

Ash Parish Council Policies 2026	On website	Adopted	Review		Additional Policies/Best Practice		
Policies Listed individually						On website	
Asset Register	YES	2023	2026		Biodiversity Policy	YES	2023 No change
Good Councillor Guide	YES	2024	2027		Biodiversity Working Group	YES	2023 No change
					Biodiversity action plan	YES	2022 No change
Policies adopted since May 2025					Public Land/building register	YES	2025 No change
Code of Conduct	YES	2024	2027		Recording Policy	YES	2025 No change
Procurement Policy	YES	2025	2027		Safeguarding	YES	2025 No change
Procurement guidelines	YES	2026	2027		Tree Policy	YES	2025 No change
Purchase Order	YES	2026	2027				
Policies to be updated/adopted/re-adopted at APCM					Policies on Website		
Cemetery Charges	YES	TBA	2026		Co-option Policy	YES	2025 No change
Data Retention Policy	YES	TBA	2026		Co-option info/application form	YES	2025 No change
Dignity at Work/Civility	YES	TBA	2026		Complaints	YES	2025 No change
Scheme of delegation	YES	TBA	2026		Disciplinary Policy	YES	2025 No change
Risk Management Scheme	YES	2025	2026		Equality & Diversity Policy	YES	2025 No change
Risk Management StrategyPolicy	YES	2025	2026		Financial Regulations	YES	2025 No change
Standing Orders	YES	2024	2026		Grant Application/Policy	YES	2025 No change
					Grievance Policy	YES	2025 No change
					Health & Safety /lone worker	YES	2025 No change
					Investment Policy	YES	2025 No change
Assertion 10 Policies (Green)(A10 & Parish Council)							
Website accessibility Statement	YES	TBA	2027				
Data Breach Procedure	YES	TBA	2027				
Data Breach Reporting Form	YES	TBA	2027				
GDPR Map	YES	TBA	2027				
Privacy Policy A10/PC	YES	2025	2027				
Publication Scheme A10/PC	YES	TBA	2027				
Data Protection Policy A10/PC	YES	2025	2027				
Document Retention/disposal A10/PC	YES	2025	2027				
FOI PolicyA10/PC	YES	2025	2027				
IT Policy A10/PC	YES	2026	2027				
Email Retention Policy A10/PC	YES	2026	2027				

ASH PARISH COUNCIL Co-option Application

Information for parishioners wanting to be considered for co-option as Councillor for Ash Parish Council.

The Role of a Parish Council

A parish council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish and has an overall responsibility for the well-being of its local community. It is the level government closest to the community and its work falls into three main categories:

- Representing the local community
- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Striving to improve quality of life in the parish

The Role and Responsibilities of a Parish Councillor

Parish councillors act as ambassadors for their community, keeping everyone aware of local needs and concerns. Councillors represent the voice of their community as a whole, whilst being aware of, and considerate to, specific minority needs.

Responsibilities include (but not limited to):

- To determine council policy and provide community leadership; monitor and review council performance in implementing policies and delivering services; represent the council externally; and act as advocates for their residents/community
- Improve the quality of life and the environment in their local area.
- Work to identify issues that are important to the lives of the residents
- Be well-informed, especially about diverse local views. A councillor cannot assume they represent the interests of the residents without consulting them.
- Representing the views of residents in an objective and professional way.
- Make difficult decisions, in an open and reasoned way.
- Run local services, such as open spaces, play areas etc. (often done in conjunction with a team of willing volunteers undertaking various 'manual' tasks).
- Take accountability for their own designated areas of responsibilities; undertake actions from and report back at PC meetings.
- Support the roles and responsibilities of other councillors and the clerk.
- To comply at all times with the councillors' Code of Conduct, the law, and such other policies, procedures, protocols and conventions agreed by the council, which includes attendance at PC meetings and good time keeping.

Chairs have additional responsibilities, which mean that they may have to have a closer working relationship with employees (clerk) than other councillors do.

The Role and Responsibilities of a Parish Clerk

Officers (clerks) are responsible to the council. Their job is to give advice to councillors and to the council. The primary role of officers is to advise, inform and support all members and to implement the agreed policies of the council.

