

WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL: RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment is a general and systematic examination of financial, people, environmental and community responsibility management factors. This table has been produced to ensure that our Parish Council has identified and assessed the risks it faces in each of these four areas and then satisfied itself that adequate steps have been taken to manage and minimise the key risks. In order to help prioritise risk management effort, the risks have been categorised into three levels: high (H), medium (M) and low (L).



Subject	Risk(s) Identified	Risk Level H/M/L	Management of Risk	Review/Assess/Revise?
FINANCIAL RISKS				
Precept	1. Inadequate precept	L	<p>In the first instance, East Suffolk Council (ESC) advises the Parish Council (PC) of the Council Tax base rate, which is effectively the amount of money that every £1 of Council Tax raises from all property taxation for allocation to parish purposes in any one year through the PC.</p> <p>To determine the amount of precept required by the PC annually, the Clerk prepares an annual budget. To draft this budget, the Clerk evaluates past and current expenditure, future projects requiring investment or expenditure, current bank balances and debtors and creditors. The Clerk then determines from these data the amount of precept required from <u>SCDC/ESC</u>. A full budget review is undertaken by the Finance & General Purpose Committee in December and the PC formally resolves the precept at its January Council Meeting. The Clerk, as the PC's Responsible Finance Officer, then submits a formal, written request for the precept to SCDC.</p> <p>The PC is advised every April of the annual precept figure which is then transferred by BACS payment in two parts into the PC's current bank account.</p>	Continue to monitor
	2. Changed or reinforced precept requirements	L	<p>If the Government or any of its agents were to change the rules under which precepts are set or calculated, we must assume this would require an act of Parliament or local government legislation which would afford the PC sufficient time to mitigate any change.</p>	
Financial and general business	3. Overspending or failure to maintain adequate reserves	M	<p>The PC has determined and ratified a policy such that it will, in future, maintain a financial reserve equivalent to 66% of its current precept and that it will seek to protect these reserves through judicious management of expenditure and low-risk fund raising. <u>Financial controls are in place to ensure expenditure does not exceed budget without appropriate authorisation</u></p>	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Financial records	4. Inadequate records	L	<p>The PC operates under strict financial regulations, guidelines and processes, which set out the requirements and framework under which it must work. These also set out how records must be maintained monthly by the PC and annually by an independent internal and external auditor. A copy of these financial regulations is readily available from the Clerk.</p>	The financial regulations must be reviewed annually to ensure they are adequate and are compatible with any changes proposed or required by

Commented [AB1]: We maintain 50% of precept as recommended, not 66%. I have not seen such a policy referred to here. Happy to add it to Finance Regs

