

HELPSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Risk Management Policy & Governance Risk Register 2026

Version Control:

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Adopted: April 2026

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ACCESSIBILITY REMINDER: When publishing this document, export as an accessibility-checked (tagged) PDF using structured headings and readable fonts.

1. Purpose

This Risk Management Policy sets out Helpston Parish Council's framework for identifying, assessing and managing risks that may affect governance, finance, operations, assets, staffing, public activities and reputation.

Effective risk management supports sound decision-making, protects public funds and ensures the Council fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

2. Governance and Legislative Framework

Prepared having regard to:

- Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014
- Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015
- "Statement of Assurance of Proper Practices" (SAPPP) Practitioners' Guide (formerly JPAG Practitioners' Guide)
- Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Bribery Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- Relevant guidance issued by NALC and SLCC

3. Relationship to the Annual Governance Statement (AGAR)

This policy supports compliance with the Annual Governance Statement, particularly:

Assertion 1 – Proper accounting records have been kept.

Assertion 2 – The Council maintained an adequate system of internal control.

Assertion 5 – The Council carried out an assessment of the risks facing the authority.

Assertion 10 – The Council complied with transparency obligations.

The Risk Register contained within this document forms part of the Council's evidence for these assertions.

This policy forms part of the Council's core governance framework alongside the Financial Regulations and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) processes. Together, these elements form an integrated system of governance and internal control that supports lawful decision-making, financial management, and accountability.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by the Council and to councillors, the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, contractors and volunteers acting on behalf of the Council.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Council – holds overall responsibility for risk management and the approval of this policy.

Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer – maintains the Risk Register, monitors risks and implements operational controls.

Councillors – review risks periodically and ensure appropriate governance arrangements are maintained.

6. Risk Identification

Risks may arise from:

- Financial management and internal control
- Governance and decision-making processes
- Transparency and statutory publication requirements
- Council assets and insurance

- Health and safety responsibilities
- Data protection and information governance
- Public events associated with the Council
- Staffing and operational capacity

7. Risk Assessment Methodology

Risks are evaluated by considering:

- Likelihood of occurrence
- Potential impact on the Council
- Existing control measures

Risks may be categorised as Low, Medium or High.

8. Control and Mitigation

Risk controls may include:

- Governance policies and procedures
- Financial Regulations and internal control systems
- Insurance cover and asset inspections
- Staff training and councillor awareness
- Health and safety assessments
- Contractual safeguards

9. Governance Risk Register

Financial Control

Risk: Loss, fraud or misstatement of Council funds. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Financial Regulations, dual authorisation of payments in accordance with the Council's bank mandate and Financial Regulations, bank reconciliations, retention of invoices and councillor oversight.

Governance & Decision-Making

Risk: Unlawful or improperly recorded decisions. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Standing Orders, published agendas and minutes, councillor training.

Draft minutes are reviewed by the Chair before publication to improve accuracy.

Lawful Use of Statutory Powers

Risk: Unlawful expenditure or action arising from the use of incorrect statutory powers

or improper decision-making. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Clerk advice provided at meetings, reference to statutory powers prior to resolution, compliance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, and reliance on recognised guidance, including Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration and JPAG Practitioners' Guide.

Transparency & Publication

Risk: Failure to publish statutory information. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Website publication schedule ensuring that statutory and governance documents, including Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, policies and Annual Governance and Accountability Return documentation, are published in accordance with statutory transparency requirements.

Assets & Insurance

Risk: Loss or damage to Council assets. **Risk Rating: Low-Medium**

Controls: Asset Register, routine inspections of council assets, including the village sign, village green, cemetery and other public areas, and annual insurance review.

Health & Safety

Risk: Injury to councillors, staff, contractors or members of the public. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Risk assessments, contractor insurance, site inspections and health and safety procedures. Cemetery and churchyard memorial safety inspections are conducted periodically to manage potential risks posed by unstable memorials.

Public Meetings / Councillor Safety

Risk: Personal safety risks or misunderstanding arising from meetings with members of the public. **Risk Rating: Low**

Controls: Where practicable, meetings between councillors and members of the public should be attended by two councillors.

Data Protection

Risk: Personal data breach or unlawful processing. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: GDPR policies, access controls, ICO registration and data management procedures.

Information Security / Cyber Risk

Risk: Loss of data, disruption to Council operations or financial fraud arising from cyber incidents or system failure. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Secure passwords, controlled user access, regular software updates, secure cloud storage arrangements and staff awareness of cybersecurity guidance.

External Events & Public Activities

Risk: Injury, safeguarding issues or reputational damage arising from events organised by or associated with the Parish Council. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Event risk assessments, confirmation of Public Liability Insurance, clear identification of organisers and allocation of responsibilities.

Staffing & Capacity

Risk: Loss of key operational knowledge. **Risk Rating: Medium**

Controls: Documented procedures, handover notes and access to external professional support where required.

Risk Ratings are interpreted as follows:

Low – Minor operational disruption with minimal financial or reputational impact

Medium – Noticeable operational or financial impact requiring management action

High – Significant risk with potential legal, financial or reputational consequences requiring urgent control measures

10. Monitoring and Review

The Risk Register will be reviewed at least annually and in conjunction with the preparation of the Council's budget and completion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. Additional reviews may take place where new activities, projects or risks arise.

11. Approval

Approved by Helpston Parish Council

Chair: _____

Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer: _____

Date of adoption: _____

Next Review: January 2027

