

ASSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

July 2026

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Aims and Objectives

Assington Parish Council ("Council") is committed to high standards of engagement with its community. Our council is part of a tier of local government which belongs to, is part of and is directly accountable to its local community. Councillors play an important role as they are elected to make decisions on matters affecting the village. We aim to make a measurable difference to the quality of life of the community we serve and to be responsive to the needs of our community. This statement sets out how we ensure the community is kept informed about and can contribute to the activities and decision-making of this council to the benefit of the Council.

What is Our Community?

We believe our community is everyone within the boundaries of our parish including all ages, any organisations, groups and individuals within it. We also recognise that residents pay for the activities of the Council and that visitors to our community form an important part of the vibrancy of community life. We understand that there are certain bodies that are crucial to local quality of life and we will strive to achieve excellent working relationships with these bodies including village organisations, the Police, neighbouring councils and other tiers of local government.

Provision of Information to the Community

This Council ensures that its main documents which reflect its decisions are published and readily available for the public to view. These documents include the agendas, minutes and annual reports of the council which are:

- Published on the council's website
- Posted on the notice boards
- Available to view by request and prior arrangement with the Clerk, or in the 15 minutes before council meetings

The council also summarises its activities and reports them to the *Press* and in the village magazine. You can view the councils Freedom of Information Publication Scheme on the council's website.

Opportunities for involvement and representations to the Council

The agenda for full council meetings contain an invitation to the public and press to attend and gives you an indication of the business to be transacted so that you can decide whether you want to attend or make your views known by some other means prior to the meeting. Meetings are the forum for business and decision-making and it is important that this business can be conducted with ample time for due consideration of issues before councillors. However, at council meetings there is also an opportunity for the public to make representations in person prior to decisions being made. We welcome representations but inevitably have to apply a time limit and if you are concerned that there might be insufficient time to make your points known, you might wish to make representations in writing prior to the meeting. We give representatives from the Police and other tiers of local government an opportunity to make reports to full council meetings. This provides the public and councillors with more information and an opportunity to ask questions on matters of interest to them.

The Council will also call an annual meeting of the parish on a day falling between 1 March and 1 June inclusive. This is your meeting and you will have an opportunity to hear from many community organisations and to ask them questions. It is also possible to raise matters of concern to the community.

Involvement in Partnerships

The Council has representation on the Village Hall Management Committee and attends many meetings of bodies which make decisions affecting the local community. Information obtained from these meetings is reported to full council meetings.

Role of councillors

Councillors are the decision-makers of the Council. The contact details for all councillors are available from the clerk and are also published on the council's website and the notice boards. Councillors also hold the Clerk to account. Councillors welcome contact with members of the public, endeavour to be available immediately prior to council meeting for anybody who wishes to speak with them and they will listen to the representations you make to them at council meetings whether you attend in person, ask another person to raise matters for you or provide your comments in writing.

The contact details for the Clerk to the council are published on the council's website and the notice boards. The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the council and is the appropriate contact in most cases for raising matters with or requesting information from the council.

Please feel free to contact to contact the Clerk for more information on anything in this Statement.

Specific Areas for Community Involvement

In some circumstances, we also provide additional information sheets and/or provide additional public meetings in the event that exceptional issues arise which are of particular interest to the community. We envisage that these might include plans for significant planning development, exceptional spending plans and any emergency situations that arise. We will also hold public meetings in our ongoing communication with all residents on their requirements of the Council.

Contact details for the council are:

Address 4 Northfield Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket IP14 3HF

Telephone 01449 674727

Email assingtonpc@yahoo.com

Website www.assington.onesuffolk.net

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 30th March 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. This Policy sets out procedures for dealing with any complaints that anyone may have about Assington Parish Council's (APC) administration and procedures and it applies to the APC's employees. Councillors are covered by Suffolk Local Code of Conduct which has been adopted by the council and any complaint against a councillor should be addressed to Babergh District Council's Monitoring Officer. Complaints against policy decisions made by APC shall be referred back to the Council.
2. If a complaint about procedures or administration as practised by APC's employees is notified orally to a Councillor or the Parish Clerk, they should seek to satisfy the complaint fully. If that fails, the complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Parish Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.
3. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Parish Clerk he or she should be advised to put it to the Chairman or Vice Chairman.
4. On receipt of a written complaint the Chairman, Vice Chairman or the Parish Clerk (*except where the complainant is about the Clerk's own actions*), shall try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This shall not be done without first notifying the person complained against and giving him or her an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to attempt to settle the complaint at this stage.
5. Where the Chairman or Vice Chairman receives a written complaint about the Parish Clerk's own actions, the Parish Clerk shall be notified and given an opportunity to comment.
6. The Parish Clerk, Chairman or Vice Chairman shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
7. The Parish Clerk, Chairman or Vice Chairman shall bring any written complaint that has not been settled to the next meeting of the Council. The Parish Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and the complainant shall be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint orally. (Unless such a matter may be related to Grievance, Disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or likely to take place when such a hearing may prejudice those hearings when the complaint will have to be heard under Exempt Business to exclude any member of the public or the press, or deferred on appropriate advice received).
8. APC shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
9. As soon as may be after the decision has been made it and the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.
10. APC shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 26th January 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Assington Parish Council is committed to a policy of protecting the rights and privacy of individuals, including volunteers, staff and others, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) May 2018.

1. Introduction

Assington Parish Council is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information. We take care to protect the privacy of everyone that communicate (online or offline) with us, events, over the phone, through our mobile applications, websites and social media platforms.

We have therefore developed this privacy policy to inform you of the data we collect, what we do with your information, what we do to keep it secure as well as the rights and choices you have over your personal information.

2. The information we collect and when

We only collect information that we know we will genuinely use and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The type of information that we will collect on you, and you voluntarily provide to us includes:

- Your name
- Address
- Telephone number(s)
- Email address
- Survey responses

We may, in further dealings with you, extend this information to include your subscriptions, records of conversations and agreements.

- You are under no statutory or contractual requirement or obligation to provide us with your personal information; however, we require at least the information above in order for us to deal with you in an efficient and effective manner.
- The legal basis for processing your data is based on your specific consent that we will have requested at the point the information was initially provided, therefore we will not store, process or transfer your data outside the parties detailed above unless we have an appropriate lawful reason to do so.

