2025

Deddington Parish Council

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RISK ASSESSMENT

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1 Introduction and Background

1.1 The Council recognises its responsibility to manage risk effectively in order to protect its employees, assets, and community against potential loss. It is required to undertake a regular assessment of the risks which might impact on the Council's activities or prevent it from meeting its objectives.

1.2 This document identifies the Council's objectives, and those risks which the Council believes may prevent it meeting them.

The Council anticipates that risks will never be fully eliminated and will change, with new risks being identified, and possibly existing risks will close. It is an integral part of council management and consequently, will be formally reviewed not less than once each year and revised where and when necessary.

2 Types of Risk

2.1. In order to manage risk, the Council needs to know its key risks;

a) financial - loss of money;
b) security - fraud, theft, embezzlement;
c) property - damage to property;
d) legal - breaking the law or being sued;
e) IT – failure of IT systems or misuse; and
f) reputational – actions taken harmful to the authority's public reputation.

3. Roles and Responsibilities for Risk Management

3.1. All Council members and staff of the Parish Council are responsible for risk management.

• Have collective responsibility in understanding the strategic risks which the Parish Council faces.

• Ensure that all identified risks have been considered in decision making and countermeasures and controls are defined.

• Agree and publish a clear Risk Assessment Policy and oversee the effective management of risks by the Parish Clerk.

• Monitor the effectiveness of the Parish Council's risk management arrangements by reviewing any risk management reports to Council.

• Know how the Parish Council will manage and operate in a crisis through its approved Emergency Plan.

3.2. Parish Clerk:

• The lead officer for risk management and owner of the Risk Assessment Policy.

• Has the responsibility to understand the strategic and operational risks that the Parish Council faces and to oversee the effective management of these risks.

• Lead on the corporate governance agenda which includes risk management and with the Council's Chair approve the Annual Governance Statement.

• Ensure that risks are fully considered in strategic decision making and that the Risk Assessment Policy helps the Parish Council to achieve its objectives and protection of assets.

• Provides advice as to the legality of policy and service delivery and update the Parish Council on the implications of new or revised legislation.

• Assess and implement the Council's insurance requirements.

• Assess the financial implications.

3.3 Finance and General Purposes Group:

• Support the Parish Clerk in all aspects of risk management.

• Ensure that risks are fully considered in all decision making and that the Risk Management Strategy helps the Parish Council to achieve its objectives and protection of assets.

• Assist in embedding a culture of risk management through the Parish Council and encourage appropriate training, including induction and refresher training for staff.

3.4. All Employees:

• Understand their accountability for individual risk.

• Understand how they can enable continuous improvement of risk management.

• Report systematically and promptly to the Parish Clerk any perceived new risk or failure of existing control measures.

• Provide a pro-active role in the reporting and assessing of physical risks in respect of public, staff and property.

3.5 Role of Internal Audit:

• Provide a scrutiny role by carrying out audits to provide independent assurance to Members, via the Internal Auditor's annual audit plan and post audit report that the necessary risk management systems are in place.

4 The Risk Management Process

4.1 Identification of Risks

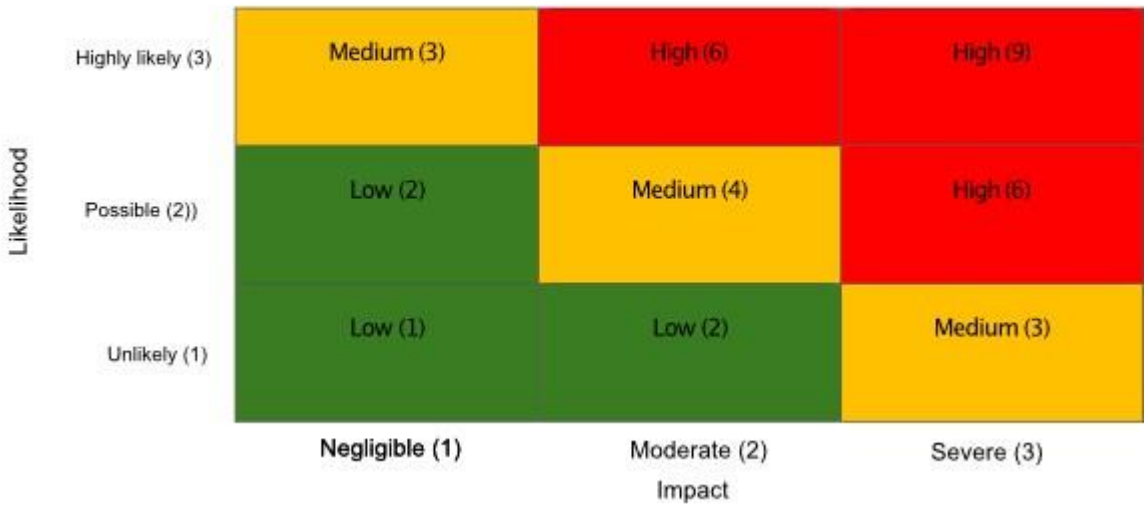
The Parish Clerk is responsible for identifying and recording any risks. Identification will be either via a formal process of planned inspections or ad hoc requests or risks being noted through everyday working situations.

