

Bourtons' Parish Council Risk Assessment

Adopted by the Council at February 2024 meeting. Reviewed February 2026 minute 0226.22

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 producing this assessment, the following procedure was used:-

- Identify the areas to be reviewed
- Identify what the risks may be [Risk Rating. Key: L=low, M= Moderate, H= High]
- Evaluate the management and control of the risks and record the findings
- Review, assess and revise the assessment as required.

Subject	Risk (s) Identified	Rating	Control Measures	Status/Notes
1) Business Continuity	a) Losing Councillor memberships or having more than 3 vacancies at any one time	L	When a vacancy arises, there is a legal process to follow. This either leads to a bye-election or into a co-option process. An election is out of the Parish Council's control. The co-option process begins with an advert, acceptance of applications, consideration of applicants and co-option vote at a Council meeting, then appointment. If there are more than 3 vacancies at any one time on the Council it becomes inquorate. The legal process of the District Council appointing members takes place.	Existing procedures adequate Review plan when necessary
	b) Parish Council unable to function in the event of an unexpected disaster.		Business continuity procedures in place. Parish council to operate from still active Councillor's/Clerk's/RFO's properties with minimum quorum – temporary Councillors to be co-opted as necessary.	Existing procedures adequate. To be reviewed annually.
2) Precept	a) Precept inadequate b) Precept not applied for c) Precept not received	L	a) Precept determined by producing regular budget control statements and amount requested is based on actual spend and estimated expenditure for the ensuing year b) Clerk to submit request to Cherwell District Council, in response to their email. c) Financial presentation [FINREP] prepared by RFO for each Council meeting will show funds received.	Precept reviewed annually Existing procedures adequate
3) Financial Records	a) Inadequate records b) Financial irregularities	L	The Parish Council has controls and procedures in place to ensure that requirements are met, which are maintained by and reported to each Council meeting by the RFO.	Existing procedures adequate

4) Banking	<p>a) Inadequate checks</p> <p>b) Bank errors</p> <p>c) Loss of cheques/cash</p> <p>d) Unnecessary charges</p>	L	<p>a) The Parish Council has controls and procedures in place which set out the requirements for banking, cheques and reconciliation of accounts.</p> <p>b) Bank errors are reported to the Bank in writing but it is at the discretion of the bank what action it will take regarding refund.</p> <p>c) The RFO has controls and procedures to manage received cheques prior to banking. No significant cash [over £50] is kept unbanked for more than 48 hours.</p> <p>d) Bank charges are reviewed monthly against bank statements by the RFO.</p>	Existing procedures adequate
5) Cash	a) Loss through theft and dishonesty	L	a)The Parish Council has controls and procedures in place which set out the requirements to be met. Insurance in place to provide cover.	Existing procedures adequate
6) Reporting and auditing	<p>a) Lack of information and communication</p> <p>b) Compliance</p>	L	<p>a) A FINREP is produced at every Parish Council meeting as an agenda item and is approved at the meeting.</p> <p>b) Monthly bank current account reconciliations carried out & a full bank reconciliation [as per external audit requirements] is completed every 4 months and is reviewed by Council.</p> <p>c) Internal process audits are carried out annually.</p> <p>d) External audit conducted annually according to statutory requirements.</p>	Existing procedures adequate
7) Costs and expenses Debts	<p>a) Incorrect invoicing</p> <p>b) Cheques incorrect</p> <p>c) Debts outstanding</p>	L	<p>a & b) All payments to be approved at a full Council meeting and all invoices checked. Two authorised signatories are required to sign cheques, cheque number written on invoice which must be initialled by cheque signatories. Cheque stubs initialled.</p>	Existing procedures adequate

