

## Northiam Parish Council Risk Assessment

### Notes

**“The greatest risk facing a local authority is not being able to deliver the activity or services expected of the Council.”** Risk assessment is a systematic general examination of working conditions, workplace activities and environmental factors that will enable the council to identify any and all potential risks inherent in the place or practices. Based on a recorded assessment the council should then take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible. Making sure that all staff and members are made aware of the results of the risk assessment.

This document has been produced to enable the Parish Council to assess the risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them. In conducting this exercise, the following plan was followed:

- ✍ Identify the areas to be reviewed.
- ✍ Identify what the risk may be.
- ✍ Evaluate the management and control of the risk and record all findings. ✍ Review, assess and revise if required.

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT				
Subject	Risk(s) Identified	H / M / L	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess/Revise
Business continuity	Risk of Council not being able to continue its business due to an unexpected or tragic circumstance	H	All files and recent records are kept at the Parish Office. The Clerk makes regular back-ups of files to a hard drive and online. In the event of the Clerk being indisposed the Chairman to contact the East Sussex Association of Local Councils for advice. Rapid employment of a Locum Clerk to cover is essential to keep the council running. Passwords to council laptops and programmes and other subscriptions to be held in a sealed envelope in the safe in case of illness of staff.	Existing procedures adequate. Review when necessary.
Precept	Risk of Council not calculating precept in time Requirements not submitted to RDC Amount not received by the Council	M M L	The RFO and Finance working group review the Precept requirement annually and make recommendations to the Council at the December meeting. The Council reviews the presented budget update information, including actual position and projected position to year end and estimated figures for the next financial year. With this information the Council then agrees the amounts set for the specific budget headings for the following year, the total of which is resolved to be the precept amount to be requested from Rother District Council. This figure is submitted by the Clerk to RDC.	Existing procedure adequate.
Financial records	Inadequate records Financial irregularities	L L	The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements. Scribe accounting software is used and the reports inspected by the Internal Auditor. Spare keys for cabinets to be held by Chair or Vicechair	Existing procedure adequate.

Bank and banking	Inadequate checks Bank mistakes Loss Charges	L  L	The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements for banking and reconciliation of accounts. A payments schedule is circulated to councillors before the meeting, approved and signed off at the monthly meeting in conjunction with the invoices. The payments are set up on the online banking system by the RFO and authorised by 2 councillor signatories. The RFO reconciles the bank accounts each month as part of the digital banking procedures and these are approved by council at the monthly meeting. The Financial Regulations were updated and approved in May 2024 by the Clerk. These will be updated annually.	Existing procedure adequate. Review the Financial Regulations when necessary and bank signatory list when necessary. Monitor the bank statements monthly.
------------------	---	------------	---	---

<b>FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Risk(s) Identified</b>	<b>H / M / L</b>	<b>Management/Control of Risk</b>	<b>Review/Assess/Revise</b>
Cash	Loss through theft or dishonesty	L	The Council's insurance policy has a Fidelity Guarantee. No petty cash float is held	Existing procedure adequate. Review the Financial Regulations when necessary. Ensure Fidelity Insurance is adequate.
Reporting and auditing	Risk of not having clear and consistent process for communicating payments and Receipts.	L  L	A list of payments and receipts is produced using the Scribe accounting software and circulated to councillors by the RFO. A copy is provided for councillors at the meeting.	Existing communication procedures adequate.
Insolvency and Low reserves	Overspending reducing reserves too much	M	Quarterly financial reports produced by the RFO showing spending against budget and spending against earmarked funds. Written report as well as scribe report to ensure full understanding. Reserves and funds levels to be included in financial reports	
Direct costs Overhead expenses Debts	Goods not supplied but billed Incorrect invoicing Loss of stock	L  L  L	The Council has Financial Regulations that set out the requirements. The RFO confirms invoices and bank details are correct. Invoices only paid after work completed or goods received At each Council meeting the list of invoices awaiting approval is available to Councillors, and considered. Council approves the list of requests for payment.	Existing procedure adequate. Review the Financial Regulations when necessary.
Grants and support - payable	Council unable to make payments Authorisation of Council to pay lost	L	All such expenditure goes through the required Council process of approval, minuted and listed accordingly. The Council does not currently have the General Power of Competence (GPC), it must therefore use s137 for payments where other Powers cannot be used, taking account of the limits imposed. At least three members of the council to be authorised to be able to set up payments or authorise payments	Existing procedure adequate.
Grants - Receivable from Rother District Council	Non receipt of regular Grants, thereby reducing the Parish Council's expected income	L	The open spaces grant for Beacons Field is received in April.	Existing procedures adequate.

