

Somersham Parish Council Risk Management Policy

Adopted: 13/05/2024

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1. Definition of Risk

Risk is an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, will have an effect on the achievement of an authority's objectives.

2. Background

The greatest risk facing a Parish Council is that it is unable to continue its business as defined by law. Risk management is the process whereby authorities methodically address the risk associated with what they do and the services which they provide. The focus of risk management is to identify what can go wrong and take proportionate steps to avoid this or successfully manage the consequences.

Risk Management is not just about financial management; it is an essential feature of good governance. It is about protecting the achievement of objectives set out by the authority to deliver its priorities. Managing risk covers dealing with financial matters, issues of health and safety and ensuring plans are in place to achieve the Council's objectives. The failure to manage risk effectively can be expensive in terms of litigation and reputation and can impact on the ability to achieve desired outcomes. The authority generally and members individually are responsible for risk management.

Risk management is an ongoing activity and the Council will ensure to identify the risks, assess the risks, address the risks and review and report on risks.

The Council will evaluate how likely it is that a risk is present in any activity and the potential consequences (financial loss, difficulties in meeting its legal obligations etc.) Some consequences may not have an immediate financial impact but could have an adverse effect on the Council's standing in the community. The assessment of potential impact and likelihood need not be any more complex than assigning a simple numerical score, say 1 – 3 and multiplying the two scores to arrive at a risk assessment for each risk of high, medium or low. The risk assessment enables the authority to decide which risks it should pay most attention to when considering what measures to manage them.

3. Policy

The Council will

- (a) At least annually review this risk assessment policy and the risk assessments
- (b) Identifies key risks facing the Council in achieving its objectives and priorities
- (c) Undertake Risk Prioritisation - Evaluate the potential consequences to the council if an event identified as a risk takes place
- (d) When considering new projects, the Council will assess all potential risks to the Council, including financial risks
- (e) Decides upon appropriate measures to avoid, reduce or control the risk and its consequences
- (f) Continued the practice of maintaining the minutes of meetings as an essential record of the review and management of risk

- (g) Consider establishing a protocol for the use of council-owned computers and other equipment.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Part 1 Audit Risk

Areas where there may be scope to use insurance to help manage risk.

- I. Risk Identification
- II. Internal Control
- III. Internal Audit Assurance

Dealing with Outside Bodies Incurring Risk

- I. Risk Identification
- II. Internal Controls
- III. Internal Audit Assurance

Self Managed Risk

- I. Risk Identification
- II. Internal Controls
- III. Internal Audit Assurance

Part 2 Operating Procedures

Part 3 Areas of risk affecting Somersham parish Council's ability to deliver its services

Part 4 Financial Procedures

Part 1 – Audit Risk

(A) Areas where there may be scope to use insurance to help manage risk

(i) Risk Identification

Insurance cover for risk is the most common approach to certain types of inherent risks. Somersham Parish Council currently insures through Gallagher's Insurance.

- *The protection of physical assets owned by the Council include;*
The Council owns the Millennium Pavilion and Sports field, the Norwood building, the Norwood playing field, Norwood car park, and the Norwood youth play areas. This includes the sea metal containers at the rear of the Millennium Pavilion and Lake area. The Council's asset register comprehensively identifies all its assets.

The Council own some open space areas: -

- Somersham Nature Reserve.
- The lake area.
- The White Post Area.

Also situated at various locations throughout the Parish are, for example, The Cross, benches, noticeboards, the village sign and the telephone box.

All items within the Parish Council ownership are identified within the Council's insurance policy schedule and are insured for replacement value.

- *The risk of damage to third party property of individuals as consequence of the Council providing services or amenities to the public (public liability)*
The Council carries public liability in respect of all its activities.
- *Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty*
The Council's policy provides a fidelity guarantee set at a level recommended by the Auditor.
- *Legal liability as a consequence of asset ownership*
This liability is covered by insurance under the Council's public liability insurance.