			c) Payments due to the Council are pursued and, where possible, payment is obtained in advance.	
8) Work commissioned by Parish Council	a) Insufficient quotations obtained b) Work commissioned incorrectly c) Work goes over budget	L L M	a) Financial Regulations require the Parish Council to obtain more than one quotation for necessary work, above a figure specified. Councillor responsible for project to check the quotations and research any problems and report to Council. Oversight by the RFO. b&c) Councillor to manage project effectively, with oversight by the RFO where appropriate.	Existing procedures adequate
9) Remuneration and other costs	a) Remunerations calculated and paid incorrectly b) Tax and N I implications	L	a) Salaries are reviewed annually and based on industry remuneration scales. Other people who undertake work on behalf of the Parish Council are self-employed contractors, such as the Burial and Churchyard Wardens and the Internal Auditor. Other people may be employed on an ad hoc basis. b) Tax and N I matters are dealt with by the RFO, managed through an external payroll agency.	Existing procedures adequate To be reviewed annually
10) Councillors and employees	a) Loss of key Councillors and contractors b) Fraud by Councillors and contractors c) Actions undertaken by Councillors and contractors	L	a) This is covered by the Business Continuity procedures b) Insurance requirements specified by our Insurer to be adhered to. c) Adequate training to be arranged for Clerk/RFO and Councillors to be provided with the necessary information for them to carry out their duties effectively.	Existing procedures adequate. To be reviewed annually.

11) Election Costs	a) Risk of an election	L/M	Risk is higher in an election year. When an election is due the Clerk will obtain an estimate of costs from the District Council for a full election and an uncontested election. There are no measures which can be adopted to minimise the risk of having a contested election as this is a democratic process and should not be stifled. Expected cost will be included in budget for year in which elections are scheduled.	Existing procedures adequate. Note : an election has not been required in this Parish for many years due to low number of prospective Cllrs; risk is therefore deemed to be very low.
12) VAT	a) Failure to maintain proper records and to reclaim VAT where appropriate	L	The Parish Council has controls and procedures in place to ensure that VAT is reclaimed as appropriate. The RFO reviews the position and makes a claim where necessary	Existing procedures adequate.
13) Annual Accounts	a) Failure to submit within time limits	L	The Annual Accounts are prepared by the RFO and are completed and signed by the Council (at PC meeting in May/June). Deadlines are specified by the External Auditor and failure instigates penalties.	Existing procedures adequate.
14) Legal powers	a) Illegal activity or payments	L	All <i>non-routine</i> activity and payments within the powers of the Council to be resolved and minuted at full Council Meetings, including a reference to the power used.	Existing procedures adequate. All spend authorised under special powers to be minuted.
15) Minutes/Agendas/ Notices Statutory documents	a) Accuracy and legality b) Business Conduct	L	a) Minutes and agenda are produced in the prescribed method by the Clerk and adhere to the legal requirements. Minutes are approved and signed at the next Council meeting by the Chairman. Minutes and agenda are displayed according to the legal requirements on village noticeboards and on the website b) Business conducted at Council meetings should be managed by the Chair.	Existing procedures adequate. Councillors to adhere to code of conduct.

			<p>c) Notifications of meetings to discuss planning applications are displayed within the required timescales.</p> <p>d) Responses to planning applications are given within the required timescales.</p> <p>e) Copies of planning applications can be viewed on the District Council planning portal.</p>	
16) Members interests	<p>a) Conflict of interest</p> <p>b) Register of Members interests</p>	L M	<p>a) Although not a requirement, the declaring of interests by members at each meeting should be an obvious process to remind Councillors of their duty and is recorded in the minutes.</p>	<p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Councillors take responsibility to update their forms.</p>
17) Data Protection	a) Policy and Provision	L/M	<p>The Council is compliant with the GDPR and has the necessary processes in place. The Council is registered with the Information Commissioners Office.</p>	<p>Registration to be renewed annually.</p>
18) Freedom of information Act	a) Policy and Provision	L/M	<p>The Council has a model publication scheme for local councils in place. The Council has received one request for information to date.</p> <p>The Council is able to request a fee for the work required to provide information. The Clerk will monitor and report the impact of any requests made.</p>	<p>Existing procedures adequate.</p>
19) Assets	<p>a) Loss or damage</p> <p>b) Risk/damage to third parties or their properties</p>	L	<p>An annual review of assets is carried out in order to update insurance cover and to ensure that storage and maintenance of physical assets is maintained</p>	<p>Asset register to be reviewed annually but updated when new assets acquired.</p>
<p>20) Maintenance of property for which the Parish Council is responsible</p> <p>i(Clock in belltower, village hall, community hall, all playgrounds, allotments, Burial Ground, Churchyard)</p>	<p>a) Poor performance of property or amenities</p> <p>b) Potential loss of income</p> <p>c) Risk to third parties</p>	L	<p>All assets or property for which the Parish Council is responsible are regularly reviewed and maintained.</p> <p>All repairs and relevant expenditure for these repairs are actioned/ authorised in accordance with the correct procedures of the Council.</p> <p>All assets/property are insured and reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Existing procedures adequate.</p> <p>Maintenance requirements identified in asset register</p>

