

## MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL: Quality Gold Criteria 3

### Ensures that the Council delivers value for money

Marden Parish Council is always aware of its responsibility to the community to provide value for money.

Like all Councils, we operate under a system of strict financial controls (Financial Regulations) and our accounts are subject to a two-stage audit; Internal Audit twice a year by an auditor selected by the council and then an External Audit which is undertaken at the end of the financial year by a nationally approved specialist firm of auditors (currently Mazars LLP). We also operate under statutory controls which determine procedures and approvals are required for expenditure.

In the interests of transparency, we also make available a list of expenditure over £100 which is accessible on the Parish Council website ([MPC Accounts - Marden Parish Council Marden, Tonbridge, Kent - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)) in addition to the list of invoices paid which are listed on the monthly Full Council minutes and Committee minutes. However, financial controls determine *HOW* the money is spent, not upon *WHAT* it is spent on or how this provides value for money for residents.

Marden Parish Council believes that, in order to deliver the best value, it should consider the priorities and concerns of Marden residents through our Community Engagement Policy: [Microsoft Word - Community Engagement March 2024 \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

Public consultations are held when the Parish Council is considering major items of capital expenditure. An example of this is the event held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024 about making better use of the playing field changing rooms formerly used by a village football team (now playing elsewhere). Proposals for using a combination of Section 106 funding and the council's own earmarked reserves to provide a new community space for smaller events were explained, and residents' views were canvassed. This feedback, including about value for money, will be used by the council in its subsequent decision making.

Two other recent examples of the Parish Council's search for value for money involve searching for grant sources for schemes to benefit the community in addition to planned works using the council's earmarked reserves:

- 1) Provision of a paved path to aid pedestrians by keeping them further away from moving traffic along the entrance to the car park in the centre of the village, where funding of £500 from the Marden County Councillor was obtained, enabling this to be completed in February 2022.
- 2) Provision of another paved path linking two separate housing developments to the south of the village centre, where funding of £4,000 from the Local Authority's Love Where You Live grant was obtained, enabling this scheme to be completed in March 2024.

The Clerk and other officers have an established network of contacts with their counterparts in neighbouring councils, and this provides a useful source of advice and recommendations for potential new contractors and service providers to help ensure that competitive quotations can be sought from a wide pool of competent companies and sole traders offering value for money.

#### VALUE FOR MONEY

It is essential that as a Council we provide value for money. Our aim, therefore, is to deliver council services for the least expense without compromising quality. However, this does not mean that the Council will necessarily accept the lowest quote. The Clerk, along with the Finance Committee, reviews all contracts on a regular basis (not exceeding three years) to ensure that we have achieved value for money.

*Value for Money (VFM) is the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness and achieving this means having a balance between all three.*

**Economy:** Competitive quotes for works and materials required are sought in line with MPC's Financial Regulations.

**Efficiency:** the Clerk and Council seek to obtain the most efficient services available and review the agreements with outside contractors on a regular basis.

**Effectiveness:** the Clerk and Council review the effectiveness of contracts when they are due to expire and to consider if any changes are required or the service could be delivered in any other way.

#### OBJECTIVES

Marden Parish Council's objective is to identify the principles of value for money and to ensure that these are reflected in our service planning and delivery.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

- All Councillors: General duty to ensure that Marden Parish Council provides value for money to the community.

- Full Council: Overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council delivers value for money.
- Finance Committee: Makes recommendations to the Full Council and other Committees about how to achieve value for money; undertakes an annual programme of financial reviews.
- Clerk (as Responsible Financial Officer): Responsible for financial controls; ensures that Marden Parish Council's strategic direction is consistent with this statement.
- Officers: Ensure that Council services are delivered with economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

*All Marden Parish Council policies relevant to Finance should reflect this statement.* [Finance Policies and Procedures - Marden Parish Council - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk/finance-policies-and-procedures)