Best value Accountability	Work awarded incorrectly  Overspend on services	L L	As per Financial Regulations normal Parish Council practice would be to seek, if possible, more than one quotation for any substantial work required to be undertaken or for goods. For major contract services, formal competitive tenders would be sought. If a problem is encountered with a contract the Clerk would investigate the situation, check the quotation/tender, research the problem and report to Council. Quarterly financial reports to consider whether budget areas are being exceeded or look like they will be exceeded to allow time to resolve the issue.	Existing procedure adequate.
Salaries and assoc. costs	Salary paid incorrectly Wrong rate paid Wrong deductions of Tax Unpaid contributions to the Inland Revenue	L L L L L L	The Parish Council authorises the appointment of all employees at Council meetings. Salary rates are assessed annually in November by the Council and applied on 1st April each year. Wages are paid on the second Thursday of the month on a salary basis and Payroll provider used to ensure the council remains within the law. RFO/Clerk to double check payments. Payroll provider to confirm PAYE amounts. The staff keep a timesheet and have a contract of employment and job description.	Existing appointment and payment system is adequate.
Locum Clerk/Other workers (voluntary/casual)	Loss of Clerk  Fraud  Actions undertaken Health & Safety	L L L L	A budget category should be allocated to pay a locum Clerk should the Clerk become indisposed or in the event of the Clerk resigning. The requirements of the Fidelity Guarantee insurance to be adhered to with regards to Fraud.	To be included in the budget when setting precept. Existing procedure adequate. Monitor working conditions, safety requirements and insurance regularly.
Councillor expenses	Councillors over-paid	L	Any expenses are claimed by presenting the relevant receipt to the Council for approval.	Existing procedure adequate.
Councillor allowances	Income tax deduction	L	No allowances are allocated to Parish Councillors.	
Election costs	Risk of an election cost	M	When an election is due the Clerk will obtain an estimate of costs from the District Council for a contested election or by-election. There are no measures which can be adopted to minimise the risk of having a contested election or by-election as this is a democratic process and should not be stifled.	Existing procedure adequate. At the end of a term a specific category will be allocated in the budget for a contested election. Any by-election costs will be taken from reserves.
VAT	Risk of errors in reclaiming/charging	L	VAT is reclaimed via VAT126 twice a year. The calculations and amount due is produced by the accounting software.	Existing procedure adequate
Annual return	Not Submitted within time limits	M	AGAR – the accounting statement is prepared by the RFO and checked at the Internal Audit. The Annual Governance Statement is prepared by the Clerk. Both parts are agreed separately at a meeting of the Full Council and sent on to the External Auditor within time limit.	Existing procedures adequate.

Legal powers	Illegal activity or payments	L	All activity and payments within the powers of the Parish Council to be resolved and minuted at full Parish Council Meetings. The Council does not currently have the General Power of Competence. It must therefore use s137 for payments where other Powers cannot be used, taking account of the limits imposed.	All activities and payments Minuted. Council reviews compliance with the criteria to use the GPC at its Annual Meeting.
Council records - paper	Loss through: theft fire damage	M M L	The Parish Council records are stored Parish office. Records include current correspondence, Minute books, cash book, bank statements, insurance, etc. Recent archives are stored in the parish office and older more historical records are in the county archives.	The office has a fire proof safe. Only the Clerk, RFO and Chairman have keys and therefore access to the office unsupervised.
Council records - electronic	Loss through: Theft, fire, damage Corruption of computer	L L	The Parish Council's electronic records and emails are stored on a laptop at the Clerk's home. Back-ups of the files are uploaded at regular intervals to a hard drive. Online back up to cover the regular change of staff.	Existing procedure adequate. Confirm back up arrangements with the transition to the New Clerk.
Insurance	Adequacy Cost Compliance Fidelity Guarantee	L L L L	An annual review is undertaken (before the time of the policy renewal) of all insurance arrangements in place. Employers and Employee liability insurance are a necessity and must be paid for. Ensure compliance measures are in place. Ensure Fidelity checks are in place. Replacement values to be considered as part of the renewal process.	Existing procedure adequate. Review insurance provision annually. Review of compliance.
Data protection	That the Parish Council or its officers or councillors breach the data protection legislation, resulting in a loss or claim.	M	The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner. Privacy and Data Protection policies are in place. Data Breaches are to be reported to the ICO by the Data Controller.	Ensure annual renewal of Registration and compliance with the General Data Protection Requirement. Training as needed to stay up to date
Freedom of Information Act	That the Parish Council or its officers or councillors breach the FOI legislation, resulting in a loss or claim	L M	The Council has a model publication scheme for Local Councils in place. The Council is able to request a fee for any information requested to cover the cost of consumables and the clerk's time.	Monitor and report any impacts of requests made under the FOI Act.
Compliance with Transparency Code	Risk of Fine from the ICO	M	The internal audit reviews compliance with the code. RFO and Clerk to keep abreast of changes in law and to keep the website up to date.	Training for Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Website	Breaking Data Protection Regulations  Failing to comply with Transparency Act Failure to Comply with Accessibility Act	L-M	The council has Data Protection Policies and training in place. The website is password protected. Transparency forms part of the internal auditors review and reports.  The council website provider ensures the website complies with accessibility requirements	Policies and training to be revisited following any reports or of the council becoming aware of any problems
Meeting location	Meeting location does not comply with legal requirements including re accessibility. Meeting location does not meet Health and Safety requirements. Privacy of members of the public and staff that object to bein recorded, visually or audibly.	L  M	The Parish Council Meetings are held at the Village Hall. A code is required to gain access. The Clerk keeps abreast of relevant legislation re legal requirements, and performs a regular risk assessment to ensure the premises and the facilities are adequate for the Clerk, Councillors and Public who attend from H&S and privacy aspects.	Existing location adequate.