3. How we use your information

- To contact you, following your enquiry, reply to any questions, suggestions, issues or complaints you have contacted us about;
- Help answer your questions and solve any issues you have.

4. Who we might share your information with

We may share your personal data with other organisations in the following circumstances:

- If the law or a public authority says we must share the personal data;
- If we need to share personal data in order to establish, exercise or defend our legal rights (this includes providing personal data to others for the purposes of preventing fraud and reducing credit risk); or

- From time to time, employ the services of other parties for dealing with certain processes necessary for the operation of the Website. However, all the information we share will be collected and anonymised, so neither you nor any of your devices can be identified from it.

5. **How we keep you updated on our products and services**

We will send you relevant news including by email, but only if you have previously consented to receive these communications. When you register with us we will ask if you would like to receive communications, and you can change your contact details over the phone or in writing at any time.

If you wish to amend your preferences, you can do so by contacting the Clerk: Christine Hargan

Telephone: 01449 674727

Email: assingtonpc@yahoo.com

6. **Your rights over your information**

• **Right to Access Your Personal Information**

- You have the right to access the personal information that we hold about you in many circumstances, by making a request. This is sometimes termed 'Subject Access Request'. If we agree that we are obliged to provide personal information to you (or someone else on your behalf), we will provide it to you or them free of charge and aim to do so within 30 days from when your identity has been confirmed.
- We would ask for proof of identity and sufficient information about your interactions with us that we can locate your personal information.
- If you would like to exercise this right, please contact us as set out below.

• **Right to Correction Your Personal Information**

- If any of the personal information we hold about you is inaccurate or out of date, you may ask us to correct it.
- If you would like to exercise this right, please contact us as set out below.

• *Right to Stop or Limit Our Processing of Your Data*

- You have the right to object to us processing your personal information if we are not entitled to use it any more, to have your information deleted if we are keeping it too long or have its processing restricted in certain circumstances.
- If you would like to exercise this right, please contact us as set out below.

• **For more information about your privacy rights**

- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) regulates data protection and privacy matters in the UK. They make a lot of information accessible to consumers on their website and they ensure that the registered details of all data controllers such as ourselves are available publicly. You can access them here <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public>.
- You can make a complaint to the ICO at any time about the way we use your information. However, we hope that you would consider raising any issue or complaint you have with us first. Your satisfaction is extremely important to us, and we will always do our very best to solve any problems you may have.

7. **How long we keep your information for**

We retain a record of your personal information in order to provide you with a high quality and consistent service. We will always retain your personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and never retain your information for longer than is necessary. Unless otherwise required by law, your data will be retained as long as useful after [our last contact with you, at which point it will be deleted.

8. **Security**

Data security is of great importance to Assington Parish Council and to protect your data we have put in place suitable physical, electronic and managerial procedures to safeguard and secure your collected data.

We take security measures to protect your information including:

- Limiting access to our buildings to those that we believe are entitled to be there (by use of passes, key card access and other related technologies where available);
- Implementing access controls to our information technology
- We use appropriate procedures and technical security measures (including strict encryption, anonymisation and archiving techniques where available) to safeguard your information across all our computer systems, networks, websites, offices and stores.
- Never asking you for your passwords;
- Advising you never to enter your account number or password into an email or after following a link from an email.

9. How to contact us

If you would like to exercise one of your rights as set out above, or you have a question or a complaint about this policy, the way your personal information is processed, please contact us by one of the following means:

By email: assingtonpc@yahoo.com

By post: The Clerk, Assington Parish Council, 4 Northfield Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket IP14 3HF

Thank you for taking the time to read our Data Protection Policy.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Policy statement

1. The aims of this Disciplinary Procedure and its associated Disciplinary Rules are to set out the standards of conduct expected of all staff and to provide a framework within which managers can work with employees to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and to encourage improvement where necessary. The standards of conduct expected of all employees are set out in the Disciplinary Rules which are appended to this policy.
2. It is our policy to ensure that any disciplinary matter is dealt with fairly and that steps are taken to establish the facts and to give employees the opportunity to respond before taking any formal action.
3. This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary this procedure, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

2. Who is covered by the procedure?

The procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service. It does not apply to agency workers or self-employed contractors.

3. What is covered by the procedure?

- 3.1. This procedure is used to deal with misconduct. It does not apply to cases involving genuine sickness absence, proposed redundancies or poor performance. In those cases reference should be made to the appropriate policy or procedure.
- 3.2. Minor conduct issues can often be resolved informally between you and the Chairman. These discussions should be held in private and without undue delay whenever there is cause for concern. Where appropriate, a note of any such informal discussions may be placed on your personnel file but will be ignored for the purposes of any future capability hearings. In some cases an informal verbal warning may be given, which will not form part of your disciplinary records. Formal steps will be taken under this procedure if the matter is not resolved, or if informal discussion is not appropriate (for example, because of the seriousness of the allegation).
- 3.3. You will not normally be dismissed for a first act of misconduct, unless we decide it amounts to gross misconduct or you have not yet completed your probationary period.
- 3.4. If you have difficulty at any stage of the procedure because of a disability, you should discuss the situation with the Chairman as soon as possible.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1. Our aim is to deal with disciplinary matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with an investigation or disciplinary matter.
- 4.2. You, and anyone accompanying you (including witnesses), must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure.
- 4.3. You will normally be told the names of any witnesses whose evidence is relevant to disciplinary proceedings against you, unless we believe that a witness's identity should remain confidential.

5. Investigations

- 5.1. The purpose of an investigation is for us to establish a fair and balanced view of the facts relating to any disciplinary allegations against you, before deciding whether to proceed with a disciplinary hearing. The amount of investigation required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case. It may involve interviewing and taking statements from you and any witnesses, and/or reviewing relevant documents.

We will appoint a HR Committee to investigate and we will set out a provisional timetable for the investigation, which will be communicated to all parties. The investigation will be thorough, impartial and objective. We reserve the ability to appoint an independent third party to investigate the allegations made.