(ii) Internal Controls

Somersham Parish Council's controls include:

- *An up to date register of assets and investments*
- *Regular inspection and maintenance of physical assets*
- *Annual review of risk and adequacy of insurance cover*
- *Ensuring the robustness of insurance providers*
- *Robust electronic banking processes.*

(iii) Internal Audit Assurance

Internal audit testing may include:

- *Review of internal controls and their documentation*

- *Review management arrangements regarding insurance cover*
- *Testing of specific internal controls and reporting finding to management*

(B) Dealing with outside bodies incurring risk

(i) Risk identification

1) Banking arrangements, including borrowing or lending

- The Council's current account is held with Unity Trust Bank and EMR's are held with CCLA Public Sector Fund. Internal controls are in place.

(ii) Internal Controls

Somersham Parish Council's controls include:

- Standing Orders and Financial Regulations dealing with the award of contracts for services of purchasing of capital equipment
- Regular reporting on performance by suppliers/providers/contractors
- Regular scrutiny of financial records
- Full Council receive the following reports monthly:-
 - Detailed Income & Expenditure
 - Earmarked Reserves
 - Bank Reconciliations
 - The budget is reviewed quarterly and agreed annually.
- Annual review of contracts
- Adoption of Codes of Conduct for members

(iii) Internal audit assurance:

Internal audit testing may include:

- Review of internal controls in place and their documentation
- Review of minutes to ensure legal powers are available and the basis of the powers recorded and correctly applied
- Review of testing arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and corruption
- Review of adequacy of insurance cover provided by suppliers
- Testing of specific internal controls and reporting findings

(C) Self-managed risk**(i) Risk identification**

- Keeping proper financial records in accordance with statutory requirements
- Ensuring all business activities are within legal powers applicable to local Councils
- Ensuring all requirements are made under employment law and Inland Revenue regulations
- *Ensuring the adequacy of the annual precept within the sound budgeting arrangements*
- *Monitoring the performance against agreed standards of partnership agreements*
- *Ensuring the proper use of funds granted to local community bodies under specific powers or the Local Government Act Section 137*
- *The Parish Council are currently not qualified to use the General Power of Competence.*
- *Proper, timely and accurate reporting of Council business in the minutes*
- *Responding to electors wishing to exercise their rights of inspection*
- *Meeting the laid down timetables when responding to consultation invitation*
- *Proper document control*
- *Register Councillors interest and gifts and hospitality in place, complete, accurate and up to date.*

(ii) Internal Controls

Somersham Parish Council's Controls include:

- Regular scrutiny of financial record and proper arrangements for approval of expenditure
- Contracts of employment for all staff, reviewed by the Council (Personnel and Governance Committee), systems of updating records for any changes in relevant legislation
- Regular returns of VAT: training the responsible officer in matters of VAT and other taxation issues as necessary
- Regular budgeting monitoring statements
- Developing systems of performance measurement
- Procedure for dealing with and monitoring grants and loans made or received
- Minutes properly numbered and paginated with a master copy kept in safekeeping
- Documented procedures to deal with enquiries from the public
- Procedures in place for monitoring Councillors interests and gifts and hospitality received
- Adoption of codes of conduct for Councillors

(iii) Internal Audit Assurance

Internal audit testing may include:

- Review of internal controls in place and their documentation
- Review of minutes to ensure legal powers in place, recorded and correctly applied
- Testing of income and expenditure from minutes to cashbook, from bank statements to cashbook, from minutes to statements etc.
- Review and testing arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and corruption.
- Testing of disclosures

- Testing of specific internal controls and reporting findings to management.
- Review of insurance policies in place

Part 2 – Operating Procedures

Procedures to deal with enquiries from the public

- All telephone enquiries from public are dealt with promptly and passed to the relevant Councillors, Statutory Bodies or Organisations.
- All written enquiries and e-mails are acknowledged if appropriate and are treated as correspondence.

Procedures to deal with written requests

- All responses to consultation are dealt with as soon as possible under the consultation time allowed.
- All documents and letters are dated on receipt and are acknowledged if appropriate.
- All documents and letters etc are placed in the correspondence file for the next appropriate meeting.
- All urgent correspondence is placed before the Chairman of Council.
- All correspondence is answered within one week from the meeting if possible.
- All documents and responses are then filed in the appropriate file.

