

Blundeston & Flixton Parish Council

Risk Assessment

Introduction

Risk assessment is a general examination of the environment in which the Parish Council operates that will enable the identification of potential risks. All practical and necessary steps should then be taken to minimise the risks, whilst accepting that by their very nature it may not always be possible to eliminate them completely.

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 level of risk – High(H), Medium(M) or Low(L)
- Document the management of the risk
- Document any action to be taken

The risks have been split into four areas:-

- Financial
- Management of the council
- Parish Council assets
- Other

Abbreviations used:-

- CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy – payable to the Parish Council on certain residential developments
- ECB – Enabling Communities Budget – funds available from East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council
- HMRC – HM Revenue & Customs
- PC – Parish Council
- RFO – Responsible Financial Officer – this role is currently undertaken by the Clerk to the Parish Council
- SALC – Suffolk Association of Local Councils

FINANCIAL

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Risk Identified</u>	<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Management of Risk</u>	<u>Action</u>
Precept	Not submitted or submitted late	L	The precept is agreed at the November meeting and submitted by the Clerk by the end of January at the latest.	Clerk to ensure approval is minuted and submission is made on time.
	Not paid by East Suffolk Council	L	Confirm receipt to bank statements	RFO to check monies are received on the due date(s)
	Adequacy of precept	M	Level or precept advised by East Suffolk in November and agreed at the November meeting.	RFO to send round to Parish Councillors when received
Budget	Not realistic	M	Budget is prepared based on prior year costs, known or expected increases and any additional costs expected to occur. Draft budget is discussed at the November meeting and agreed at the December meeting. Quarterly review of actual costs to budget.	RFO to send round to Parish Councillors quarterly
Grants receivable (eg CIL, ECB)	Claims procedure	L	Ensure necessary paperwork is submitted on a timely basis, including any follow up reports	Clerk to action
	Receipt of grant when due	L	Confirm receipt to bank statements	RFO to check monies are received
Clerk's salary	Salary paid at incorrect rate	L	Payroll is operated by SALC and annual pay increase is advised by them for agreement by the Parish Council.	Annual increase to be circulated to all PC members for agreement at the next PC meeting
	Deductions not made in accordance with HMRC regulations	L	Payroll is operated by SALC who are aware of deductions required	None required
	Salary not paid on due date	L	Paid by standing order with any amendments to amount advised to the bank	RFO to advise bank of any changes
Direct Costs and overhead expenses	Goods not supplied to Council	L	Clerk to ensure all goods have been received prior to payment of invoice	RFO to action
	Invoice incorrectly calculated or recorded	L	Check calculations on invoice including any VAT that may be due	RFO to action
	Payment is made for incorrect amount or to the wrong supplier	M	All payments, whether made by cheque or electronically, are signed off by two of the signatories to the bank account	Signatories to check payment is correct prior to authorizing it

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Risk Identified</u>	<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Management of Risk</u>	<u>Action</u>
Internal control	Not carried out on a regular basis	L	Appoint a member of the PC who is not a bank signatory to undertake a quarterly check on the financial records	Appointed member to carry out quarterly check
Election costs	Cost not included in annual budget	M	There is no way to minimise the risk of having a contested election as cannot be known in advance when such an event may arise. However, a reserve is in place to cover any election costs	RFO to monitor level of reserve to ensure it is sufficient
VAT	Input VAT claimed when not due	M	Ensure all input VAT claimed is supported by invoices in the format as described by HMRC	RFO to ensure invoices are compliant
	VAT not claimed within time limits	L	VAT returns are submitted annually or more frequently if the total input VAT to be claimed exceeds HMRC guidelines	RFO to ensure VAT returns are submitted at the appropriate times
Reserves – general or earmarked	Insufficient funds held in reserves	L	Consider adequacy of reserves when agreeing budget and also in light of year end accounts	RFO to consider when setting budget
Financial records	Inadequate records kept to evidence the financial transactions of the PC	L	RFO to ensure there is documentary evidence for every transaction	RFO to action
Banking facilities	Inadequate procedures for banking receipts and payments	L	The PC has separate Financial Regulations which govern how bank transactions are to be dealt with	RFO to ensure all bank transactions are dealt with in accordance with current regulations and also ensure these are kept up to date
	Bank errors	L	Monthly bank reconciliations carried out to ensure all items are correctly reconciled to the financial records.	RFO to prepare monthly bank reconciliation
	Authorisation of payments	L	The PC has separate Financial Regulations which govern the authorization of bank payments	RFO to ensure all payments are correctly authorized
Investment Income (bank interest)	Receipt when due	L	Confirm receipt to bank statements	RFO to check interest is received if any is due
	Surplus funds	L	Transfers to be made to/from deposit account as required	RFO to monitor level of funds

MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Risk Identified</u>	<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Management of Risk</u>	<u>Action</u>
PC members interests	PC members interests not declared or recorded leading to a conflict of interest	L	Agenda item to ask for any members interest relating to any of the matters to be discussed. All PC members have to complete an online register of interests which can be found at Register Of Interest List	All PC members to ensure that they declare any interests and that the online register is kept up to date
Minutes	Accuracy - all matters discussed are properly documented	L	Draft minutes are sent to all PC members after the meeting and also published on the PC's website. Any amendments can then be flagged up to the Clerk who will respond accordingly. The minutes are then formally approved at the next meeting.	All PC members to review the minutes in order to approve them at the next meeting
Agendas, notices and statutory documents	To be prepared and published as legally required	L	Agenda is prepared in the prescribed format and published in accordance with legal requirements. Other notices and statutory documents are dealt with in a timely manner and within given timescales.	Clerk to ensure timely publication of all documents
Staff	Loss of key personnel, eg Parish Clerk, RFO	L	Risks arise from hours worked, health, stress, lack of training, long term sick – risk is monitored by the Chairman of the PC and managed as appropriate. Staff are encouraged to flag up any issues as they may arise.	Chairman to monitor and staff to raise any issues on a timely basis
	Fraud	L	Fidelity Guarantee value appropriately set	Council to review annually
Councillors	Loss of PC members, insufficient to form a quorum at meetings	L	Legal process is followed when a vacancy occurs. If the Parish Council becomes inquorate then East Suffolk Council will provide a process to follow to appoint members to ensure business can carry on.	Clerk to ensure correct process is followed

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Council records – paper and electronic	Loss of council records due to fire, theft, damage or computer breakdown	L	Paper records are stored in a locked fireproof cabinet in the village hall – keys are held by the Chairman and the Clerk Electronic records are kept on the PC laptop provided to the Clerk – regular backups are taken and stored in the cabinet referred to above.	Clerk to take regular backups of information held on the laptop
Insurance	Insufficient cover	L	Annual review of cover is undertaken prior to renewal to ensure it is sufficient and up to date	Clerk to undertake review of cover
Meeting location	Adequacy and Health & Safety	L	Meetings are held in the village hall. These premises are the subject of a separate Village Hall Management Committee. Considered to be a safe and comfortable environment for all who attend meetings.	Village Hall Management Committee to report on any issues arising
Website	Information published on the website is out of date or non-compliant	L	Clerk ensure website is kept up to date and all documents are relevant and in the required format	Clerk to keep website up to date

ASSETS

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Risk Identified</u>	<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Management of Risk</u>	<u>Action</u>
Assets owned by the PC	Loss or damage resulting in reduced value of assets or loss of income/performance	L	Assets are recorded on the financial spreadsheets maintained by the Clerk and a review undertaken by the external auditor annually to check for any additions or disposals	Clerk to maintain list including any additions or disposals of capital items
Maintenance	Poor performance of assets which could lead to loss of income or risk/damage to third parties	L	Assets owned by the PC are regularly inspected and kept in good repair. Assets are also insured and reviewed annually to ensure cover is sufficient	All PC members to ensure Clerk is advised of any assets in poor condition Clerk to ensure insurance cover is adequate
Noticeboards	Vandalism/damage causing risk or harm to third parties	L	Clerk has keys to noticeboards and checks for any damage when posting notices. All noticeboards are included in the insurance policy. The Clerk is also mindful of roadside safety when at the notice boards.	Clerk to continue to monitor
Seats	Vandalism/damage causing risk or harm to third parties	L	Whilst there is no formal inspection, any faults or damage reported to the PC are dealt with at the meeting following the report or sooner if urgent action is needed	Any issues reported are dealt with promptly
Dog waste bins	Theft, damage or vandalism	L	Reliance on parishioners to report any issues which are then dealt with promptly. Bins are emptied by East Suffolk Council contractors.	Any issues reported are dealt with promptly
Village Hall	Fit for purpose including disabled access, fire systems, functionality of toilets and kitchen, general condition of building	M	The village hall is maintained by the Village Hall Management Committee with any major issues being reported to the PC	PC to action any major issues as and when they arise
Laptop and printer held by the Clerk	Injury or harm from misuse, prolonged use and malfunctioning	L	Clerk is aware of best practice when using the laptop including the need to take regular breaks, posture and positioning of screen. Clerk reports any equipment defects to the PC who will take remedial action.	Clerk to ensure best practice is followed and any defects dealt with

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Playground	Health & Safety causing risk of harm to users of the equipment	M	The PC has a separate policy relating to the playground	Clerk to ensure policy is kept up to date and that regular inspections take place. Record of inspections to be maintained.
	Maintenance of equipment	M		
	Damage to trees	L		

OTHER

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Risk Identified</u>	<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Management of Risk</u>	<u>Action</u>
Village maintenance working parties	Health & Safety, use of machinery, personal injury	M	The PC has a separate policy relating to volunteers	Clerk to ensure policy is kept up to date and that regular inspections take place.
Community Litter Pick	Health & Safety, contamination, personal injury	M	The PC has a separate policy relating to volunteers	Clerk to ensure policy is kept up to date and that regular inspections take place.

This Risk Assessment was adopted by the council at its meeting held on 16 December 2024.

Date of next review – December 2025

Reviewed December -2025

Date of next review -December 2026