- 5.2. Investigative interviews are solely for the purpose of fact-finding and no decision on disciplinary action will be taken until after a disciplinary hearing has been held.
- 5.3. You do not normally have the right to bring a companion to an investigative interview. However, we may allow you to bring a companion if it helps you to overcome any disability, or any difficulty in understanding English.
- 5.4. You must co-operate fully and promptly in any investigation. This will include informing us of the names of any relevant witnesses, disclosing any relevant documents to us and attending investigative interviews if required.
- 6. Criminal charges**
 - 6.1. Where your conduct is the subject of a criminal investigation, charge or conviction we will investigate the facts before deciding whether to take formal disciplinary action.
 - 6.2. We will not usually wait for the outcome of any prosecution before deciding what action, if any, to take. Where you are unable or have been advised not to attend a disciplinary hearing or say anything about a pending criminal matter, we may have to take a decision based on the available evidence.
 - 6.3. A criminal investigation, charge or conviction relating to conduct outside work may be treated as a disciplinary matter if we consider that it is relevant to your employment.
- 7. Suspension**
 - 7.1. In some circumstances we may need to suspend you from work. The suspension will be for no longer than is necessary to investigate the allegations and we will confirm the arrangements to you in writing. While suspended you should not visit our premises or contact any of our clients, customers, suppliers, contractors or staff, unless you have been authorised to do so by the HR Committee.
 - 7.2. Suspension of this kind is not a disciplinary penalty and does not imply that any decision has already been made about the allegations. [You will continue to receive your full [basic] salary and benefits during the period of suspension].
- 8. Notification of a hearing**
 - 8.1. Following any investigation, if we consider there are grounds for disciplinary action, you will be required to attend a disciplinary hearing. We will inform you in writing of the allegations against you, the basis for those allegations, and what the likely range of consequences will be if we decide after the hearing that the allegations are true. We will also include the following where appropriate:
 - (a) a summary of relevant information gathered during the investigation;
 - (b) a copy of any relevant documents which will be used at the disciplinary hearing; and
 - (c) a copy of any relevant witness statements, except where a witness's identity is to be kept confidential, in which case we will give you as much information as possible while maintaining confidentiality.
 - 8.2. We will give you written notice of the date, time and place of the disciplinary hearing. The hearing will be held as soon as reasonably practicable, but you will be given a reasonable amount of time to prepare your case based on the information we have given you.
- 9. The right to be accompanied**

- 9.1. You may bring a companion to any disciplinary hearing or appeal hearing under this procedure. The companion may be either a trade union representative or a colleague. You must tell the HR Committee Chairman who your chosen companion is, in good time before the hearing.
- 9.2. A companion is allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay but no-one is obliged to act as a companion if they do not wish to do so.
- 9.3. If your choice of companion is unreasonable we may require you to choose someone else, for example:
 - (a) if in our opinion your companion may have a conflict of interest or may prejudice the hearing; or
 - (b) if your companion works at another site and someone reasonably suitable is available at the site at which you work; or
 - (c) if your companion is unavailable at the time a hearing is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days.
- 9.4. We may, at our discretion, allow you to bring a companion who is not a colleague or union representative (for example, a member of your family) where this will help overcome a disability, or where you have difficulty understanding English.

10. Procedure at disciplinary hearings

- 10.1. If you or your companion cannot attend the hearing you should inform us immediately and we will arrange an alternative time. You must make every effort to attend the hearing, and failure to attend without good reason may be treated as misconduct in itself. If you fail to attend without good reason, or are persistently unable to do so (for example for health reasons), we may have to take a decision based on the available evidence.
- 10.2. The hearing will be chaired by a councillor on the HR Committee. You may bring a companion with you to the disciplinary hearing (see paragraph 9).
- 10.3. At the disciplinary hearing we will go through the allegations against you and the evidence that has been gathered. You will be able to respond and present any evidence of your own. Your companion may make representations to us and ask questions, but should not answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during the hearing.
- 10.4. You may ask relevant witnesses to appear at the hearing, provided you give us sufficient advance notice to arrange their attendance. You will be given the opportunity to respond to any information given by a witness. However, you will not normally be permitted to cross-examine witnesses unless, in exceptional circumstances, we decide that a fair hearing could not be held otherwise.
- 10.5. We may adjourn the disciplinary hearing if we need to carry out any further investigations such as re-interviewing witnesses in the light of any new points you have raised at the hearing. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.
- 10.6. We will inform you in writing of our decision and our reasons for it. Where possible we will also explain this information to you in person.

11. Disciplinary penalties

- 11.1. The usual penalties for misconduct are set out below. No penalty should be imposed without a hearing. We aim to treat all employees fairly and consistently, and a penalty imposed on another employee for similar misconduct will usually be taken into account but should not be treated as a precedent. Each case will be assessed on its own merits.
- 11.2. Stage 1 - First written warning. It will usually be appropriate for a first act of misconduct where there are no other active written warnings on your disciplinary record.

- 11.3. Stage 2 - Final written warning. It will usually be appropriate for:
- (a) misconduct where there is already an active written warning on your record; or
 - (b) misconduct that we consider sufficiently serious to warrant a final written warning even though there are no other active warnings on your record.
- 11.4. Stage 3 - Dismissal. It will usually only be appropriate for:
- (a) any misconduct during your probationary period;
 - (b) further misconduct where there is an active final written warning on your record; or
 - (c) any gross misconduct regardless of whether there are active warnings on your record. Gross misconduct will usually result in immediate dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice (summary dismissal). Examples of gross misconduct are set out in our Disciplinary Rules, which are contained in the Staff Handbook.
- 11.5. Alternatives to dismissal. In some cases we may at our discretion consider alternatives to dismissal. These will usually be accompanied by a final written warning. Examples include:
- (a) Demotion.
 - (b) Transfer to another department or job.
 - (c) A period of suspension without pay.
 - (d) Loss of seniority.
 - (e) Reduction in pay.
 - (f) Loss of future pay increment or bonus.
 - (g) Loss of overtime.
12. The effect of a warning
- 12.1. Written warnings will set out the nature of the misconduct, the change in behaviour required, the period for which the warning will remain active, and the likely consequences of further misconduct in that active period.
- 12.2. A first written warning will usually remain active for six months and a final written warning will usually remain active for 12 months. Your conduct may be reviewed at the end of a warning's active period and if it has not improved sufficiently we may decide to extend the active period.
- 12.3. After the active period, the warning will remain permanently on your personnel file but will be disregarded in deciding the outcome of future disciplinary proceedings.
13. Appeals against disciplinary action
- 13.1. If you feel that disciplinary action taken against you is wrong or unjust you should appeal in writing, stating your full grounds of appeal, to the HR Committee within one week of the date on which you were informed of the decision.
- 13.2. If you are appealing against dismissal, the date on which dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal. However, if your appeal is successful you will be reinstated with no loss of continuity or pay.
- 13.3. If you raise any new matters in your appeal, we may need to carry out further investigation. If any new information comes to light we will provide you with a summary including, where appropriate, copies of additional relevant documents and witness statements. You will have a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before

the hearing, and you or your companion may comment on any new evidence arising during the appeal before any decision is taken.

