

Fawkham Parish Council Risk Assessment - 2023

Risk assessment is a systematic general examination of working conditions, workplace activities and environmental factors that will enable the Parish Council to identify any and all potential inherent risks. The Parish Council, based on a recorded assessment, will take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible.

This document has been produced to enable Fawkham Parish Council to assess the risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them.

SUBJECT	RISK(S) IDENTIFIED	H/M/L	MANAGEMENT/CONTROL OF RISK	REVIEW/ASSESS/REVISE
FINANCIAL				
Precept	Inadequacy of precept meaning Council cannot carry out its statutory duties	L	To determine the precept amount required each year, the Council develops a forecast of income and expenditure for the forthcoming year and, taking into account the Council Tax Base advised by SDC, sets an appropriate precept.	Existing procedure adequate
Payment of election costs	Inability to meet the cost of elections in an election year or to fill a contested casual vacancy	M/L	Set aside 25% of estimated cost within each years' budget to cover the cost on a four year cycle	New process from 2019/20 budget year

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Financial Records	Inadequate records/ financial irregularities	L	The Council has Financial Regulations which set out the requirements. Copies of all invoices, payments, quotes and tenders are retained and made available for inspection the internal auditor as part of the annual AGAR process	Existing procedure adequate; Financial Regulations are reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose
Banking	Inappropriate signing of cheques or authorisation of online payments	L	Cheques can only be approved when signed by two authorised signatories of the bank account. Invoices for payment are presented monthly meetings for counter-signing when payments are agreed. Cheque stubs are initialled by the signatories when signing the cheques, and online payments also require a two person authorisation process.	Existing procedure is adequate
Banking	Bank errors	L	Monthly reconciliation of payments against the bank statement is confirmed to the meeting of the Parish Council by the Clerk. Reconciliation is signed and certified as correct by the Clerk as the RFO.	Existing procedure adequate
Financial Monitoring	Lack of monitoring leading to financial budget issues or mismanagement.	L	Financial monitoring is a regular agenda item, with a finance monitoring report prepared and reviewed at each meeting and recorded in the minutes.	Existing procedures adequate

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VAT	Non-reclaiming	L	The Council has financial regulations which set out the requirements. The finance monitoring report records any VAT to be reclaimed against each entry. VAT is reclaimed at the end of each financial year.	Existing procedures adequate
Grants	Misuse of grants received	L	If/when received, these are reported in the monthly finance monitoring report	Existing procedures adequate
Grants and support payable	Misuse of power to pay	L	Any such expenditure goes through the required process of approval in accordance with the Financial Regulations, minuted and listed if a payment is made using s137 powers	Existing procedure adequate
Salaries and associated costs	Salary paid incorrectly and/or unpaid tax due to HMRC	L	The Clerk formally reports to the Parish Council any changes on rates of pay following national awards under NJC terms and conditions, as notified by KALC. HMRC basic tools real-time reporting is used to determine tax due. Internal auditor is able to check appropriate processing.	Existing procedure adequate
Insurance	Outdated asset register leading to under or over insurance	L	An asset register is updated annually and published on the PC website. Changes are notified to the Council's insurers.	Existing procedure adequate

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PEOPLE				
Inappropriate behaviour	Inappropriate behaviour by employees or Councillors	L	Appropriate policies and code of conduct in place and communicated	Review of HR policies is underway. Model policies were adopted in 2022 and added to FPC's website.
Employees	Fraud by Clerk	L	Requirements of Fidelity Guarantee insurance are adhered to regarding fraud. Monthly finance monitoring report, reconciliation of bank statements and internal audit process all act as checks	Existing procedures adequate
Health and safety of employee	Risk to health and safety of the clerk	L	Role is largely working from home, and the Clerk is expected to maintain safe working practices and report any issues. A home working risk assessment is periodically undertaken. A separate risk assessment is maintained for the village hall (used for PC meetings) and agendas contain a notice detailing the procedure for an emergence evacuation of the hall	Monitor health and safety
Clerk as Proper Officer and Finance Officer	Lack of professional knowledge leading to incorrect advice	M	The Parish Council supports the Clerk's attendance at relevant training offered by the Kent Association of Local Councils	Existing procedures adequate. Consideration to be given to CiCla accredited clerk training during 2023.