	5. Changed financial regulation	L	In the same way as (2) above, we must be given sufficient and clear notice of any changes required by the statutory authorities	statutory bodies.
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Banking	6. Inadequate checks on receipts, payments and balances	L	The PC maintains two bank accounts. The Clerk & Cemetery Clerk pays all monies received into the Community Account. All payments are made using cheques Electronic Payments or Direct Debits drawn on the Community Account and must be signed authorised by two signatories in line with the current mandate. Reserves are kept within the Business Rate Tracker account and may be transferred back to the Community Account to meet high levels of expenditure. The Clerk prepares bi monthly bank reconciliation's for all accounts when the relevant statements are received to ensure all receipts, payments and transfers are properly recorded and any variations are reported immediately. All accounts are fully and independently audited each year.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate. Clerk to review the bank mandate following any change to the membership of the PC.
Financial controls	7. Inadequate processes or checks	L	Any financial obligation must be resolved and clearly minuted before any commitment is entered into as the precept is public money. All payments must be notified, approved and clearly minuted by members at regular and quorate PC meetings. Any S137 payments must be recorded at time of approval. All payments are fully and independently audited each year.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
VAT	8. Maintain records and claim refunds within set time limits	L	Under current HMRC legislation, the PC is able to reclaim all VAT paid on goods and services at the relevant rate. The Clerk calculates the VAT paid by analysing all invoices using the PC's accounting spread sheets and retains all VAT receipts with PC records for HMRC inspection. The Clerk makes VAT refund claims to HMRC annually in order to recover the tax paid and all claims against invoices are fully and independently audited each year.	Existing procedure are deemed adequate.
Annual return	9. Incomplete and/or not submitted within required time limits	L	The annual return is completed by the Clerk, approved and signed by the PC and then submitted to the Internal Auditor for completion and signature. Once checked and approved the annual return is sent onto the External Auditor within the required time limit. A diary of all the deadlines is kept by the Clerk and the Clerk reinforces these deadlines with both auditors.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Fraud	10. Fraudulent placement of contracts for services or supply of goods 11. False expense claims or unpermitted payments	L	It is the duty of every member of the PC and the Clerk to ensure that the highest standards of public service are attained and that everyone adheres to the strict rules and guidelines set on the procurement and purchase of services. It is also the duty of the PC to ensure it obtains the optimum value-for-money on behalf of its community in the purchase of goods and services from all its funds in the main through competitive and confidential tendering. The PC must also strive to optimise the revenues and surpluses derived from appropriate fund-raising activities. In addition, the requirements of the PC's Fidelity Guarantee Insurance must be adhered to and any breaches, whether suspected or real, must be openly reported without delay. Finally, all payments and expense claims are fully and independently audited each year.	All members of the PC and the Clerk are made and kept fully informed of the rules of public financial governance. The Fidelity Guarantee and its accompanying insurance policy must be reviewed annually.

Commented [AB2]: Not any more

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Insurance	12. Inadequate cover	L	A review is undertaken at the time of the annual policy renewal to ensure that the terms of the policy remain acceptable and that all known risks and assets are adequately protected. Further competitive quotes are obtained if deemed appropriate at renewal.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
	13. Cost			
Assets	14. Loss or damage	L	An Asset Register is kept up to date and insurance is held at the appropriate level for all items. Regular checks are made on all assets by members of the Parish Council. £5,000,000 Public Liability on Insurance Policy covered. Annual Inspections are carried out on all Play Equipment.	Review annually and inform Insurance Co if necessary. Annual Play Equipment inspections to be carried out.
	15. Risk/damage to third party individuals and their property			
Election costs	16. Election costs exceeding estimates	L	This risk is higher in an election year. There are few, predictable measures which could be adopted to minimise risk of having a series of contested elections. A reserve in the accounts should be budgeted for and maintained to cover unexpectedly high costs and red-ringed in the PC's reserve bank account.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
GOVERNANCE RISKS				
Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Human Rights Acts	17. Absence of policies and lack of adherence preventing the community to free access of information	L	The PC has a model publication scheme in place and abides by the strict codes set by its Standing Orders to protect individual rights and privacy. The PC encourages all members and the Clerk to receive appropriate training and refresher courses to ensure that the highest standards of legal compliance and governance of personal data are achieved.	Monitor and report any contraventions or potential infringements of each of these important Acts of Parliament which protect individual rights and freedom.
Formal records of business and maintenance of statutory documents	18. Inaccurate or incomplete minutes 19. PC affairs conducted illegally or improperly	L	Summons and Agendas of meetings are produced and issued to all councillors within the correct time frame. The minutes of each meeting are then produced by the Clerk and issued, in draft, to the PC for its review in advance of the following meeting. Thereafter, the minutes are revised, if required, and approved at the next quorate PC meeting and signed by the Chairman as a full and accurate record. Signed minutes are maintained by the Clerk and kept in PC records and approved minutes are uploaded onto the PC website for public referral. Agendas are displayed on the PC notice boards within the correct time frame.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.