- 13.4. We will give you written notice of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing.
- 13.5. The appeal hearing may be a complete re-hearing of the matter or it may be a review of the fairness of the original decision in the light of the procedure that was followed and any new information that may have come to light. This will be at our discretion depending on the circumstances of your case. In any event the appeal will be dealt with as impartially as possible.
- 13.6. Where possible, the appeal hearing will be conducted impartially by councillors forming an Appeals Committee who have not been previously involved in the case. You may bring a companion with you to the appeal hearing (see paragraph 9).
- 13.7. We may adjourn the appeal hearing if we need to carry out any further investigations in the light of any new points you have raised at the hearing. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.
- 13.8. Following the appeal hearing we may:
 - (a) confirm the original decision;
 - (b) revoke the original decision; or
 - (c) substitute a different penalty.
- 13.9. We will inform you in writing of our final decision as soon as possible. Where possible we will also explain this to you in person. There will be no further right of appeal.

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 26th January 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

DISCIPLINARY RULES

1. Policy statement

- 1.1. These Disciplinary Rules should be read in conjunction with our Disciplinary Procedure. The aim of the Disciplinary Rules and Disciplinary Procedure is to set out the standards of conduct expected of all staff and to provide a framework within which managers can work with staff to maintain those standards and encourage improvement where necessary.
- 1.2. It is our policy to ensure that any disciplinary matter is dealt with fairly and in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 1.3. If you are in any doubt as to your responsibilities or the standards of conduct expected you should speak to your line manager or chairman.
- 1.4. These rules do not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2. Rules of conduct

- 2.1. While working for us you should at all times maintain professional and responsible standards of conduct. In particular you should:
 - (a) observe the terms and conditions of your contract, particularly with regard to:
 - (i) hours of work;
 - (ii) confidentiality;
 - (b) observe all our policies, procedures and regulations notified to you from time to time;
 - (c) take reasonable care in respect of the health and safety of colleagues and third parties [and comply with our Health and Safety Policy];
 - (d) comply with all reasonable instructions given by managers; and
 - (e) act at all times in good faith and in our best interests and those of our staff.
- 2.2. Failure to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct may result in action being taken under our Disciplinary Procedure.

3. Misconduct

The following are examples of matters that will normally be regarded as misconduct and will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure:

- (a) Minor breaches of our policies;
- (b) Minor breaches of your contract;
- (c) Damage to, or unauthorised use of, our property;
- (d) Poor timekeeping;
- (e) Time wasting;
- (f) Unauthorised absence from work;
- (g) Refusal to follow instructions;
- (h) Excessive use of our telephones for personal calls;
- (i) Excessive personal e-mail or internet usage;
- (j) Obscene language or other offensive behaviour;
- (k) Negligence in the performance of your duties; or

- (l) Smoking in no-smoking areas.

This list is intended as a guide and is not exhaustive.

4. Gross misconduct

- 4.1. Gross misconduct is a serious breach of contract and includes misconduct which, in our opinion, is likely to prejudice our business or reputation or irreparably damage the working relationship and trust between us. Gross misconduct will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and will normally lead to dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice (summary dismissal).
- 4.2. The following are examples of matters that are normally regarded as gross misconduct:
 - (a) Theft or fraud;
 - (b) Physical violence or bullying;
 - (c) Deliberate and serious damage to property;
 - (d) Serious misuse of our property or name;
 - (e) Deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material;
 - (f) Repeated or serious failure to obey instructions, or any other serious act of insubordination;
 - (g) Unlawful discrimination or harassment;
 - (h) Bringing the organisation into serious disrepute;
 - (i) Being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances during working hours;
 - (j) Causing loss, damage or injury through serious negligence;
 - (k) Serious breach of health and safety rules;
 - (l) Serious breach of confidence;
 - (m) Accepting or offering a bribe or other secret payment;
 - (n) Conviction for a criminal offence that in our opinion may affect our reputation or our relationships with our staff, customers or the public, or otherwise affects your suitability to continue to work for us;
 - (o) Possession, use, supply or attempted supply of illegal drugs;
 - (p) Serious neglect of duties, or a serious or deliberate breach of your contract or operating procedures;
 - (q) Knowing breach of statutory rules affecting your work;
 - (r) Unauthorised use, processing or disclosure of personal data contrary to our Data Protection Policy;
 - (s) Harassment of, or discrimination against, employees, contractors, clients or members of the public, related to gender, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion or belief or age;
 - (t) Refusal to disclose any of the information required by your employment or any other information that may have a bearing on the performance of your duties;
 - (u) Giving false information as to qualifications or entitlement to work (including immigration status) in order to gain employment or other benefits;

- (v) Knowingly taking parental, paternity or adoption leave when not eligible to do so or for a purpose other than supporting a child;
- (w) Making untrue allegations in bad faith against a colleague;

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 26th January 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY

DOCUMENT	PAPER / ELECTRONIC	LOCATION	STANDARD MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD
Agendas	E	Computer	3 years
Clerk's Personnel records	P	Chairman	9 months after ceasing employment
Contracts	P	File	Indefinitely
Declaration of Office Chairman	P	Admin File	Term of Office plus 1 year
Declaration of Office Councillor	P	Admin File	Term of Office plus 1 year
Election documents	P	Admin File	6 months after Election
Inspection Reports	P	Admin File	Indefinitely
Leases	P	File	Indefinitely
Newsletter	E	Computer	Indefinitely
Planning Applications & Responses	E	BDC website	
Register of Interests	E	BDC website	
Routine Correspondence	P	Correspondence File	Retain as long as useful
Routine emails	E	email account	Retain as long as useful
Signed Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting	P	Minutes File	Indefinitely
Signed Minutes of Council Meetings	P	Minutes File	Indefinitely
Annual Return	P	Accounts File by Year	Indefinitely
Bank paying-in books & Cheque book stubs	P	Finance File	Last completed audit year