<b>ASSETS</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Risk(s) Identified</b>	<b>H / M / L</b>	<b>Management/Control of Risk</b>	<b>Review/Assess/Revise</b>
Play area equipment, Cemetery, Street Furniture, Land and Building assets:	Loss or Damage Risk/damage to third party(ies)/property	L L L	An asset register is kept up to date and insurance is held at the appropriate level for all items. Regular checks made of all equipment at the playing field. Annual inspection of play area carried out by a suitably qualified company. Annual inspection of trees on Parish Council-owned land carried out by The Open Spaces working party. Annual check of all Assets to determine state and note maintenance needs Each Asset additionally has its own risk assessment.	Existing procedure adequate. Review insurance requirements annually.
St Franics Field Managed by SFF CIC	Incorrect management resulting in: Injury to public and volunteers  Mismanagement of A team volunteers  Bankruptcy  Spending exceeding Council Budget  Fines from breaking the law	M	SFF CIC to provide copy of Public Liability insurance for £12,000,000 Ensure SFF CIC have risk assessment and regular inspection in place  Ensure SFF CIC have risk assessment in place, offers training so volunteers remain safe. Only use appropriately experience person for the activity  Require detailed quarterly financial reports  Require detailed quarterly financial reports and long -term plans to be costed in advance to allow for correct budgeting  Ensure that SFF CIC use appropriately experienced contractors and hold contractors insurance to cover errors	
<b>LIABILITY</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Risk(s) Identified</b>	<b>H / M / L</b>	<b>Management/Control of Risk</b>	<b>Review/Assess/Revise</b>
Legal Powers	Illegal activity or payments  Working Parties taking decisions without proper authority	L L	All activity and payments made within the powers of the Parish Council (not ultra vires) and to be resolved and clearly minuted.  Ensure working parties are established with clear terms of reference. Any decisions to be made by Full Council. Councillors regularly reminded of basis requirements.	Existing procedure adequate.  Existing procedure adequate.
Minutes/Agendas/ Notices/Statutory documents	Accuracy and legality Business conduct	L L	Minutes and agenda are produced in the prescribed method by the Clerk and adhere to the legal requirements. Minutes are approved and signed at the next Council meeting. Minutes and agenda are displayed according to the legal requirements. Business conducted at Council meetings should be managed by the Chair.	Existing procedure adequate. Guidance/training to Chair should be given (if required). Members to adhere to Code of Conduct.
Public Liability	Insurance is adequate regarding risk to third party, property or individuals	M	Insurance is in place and adequacy reviewed annually. Risk assessments carried out to comply with requirements. Visual Inspection reports to be written, dated and signed. Copies to be kept.	Existing procedures adequate. Ensure risk assessments are completed.
Employer Liability	Non-compliance with employment law resulting in a claim against the Parish Council	L	Undertake adequate training and seek advice from the East Sussex Association of Local Councils. Ensure insurance covers employment claims.	Existing procedures adequate.

Liability due to Contractors used to manage assets	Regular monitoring of work, Requirement to hold a copy of their Public Liability insurance. Requirement for contractors to hold the appropriate certificates.		Certificates and insurance to be requested as part of tender process or quote process.	
Data Protection	Breach of Data Protection Laws and risk of being fined.		The council has Data Protection Policies and training in place.	Policies and training to be revisited following any reports or of the council becoming aware of any problems
Legal Liability	Legality of activities Proper and timely reporting via Minutes Proper document control	M L L	Clerk to clarify legal position on proposals and to seek advice if necessary. Council always receives and approves Minutes at meetings. Documents are kept securely in the parish office or electronically. Electronic access is by the Clerk only.	Existing procedures adequate.

<b>COUNCILLORS' PROPRIETY</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Risk(s) Identified</b>	<b>H / M / L</b>	<b>Management/Control of Risk</b>	<b>Review/Assess/Revise</b>
Members' interests	Conflict of interest Declaration of Councillors' Pecuniary interests (DPI)	M L	Councillors have a duty to declare any interests at the start of the meeting. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest (DPI) forms to be reviewed regularly by Councillors, and published on the Parish Council website	Existing procedure adequate. Members to take responsibility to update their Register.

Reviewed: August 2024

Date of next review: May 2025