Part 3 - Risk Assessment - Areas of risk affecting Somersham Parish Council's ability to deliver its services.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk Rating	Controls in place	Additional Controls required	Timeframe
Financial						
Precept inadequate	3	1	3	The budget is closely monitored by the EO. Budget monitoring reports are received by Full Council quarterly. Meeting is held in preparation for setting budget. The finance, insurance and risk management working group look at the next financial year in order to request a budget, if within the set TOR.		
Incomplete or inaccurate financial records	3	1	3	Somersham Parish Council comply with Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England. A Practitioners' Guide and Proper Practices to be applied in the preparation of statutory annual accounts and governance statement. Financial Regulations are reviewed yearly.		
Breach of Financial Regulations	3	1	3	Members and officers are required to comply with Financial Regulations. Regular Financial monitoring.		
Council overspend	2	1	2	Areas of spend closely monitored by EO and Council. Regular reporting to Council. Adequate reserves in place.		

Financial (cont'd)						
Damage to or loss or theft of assets	2	1	2	Assets register in place. Appropriate insurance in place and reviewed at least annually.		
Incorrect VAT claim and VAT non-compliance	3	2	6	EO scrutinises all invoices received.	Further training to be undertaken by EO	Next Availability
Insurance inadequate for purposes	3	1	3	Mandatory insurances in place and under reviewed at least annually.		
Cash investments, banking errors and charges arising	3	2	6	Bank reconciliations undertaken quarterly through making tax digital. Bank account with reputable organisation.	Investment strategy to be reviewed.	
Loss of interest	1	1	1	Current and Savings account established.		
Loss or theft of cash	3	2	6	Statutory insurances are in place and the Fidelity Guarantee is adequate	Look into spreading the Councils cash holdings to take advantage of the CCLA scheme.	
Contractor fails to deliver services	1	1	1	All contracts are paid in arrears, therefore no financial loss is incurred.		
Claims against the Council	2	2	4	Appropriate insurances are in place and reviewed at least annually.		
Unforeseen circumstances	1	2	2	The Council has sufficient reserves in place. The maximum reserves is set at 12 months and minimum 3 months. Reserves are considered when setting the budget.		
COVID – 19						
Budgetary underspend: unable to deliver projects due to regional / nationwide lockdown	2	3	6	EO to apply financial controls, review finances monthly, report to Council and recommend actions to be taken: transfer		As required

				of funds as necessary. Other risks covered throughout this risk assessment		
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Governance						
Breach of Standing Orders	2	2	4	Standing Orders in place and reviewed yearly. All members and officers are aware of and adhere to Standing Orders.	Induction and training to be put in place.	When new Cllrs start.
Spend and activity in areas in which the Council has no power (ie Council behaves ultra vires)	3	2	6	EO employed with good knowledge of the scope of the Council's legal powers. Access to legal advice through CAPALC subscription. Copy of Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration available to EO. EO is currently undergoing the Community Governance Degree and is CILCA qualified.	Training to be made available. When making resolutions new projects should be risk assessed considering power to spend. Power to spend to be added to the budget spreadsheet.	Ongoing
Insufficient capacity of members and staff to deliver upon Council objectives.	2	2	4	The power to act to ensure a quorate council rests with the Principal Authority. Staffing arrangements reviewed regularly.	Insurance for staff sickness	
Members fail to behave in accordance with the member code of conduct	2	2	4	Code of Conduct policy adopted by Council. All members sign declaration of acceptance. Handling Complaints Policy in place.	New members to attend Code of Conduct Training as soon as available.	When new Cllrs start.
Conflict of interest not declared	2	2	4	Monitoring Officer maintains register of interests which are published on the internet.	New members to attend Code of Conduct Training	When new Cllrs start.

