

TOFT PARISH COUNCIL – RISK ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

Risk management is a structured approach to managing known, and perceived threats (e.g. cuts at District and County level which may reduce local services).

It closely relates to a Council's ongoing activities and flows from regular assessment of risk.

For Parish Councils this may be described as *risk awareness & engagement*.

Toft's Parish Council and its Parish Clerk manage risks to Toft on an ongoing basis within its boundaries and vicinity, by:

- identifying risks to the parish and parishioners;
- developing strategies to manage, and alleviate these risks;
- working in partnership with the community using its resources; and
- working with others outside our boundaries who share our interests, and aims.

A Structured Approach

The Council's approach to risk management starts at the beginning of each business year. By setting aside time to review its business and strategies the Council will gain a clear view of its priorities, and revisit its objectives and how they are to be managed. This has the advantage of developing clear roles that will help the Council effectively use its powers and duties for the benefit of the community.

Risk Management Assessments

When the need is identified *in year* risk management assessments may be carried out by the lead Councillor(s) with the assistance of the Clerk as necessary.

Consideration by the Council

The Council as the decision making body resolves issues, and makes decisions by consensus following constructive engagement and thought by all its members.

To assist Councillors to act as a corporate body several basic requirements need to be in place, including early referral of projects with:

- Answers to key questions - **Why? What? When?**
 - **Community benefit?** (*must be clearly established*)
 - **Consequences?** (*if not done now, or in future*)
 - **Cost/benefit ratio?** (*benefit must outweigh cost*)
 - **Comparison with other projects?** (*order of priority*)

- Specialist Advice
 - Health & Safety, Legal, Resources, Facility Management (play areas) trees, footpaths etc.

- Up to date reports
 - showing progress, latest and planned expenditure on current projects; and
 - significant projects (over £500) planned over next three to five years by programme (e.g. Open Spaces, village works , bus shelter)

Action by Working Party

Where this applies this is driven by a clear programme of work delegated by the Council, and monitored by ongoing monthly progress reports to the Council. The Clerk may not commit resources on new projects without reference to the full Council, unless delegated authority has been approved in accordance with the Finance Regulations.

Business Item	Risk	Level of Risk - High/Medium/Low	Alleviation of Risk by Toft Parish Council	2022-23
Council				
Decision making	Maintaining the work of the Council with only 5 Councillors against a full complement of 7.	M	By promoting the role of the Council within the community to generate interest in potential co-optees to the Council.	Efforts will be made to publicise work using The Calendar and notice boards.
Training	Lack of awareness of the roles and powers of the Council, Clerk and Councillors	M	Councillors to attend training.	* Parish Clerk to arrange.
Declaration of interest(s)	Debating issues, and voting without declaration of prejudicial interest.	L	Agenda item at Council Meetings. Guidance circulated.	* Register of Interest forms reviewed and updated at Annual Meeting.
Review of risk assessment policy	Changing circumstances,	M	Annual review	Commenced 2011.
Resources & Services	Recognition of potential cuts at District and County level that may reduce local services.	M	Identifying services at potential risk e.g. village lighting, footpath & bridge maintenance	* Setting aside contingency monies within budget to cover local funding.

<p><u>Finance:</u></p>	<p>(a) Ensuring adequacy of precept</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>i) RFO checks receipt of the council tax base rate from SCDC for Band D property in the parish.</p> <p>ii) RFO prepares draft budget by forecasting expenditure on new and existing projects.</p>	<p>* Council to review draft budget in January, and formally sets precept by offsetting financial requirement against unallocated balances.</p>
<p>Precept</p>	<p>b) Precept not submitted to SCDC</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>RFO sends formal request in writing to SCDC after January Council meeting.</p>	<p>* RFO to advise Council of SCDC deadline, and copies in Councillors.</p>
	<p>c) Precept not received by Parish Council</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Precept is transferred via BACS into Parish Council's bank.</p>	<p>* RFO to advise Councillors of receipt of monies.</p>
<p>Banking</p>	<p>Inadequate checks resulting in errors.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Toft PC has 4 bank accounts. Payments are made by cheque or BACS from the current account authorised by two authorised signatories, and bank stubs initialled & retained.</p> <p>The RFO/signatories are responsible for bank correspondence and statements, & carries out bank reconciliations to ensure all receipts and payments are accounted for; and sufficient monies are available for monthly outgoings.</p>	<p>New signatories approved, and notified to bank in 2022.</p> <p>* RFO to liaise with Chairman to produce letter of authority to bank to transfer monies from saving account to current account when required.</p>