Bank Statements	P	Accounts File by Year	Last completed audit year
Clerk expenses	P	Accounts File by Year	6 years
Insurance policies	P	Accounts File by Year	Indefinitely
Paid Invoices	P	Accounts File by Year	6 years
PAYE returns including hours paid	P	Accounts File by Year	6 years
Quotation and tenders	P	Accounts File by Year	12 years
Receipt & Payment Accounts	P	Accounts File by Year	Indefinitely
Receipt Books	P	Accounts File by Year	6 years
VAT records	P	Accounts File by Year	6 years
Agreements	P	Allotments File	Indefinitely

* To ensure that an old clerk's personnel file (including Contract of Employment) is available for a year-end audit no matter when he / she left. However, from an employer viewpoint a "personnel record" cannot be deleted lock, stock and barrel and it would be worthwhile following the Information Commissioners Office: "An employer should review the personal data it holds about an individual when that individual leaves the organisation's employment. It will need to retain enough data to enable the organisation to deal with, say, providing references or information about the individual's pension arrangements. However, personal data that is unlikely to be needed again should be removed from the organisation's records – such as the individual's emergency contact details, previous addresses, or death-in-service beneficiary details." Reviewed annually

DONATIONS POLICY

Introduction

Assington Parish Council (APC) sometimes receives requests from third parties for financial support. While there may be powers under which APC donate, eg Local Government Act 1972 §214 in respect to Cemetery Maintenance, normally the power to donate is contained in the Local Government Act 1972, §137, which allows a local authority to spend a limited amount on activities for which it has no specific power, but which the authority considers 'will bring direct benefit to the area, or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants'. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 added the requirement that the benefit obtained should be commensurate with the expenditure incurred.

Policy Statement

APC retains discretion to support organisations, supported by local people, financially in order to provide facilities and services for the community. All requests must promote the wellbeing of Assington residents or the fabric of the parish. The Council will earmark a sum within each annual budget for this purpose. Any donation made by APC for Cemetery Maintenance is outside the scope of this policy. APC's decision is final.

Procedure

1. Eligible donation requests will be considered at the next APC meeting after receipt by the Clerk, with the appropriate level of support determined by APC based on the benefit to the Parish
2. Approved donations will be paid by bank transfer after the meeting.

This Policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 26 September 2022

EQUALITY POLICY

Assington Parish Council ("Council") is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity for all our residents, customers, staff and potential staff and will fulfil its legal responsibilities under all legislation concerning equal opportunities.

The Council will actively develop positive practices which promote equality of opportunity and enable residents and customers to fully participate and staff to realise their full potential. No resident, customer, job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, colour, creed, nationality, ethnic or national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, marital status, or will be disadvantaged by any condition which cannot be justified. The Council will ensure that all decisions on participation, recruitment, selection, training, promotion and career development are based on abilities, merits, and objective job related criteria.

All staff are required to behave in a non-discriminatory manner and to create a culture in which people can feel confident of being treated with fairness, dignity and tolerance. It is the responsibility of all Council Members and employees to adopt and implement this policy as part of their professional activities and conduct.

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 30th March 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Making a Freedom of Information (FOI) request from Assington Parish Council

To make a request under the FOI Act please contact the Clerk in writing by letter or e-mail providing the following details:

- Your title, initials and last name
- Your address for correspondence including the postcode
- Your e-mail address if applicable
- A contact telephone number
- Details of the information you are requesting

Send your application to the council address / email address as follows:

Assington Parish Council, 4 Northfield Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket, IP14 3HF.

Email assingtonpc@yahoo.com

Council's response

The request will be registered upon receipt and the Clerk will send you an acknowledgment setting out the date of the commencement of the statutory period of 20 working days. You will be advised of the amount that you will be likely to pay for the information and payment will be required before the information is provided.

The Council must provide the information within your request within 20 working days or explain to you why it is unable to do so. If the information requested is only available by viewing in person the Clerk will make arrangements with you to view the information.

What to do if you are unhappy with the FOI response

If you are unhappy with information provided you may request an internal review of this matter from the Council. If, after an internal review, you are still unhappy with the decision, you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Telephone 01625 545745.

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 30th March 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

POLICY STATEMENT

It is our policy to ensure that all employees have access to a procedure to help deal with any grievances relating to their employment fairly and without unreasonable delay. We aim to investigate any formal grievance you raise, hold a meeting to discuss it with you, inform you in writing of the outcome, and give you a right of appeal if you are not satisfied.

Issues that may cause grievances include:

- terms and conditions of employment;

- health and safety;

- work relations;

- bullying and harassment;

- new working practices;

- working environment;

- organisational change; and

- discrimination.

This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. It may be amended at any time and we may depart from it depending on the circumstances of any case.

Who is covered by the procedure?

This procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service.

Using this procedure

If you have difficulty at any stage of the Grievance Procedure because of a disability or because English is not your first language, you should discuss the situation with the Chairman as soon as possible.

This Grievance Procedure should not be used to complain about dismissal or disciplinary action. If you are dissatisfied with any disciplinary action, you should submit an appeal under the appropriate procedure.

Written grievances will be placed on your personnel file along with a record of any decisions taken and any notes or other documents compiled during the grievance process. These will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Raising grievances informally

Most grievances can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with the Chairman. If the complaint concerns him or her, then you should speak informally to another Member of the Council. If this does not resolve the issue, you should follow the formal procedure below.

Formal written grievances

If your grievance cannot be resolved informally you should put it in writing and submit it to the Chairman, indicating that it is a formal grievance. If the grievance concerns him or her, you may submit it instead to the Vice Chairman.

The written grievance should contain a brief description of the nature of your complaint, including any relevant facts, dates, and names of individuals involved. In some situations we may need to ask you to provide further information.

Investigations

In some cases it may be necessary for us to carry out an investigation into your grievance. The amount of any investigation required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case. It may involve interviewing and taking statements from you and any witnesses, and/or reviewing relevant documents. The investigation will be carried out by the Chairman.