				Staff conflicts of interest referred to Parish Council.		
Libel or slander claims received	1	2	2	Insurance in place and reviewed annually		

Governance (cont'd)						
Poor relationship with local government and public service partners	1	2	2	Ongoing work to ensure that there is ongoing liaison to maximise opportunities and influence.		
Council meetings not quorate or not minuted correctly.	2	2	4	Attendance recorded as part of minuted taking to evidence as quorum. Minutes and agenda published as per legal requirement. Minutes approved by Council as a true and accurate records.		
Health and Safety						
Members of public, staff or members injured at Somersham Parish Council premises or event.	3	2	6	Health and Safety Policy in place. Public and employers liability insurance in place. Contractors required to state liability insurance status prior to securing work with the Parish Council. All members and staff made aware of their Health & Safety responsibilities. Support obtained from a reputable Health and Safety professional. Risk assessments are completed and reviewed at least annually		

Staffing						
Inadequate capacity to fulfil the Councils objectives	2	2	4	Arrangements for staffing established. HR Committee established	Appraisals to be undertaken yearly. Exit meeting to deal with current and future workload.	As needed
Inadequate training	1	1	1	Induction and initial training in place. Training records kept.	All officers to receive sufficient professional and on-the-job training to ensure they can fulfil their roles. Officer appraisal to take place on regular basis. Member training to take place as needed to take account of any specialist committee roles and new development.	As needed
EO unable to carry out their duties in the short term	2	2	4	The Deputy Clerk will carry out EO duties until their return to work, as per the staffing structure.		
EO unable to carry out their duties in the long term	2	2	4	The Council adheres to the current legislation laid down in N.J.C. for Local Gov. Services, pay & conditions. The Council would make arrangements for either a temporary or permanent replacement as appropriate.		
Payroll inaccurate	1	2	2	Using a reputable payroll system.	Outsourced to Brightpay.	

Information Assets						
Excessive Freedom of Information Requests	1	1	1	ICO registration in place Minutes published on the website. Public and press welcome to attend council meetings. Policies in place	Accounts (including spend over £500) are transparent and published on the website.	
Loss of data	3	2	6	Back up system in place	CITRIX (Microshade system) in place.	
Corporate memory loss arising from staff or member loss of office/resignation	2	2	4	Passwords protected as per Financial Regulations. Delegated decisions to be recorded as required in law.	Develop a procedure for dealing with future staff and member leavers.	
Breach of data protection/information security	2	2	4	Computers password protected. Data Retention Policy, Data Protection Policy, Subject access statement, Privacy statements and Data security incident procedure in place Data protection officer appointed through CAPALC membership.		

Reputation						
Adverse press coverage	2	2	4	Public and press welcome to attend/film Council meetings. Community Engagement, Media, Press and Public Relations Committee in place. Recording and filming policy in place.		
Lack of community engagement and recognition	1	2	2	All Somersham parish Council's activities are for the benefit of the people in its area.	Promote and apply community engagement strategy including use of surveys and the Neighbourhood plan processes.	
Undue negative influence of political parties of council policy	1	1	1	Election nominations open and promoted to all residents/workers who meet the qualification criteria		

Simple risk assessment matrix followed:-

LIKELIHOOD	Highly likely (3)	Medium (3)	High (6)	High (9)
	Possible (2)	Low (2)	Medium (4)	High (6)
	Unlikely (1)	Low (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)
		Negligible (1)	Moderate (2)	Sever (3)

IMPACT

Part 4 – Somersham Parish Council Financial Procedures:			
Ref No:	Procedure Description:	Who:	When/Frequency:
1	Income		
1.1	Income received either by cash, cheque or direct credit to the Bank Account should be checked to ensure that the amount is correct and any queries reconciled.	EO	As soon as income is received
1.2	Income received should be entered in the cash book under the appropriate headings	EO	As soon as income is received
1.3	Any payment advice should be retained and kept in a suitable file	EO	As soon as income is received
1.4	Income received by cash or cheque should be paid into the Council's bank account	EO	A.S.A.P. After Receipt
1.5	The timeliness of any receipt but in particular the receipt of the precept should be checked and if any cause for concern should be raised with the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council	EO	A.S.A.P After Receipt
2	Expenditure		
2.1	All expenditure should be in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and should be properly authorised by the Council at meeting or by delegated authority. Before authorising expenditure, the Council should satisfy itself that there is sufficient in the Council's budget to cover the expenditure	Parish Council	As required
2.2	Upon receipt of an invoice, a check should be carried out to ensure that the relevant goods or services have been received and are satisfactory. The invoice should be checked to ensure that it is the correct amount (as authorised by the Council) and any differences explained and justified.	EO	As required
2.5	Payment of invoices should be timely and not unduly delayed	EO	

