

**Definition of Risk Management**

Risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation’s ability to achieve its objectives and to successfully execute its strategies. Risk management is the process by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled. It is a key element of the framework of governance together with community focus, structures and processes, standards of conduct and service delivery arrangements. 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.

The Council is aware that although some risks can never be eliminated fully, it has in place a strategy that provides a structured, systematic and focused approach to managing risk, which:

- Identifies the key risks facing the Council
- Identifies what the risk may be
- Identifies the level of risk
- Evaluates the management and control of the risk and records findings
- Reviews, assesses and revises procedures if required.

**Risk Assessment**

Likelihood: Probability of occurrence.

Impact: If this risk occurs, what would be the effect on the Council?

**Response**

Prevention: The risk of occurrence is eliminated.

Mitigation: The impact of the risk is lessened.

Acceptance: The risk may occur and the Council will adopt tactical responses if it does.

Transfer: The risk is passed to another body (e.g. Insurance).

Date of review/ratification: 10/03/2025

Date of next review: March 2026

PARISH COUNCIL MANAGEMENT						
Subject	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Response	Risk Control Measures (Alleviation of risk by OWPC)	Comments/Review
Business Continuity	Council not being able to continue its business due to an unexpected or tragic circumstance	M	H	Acceptance	Files and recent records are kept at the Clerk's house on a laptop, backed up by Cloudy IT. The Clerk has created a Business Continuity document, which holds all business related information, both Chair and Vice have instructions on how to access this information in the event the Clerk is not available.	Business Continuity document is live and updated regularly
Meeting Location	Adequacy / Health and Safety provision falls below standards required	L	L	Transfer	Meetings are held at St Marys Church, Woughton on the Green, health & safety provision falls under the church responsibility.	OWPC does submit a risk assessment for meetings confirming adhering to Church requirements.
Council Records (physical)	Loss through fire, theft, damage	L	M	Mitigation	Clerk scans all physical documents electronically. The physical signed minutes are kept in a folder and transferred to Bucks Archive for safe keeping.	There is currently a small backlog in document filing in the absence of a clerk. <b>Also Bucks Archive to move to High Wycombe to new facility ( 2025-2026)</b>
Council Records (Electronic)	Loss through damage, fire, computer hardware failure, malware, or hacking	L	L	Mitigation	All electronic data is backed up by Cloudy IT and relevant anti-virus software in place.	
<b>Lack of Councillors</b>	<b>Councillor numbers fall below quorate number</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>Acceptance</b>	<b>The numbers of Cllrs for Parish and per Ward are high and able to withstand a certain amount of movement, but has history of being fully resourced and effective.</b>	<b>Should a PC fall below the quorate number to function, City Ward Councillors are allocated by MKCC in the interim. To note Community Governance Review by MKCC 2025</b>
FINANCIAL RISKS						
Subject	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Response	Risk Control Measures (Alleviation of risk by OWPC)	Comments/Review
Precept	The amount of the precept may prove inadequate, meaning that the Council is unable to fulfil its function and meet its obligations.	M	H	Prevention	Annual Precept review supported by sound budgeting. Parish Council receives budget update information monthly at meetings. The budget and precept setting process begins in November each year, involving the full Council, and consultation with residents through newsletters and approved in January each year.	Council submits Precept Requirements by end of January / Early Feb each year as it is required by the principal authority.
Insurance	Amount of Insurance inadequate.	L	M	Prevention	Annual review of all insurance arrangements in Apr, ready for approval in May meeting.	Insurance policy expires 21/06/25.
	Cost of insurance premium too high due to less and less companies wanting to insure the public sector.	M	M	Prevention	Competitive quotes are sort.	Next review in May 2025 for insurance renewal.
	Insurance cover not compliant with requirements.	L	L	Prevention	Annual review of obligations carried out.	Next review in May 2025 for insurance renewal.
	Fidelity Guarantee insurance not available.	M	M	Prevention	Annual review.	Next review in May 2025 for insurance renewal.