When changes to working arrangements, new initiatives, events or projects are to be undertaken the Clerk will seek to identify any risks early in the planning process and prior to implementation.

Each risk should be described and set out on a risk assessment form and approved.

4.2 Evaluation of Risks

On identification of a risk the Clerk will assign a risk factor by reference to the risk matrix.



According to the level of risk identified appropriate action should be taken.

4.3 Mitigation of Risk

The Parish Clerk should consider what controls are in place to mitigate the risk. These could include controls to reduce the likelihood of a risk occurring or to reduce the impact on the Parish Council.

Only existing controls that are already in place should be considered and included on the risk assessment.

4.4 Further Action to be Taken

Following evaluation there are four main control options to manage the risk: Terminate the risk – take a decision to discontinue the activity. Transfer the risk – the risk is 'passed' on e.g. to an insurer. Treat the risk – put in place additional effective controls to reduce the impact or likelihood. Tolerate the risk – accept the risk but continue to monitor and evaluate.

Where additional controls are required, these should be agreed with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chair of the Finance & General Purposes and details entered onto the risk assessment and the Council notified at its next meeting.

5 The Council's Objectives

It is stated above that the Council is required to undertake a regular assessment of the risks which might impact on the Council's activities or prevent it from meeting its objectives. It follows that those objectives need to be clearly stated and understood by the Councillors and by the Clerk.

The Council's activities may be described as "Maintaining and Improving the Parish of Deddington". Those activities include:

- Maintaining the assets of the Council;
- Setting an annual budget, raising a Parish precept, and monitoring expenditure against the budget;
- Representing the interests of the Parish to higher levels of local government and to central government;
- Considering Planning applications and commenting thereon to Cherwell District Council or Oxford County Council as the planning authorities;
- Managing and maintaining the play surface and the equipment of the various Play Areas;
- Managing two allotment sites: Stonepits in Hempton and Satin Lane in Deddington, including liaison with the Satin Lane Allotment Society;
- Cutting the grass on verges and paths on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council;

- Cutting the grass at the Castle grounds on behalf of English Heritage
- Providing and arranging for the emptying of bins for dog waste;
- Making small grants and donations to Parish activities and charities;
- Canvassing opinions and conducting surveys into the future development of the Parish;
- Any other activities necessary or desirable to ensure that the above activities are undertaken (such as, employing and paying a Clerk, subscribing to the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils).
- Provision and maintenance of the Cemetery
- While Highways is the responsibility of Oxford County Council, the Parish Council monitors the condition of roads, footpaths etc. In addition, it can conduct regular Speed Watches using volunteers. A separate Risk Assessment has been carried out for this activity entitled "Speed Watch Volunteers"**.**
- Other activities to maintain the general fabric of the Parish and such other functions permitted by law

The Council does not exercise any strategic authority.

The Council produces a Parish Plan which provides a representative view of the Parish and informs the Council's deliberations. The most recent survey was carried out and the results published in autumn 2014.

There is a very small number of rental agreements which the Council administers e.g., allotments. The Windmill Centre is leased to the Trustees of the Windmill Community Centre at a peppercorn rent. In addition, the Parish Council acts as freeholder and custodian trustee for the Holly Tree Club charity.

The assets owned by the Parish Council are shown in the schedule appended to the annual accounts.

The Council currently employs a part-time Clerk, and two part-time stewards. The Council has the usual responsibilities relating to employees (e.g. employment law, HMRC regulations, PAYE, providing premises).

With the exception of deposit accounts, the Council does not lend money in any significant way but from time to time, will make loans to Parish organisation and groups.

6 Clerk

Delegated powers. Occasionally it is required that the Clerk/RFO has delegated powers to act on behalf of the Council. This is always agreed at full Council given the duration and scope of the powers.

As proper practice should the Clerk/RFO be unable to work all relevant computer and banking passwords and PIN will be kept in a signed envelope in the Parish Office. This

envelope should be opened only in the presence of the Chair or Vice Chair and one other member of F&GP.

7 Activities which are Contracted Out

Many of the Council's activities are contracted out to organisations which the Council considers to be sufficiently qualified to undertake them. The Council considers that any risks associated with those activities are adequately managed by the contractors.

The table below identifies those activities which are contracted out, the contractors who undertake them, and their key qualifications.

Activity	Contractors	Key Qualification
Inspection of Play Area	RoSPA Playsafety Ltd, Swindon SN6 8TY	An offshoot of RoSPA, the organisation which sets the safety standards in the UK
Maintenance of Play Area	Inspected at least monthly by Playground Inspector– action taken where required	ROSPA trained
Grass Cutting parish verges, amenity areas, Castle Grounds and playing fields Weed control of Windmill Centre	Thomas Fox, Green Scythe	See below
Condition of trees on parish land	Bicester Tree Services	
Weed Control of pavements and the cemetery	Complete Weed Control	See below
Emptying Dog Bins	CDC	District Council
Internal Auditor	IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd	
External Auditor	Moore	

The Council only awards contracts which relate to public access (e.g. grass cutting) to contractors who can demonstrate that they hold adequate public liability insurance and follow safety procedures e.g. wearing of high visibility jackets.