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Meeting location	20. Adequacy 21. Health & safety	L	The PC meetings are held at Wickham Market Village Hall which provides good meeting facilities for the whole council and opportunities for the community represented to engage in the meetings during each public session held. Meetings are advertised as much as possible in advance to ensure attendance. The PC considers the facilities are adequate for all who attend from a health & safety view, including the Annual Parish Meeting.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Members interests	22. Potential conflicts of interest	L	This is a standard agenda item at all meetings and all members of the PC are required to formally declare and register any Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary interests they may have in respect of any matters under discussion at the outset of each meeting. A register of interests stated is continuously maintained and updated both with the Clerk and online.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate and individual councillors are to continue to review and advise any changes to the Clerk.
Official records	23. Loss through theft/fire/damage	L	The PC official records and supporting documents are stored at the home of the Clerk. Some official records are stored within the fireproof safe at Linda Merriam's home. Some are also scanned if appropriate.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Electronic records	24. Loss through theft/fire/damage or corruption/loss of computer data	L	The PC's electronic data and records are stored on the Clerk's PC <u>which automatically backs up to a secure encrypted Microsoft 365 for business account.</u> Backups are taken at regular intervals.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY RISKS				
Community engagement	25. Inability to address the main concerns of the community and address strategic, long-term needs	M	The PC is currently in the process of compiling a Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, the PC has determined that it must seek to reinforce its ability to cope with new developments in Government policy which are designed to reinforce the power of local government and community involvement. The PC has determined that it must continue to improve its efforts to communicate its own purpose and actions to its community and strive for higher levels of public engagement in and knowledge of its purpose (and limitations) and activities. <u>The PC also publish a regular newsletter which is distributed to all residents</u>	Existing procedures have recently been reinforced.
Environment and aesthetics	26. Degradation of the local environment	L	The PC maintains an active role in planning matters. It also strives to conserve the ecology of the parish to the best of its abilities in conjunction with Government agencies and the NFP sector to maintain a sustainable and balanced community and environment. The Parish Council is currently in the process of implementing a Neighbourhood Plan.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.

ASSETS				
Wickham Market Cemetery	27. To address risks	L	The Cemetery Group & the Environment Group have site meetings when issues of maintenance are discussed with contractors. All trees are assessed for safety and the appropriate works are carried out accordingly. The contractors are <u>Currently East Suffolk Norse but will become East Suffolk Services in July 2023</u> Direct Services of East Suffolk Council, who have all the necessary qualifications to carry out the work. An assessment of all the memorial headstones was carried out in July 2011. At the same time an assessment of the brick built shed was also carried out (this is padlocked for security) along with the seating within the cemetery. These are all to reduce risk of accident to visitors to the cemetery. Undertakers have been issued with safety guidelines and regulations to ensure the safety of visitors. Ground anchors for new memorials are now mandatory within the cemetery to protect visitors. Relatives are asked to remove breakable vases in view of safety concerns issued by the contractors.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Bus Shelter & Street Furniture	28. To address risks	L	The condition of the bus shelter is monitored by the Clerk and other Councillors to protect users from injury as it is so visually prominent. Repairs are organised accordingly. Seating is also monitored by all members, again to protect users, reporting problems to the Clerk.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Allotments	29. To address risks	L	Allotment tenants are reminded of their obligation with garden chemicals, tools etc. when their rent collection letters are issued each year. Each site has a Site Representative who reports problems to the Clerk, such as leaking taps, vandalism etc.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Skate Park & Basketball Court	30. To address risks	L	The Clerk and members of the E & L Committee along with the Village Handyman inspect on a regular basis to detect visible faults. An Annual Inspection is carried out.	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.
Play Areas	31. To address risks	M	Simons Cross is maintained and assessed by East Suffolk Council whilst the risk assessment of the village hall play area is a matter for the Parish Council. An Annual Inspection is carried out.	To ensure appropriate inspections are carried out annually.
Village Hall	32. To address risks	M	Wickham Market Village Hall is owned by Wickham Market Parish Council but managed by Wickham Market Village Hall Management Committee (CIO)	Existing procedures are deemed adequate.