Financial Reporting	To ensure Councillors receive accurate financial records & bank reconciliations to permit informed decisions by the Council.	M	RFO financial reports for Council meetings showing receipts and expenditure against budget. Inspection & approval by the Council.	* To be signed off by the Chairman annually, and retained as part of the minutes for review by the Internal Auditor.
Audit	To provide independent assurance to the Council of the accuracy of the accounts, & that expenditure is in accordance with Council decisions and budget.	L	Internal auditor appointed by the Council at the Annual Parish Meeting, and internal and external Audits carried out each year. Results are reported to the Council.	Existing procedures to be retained.
Cash	Loss through theft, dishonesty, or inefficiency	L	No petty cash system in operation.	Cover for losses is part of Toft PC's insurance.
Financial Regulations	Not used for reference, or guidance.	L	Current version is 2019 Model	* The PC will ensure the Financial Regulations are in line with the NALC model
Insurance	Adequacy of cover, including public liability Cost	H L	Level of cover to be examined against risk and assets held. Recognition of current competitive market	Annual reviews
Assets	Failure to recognise assets held/not held.	L	Asset register to be maintained and updated.	Annual reviews.

<p>VAT</p> <p>Section 137 Expenditure</p>	<p>Potential loss of receipts to Council. Annual exercise to recover VAT payments forgotten.</p> <p>Exceeding statutory limit for expenditure per financial year. [Section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972]</p>	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>RFO records VAT on purchases on finance spreadsheet & retains VAT receipts for VAT refund claim to HM Customs & Revenue.</p> <p>Keeping records to ensure that the limit per elector for parish and town councils in England is not exceeded.</p>	<p>Existing procedures to be retained. Councillors notified of monies reclaimed.</p> <p>* Council to receive financial reports detailing S137 payments and monitor annual expenditure.</p>
<p>Contracts</p>	<p>Not gaining “Best Value” for the community.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>By seeking more than one quotation for any works or goods obtained in accordance with the Finance Regulations.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>Retention of trained Clerk & RFO</p> <p>Correct salary paid</p> <p>Risk of financial penalty if PAYE contributions not paid (& Annual Return) not made by HM Customs & Revenue’s deadlines.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>L</p> <p>H</p>	<p>Contract & terms and conditions agreed.</p> <p>New Payroll service approved.</p>	<p>* Council to review any new arrangements annually</p>
<p>Projects</p>	<p>Financial and H&S risks if not correctly project managed, and outcome evaluated.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>Council or Working Party to carry out yearly Risk Assessment; and assess findings (eg risk assessments of recreation areas, and play equipment by RoSPA including inspections by members.)</p>	<p>* Need to ensure annual safety assessments of the Recreation Ground and Community Land</p>

Contingency Planning	Cuts in services provided by SCDC and CCC lead to additional financial pressures at parish level.	H/M	Careful monitoring of budget cut back messages received from District and County Councils to identify areas at risk (e.g. parish lighting).	* Contingency fund(s) to be built into budget.
Statutory records	<u>Risk of loss of:</u> - deeds of The People's Hall; - registration documents to common land in Toft; and - records of Council Meetings.	H H M))To be stored in County Archive)subject to space being available.) Land Registry hold copies.	Masters with Clerk and offsite.
Electronic records	Loss of working & policy documents, correspondence and finance records.	H	Data backed up regularly and stored off site	* To be confirmed by Toft Parish Council at annual meeting.
Data Protection	Non compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998	H	Registered with the Information Commissioner.	* To be confirmed by Toft Parish Council at annual meeting.
Freedom of Information	Non compliance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000	L	Toft Parish Council has complied with the requirement to produce a Publication Scheme, and advertise information available on request.	Scheme to be updated as necessary.
Community				
Communication	Lack of awareness by the wider community of the role, and achievements of the Council.	M	Development of a Communication Strategy including publicising current Councillors, and their roles.	Introduction of Facebook & maintenance of village newsletter update of Council activities.
	Lack of involvement in key areas	M	Attendance at Management	Councillors to receive

	of local community life.		Committee Meetings of The People's Hall.	reports & minutes.
Resources	<p>Lack of support to parish, risking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ongoing assistance to Management Trustees running The People's Hall - oversight of footpaths, roads and bridges, planning and law & order issues; and - maintenance of seats, notice boards, village sign etc 	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>The Council, as Custodial Trustee, maintains close contact with The People's Hall, providing financial assistance as required.</p> <p>Councillors (& Clerk) keep in close touch with officials and Councillors of SCDC and CCC; and Cambridge Constabulary.</p> <p>Annual Inspection of village facilities and roads.</p>	<p>Council appointment to the Management Committee appointed annually.</p> <p>Ongoing liaison to continue.</p> <p>Programme of works agreed annually</p>
Events	Health & Safety of residents and visitors	M	Written risk assessment carried out by Working Party and copied to Council.	Feedback provided to organisers when approval of event is confirmed.

Gail Stoehr
Clerk to Toft Parish Council
July 2022