			All public amenity land is inspected regularly by the Council or their advisers	
21) Notice boards Official Locations Main Street, GB Chapel Lane, LB Others Playgrounds GB & LB Allotments	Risk/Damage/Injury to third party	L	Council has five notice boards sited around the village. All locations have approval by relevant parties, insurance cover, inspected regularly by the Clerk - any repairs/maintenance requirements brought to the attention of the Council. Keys are held by the Clerk.	Existing procedures adequate
22) Street furniture, signs, benches, etc.	Risk/Damage/Injury to third party	L	The Council is responsible for four boundary signs, dog bins, salt/grit bins, litterbins, and benches which are covered by insurance, and included on the Asset register.	Existing procedures adequate
23) Two defibrillators (AEDs) 2015	Risk/Damage/Injury to third party Misuse	M	Machines are locked in purpose-made cabinets, which are kept frost-free. Key-code access(information from emergency phone call) Public training sessions provided. Defibrillators are inspected monthly.	Liaise with The Circuit with whom they are registered.
24) Playgrounds Locations Main Street, GB Chapel Lane, LB Note A LAP at Garners Field will be acquired by free transfer from CDC in 2024 with support maintenance funds.	a) Risk/Damage/Injury to third party b) Financial: Cost of repairs or replacement of equipment	M	Playgrounds in each village are inspected regularly by a councillor and their condition reported at monthly PC meetings. Any remedial action required is noted and carried out as soon as possible. If any dangerous condition is found that equipment, or the playground, would be closed to the public until repaired or removed. Public liability insurance is in place. Annual professional ROSPA Inspection on each playground is conducted. (July). Council maintains reserves to cover contingency costs	Existing procedures adequate
25) Burial Ground	Risk/Damage/Injury to third party	L	The Council employs a Warden to administer the orderly business of burials. He reports to the council any matters requiring attention.	Existing procedures adequate.

26) Public open space maintenance	Risk/Damage/Injury to third party	L	<p>Grass on the Green, the two playgrounds, The Allotments and the Burial-ground are maintained by a contractor paid by the Council, using his own equipment, and covered by his own Public Liability insurance (£10m).</p> <p>The road across The Green is an adopted highway.</p>	Existing procedures adequate
27) Churchyard and War Memorial	Risk/Damage/Injury to third party	L	<p>The Churchyard at All Saints Church, Great Bourton is closed for burials, and is the responsibility of the Council. The grounds are maintained by a resident, paid by the parish council, using machinery owned by the council. He has his own public liability insurance cover. He also makes regular inspections of the gravestones and monuments for safety and stability.</p> <p>Each grave is the responsibility of the family owner where extant.</p>	Existing procedures adequate
28) Clock Tower and Clock	Risk/Damage/Injury to third party	L	<p>The fabric of the Clock Tower is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council, but the Clock is owned by and the responsibility of the Council. A separate reserve fund is held at the bank to cover contingency payments for repairs and maintenance of the clock. In 2022 an autowinder was installed.</p> <p>A clock keeper appointed by the Council oversees the Clock and inspects on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Existing procedures adequate</p> <p>2016 The electricity supply cable to the tower was renewed in 2016 at the expense of PCC.</p>