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Health and safety of clerk, councillors and public	Personal injury	L	Liability insurance is held for clerk, callers and public carrying out volunteer duties such as inspections, lorry watch etc. Certificate is displayed at the village hall. A separate risk assessment is maintained for the village hall (used for PC meetings) and agendas contain a notice detailing the procedure for an emergence evacuation of the hall	Existing procedure adequate
GOVERNANCE				
Annual Governance and Audit Return (AGAR)	Failure to suit within time limit and/or complete accurately	L	The AGAR is requested by the internal auditor and is shared in draft form with the internal auditor prior to presentation to the PC. It is completed and signed by the Clerk and Chair at a PC meeting, and submitted within the prescribed time by the clerk. Relevant statutory notices are published to the PC website. The Internal auditor checks annually that all relevant VAT has been reclaimed.	Existing procedure adequate
AGAR	Failure to follow up any matters recommended by the internal auditor.	L	There have been no such issues in recent years, but were they to arise they could be followed up and reviewed as part of the subsequent year's AGAR	Existing procedure adequate

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Publication of information as required under the Transparency Code	Failure to publish the required information within the required time	L	The website to set out a list of the required information which is updated annually as part of the AGAR/Annual Council Meeting processes	Information to be updated and expanded as part of the new website design mid-2022
Legal Powers	Illegal activity or payments	L	All activity and payments within the powers of the PC are resolved at Council Meetings and so open to public scrutiny	Existing procedure adequate
Minutes/agendas/notices	Inaccuracy and illegalities	L	Public notices, agendas and minutes are produced and published in the prescribed manner by the Clerk. Minutes are approved and signed at the next Council meeting, as required by the Standing Orders, and are published on the PC website, either in draft or final format, in the required timeframe	Existing procedure adequate
Members' interests	Pecuniary and other interests of councillors which may lead to conflict of interest	L	The Council adopted a new Code of Conduct under the Localism Act 2011. Updates to the register of members' interest are sought regularly, published on the PC website, and supplied to the Monitoring Officer at SDC. The Clerk provides advice on compliance with the adopted Code	Existing procedures adequate. Members take responsibility for advising of any changes to their declarations when required.

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Planning	Inability to respond to statutory consultations in time	L	Where necessary, the date of a scheduled meeting is altered, or an extra meeting convened, so that formal response can be agreed and submitted to SDC within the 21 day deadline	In November 2022, FPC adopted terms of reference – Delegated Authority to Clerk in relation to Planning Applications.
Insurance	Inadequacy, poor value for money, non-compliance with legal requirements, Fidelity Guarantee	L	An annual review is undertaken of all insurance arrangements, including cost and adequacy. Fidelity check in place.	Existing procedure adequate
Data protection; Freedom of Information; Privacy Policy; Accessibility Regulations	Failure to provide relevant policy; failure to adhere to relevant policy	L	The Parish Council is registered with the Information Commissioner, with annual fee paid by direct debit; has a publication scheme in place; includes a Privacy Policy on the website; and provided a new Accessibility Regulations compliant website by the deadline of September 2020.	Existing procedures adequate
Business as usual threat	Inability to manage Parish Council's business because of the unexpected absence of the Clerk	L	Neighbouring Parish Councils and/or the SLCC would be contacted for emergency cover. Or a Cllr would assume the responsibility of the Proper Officer and take Minutes, prepare agendas etc.	Existing procedures adequate

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PHYSICAL EQUIPMENT				
Assets – Village Green benches, village signs, trees, electricity supply cupboard, village gateways, defibrillator, dog waste bin, two noticeboards	Damage by 3rd Party; risk to third party	L	<p>An annual review of assets is undertaken, including their condition, with steps taken to ensure repairs/maintenance where required. All assets are covered by the PC's insurance policy where the value is above the minimum.</p> <p>Trees: Periodic professional advise sought on risk, low branches, inspected and cut as required annually.</p> <p>Cupboard: is padlocked.</p> <p>Village gateways: sighted in accordance with KCC guidance.</p> <p>Defibrillator: is inspected on a monthly basis by Rosie Withenshaw (The Sevenoaks CPR Charity).</p> <p>Dog waste bin: is emptied under a contract with SDC</p> <p>Noticeboards: inspected monthly by the Clerk.</p>	Existing procedure adequate

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Assets – Other	Risk of loss or damage to asset; risk of damage to third party	L	An annual review of assets is undertaken for insurance and maintenance purposes. All assets are covered by the PC's insurance policy where the value is above the minimum.	Existing procedures adequate
Maintenance /replacement of assets	Poor performance of assets or amenities; lack of funds to provide repairs/replacement	L	All assets owned by the Parish Council are reviewed at least annually. Maintenance is planned and budgeted for where possible. Any repair/replacement is undertaken in accordance with the PC Standing Orders and Finance Regulations.	Existing procedures adequate
Council records – paper	Loss through: theft, fire or other damage	L	Parish Council records needed for current use are stored at the home of the Clerk. In addition, some items are held in locked filing cabinet in the village hall and also some in safe custody at Lloyds Bank in Gravesend.	Lockable filing cabinet purchased and installed at the village hall for archive material such as old Minute books and other records. The items held in safe custody will be investigated by the clerk and Chair as their exact nature is unknown.

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Council records – electronic	Loss through: theft, fire damage or corruption of computer	L	Documents are stored on the clerk's personal laptop. Regular back ups are made.	In addition, every six months, files are also to be copied onto two memory sticks, one held by the clerk and one by the Chair.
CONTRACTS/CONTRACTORS				
Not insured or inadequately insured	Public liability risk	L	Insurance cover held by contractors is checked before a contract is awarded and annually thereafter	Existing procedures adequate