You must co-operate fully and promptly in any investigation. This may include informing us of the names of any relevant witnesses, disclosing any relevant documents to us and attending interviews, as part of our investigation.

We may initiate an investigation before holding a grievance meeting where we consider this appropriate. In other cases we may hold a grievance meeting before deciding what investigation (if any) to carry out. In those cases we will hold a further grievance meeting with you after our investigation and before we reach a decision.

Right to be accompanied

You may bring a companion to any grievance meeting or appeal meeting under this procedure. The companion may be either a trade union representative or a colleague. You must tell the person holding the grievance meeting who your chosen companion is, in good time before the meeting.

At the meeting, your companion may make representations to us and ask questions, but should not answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during the meeting.

Acting as a companion is voluntary and your colleagues are under no obligation to do so. If they agree to do so they will be allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion.

If your choice of companion is unreasonable we may ask you to choose someone else, for example:

- if in our opinion your companion may have a conflict of interest or may prejudice the meeting; or

- if your companion works at another site and someone reasonably suitable is available at the site at which you work; or

- if your companion is unavailable at the time a meeting is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days afterwards.

Grievance meetings

We will arrange a grievance meeting, normally within one week of receiving your written grievance.

You and your companion (if any) should make every effort to attend grievance meetings. If you or your companion cannot attend at the time specified, you should inform us immediately and we will try, within reason, to agree an alternative time.

The purpose of a grievance meeting is to enable you to explain your grievance and how you think it should be resolved, and to assist us to reach a decision based on the available evidence and the representations you have made.

After an initial grievance meeting we may carry out further investigations and hold further grievance meetings as we consider appropriate. Such meetings will be arranged without unreasonable delay.

Your companion at a grievance meeting may make representations to us and ask questions, but should not answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during the meeting.

We will write to you, usually within one week of the final grievance meeting, to inform you of the outcome of your grievance and any further action that we intend to take to resolve the grievance. We will also remind you of your right of appeal. Where appropriate we may hold a meeting to give you this information in person.

Appeals

If the grievance has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may appeal in writing to the Chairman stating your full grounds of appeal, within one week of the date on which the decision was sent or given to you.

We will hold an appeal meeting. This will be dealt with impartially by councillors forming the Appeals Committee who have not previously been involved in the case (although they may ask anyone previously involved to be present). You have a right to bring a companion to the meeting (see paragraph 9).

We will confirm our final decision in writing, usually within one week of the appeal hearing. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further appeal

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 26th January 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the Policy of Assington Parish Council ("Council") to protect all persons including employees, customers, contractors and members of the public from potential injury and damage to their health which may arise from work activities.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The Council will

- provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for all employees
- provide and maintain safe council owned facilities for the public
- provide such information, training and supervision, as they need for this purpose
- give a high level of commitment to health and safety and will comply with all statutory requirements.

WHO DOES THE POLICY APPLY TO

The Policy applies to all employees, contractors and Councillors of the Council

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

Subject to any new legislation or changes in case law which require immediate amendment; or any changes in the needs of the Parish Council, this Policy will be reviewed annually.

Internet Banking Policy

Background This policy is based on the advice issued by the National Association of Local Council (NALC) relating to parish councils' use of online banking and the implications for the way in which the Parish Council operates with regards to the authorization of payments.

Banking arrangements have changed significantly in recent years, with more transactions being carried out online. As a result of this, the use of cheques is becoming rare. Many businesses prefer to receive payment by electronic means and are now discouraging the payment of invoices by cheques. This has become particularly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Legislation The Legislative Reform (Payments by Parish Councils, Community Councils and Charter Trustees) Order 2014 (SI2014/580) came into effect on 12th March 2014. This Legislative Reform Order repeals the statutory requirement (Local Government Act 1972 section 150(5) which states that "every cheque or other order for the payment of money shall be signed by two members of the council".

The removal of this particular legal requirement enables the Parish Council to take an overall approach to how it controls its money as well as taking advantage of modern technology including internet banking.

Internal Controls The Parish Council must ensure that it maintains robust controls on payments as an integrated part of its overall financial control system and proposes an Internet Banking Policy as part of its governance.

At all times the advice of NALC in relation to dual authorization will be followed: "Councils must not relinquish the "two member signatories" control over cheques and other orders for payment until they have put in place safe and efficient arrangements in accordance with the guidance noted from the NALC Finance and Audit Advisor "the overriding requirement resulting from the abolition of S150(5) is that each and every local council seeking to depart from the two signature rule must "implement and maintain robust controls on expenditure as an integrated part of their overall financial control system".

It is not a requirement that two people authorize electronic payments, however it is a general principle that more than one person should be involved in any payment, whether that is before, at or after the point at which the payment is made. Councils must consider the appropriate systems, procedures and controls available by banking providers". Current position: February 2021 The Parish Council has two bank accounts with Unity Trust Bank with internet banking facilities set up for the day-to-day payment of invoices and receipt of income on these current accounts. The Clerk provides monthly reconciliations supported by bank statements to full Council on the Council's main Current and Deposit Accounts. Payments by cheque will be made when necessary, following the existing controls and approvals, but the Council will move to online payments as the default position.

The Council will have a minimum of three Councillors as authorised signatories at any one time.

Policy

1. Wherever possible, payments will be made using online banking and should be initiated as per the procedures set out below within three days of being agreed at a council meeting.
2. Payment for items made by internet banking transfer must have evidence retained showing which members approved release of the payment.
3. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Clerk shall be appointed as the Administrator.

The Clerk will be able to transfer funds between accounts held at the same bank.

The Clerk will be the only authorised person enabled to set up a beneficiary or a payment.

4. The Bank Mandate approved by the Council shall identify a minimum of three Councillors as Signatories who will be authorised to 'approve only' transactions on those accounts.
5. Access to internet banking accounts will be directly to the bank's log-in page and not through a search engine or e-mail link. Remembered or saved password facilities must not be used on any computer used for council banking work. Breach of this requirement will be treated as a very serious matter.
6. The Council, and those signatories using computers for the Council's internet banking, shall ensure that anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software with automatic updates, together with a high level of security, is used. Signatories may request reimbursement for the installation and annual update of such software on their personal computers.
7. No employee or Councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the working of the Council or its bank accounts, to any person not authorised in writing by the council.
8. New beneficiary details and changes to beneficiary details used for internet banking must be supported by hard copy or email notification for checking and supported by hard copy authority for change signed by the Clerk and a Signatory.
9. A programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed.