29) Allotments	<p>Risk/Damage/Injury to third party</p> <p>Financial: a) Non-payment of rent.</p> <p>b) Cost of repairs</p> <p>c) High water bill</p>	<p>L</p> <p>M</p> <p>M</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Each tenant signs an agreement setting out their rights and responsibilities. Each tenant is expected to exercise due care for their own safety and that of others. The Council has Public Liability insurance for its members and employees.</p> <p>a) The Clerk will pursue payment of rents. Sanctions</p>	<p>Existing procedures adequate</p> <p>Chain with key-coded padlock is in place on vehicular and pedestrian gates.</p> <p>Clause in Tenancy Agreement provides for control of codes.</p>
----------------	--	---	--	--

			<p>are defined in the Tenancy Agreement.</p> <p>b) Routine repairs and bills will normally be met from rent payments. Predictable maintenance would be planned in budget. Emergencies from reserves.</p> <p>c) Water is turned off in winter (Oct-March) to avoid burst pipes. Sprinklers and unattended hosepipes are prohibited. Tenants have declined the opportunity to create a committee to oversee their rights and the site.</p>	
<p>30)i. Halls Village Hall</p>	<p>a) Risk/Damage/Injury to third party b) Financial: Cost of repairs or replacement of equipment</p>	L/M	<p>The Village Hall is run by a Village Hall Committee, as charity trustees, to ensure its orderly administration, maintenance, insurance, financial viability etc. The Chairman reports to the Council any matters requiring attention.</p> <p>Planned major repairs, replacements will be included in budget figures. Emergencies from reserves.</p> <p>Note A 3-year lease extension was granted in 2023 but renegotiation of a new lease will be required for implementation in 2026.</p>	Existing procedures adequate
<p>ii. Community Hall and surrounding land, including car park, paving, shrub beds with perennial planting and enclosed grass area.</p>	<p>a) Risk, Damage, Injury to third party b) Financial: b) Cost of repairs or replacement of equipment</p>	L/M	<p>The new Community Hall was transferred into Council ownership in November 2019.</p> <p>It is managed by a CIO [Charitable Incorporated Organisation] with its own committee, which is responsible for all day-to-day operations and operates its own budget.</p> <p>External repairs and replacement of capital equipment is the responsibility of the Council. Internal</p>	<p>Buildings insurance maintained by the Council.</p> <p>Operational insurance funded by the CIO.</p> <p>Annual budget to be prepared by the CIO and agreed by the Council.</p> <p>Risk assessment to be prepared by the CIO for all operational risks.</p>

			<p>maintenance and replacement of damaged assets is as described in the lease. Cost of maintenance of land around hall is borne by Council.</p>	<p>Policy to be developed in the event of the CIO ceasing to operate.</p>
<p>31) Meeting location</p>	<p>a) Inadequacy b) Health & Safety</p>	<p>M M</p>	<p>Council meets monthly in the Community Hall. The premises are considered adequate from a Health and Safety and comfort aspect.</p>	<p>Existing location is adequate</p>
<p>32) Council records – a) paper</p>	<p>Loss through: Theft, fire, damage</p>	<p>L/M/L</p>	<p>Council records are stored at the home of the Clerk. Records include historical correspondence, minute books and copies, legal documents, records such as contractors, insurance, payments, etc.</p> <p>Older, archived, documents are held at the County Record Office at Oxford</p> <p>Some Deeds of property are held at the council's solicitors, Messrs. Aplin (now known as Alsters Kelley Solicitors Ltd, incorporating Aplins) in Banbury</p>	<p>Loss through theft or damage is unlikely. Any legal documents held should be copied and held at a separate location.</p> <p>Insurance in place.</p> <p>Non-current documents stored in Community Hall.</p>
<p>Council records – b) electronic</p>	<p>Loss through: theft, fire, damage corruption of computer</p>		<p>Council electronic records are stored on the Council laptop computer. Back-ups of the files are taken at regular intervals.</p>	<p>Existing procedures are to be reviewed</p> <p>Separate back-up to be held at Community Hall</p>
<p>33) Website</p>	<p>Webmaster not being able to function Loss of passwords</p>		<p>Webmaster is able to maintain website. Copy of all passwords used by the website to be kept by a Councillor and Chairman .</p>	<p>Existing procedures adequate</p>