The Council considers that there is no need for formal assessment of the delivery of those activities contracted out. Every invoice submitted by a contractor is individually considered by the Council before being authorised for payment. Any failure to deliver the relevant services would be detected at that point and appropriate action taken.

With the exception of the External Auditor (whose appointment is outside the control of the Council) and the Clerk and Stewards (whose contracts are governed by standard contractual terms) most contracts are reviewed at least annually on renewal – the exception being the grass cutting contracts that are issued on a three-year basis.

8 Formal Risk Assessment

The Council has adopted a formal process of regular assessment of risk.

Governance & Accountability Practitioners Guide March 2021 is used by the Parish Council for guidance in drawing up its Risk Assessment.

9 Codes of Conduct

The Council and the individual Councillors are required to comply with all relevant Codes of Conduct.

Cherwell District Council now maintains the Register of Members' Pecuniary Interests. A record of gifts and hospitality is in place, complete, accurate, and up to date.

A Register of attendance at Council meetings is maintained to ensure that if a member fails throughout six consecutive months to attend any meetings of the Council without acceptable reason, he or she will automatically cease to be a member of the Council.

10 Precept

In setting the precept, the Council considers the value of existing funds and sets the precept against budgeted expenditure.

Cherwell District Council collects the precept as part of the Council Tax Bill.

The Council regularly receives budget update information and the precept is an agenda item at Council. The various working groups are involved in putting forward their forecast expenditure which is used to determine the required finance for standing costs and projects for the following year. The precept amount is then agreed at Council and submitted in writing to Cherwell District Council within the prescribed timescale. It is considered that existing mechanisms are satisfactory.

11 Asset Control

The Council maintains a register of assets and regularly checks their existence and considers their maintenance and repair.

Whenever the council renews its existing insurances, a check is made to ensure that the sums insured adequately reflect the risks to the Council's assets.

Maintenance of all assets, including the Play Areas, is undertaken by appropriately qualified contractors as required.

The Council considers that there are no material risks relating to these assets.

The Play Areas are inspected every week and the Playground Inspector reports monthly on the status and any remedial action required. The inspections are based on RoSPA guidelines, using a maintenance checklist that is regularly reviewed by the Clerk.

In addition to the weekly inspections a RoSPA-accredited inspector conducts an annual inspection. That inspection results in a formal assessment of the risks. The report is considered by the Council and appropriate actions are taken to implement all the recommendations.

The Council considers that there are no material risks relating to the Play Areas not covered by the RoSPA report.

The risk of vandalism exists in relation to the Council's assets e.g. sports facilities and play areas and while appropriate insurance cover is in place, action to minimize the risk is taken by involving the police, heightening the awareness of the community and seeking their assistance. CCTV has been installed at The Windmill Community Centre.

12 Bank Reconciliation

A bank reconciliation is prepared monthly by the RFO and presented to every meeting and checks are carried out by a member of the Finance & General Purposes working group. The books of account are properly maintained. The Council considers that there are no material risks relating to the bank accounts.

13 Cash

Apart from minor receipts e.g. from a very few allotment rents and occasional photocopying, there are no cash transactions and no cash balance is held.

The Council considers that there are no material risks relating to cash.

14 Financial Records, and Annual Accounts and Returns

The Council maintains appropriate financial records which are audited by the Internal Auditor. The agreed procedures are set out in the Council's Financial Regulations.

The Council considers that the financial records meet HMRC regulations (including VAT).

The Annual Returns are properly prepared, presented to the Council, and audited by both the Internal Auditor and the External Auditor.

Key financial records in paper form are kept securely in a fireproof safe and computer records are automatically backed up offsite on Google Drive.

The Council considers that there are no material risks relating to the Financial Records, nor to the Annual Accounts and Returns.

The council has a direct debit card drawn on the Imprest Account. This can be used by the RFO for urgent or otherwise appropriate payments up to £500 in any one case, with a monthly maximum of £600. Any such payment or use of the card must be promptly reported to the Chair or a Vice Chair.

15 Insurance[1]

The Council has insurance cover for loss of or damage to its material assets and also for Public Liability, Employer's Liability and Fidelity insurance. The insurance cover is provided by a reputable insurer, authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority.

The Clerk regularly updates cover as assets are purchased or circumstances change.

The amount of cover is considered by the Council on renewal.

The Council considers that the insurance cover is adequate.

The Council considers that there are no material risks that are not covered by the insurance.

[1] Note: during the year 1 June 2025 – 31 May 2026 DPC holds insurance that covers these specific items to this limit;
Public Liability of £12,000,000,
Employers Liability of £10,000,000 and
Fidelity Guarantee of £1,000,000