset life. They are a mechanism to smooth expenditure without the need to vary budgets.
- Carry forward of underspend on an uncompleted project – expenditure committed to a project but not spent in the budget year. Reserves can be used as a mechanism to carry forward those resources.
- Developers Contributions – proceeds from developers which can only be used for specified purposes.
- Other Earmarked Reserves – these may be set up from time to time to meet known or predicted liabilities.

Where the purpose of an Earmarked Reserve becomes obsolete, or where there is an over-provision of funds, the excess may, on the approval of the Parish Council, be transferred to other budget headings within the revenue budget, to General Reserves or to one or more other Earmarked Reserves.

EMRs will be established on a “needs” basis in line with anticipated requirements and these are to be reviewed annually when the budget is agreed.

³As above.

Any decision to set up an EMR must be approved by Parish Council. If the EMRs are used to meet short term funding gaps, they must be replenished in the following financial year. However, EMRs which have been used to meet a specific liability would not need to be replenished, after having served the purpose for which they were originally set up.

The Election Fund.

To be built up between election years at up to £30 per year until a total figure to cover one uncontested election has been reached. (2027 figure is £120)

Participatory Budgeting.

To build up to a total figure of £250.

The IT Equipment Fund.

To be built up at £200 a year to allow for laptop replacement every five years if necessary – up to a total figure of £1000.

The Defibrillator Fund.

To be built up at a rate of up to £300 a year to cover ongoing maintenance and replacement when necessary - up to a total figure of £1500.

Backney Bridge Picnic Site Fund.

To be built up at a maximum of £1500 a year to allow for future updates and repairs and emergency repairs to the site. This fund will hold a maximum of £5,000.

Lengthsman Fund (including PROW).

To be built up at a maximum of £2000 a year to allow for future maintenance and emergency provision. This fund will hold a maximum of £5,000

The General Revenue Reserve Fund.

Comprising surplus funds from previous years' precept.

Management and Control of Reserves

Movements in Earmarked Reserves and General Reserves shall be reported to the Parish Council as part of the quarterly Budget to Actual Report and at bi-monthly meetings if required. The use of Reserves shall be approved by the Parish Council.

The level of General Reserves shall be reviewed on an annual basis during the annual budgetary review and agreed by the Parish Council. The minimum level of General Reserves shall be recommended to the Parish Council by the Responsible Financial Officer. This will form part of the recommendations for the Annual Budget and Precept request by the Parish Council.

The current level of General Reserves to be held by the Council is set at equal to 9 months of predicted expenditure.

Earmarked Reserves shall be reviewed on an individual basis. This review will also be undertaken as part of the Annual Budgetary Review. Approval for the creation, amendment, cessation or continuation of Earmarked Reserves will be given by the Parish Council.

The above levels of reserves were agreed and this document adopted by the Parish Council at the meeting on the 13th January 2026, to be kept under review.