Procedure

The actual process of operating the online account will be the subject to the rules and security authorisation process of the agreed bank:

1. All orders for payment will be verified for accuracy by the Parish Clerk and included on the payment schedule.
2. The schedule of all payments shall be prepared by the Parish Clerk and presented to each meeting of the Council together with any supporting invoices or other documentation for approval. The approved schedule will be prepared by the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer agreement of all payments will be made at the meeting and the minute number recorded on the account sheet.
3. The Parish Clerk will initiate payment.
4. 1 of the 4 authorised Councillors will confirm the payments online (from the list of authorised Councillors held by Unity Trust Bank). Councillors are expected to authorise payment requests within two days of the payment being initiated by the Parish Clerk.
5. Where a councillor is to be reimbursed for expenditure, they should not be an authoriser (in the case of internet payments), or a signatory (in the case of cheque payments).
6. Inter Account Transfers

Transfers between the Council's Accounts held with Unity Trust Bank will continue to be subject to the Council's own Financial Regulation 5.5c "fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £10,000 provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council."

Information and Technology (IT) Policy

Introduction

Assington Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications.

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who use Assington Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Assington Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Assington Parish Council for work-related tasks. Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Assington Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely in compliance with the current GDPR regulations and the current **Data Protection Policy**. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

Network and internet usage

Assington Parish Council does not operate a private local-area or wide-area network. Instead, Parish Council members make use of council subscription-based cloud resources for services such as data storage, email and web hosting. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

Email communication

Email accounts provided by Assington Parish Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted.

Extreme caution shall be exercised with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. All sources shall be verified before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

Email monitoring

Assington Parish Council reserves the right to monitor email communications using the Parish Council's email domain to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

Password and account security

Assington Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

Mobile devices and remote Work

Mobile devices provided by Assington Parish Council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication.

Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the designated IT point of contact for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the Chair and Standards Committee.

Training and awareness

Assington Parish Council will provide training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology, email security and best practices updates as required.

Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in further consequences as deemed appropriate.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact The Parish Clerk, Christine Hargan
Clerk@assington-pc.gov.uk

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security Assington Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Assington Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Protocol for reporting of Assington Parish Council Meetings

1. Except where members of the public have been excluded due to the confidential nature of the business, any person may film, photograph, audio record or use social media to report on meetings of the Council, or a committee, including any public participation session.
2. Reporting is restricted by legislation to the proceedings of the meeting, in other words from calling to order to the official closure of the meeting.
3. In accordance with Government guidelines, Council policy does not permit the filming or photographing of persons under the age of eighteen or vulnerable adults without permission of a responsible adult. Any persons who object to being filmed or photographed and have moved to an area designated for this purpose should also not be filmed or photographed. However, the Council cannot guarantee that anyone will not be filmed or photographed.
4. Any person intending to report should give notice before the commencement of the meeting to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council. This will enable reasonable facilities to be afforded.
5. A notice indicating that meetings may be reported by use of filming etc. will be displayed at the meeting venue and a statement about reporting will also be included in relevant notices of meetings.
6. At the start of each meeting, the Chairman will announce that proceedings may be filmed, photographed or recorded and invite any members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed to move to the designated area.
7. Any filming or recording of meetings should be conducted overtly from a fixed point in an area of the meeting room specified by the Clerk or Chairman.
8. Live oral commentary will not be permitted at any time.
9. The use of flash photography or additional lighting will not be allowed unless agreement has been reached in advance of the meeting.
10. Recordings will not be made for reporting by the Council or any other person during any part of the meeting when the public and press are excluded.
11. Persons reporting on a meeting who act improperly or in a disruptive manner could be excluded from the meeting. 'Disruptive behaviour' would include any action or activity which disrupts the conduct of the meeting or impedes other members of the public from being able to see, hear or film etc., the proceedings. This might include:
 - Moving outside designated public areas
 - Excessive noise during debate
 - Intrusive lighting and use of flash photography
 - Asking people to repeat for the purpose of recording
12. Those reporting on meetings should not edit the recordings, films or photographs in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule, or show a lack of respect towards those being photographed, filmed or recorded.
13. Recording and reporting the council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those recording and reporting to ensure compliance, including data protection and defamation. They will be responsible for any allegations of breaches of the law which may result from their use of recorded material and are admitted to the Council

Meeting on the basis that they accept this responsibility. The Council reserves the right to initiate legal proceedings in appropriate circumstances.

14. The Council takes no responsibility for any recording made by others. It also takes no responsibility where a recording which it makes is subsequently used by any third party. Any third party making or editing a recording of a meeting shall in doing so be taken to have indemnified the Council against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands, liabilities, losses and expenses whatsoever relating to the making or use of that recording.
15. The Council asserts no copyright or control over recordings of meetings made by itself or others whilst on Council premises, subject to paragraph 12 above.
16. Generally, archived recordings made by the Council will be available on request.

This protocol was adopted by Assington Parish Council on 26th January 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

Risk Management Policy

Risk is the possibility of loss, damage, injury or failure to achieve objectives caused by an action or event. By its nature Risk management is not a planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of all risks which can threaten the assets or financial and organisational wellbeing of the council.

The Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage risks effectively to control its assets and liabilities, protect its employees and community against potential losses, minimise uncertainty and maximise the opportunity to achieve its goals.

The Purpose of this Policy is to identify, assess and mitigate potential financial risks that could impact the Parish Council's stability and performance.

The objective of this Policy is to manage the risks involved in all activities of the Parish Council. It is intended to assist in decision making processes that will minimise potential losses, improve the management of uncertainty and the approach to additional tasks.

The Policy demonstrates the importance of good Governance to the Parish Councils to protect its assets and people, whether they are Councillors, employees or the community.

