Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Parish Council
General Risk Assessment

Risk management is an essential part of effective local governance. The Parish Council recognises its duty under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which state:

> ***"A relevant authority must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective and includes effective arrangements for the management of risk."***

This document categorises the risks as High (H), Medium (M), or Low (L) based on likelihood and potential impact. The Risk Assessment will be reviewed annually by the Clerk and presented to the Parish Council for approval.

1. ASSETS AND SERVICES

No.	Area	Risk Identified	Risk Level	Measures / Comments	Further Action Required
1	Play area, Hedley Haward playing field and MUGA	Vandalism, injury, cost of replacement, legal liability, loss of amenity	M	Weekly visual and written inspections by Councillors; monthly and quarterly inspections (K Hussey); insurance cover.	None
2	Trees on parish land	Falling branches or debris causing injury or damage; legal liability	M	Visual inspections (especially after bad weather); public liability insurance; 3-yearly tree surveys by professional	Book tree survey in 2026-27
3	Street furniture and other assets (e.g. bus shelter, war memorial, noticeboards)	Damage, vandalism/theft, legal liability	L	Insurance; inspections by councillors; maintenance regime; budgeted reserves	None
4	Loss/damage of IT or files; office use lost due to disaster	Administration interruption; possible financial loss	M	Office 365, SharePoint, OneDrive; cloud backups; insurance; fire-proof cabinet; work-from-home ability; 4G/Wi-Fi access; password protection	May Investigate additional cybersecurity; scan key documents

5	Loss of council-owned land	Legal expenses; amenity loss	L	Title deeds stored securely; land registered with HM Land Registry; robust lease agreements	None
7	Poor allotment management	Amenity loss; H&S issues; reputation	L	Updated tenant/waiting lists; plot and H&S inspections; signed tenancy agreements; insurance	None
8	Misuse of playing field for events	Legal liability; nuisance to neighbours	L	Risk assessments and insurance required from third parties	None
9	Accidental loss or damage to fixed assets	Financial loss; service loss	L	Insurance; asset register; Fixed Asset Policy	None
10	Christmas tree and lights	Injury, theft, liability	L	Specialist contractor for installation and checks; insurance; secure storage; annual inspections	None
12	General village maintenance	H&S risk to workers/volunteers	M	Contractor insured and trained; 3-year contract cycle; qualified contractor;	Clerk to check first aid kit and consider first aid training action JE

2. ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL LIABILITIES

No.	Area	Risk Identified	Risk Level	Measures / Comments	Further Action Required
13	Failure to attract councillors	Reduced representation: services disrupted; inquorate meetings	M	Publicise elections/vacancies (noticeboards, website, Facebook, newsletter); promote volunteering	None
14	Failure to achieve quorum	Decisions cannot be made	M	Annual calendar; prompt agendas; attendance records.	None

15	Lack of public consultation	Poor decisions; public disenfranchised	L	Publicise meetings; use Annual Parish Meeting; online and print communications; feedback at events; public sessions at meetings, social media	None
16	Members acting alone	Legal liability; invalid indemnities	M	Members given 'Good Councillor Guide'; encouraged not to act alone; relevant training	None
17	Council decisions not implemented	Undermines trust; reputational risk	M	Draft minutes published within 2 weeks; actions reviewed at meetings	None
18	Inaccurate/improper minutes	Poor decision evidence	L	Clerk checks minutes with Chair and Vice within 7 days; drafts published online	None
19	Poor document control	Inaccessible or inaccurate records	L	Filing system and version control implemented	None
20	Failure to address conflicts of interest	Lack of transparency; complaints	M	Code of Conduct issued; training; Standing Orders	Training to be encouraged
21	Inaccurate register of interests	Transparency concerns	L	Code of Conduct; induction;	None
22	Loss of Clerk	Administration breakdown	M	Some members trained in Clerk tasks; password access in sealed envelope; contact with DAPTC for locum; Chair holds key copies	None
23	Lack of objectives/strategy	Poor performance; wasted resources	L	Budgets to be considered in Oct/Nov	Ongoing
24	Allegations of libel/slander	Legal risk; reputational damage	M	Clerk reviews all media; insurance in place; Complaints and FOI Policies	None
25	Bad publicity	Public trust damage	L	Media reviewed before release; social media Policy in place	None