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Banking	Inadequate checks lead to financial loss	L	M	Prevention	The Council has Financial Regulations (reviewed annually) which set out the requirements for online banking, cheques and reconciliation of accounts. 2 signatories for payment of BACS and cheques. The Council has spread it's risk and has two bank accounts: Lloyds Treasurers Account for daily business and Metro Instant Access Account with savings.	Financial Regulations Model Policy updated April 2024 and OWPC Policy Document being reviewed March 2025. Also a Review of Bank accounts 2025 and Accounting Software for 2025-2026. Appointment of RFO Jan 2025
Cash	Loss through theft or dishonesty	N/A	N/A		The Council does not hold any cash	
Financial Controls and Records	Inadequate checks lead to financial loss	L	M	Prevention	Monthly reconciliation carried out and saved in the Finance folder for all councillors to see. Two signatories on cheques/BACS. Internal and external audit. Any payments must be resolved and clearly minuted. Rialtas 'Alpha' software in place since April 2016. System is back-up whenever the Clerk has logged out of the system and the main data is backed up by Cloudy IT.	March 2025 review of Financial Regulations Policy 2025/26 budget includes an overall training budget for both Clerk and Cllrs for £264.
Freedom of Information Act	Prosecution for failure to meet the policy provisions of the FOI Act.	L	L	Mitigation	The Council has a model publication scheme for Local Councils in place. There have been no outstanding requests for information to date. The Council is able to request a fee if the work will take over 15 hours. However the request can be resubmitted, broken down into sections, thus negating the payment of a fee. Any requests made under FOI will trigger a review and a report to the Council.	<b>Freedom of Information and Publication Policy needs reviewing, last updated 09/03/15.</b>
Payroll	Paid incorrectly.	L	M	Prevention	Clerk submits a full time sheet each month, detailing hours and actions. This is submitted, together with a copy of the HMRC Basic Tools payroll information, to all signatories, before approved by two signatories. PAYE is paid based on the HMRC Basic Tools calculations.	
Election Costs	Additional costs incurred due to a contested election.	L	M	Mitigation	The main Parish Council elections (every 4-years) are run at the same time as MKCC election and therefore no costs are currently passed down. It is unlikely that there will be a contested election.	Council decision not to include in the annual budget 2025/26.
VAT	Underpayment/Over payment of VAT leads to investigation or possible prosecution.	L	M	Prevention	The Council has financial regulations (updated annually) which set out the requirements. VAT return is calculated by the Rialtas 'Alpha' system and checked by the internal auditor before Clerk submits.	Financial regulations to be reviewed March 2025.
Annual Return (AGAR)	Failure to submit within required timescales leads to additional payment being required/ prosecution.	L	M	Prevention	Annual return is completed and signed by the Council, submitted to the Internal Auditor for completion and signing, then checked and sent on to the External Auditor within time limit. If the Parish Council budget is under £25K, it only has to submit a Certificate of Exemption to the external auditor.	Appointment of experienced RFO Jan 2025 reduces risk
<b>ASSET RISKS</b>						
Subject	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Response	Risk Control Measures (Alleviation of risk by OWPC)	Comments/Review
Asset Register	Loss or damage of assets	L	L	Transfer	List of all assets and maintenance status covered by Asset Register and annual Risk Assessments (to be inspected as per the details set out).	Meeting 8/7/24, Minute 038.1, Asset Register updates approved March 2025 - Asset Register to be reviewed.
	Damage to 3rd Party Properties	L	L	Transfer	Risks covered by Insurance and minimal replacement provision is included	
Office Equipment	Loss or damage of assets	L	L	Acceptance	Laptop, laminator all owned by the PC. Funding set aside for replacement as and when required. Migrated to Microsoft 365, IT platform fully managed by Cloudy IT. Cloud file storage with all the appropriate backups and antivirus solution to protect data.	Christmas lights / batteries / baubles / Litter-Picking equipment / banners etc kept in Cllrs homes. Tablet for Allotment and Laptop to be itemised in Insurance renewal / ensure coverage in the policy.
<b>LIABILITY RISKS</b>						
Subject	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Response	Risk Control Measures (Alleviation of risk by OWPC)	Comments/Review
Legal Powers	Illegal activity or payments.	L	H	Prevention	The Parish Council has General Power of Competence. All activity and payments made within the powers of the Parish Council (not ultra vires) and to be resolved and clearly minuted. Ensure established with clear terms of reference. Clerk clarifies legal position on any new proposal. Legal advice to be sought where necessary. BALC. NALC. SLCC.	<b>General Powers of Competence to be reviewed / clarification appointment of RFO / qualifications</b>
	Working Groups making decisions.	M	M	Prevention	All decisions to be made only by Council. All spending by working groups must be agreed in advance and monitored monthly.	Meeting 11/09/23, minute FC23/24-51, council agreed overall Terms of Reference for Working Groups. Meeting 8/7/24, minute FC24/25-40, council carried forward the action for the Finance working group to put forward their draft terms for council consideration and approved the ToR's for the Communications, Planning and Allotments working groups