Risk Identified	Impact	Risk	Insurance Cover	Steps Taken to Minimise Risk
Fraud by Clerk or Councillor(s) resulting in immediate financial loss	Medium	Low	Yes	1. Internal accounting procedures and controls as under Financial Regulations 2. Examination of all records by Internal Auditor (following end of financial year) 3. Councillors check bank accounts reconciliation at each meeting 4. No assets are held in cash
Financial loss due to negligent or inadequate accounting	Medium	Low	No	1 and 2 as above, with attention paid to sound budgeting and adequate Precept arrangements
Inadequate forward planning and budgetary controls	High	Low	No	Annual Budget Review Actual vs Budget review at meetings
Loss of or damage to Council records				
1. Accounts	Medium	Low	Limited Insurance	Accounts books from 1st April 2001 backed up by: 1. Computer hard disk 2. Back up held on external USB and Microsoft OneDrive and Pre-Oct.1973 held in archive at The Hold in Ipswich Minute books held by Clerk. Minutes also retained on: 1. Computer hard disk 2. Back up held on external USB and Microsoft OneDrive
2. Minutes				
i. Historical ii. Post-1973 iii. May 2001 onwards	Low Medium High	Low Low Low	Limited Insurance	
Loss of or damage to Council property				Assets register regularly updated
1. Street Lighting 2. Seats, notice board 3. Dog Bins & Grit Bins	Medium Low Low	Low Low Low	Yes Yes below excess	1. Periodic inspections carried out by Suffolk County Council 2. Inspected and maintained by Parish Council

Injury to persons as a consequence of assets ownership or provision of amenities	Low	Low	Yes	All physical assets and parish footpaths regularly inspected
Damage to Council's reputation	Medium	Low	No	The Council and each individual councillor follow legal requirements and Standing Orders. They adhere to the Code of Conduct for Parish Councils. The councillors consider training requirements at the appointment or co-option of Councillors and Clerk. Training requirements are reviewed during the year. Any complaints or grievances are investigated without delay
General Data Protection Regulations	Low	Low	Yes	The council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office ICO under the GDPR. The council complies with the law in the manner that it processes data
Compromise of Data through use of Microsoft Cloud	Low	Low	Yes	The Council follows requirements of the GDPR

No changes have been made to the working practices of the Council which are likely to have any bearing on risks and their management.

As adopted by Assington Parish Council meeting on 31st March 2025 and will be reviewed annually.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1 Introduction

Assington Parish Council is committed to ensuring its Councillors and staff are trained to the highest standard and kept up to date with all new legislation. To support this, funds are allocated to a training budget each year to enable staff and councillors to attend training and conferences relevant to their office. Prospective Councillors and applicants for the post of Clerk should be made aware of the content of this policy and the expectations placed upon them contained within it.

2 Policy Statement

The council is committed to ensure that it continues to fulfil its duties and responsibilities to residents professionally. To that end the Council's intention is that Councillors, Clerk and any other workers of the Council are suitably equipped with knowledge and skills to carry out their roles and maintain effective working practices. The Council will procure or provide such training and development opportunities as it deems necessary and relevant for the delivery of its work.

3 Training and Development Activity

The council consists of seven elected Councillors and employs one part-time Parish Clerk. In addition, volunteers from within the parish provide invaluable support for its work. Training and development for each of these groups will be regularly reviewed but will contain as a minimum requirement:

3.1 For Councillors

- a. Attendance at induction sessions explaining the role of Councillors
- b. Provision of an Councillor Information Handbook containing copies of the Standing orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, policies of the Council and other information deemed relevant
- c. Access to relevant courses provided by bodies such as the *Suffolk Association of Local Councils* (SALC).
- d. Expenses for attending briefings, consultations and other general meetings for Councillors in Suffolk
- e. Circulation of documentation such as briefings and newsletters/magazines

3.2 For the Clerk

- a. Induction session explaining the role of the Clerk
- b. Provision of copies of the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, policies of the Council and other information deemed relevant.
- c. Completion of the Introduction to Local Council Administration course or similar.
- d. Gaining the *Certificate in Local Council Administration* (CiLCA) within 12 months of appointment (this is a condition of employment) in order to retain Quality Parish Council status and the General Power of Competence.
- e. Any other training relevant to the proficient discharge of their duties such as IT, Legal powers, Finance and understanding the planning system, identified through regular training needs assessments.
- f. Attendance at relevant local meetings of bodies such as the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and briefings by SALC.
- g. Subscription to relevant publications and advice services.

- h. Provision of *Local Council Administration* by Paul Clayden and other relevant publications, which will remain the property of the Council.
- i. Arranging mentoring opportunities with suitably qualified Clerks from neighbouring parishes.
- j. Regular feedback from the Chairman of the Council in their performance.

3.3 For Volunteers on Parish Council activities

- a. Briefings on relevant health and safety matters and the scope of their work prior to starting.
- b. Assessment of their skill, knowledge and capacity to complete the task in hand.
- c. Briefing on the safe use of any equipment provided by the Council.
- d. Training for volunteers will not be beyond that which is necessary for their role.

4. Training needs identification

- 4.1 Training requirements for Councillors will usually be identified by themselves, the Chairman and Clerk. Opportunities to attend courses will be investigated by the Clerk and brought to the attention of the full council.
- 4.2 Annually, the Council will formally review the training needs of Councillors and the Clerk at a meeting of the Parish Council.
- 4.3 Training needs for the Clerk will be identified through the recruitment process for new clerks, including application form and interview, formal and informal discussions and annual staff appraisal. The Clerk is expected to keep up-to-date with developments in the sector and highlight to the Council any training required.

5. Resourcing Training

- 5.1 Annually, an allocation will be made in the budget each year as required to enable reasonable training and development.
- 5.2 Annually, the Council will consider an allocation in the budget for the payment of a subscription to the Society of Local Council Clerks, Institute of Local Council Management and Suffolk Association of Local Councils to enable the Clerk and Councillors to take advantage of their training courses and conferences.
- 5.3 Purchases of relevant resources such as publications will be considered on an ongoing basis.

6. Evaluation and review of training

- 6.1 All training undertaken will be subsequently evaluated by the Council to gauge its relevance, content and appropriateness. Any additional training needs highlighted as a result will be brought into the training identification process in section 4 above.
- 6.2 Training will be reviewed in the light of changes to legislation or any quality systems relevant to the Council; new qualifications; new equipment; complaints received or incidents which highlight training needs and requests from Councillors, the Clerk or volunteers.
- 6.3 The Clerk will maintain a record of training attended by themselves and Councillors.

This policy was adopted by Assington Parish Council at its meeting on 26th January 2015 and will be reviewed annually.