

GREAT SHEFFORD PARISH COUNCIL

RISK REGISTER 2026/27

Ref	Risk/Trigger	Risk Action ⁱ	Current Risk Management	Impact Rating ⁱⁱ	Likelihood Rating ⁱⁱⁱ	Risk Rating ^{iv}	Further Action Required
STRATEGIC							
S01	Failure to attract sufficient candidates for Member vacancies or elections, leading to unfilled seats	Reduce	- Public notices of vacancies - Targeted local awareness campaigns (social media, newsletters, posters) - Promotion of meetings and encourage attendance to generate interest in being part of the Council	3	3	9	Add page to website containing basic role description
S02	Lack of public consultation on key decisions, leading to poor community engagement, reduced trust and reputational damage	Reduce	- Statutory consultations conducted when required - Use surveys, drop-in events, and online tools for non-statutory consultations - All consultations relating to the village shared via website and social media - Public participation at Council meetings encouraged - Build ongoing two-way communication with local stakeholders	3	2	6	Prepare a community engagement policy

S03	Council decisions not implemented , leading to delays in service delivery, damage to public trust and potentially legal or financial exposure	Reduce	- Decisions recorded in meeting minutes - Regular agenda item to receive updates on outstanding and ongoing actions - Regular communication between Clerk and Council Members	3	2	6	
S04	Loss of the Parish Clerk's services due to resignation, illness, or other absence, leading to disruption in council administration, delays in decision-making, and potential non-compliance with statutory duties	Reduce	- Clear job description and documented procedures maintained - Use of locum clerk/s or temporary cover arrangements - Up-to-date recruitment procedures in place	3	3	9	Develop and maintain a detailed handover and business continuity plan
S05	Lack of timely or adequate professional advice leading to uninformed decision-making, increased risk of non-compliance, financial loss, or reputational damage	Reduce	- Qualified Clerk - Access to external legal, financial and governance advisors - Training and development opportunities for Council Members and staff	4	2	8	Consider membership of professional bodies (NALC, SLCC) to access advice and support Budget provision for professional consultancy services, when needed

S06	Lack of clearly defined objectives or strategic direction , resulting in unfocused efforts, inefficient resource use, and failure to meet community needs	Reduce	- Parish Plan adopted in 2007	2	3	6	Refresh Parish Plan Develop Council priorities with clear, measurable objectives Engage stakeholders and community in strategy development
S07	Failure to accurately identify or understand the local community's needs and wishes , leading to misaligned services, reduced community satisfaction, and loss of trust	Reduce	- Regular community engagement events and opportunities - Open forum at each Council meeting - Annual Parish Assembly - Feedback mechanisms through website and social media - Established partnerships with local organisations and stakeholders	3	2	6	Community needs assessments as part of Parish Plan refresh (see S06)

S08	Negative media coverage or public perception damaging the Council's reputation, leading to loss of public trust and reduced community support	Reduce	- Chairman is designated spokesperson/s for media relations - Monitoring of media and social media channels - Proactively engage with community to build positive relationships - Respond swiftly and transparently to negative coverage	3	2	6	Develop communication and media policy Provide media training for key personnel
S09	Low levels of public participation in Council meetings leading to reduced transparency, diminished community trust, and lack of representation of community views	Reduce	- Public notices and agendas published in advance - Meetings held at accessible time and location - Opportunities for public questions and comments - Enhanced communication to raise awareness of key matters - Use of diverse engagement channels (social media, newsletters)	2	3	6	Monitor legislation for changes in virtual meeting attendance options to increase accessibility Hold occasional community forums / workshops / surgeries to encourage involvement

S10	Disaster impacting the village, natural or man-made disasters (e.g., severe flooding, major storm, wildfire, gas leak, or large-scale infrastructure failure) affecting the safety, infrastructure and functioning of the village. Potential impacts include evacuation, disruption to essential services, damage to property and risk to life.	Share	- Respond to instructions from emergency services and West Berkshire Council emergency planning team - Established Emergency Management Team (EMT) - Village hall available as temporary shelter	4	2	8	Liaise with EMT to establish their processes and procedures Prepare Community Emergency Plan Risk awareness campaigns and preparedness advice shared with residents
S11	Damage to third party property or individuals as a consequence of Council activity or failure to ensure adequate health and safety	Insure	- Health & safety checks before and during each activity - Risk Assessment carried out during preparation for events and activities - Adequate insurance - Training	4	2	8	