26	Inadequate insurance	Financial/legal risk	M	Annual review by Finance Group and Full PC; long-term policy with Clear Councils; asset-linked values	None
27	Lack of legal knowledge	Non-compliance	L	Memberships (DAPTC, SLCC and NALC); qualified Clerk; training policy; reference books purchased	None
28	Failure to comply with law	Legal and reputational risk	L	Clerk is trained; liaises with auditors; relevant memberships maintained	None
29	HMRC/employment law not met	Fines; legal risk	L	Clerk/RFO completes HMRC submissions; written contracts; employer insurance	None
30	GDPR breaches	Legal action; data misuse	M	Privacy policies, data map, retention policy; Clerk/member training; secure systems; ICO registration	None
31	Staff health & safety	Injury, legal liability	L	H&S Policy and risk assessments in place; PPE and lone worker equipment supplied; Lone Working Policy reviewed annually	None
32	Councillor/visitor H&S	Legal liability	L	H&S Policy in place; £10m public liability insurance	None

3. FINANCE AND CONTRACTS

No.	Area	Risk Identified	Risk Level	Measures / Comments	Further Action Required
33	General financial management	Misappropriation of funds	M	Two-authority internet banking; monthly reconciliations signed by Chair; Finance Group and internal audit reviews; current signatories, Jeremy Edwards, Bekkie Webb, Carol King and Clerk	None

34	Right of inspection not met	Complaints; legal non-compliance	L	Clerk advertises inspection period and responds to requests	None
35	Payment errors	Overpayment, underpayment, or fraud	L	Invoices verified and logged; payments authorised by Full Council; audit trail maintained; Internal Control Policy	None
36	Bank failure	Financial loss	M	Funds held in separate accounts; policies in Financial Regulations	None
37	Cheque misuse	Fraud or loss	L	Cheques stored securely; - cheques no longer used	None
38	Poor investment returns	Loss of income	L	Interest reviewed annually by Finance group; Investment Policy to be completed	Investment policy to be completed
39	Missed annual return deadline	Negative audit report	L	Clerk keeps online diary and tracks deadlines	None
40	Risk in partnerships/contracts	Service failure; reputational/financial risk	L	Standing Orders; Financial Regs; trained and qualified Clerk; written contracts for £5k+; tender analysis	None
41	Unmonitored contractor performance	Failed responsibilities	M	Procedures in Standing Orders and Financial Regs; internal audit	None
42	Missed precept submission	Budget shortfall	M	Dorset Council deadlines tracked; precept approval as agenda item	None
43	Inadequate precept/budget	Resource failure	M	Risk-based budgeting; reserves policy; regular monitoring; internal/external audit	None
44	VAT recovery failure	Wasted resources	L	Clerk processes claims as and when over £100 or annually; internal audit check	None
45	Overspending budgets	Financial mismanagement	L	Clerk monitors; PC review budgets regularly	None

46	Excessive or inadequate reserves	Criticism from auditors; poor planning	L	Reserves and investment Policy to be completed	Ongoing
47	Clerk fraud	Legal risk; service failure	M	Internal audit; internal controls; two-authority payments; Fidelity Guarantee insurance; PAYE checked by Chair and vice	None
48	Member fraud	Legal risk; reputational harm	M	Same controls as above; oversight by Full Council and auditors	None
49	Incomplete asset register	Audit failure	L	Reviewed annually by Council and auditors	None
50	Improper financial records	Financial risk	M	Uses Scribe accounting software; reviewed by internal audit	None
51	Accounts deadlines missed	Audit risk	L	Clerk aware of statutory deadlines; liaises with auditors if needed	None
52	Internet banking misuse	Fraud; service disruption	H	Two-authority Lloyds online banking; transactions logged in Scribe; electronic approval; monthly reconciliation	None
53	Supplier fraud	Financial loss	M	Due diligence on suppliers; Companies House checks; retention clauses; delivery/location control; online banking payee checks	None
54	Ultra vires expenditure	Legal risk	L	Legal authority recorded in minutes; general power of competence used	None
55	Unfair contract awards	Complaints; audit investigation	L	Standing Orders and Financial Regs followed; complaints procedure; use of Contracts Finder over £30k	None
56	Payroll	PC liability for National Insurance and tax compliance.	L	The PC is a registered employer and uses HMRC's basic tools to ensure correct payroll processes are followed.	None

57	Internal Audit	Internal controls may not be sufficient to manage risks.	L	An independent and qualified internal auditor reviews controls annually. An internal auditor was engaged from 2022-23. retiring	To consider new internal auditor 2025-26
58	External Audit	Non-compliance with external audit requirements.	L	The external auditor, nominated by NALC, is BDO LLP (contracted from 2023 for five years). The PC has consistently submitted annual audits on time, with no issues raised.	Small error of rounding raised

Document History

- **Approval by Full Council**: 4th September 2025
- **Next Review Due**: November 2025