Ref No:	Procedure Description:	Who:	When/Frequency:
2	Expenditure (Cont'd)		
2.6	Details of payments made should be recorded on the cash book under the appropriate headings ensuring that VAT is accurately analysed and recorded.	EO	At the time of payment
2.9	All invoices which have been paid should be retained in a suitable file	EO	At the time of payment
2.10	VAT VAT should be analysed and separately recorded on the cashbook. VAT reclaims made annually.	EO	VAT Claimed quarterly.
3	Bank Accounts		
3.1	All bank accounts in the name of Somersham Parish Council shall be authorised by the Council and all signatories shall be authorised by the Council.	Council Members	As required
3.2	All cheque books, paying in books and bank statements (including used books) should be kept in a secure place in the custody of the Parish Clerk or another person authorised by the Council	EO	
3.3	All bank statements received should be reconciled with the cashbook and any differences investigated and resolved.	EO	On receipt of bank statement
3.4	Used cheque books, paying in books and bank statements shall be retained for 7 years.	EO	Ongoing

Ref No:	Procedure Description:	Who:	When/Frequency:
4	Cash Book		
4.1	The cash book system should be run from April 1 st to March 31 st of each year with each page as it is completed, balanced off and balanced off at the year end.	EO	Ongoing
4.2	Entries on the system should be made promptly at the time of receipt or payment, with all details included under the relevant headings.	EO	As required
5	Asset Register		
5.1	All the Council's Assets should be recorded, as soon as they are acquired in the Asset Register	Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer	As required
5.2	The entries in the Asset Register should be reviewed regularly and updated as appropriate	Parish Clerk/EO/Members	Yearly
6	Payroll		
6.1	The remuneration of all employees should be approved in advance by the Council	Council	Monthly
6.2	The Council should operate a PAYE system for income tax and national insurance unless agreement to the contrary has been received from the Inland Revenue in writings	EO /Council	Monthly
6.3	The accuracy of remuneration paid to employees should be checked	Members	Monthly
7	Insurance		
7.1	The Council shall decide which risk/assets to insure and the extent of cover save that it will in any event insure those risks that it is required by law to cover	Council	Yearly
7.2	The Council will review its insurance arrangements and the adequacy of cover and if appropriate obtain competitive quotations.	EO /Council	Yearly or as necessary
8	Risk Management		
8.1	The Council should prepare a Risk Assessment and review it regularly	Council	Yearly

Ref No:	Procedure Description:	Who:	When/Frequency:
9	The Council's Budget		
9.1	The Council should set a budget for each financial year which should be approved at a Council meeting	Council	Yearly
9.2	As a resolute of setting the Budget the Council should agree the Precept for the Financial Year.	Council	Yearly
9.3	The Council should monitor progress against budget during the Financial Year and where necessary, amend spending plans or the Budget.	Council	Quarterly
10	Year End Procedures		
10.1	Ensure that all appropriate income/expenditure has been received/paid in time for the financial year end.	EO	March of financial year
10.2	Balance the cashbook and reconcile to the bank statement as at March 31 st and close off the cashbook for the Financial Year	EO	As soon as it is practicable after Financial Year End
10.3	Draw up accounts for the year and advertise time date and place for inspection of annual accounts by the public.	EO	As soon as is practicable after Financial Year End
10.4	Complete Annual Return and draft Statement of Assurance.	EO	On receipt of audit report
10.5	Obtain the Annual Report of the Internal Auditor	EO	As soon as is practicable
10.6	Submit the Annual Return as drafted to the Council for approval	EO	As soon as is practicable.
10.7	Display a notice of Public Rights under Audit and confirm to the Auditor that this has been done	EO	Upon completion of the year end Process
10.8	Display the Statement of Accounts	EO	On receipt of the returned Annual Audit