COMPLIANCE							
C12	Failure to achieve quorum at meetings, resulting in delayed decision-making, inability to conduct business, and reputational damage	Reduce	- Meeting schedule agreed and published in advance - Agendas sent ahead of time - Encourage Members to submit advance notice of apologies for absence - Engage with Members to understand and address barriers to attendance - Regular attendance monitoring - Maintain up-to-date contact details and communication protocols	4	2	8	Strengthen succession planning and recruitment of Members (see S01)
C13	Failure to respond to electors wishing to exercise their statutory right to inspect accounts and related documents, potentially resulting in non-compliance with audit legislation, legal challenge, and reputational damage	Reduce	- Inspection period published in accordance with statutory deadlines - Clear internal calendar of key audit dates - Named contact officer for inspection requests - Statutory rights guidance included on website and noticeboards	4	2	8	

C14	Members acting independently or without authority outside of formal Council meetings, potentially leading to reputational harm, breaches of the Code of Conduct, invalid decisions, or legal challenge	Reduce	- Member Code of Conduct in place - Standing Orders & Financial Regulations clearly define authority - Standing Orders & Financial Regulations are kept up to date and accessible - Address inappropriate behaviour promptly through Chairman or Monitoring Officer	4	2	8	Member training on roles and responsibilities Reinforce importance of collective decision-making via regular training and reminders Induction programme to set expectations for new Members
C15	Meeting minutes that are inaccurate, delayed, or fail to properly record decisions, leading to legal risk, loss of transparency, disputes over decisions, or reputational damage	Reduce	- Draft minutes reviewed by all Council Members before publication - Minutes approved and signed at subsequent meeting - Use of consistent minuting format - Training on minute-taking standards as required - Internal quality checks for accuracy and clarity	4	2	8	

C16	Inadequate document control , including poor version tracking, insecure storage, or difficulty retrieving records, leading to data loss, non-compliance with statutory obligations, inefficiency, or reputational harm	Reduce	- Basic naming conventions and folder structures in use - Regular backups taken - Version control protocols (v0.1 etc for drafts, v1.0 etc when adopted)	3	2	6	Explore cloud storage Adopt a formal document management policy as part of GDPR overhaul
C17	Failure to recognise or properly address conflicts of interest , resulting in compromised decision-making, legal or reputational risk, or breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct	Reduce	- Members' Code of Conduct in place - Declaration of Interests is a standing agenda item - Register of Interests maintained and published - Training on identifying and declaring interests available - Annual reminder to Members to review and update their Register of Interests - Standing Orders provide a clear procedure for managing declared interests in meetings	4	2	8	Include conflict-of-interest guidance in new member induction

C18	Incomplete or inaccurate Register of Members' Interests , leading to undeclared conflicts, breaches of the Code of Conduct, potential legal challenges, and reputational damage	Reduce	- Annual reminder sent to Members to update Register - Register published on Council website - New Members complete register on appointment - Regular audits of Register entries for completeness and accuracy - Members reminded of their ongoing obligations during meetings	4	2	8	Provide training on importance of accurate declarations
C19	Failure to complete or submit the Annual Return by the statutory deadline, resulting in non-compliance, possible audit qualification, financial penalties, and reputational damage	Reduce	- Annual Return deadline included in Council calendar - Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer assigned to oversee preparation - Detailed timetable for preparation, review and submission established - Staff training on Annual Return requirements	4	2	8	Contingency planning for staff absence during key periods (see S04)

C20	Allegations of libel or slander against Council Members or staff, leading to legal action, reputational damage, and financial costs	Reduce	- Council Members sign up to Code of Conduct - Obtain legal advice promptly when allegations arise	4	2	8	Provide training on professional and respectful communication, defamation laws and communications Develop policies on media and public statements, including clear protocols for public statements and social media use Develop a complaints and dispute resolution process
C21	Lack of adequate knowledge or understanding of relevant laws and regulations by Council Members or staff, leading to non-compliance, legal challenges, and reputational damage	Reduce	- Qualified Clerk - Access to legal advice - Training sessions on key legislation - Availability of updated legal resources - Consultation with legal experts before decisions, as needed - Monitor legislative changes impacting the Council	4	2	8	Ensure future Clerks are qualified or willing to undertake qualification at commencement of employment (also see S05)

C22	Failure to comply with data protection laws and regulations (e.g., GDPR), resulting in legal penalties, data breaches and reputational damage	Reduce	- Staff training on data protection - Clerk appointed as Data Protection Officer (DPO) - Ongoing training and awareness opportunities - Secure data handling and storage practices - Storage of data limited to essential - Access to data limited to essential	4	2	8	Prepare data protection policy and procedures, including breach response protocols
C23	Employer Liabilities	Insure	- Staff training to ensure compliance with employment law	3	2	6	Councillor training