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Minutes of Meetings / Agendas / Statutory Documents	Accuracy and Legality not adequate or compliant with statutory requirements.	M	M	Prevention	Minutes and documents are produced in accordance with statutory procedures and adhere to legal requirements. Minutes are approved and signed at next meeting. Minutes and agendas are displayed according to legal requirements. Business conducted at Council meetings managed by the Chair in accordance with Standing Orders. Council Members adhere to adopted Code of Conduct. Original minutes are held at District Authority archive (Aylesbury). <b>Note to move to High Wycombe 25/26</b>	In the absence of a paid Clerk, the likelihood and impact are both medium. There is mitigation with the attendance of a volunteer locum who is a former fulltime clerk. Appointment of experienced RFO reduces risk however.  The original Deeds for the Patch Allotment site are held with the Chair. Land Registry holds correct title deed information under OWPC.  Document Retention Policy implemented meeting 15/05/23, minute FC23/24-15.6. Council to review all documents against this policy. In Progress.
Public Liability	Risk to third party, property or individuals	L	M	Transfer	Insurance is in place. Risk assessment of any individual event should be undertaken.	Council to ensure that their annual residents event is risk assessed. <b>Next insurance review-Apr 25</b>
Legal Liability	Non-compliance with Data Protection Act	L	M	Mitigation	Policies in place: Information and Subject Access Policy. Data Protection Policy.	<b>Policies to be reviewed together with FOI Policy</b>
	Legality of Activities	L	M	Mitigation	Clerk explains legal position on proposals and seeks advice if necessary.	Clerk and RFO advise Council or seek guidance where appropriate. Affiliations to relevant bodies also source of guidance and advice.
Employer Liability	Failure to comply with employment law.	L	M	Mitigation	Ensure that training is undertaken by the Clerk and that all relevant employment policies are in place. Councillors to read and fully understand their obligations as an employer. Ref: NALC-The Good Councillor's Guide to Employment.	Training Policy to be developed. Policy review to be undertaken.
	Employee contract/job description; Tribunal or other legal challenge	L	M	Mitigation	Ensure employee contracts and job descriptions are in place. The Parish Council subscribes to the various national and regional bodies (NALC/BALC/SLCC), for help and support.	Applied in appointment of RFO Jan 2025
	Safety of Staff and visitors (office in Clerk's / RFO home)	L	M	Mitigation	Inspection of Clerk's / RFO's house for hazards and work station assessment to be carried out periodically by Clerk and Councillor. Annual insurance reviewed.	Currently not applicable
	Clerk on long term absence	L	H	Mitigation	The Parish Council subscribes to the various national and regional bodies (NALC/BALC/SLCC), for help and support. Locum Clerk can be sourced through these bodies.	No financial reserves earmarked.
	Clerk Resignation	H	H	Mitigation	Locum Clerk can be sourced through regional and national bodies (NALC/BALC/SLCC) But shortages in staff pool Nationally.	The current status of available Clerk's is low to non-existent within the sector. But appointment of RFO ( Jan 2025) to support <b>Temporary Clerk brings more rigor and compliance/</b>
<b>COUNCILLOR'S PROPRIETY</b>						
Subject	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Response	Risk Control Measures (Alleviation of risk by OWPC)	Comments/Review
Member's Interests	Conflict of Interest.	L	M	Mitigation	Councillors have a duty to declare any interest at the start of the meeting. Register of Members Interests form to be reviewed annually in May and maintained as a permanent public record. These 'interestes' are required by the MKCC and any changes here registered here.	Next review May 25
Gifts and Hospitality					Clerk to keep a register of councillors gifts and hospitality.	N/A
Defamation/Code of Conduct. Standing Orders	Legal challenged against the council.	L	M	Mitigation	Both Standing Orders and Code of Conduct reviewed annually. Code of Conduct adopted aligned with MKCC Code of Conduct	Next review May 25