FINANCIAL							
F24	Inadequate insurance coverage exposing the Council to financial loss, liability claims and operational disruptions in the event of incidents	Reduce	- Regular insurance reviews and renewals, updating policies to reflect current risks and assets - Risk assessments to identify coverage need - Maintain documentation of all insurance policies	4	2	8	
F25	Failure to accurately calculate or submit the precept by the statutory deadline, resulting in delayed funding, financial shortfalls, and potential legal issues	Reduce	- Established timeline and calendar for precept process - Financial planning procedures - Set earlier internal deadlines for draft and final precept submission	4	2	8	
F26	Setting an inadequate precept or preparing an unsound budget , leading to insufficient funds to meet Council obligations, service disruptions and financial instability	Reduce	- Regular financial reviews and forecasting at Council meetings - Use of historical data and expert advice - Establish contingency reserves	4	2	8	Training for councillors on financial matters

F27	Failure to correctly account for and recover VAT , resulting in financial loss, penalties, and non-compliance with tax regulations	Reduce	- Use of experienced finance personnel - Regular VAT training - Periodic VAT audits - Liaise with tax advisors as needed - Clear VAT recording and documentation process	3	2	6	
F28	Exceeding agreed budgets , leading to financial strain, reduced service delivery, and potential loss of stakeholder confidence	Reduce	- Regular budget monitoring and reporting at Council meetings - Adopted approval processes for payments and expenditure - Reserves maintained	4	2	8	
F29	Holding reserves that are either excessive or inadequate , leading to inefficient use of resources or financial vulnerability	Reduce	- Financial forecasting and risk assessment - Regular reserve level reviews - Adjust reserves in line with financial strategy and anticipated needs	3	2	6	Prepare reserves policy
F30	Risk of fraudulent activities committed by the Clerk , leading to financial loss, reputational damage and legal consequences	Reduce	- Annual internal audit - Financial controls and approval processes - Internal controls -	4	2	8	Provide fraud awareness training Conduct background checks during recruitment

F31	Risk of fraudulent activities committed by Councillors , leading to financial loss, damage to the Council's reputation, and legal consequences	Reduce	- Councillors sign up to adhere to Code of conduct - Declarations of interests recorded - Transparency in decision-making - Robust oversight mechanisms - Standing Orders & Financial Regulations provide roles, responsibilities and authorisation levels	4	2	8	Training on ethical standards and anti-fraud measures Establish whistleblowing and reporting procedures
F32	Inaccurate, incomplete or poorly maintained financial records , leading to errors in reporting, audit failures and potential financial mismanagement	Reduce	- Annual internal audit - Financial report to each Council meeting - Staff training on financial record-keeping - Strict record-keeping protocols - Frequent reconciliation reports	4	2	8	
F33	Failure to meet HMRC requirements , including accurate tax filings and timely payments, resulting in penalties, interest charges, and reputational damage	Reduce	- Regular payroll and tax processing checks - HMRC updates monitored - Staff training on HMRC regulations - Maintain up-to-date records and documentation - Establish internal deadlines ahead of HMRC due dates	4	2	8	

OPERATIONAL							
O34	Improper contracting procedures , including failure to follow procurement rules or inadequate documentation, leading to financial loss, legal challenges and reputational damage	Reduce	- Financial Regulations, including procurement policy in place - Contracts approved at Council meetings - Training on contracting and procurement - Clear documentation and record-keeping for all contracts	4	2	8	
O35	Loss of important data stored on laptop due to hardware or software failure, resulting in operational disruption, loss of records, and potential data breach	Reduce	- Regular backups to secure external storage device - Antivirus and security software installed and updated - Training on data handling and saving protocols	4	2	8	Explore cloud storage
O36	Failure to adequately monitor and manage performance of contractors or partners delivering work, goods or services, resulting in substandard outcomes, delays, financial loss and reputational damage	Reduce	- Clear partnership agreements with defined performance standards - Regular performance monitoring	3	2	6	

O37	Failure to accurately maintain and update the fixed assets register , leading to incomplete records, financial misstatements and potential loss or misuse of assets	Reduce	- Asset register recorded - Annual reconciliation of asset records with physical assets	3	2	6	
O38	Safety hazards or maintenance failures in recreation ground and play area , leading to injury, legal liability and reputational damage	Reduce Insure	- Regular recorded safety inspections and maintenance schedules (monthly, bi-annual and annual) - Compliance with health and safety standards - Clear signage and usage rules - Timely repairs and upgrades - User feedback and hazard reporting encouraged	4	2	8	Separate Risk Assessment for play equipment, including Skate Park
O39	Trees on the boundaries of the recreation ground pose risks of falling branches, root damage or obstruction, leading to injury, property damage or liability issues	Reduce Insure	- Routine pruning and maintenance - Regular safety assessments and remedial works - Maintain record of inspections and actions taken - Encourage site users to report concerns	4	2	8	Introduce regular tree inspections by qualified arborists Prepare a tree management and maintenance plan

O40	Damage, vandalism or neglect of bus shelters leading to safety hazards, increased maintenance costs and negative public perception	Reduce Insure	- Prompt repair of reported damage - Engage community for reporting issues	4	2	8	Develop a maintenance and inspection plan, including routine inspections and cleaning schedules
O41	Railings adjacent to highway may deteriorate or become damaged, posing safety hazards to pedestrians and motorists and potential liability for the Council	Reduce Insure	- Prompt repair of damage - Ensure visibility and signage where necessary - Coordinate with highways authority on safety requirements	4	2	8	Regular inspections and maintenance schedule
O42	Grit bins may be insufficiently stocked or poorly maintained, leading to safety hazards during icy conditions	Reduce Insure	- Regular checks and refilling schedules - Reporting system for public to notify low supply or damage - Maintain records of inspections and refills	3	2	6	Public awareness campaigns on safe use
O43	Litter bins may overflow, be damaged, or poorly located, leading to increased littering, environmental impact and negative public perception	Reduce Insure	- Regular emptying and maintenance schedules - Strategic placement in high-traffic areas - Public reporting signage - Regular audits to assess bin condition and placement - Option to increase frequency of collection during peak periods - Engage community in reporting issues	2	2	4	

O44	Dog bins may overflow, be vandalised, or poorly maintained, leading to health hazards, unpleasant environment and negative public perception	Reduce Insure	- Regular emptying and cleaning schedules - Strategic placement in popular dog-walking areas - Signage encouraging responsible use - Option to increase frequency of emptying during peak periods - Engage community to report issues - Promote responsible dog ownership campaigns	2	2	4	
O45	Notice board at the village shop may suffer from weather damage, vandalism, outdated or inaccurate information, reducing effectiveness and community engagement	Reduce Insure	- Regular inspections and updates - Weatherproof and durable materials - Routine maintenance and content review - Replace or repair damage promptly	2	2	4	
O46	Benches around the village may become damaged, unstable or deteriorate over time, posing safety hazards and reducing public amenity value	Reduce Insure	- Regular inspections and maintenance - Use of durable materials - Prompt repairs or replacement as needed - Routine inspection and maintenance program - Encourage public reporting of damage - Budget for timely repairs and upgrades	3	2	6	

O47	Fencing at the recreation ground and play area may become damaged or deteriorate, creating safety hazards for users and potential liability for the Council	Reduce Insure	- Regular safety inspections and maintenance schedule - Maintenance and timely repairs - Compliance with safety standards and regulations - Any damage or wear promptly addressed - Ensure fencing meets relevant safety guidelines - Record of inspections and repairs maintained - Budget for timely repairs and replacements	2	2	4	
O48	Benches at the recreation ground and play area may become damaged, unstable or deteriorate, posing safety hazards and reducing public amenity	Reduce Insure	- Regular inspections and maintenance - Use of weather-resistant materials - Prompt repairs or replacement - Encourage public reporting of damage - Budget for timely repairs and replacements	3	2	6	

O49	Skate park equipment may become damaged, worn or unsafe, increasing risk of injury to users and potential liability for the Council	Reduce Insure	- Regular safety inspections and maintenance - Compliance with relevant safety standards - Frequent inspections and prompt repairs - Encourage users to report hazards - Maintain records of maintenance and incidents	4	2	8	Include Skate Park in the play equipment Risk Assessment (see O38) Signage outlining safe usage
O50	Defibrillators may be unavailable or malfunction due to lack of maintenance, battery failure or vandalism, risking lives during emergencies	Reduce Insure	- Regular checks and maintenance schedule - Secure housing to prevent vandalism - Public awareness of locations - Routine battery replacements - Clear signage indicating location	3	2	6	Consider community training on usage

ⁱ Eliminate, Reduce, Transfer, Share, Insure, Accept

ⁱⁱ 1 = negligible, 2 = low, 3 = medium, 4 = high

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^{iv} Risk ratings of 12 and above will be subject to detailed consideration and/or preparation of a contingency/action plan to appropriately control the risk (Risk Management Strategy, para 5.4)