Responsibilities include (but not limited to):

- Ensures that the council conducts its business lawfully
- Administers all the council's paperwork
- Ensures that meeting papers are properly prepared and publicised
- Keeps property registers and other legal documents
- Keeps up to date by training /qualification

Both councillors and officers (clerks) are servants of the public and are indispensable to one another. Together, they bring the critical skills, experience and knowledge required to manage an effective local authority. At the heart of this relationship, is the importance of mutual respect.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL
Co-option Application

Application form for co-option to Ash Parish Council

Please complete this form to be considered as a candidate for membership of the parish council, then return by post to: Zannette Bougourd, Clerk to Ash Parish Council, 9 Redgate Park, Crewkerne. TA187NL or by e-mail (preferably as a printable pdf document) to clerk@ashpcsomerset.com

NAME:(Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other)

ADDRESS:

.....

E-mail address

Telephone

Qualification to serve

You are at least 18 years old and a British citizen or an eligible Commonwealth and you must be able to answer "YES" to at least one of the following four questions; please circle as many as apply to you.

1. Are you registered at the above address as a Local Government Elector for the area of Ash Parish (Somerset)?	YES/NO
2. During the whole of the last 12 months have you resided in the Parish or within 3 miles (4.8 kilometres) of it? Show address if different from above	YES/NO
3: During the whole of the last 12 months have you occupied as owner or Tenant land or premises in the Parish: Give address of land or premises.	YES/NO

ASH PARISH COUNCIL
Co-option Application

4: During the whole of the last 12 months has your main place of work been within the Parish? Give address and place of work and employer if applicable.	YES/NO
Disqualifications (as provided in the Local Government Act 1972, s80; Localism Act 2011, s34) If you answer “YES” to any of the following six questions then it is likely that it will not be possible to co-opt you to the Parish Council. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence.	
1. Do you now hold, or have you in the last 12 months held, any paid office or any other position of profit with this Council or an organisation controlled by the Council?	YES/NO
2: Have you ever been surcharged by the District Auditor for £500 or more?	YES/NO
3: Have you ever been disqualified by a Court from holding Public Office?	YES/NO
4: Have you ever been declared bankrupt?	YES/NO
5: Have you ever been convicted of any offense where the sentence of imprisonment was more than 3 months(even if sentence suspended)	YES/NO
6: Have you ever been found guilty of corrupt or illegal practices under Election Laws?	YES/NO

ASH PARISH COUNCIL
Co-option Application

ASH PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLOR APPLICATION FORM

Ash Parish Council are keen to co-opt fellow members of the community who are team players, willing to contribute their own ideas whilst respecting those of others and accepting majority decisions. Experience of serving on a council or with other voluntary groups may be useful. Please use this form to explain how your background and skills may enable you to contribute to the running of the Parish.

NAME:

REASONS FOR WISHING TO BE A COUNCILLOR

YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE WHICH MAY BE USEFUL AS A COUNCILLOR

PREVIOUS COMMUNITY/VOLUNTARY/COUNCIL WORK (IF APPLICABLE)

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Co-option Application

ANY SPECIFIC AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY YOU ARE INTERESTED IN
ANY OTHER COMMENTS

I have set out information about my background and reasons for applying to be considered for co-option within the form above.

Signed

Date.....

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Ash Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Main Street, Ash TA12 6PA

Tel: 01935 571050

E-mail: clerk@ashpcsomerset.com

ASH PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS POLICY

Adopted May 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Ash Parish Council ('the Council') is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this Council or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the Council, this policy document sets out how you may complain and how the Council will try and resolve your complaint.
- 1.2 Complaints received from members of the public about the administration or procedures of the Council are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman. There are few remedies available, aside from the four-yearly election cycle where Councillors may not be re-elected if the public are unhappy with the representation that they have had. The Government has taken the view that town and parish councils are accountable to their electorate, principally, through the ballot box.
- 1.3 However, in the interests of transparency and accountability the Council has adopted a formal procedure for considering complaints.
- 1.4 It is essential that complaints are dealt with positively. The Council is anxious to hear people's comments and committed to making full use of complaints information to contribute to continuous service improvement.
- 1.5 The Council's Complaints Policy applies to but may not deal with, the following three areas of complaint:
 - a. Complaints about a Council service or function.
 - b. Complaints about a member of staff.
 - c. Complaints about a Councillor.
- 1.6 The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.
- 1.7 Additionally, every elector has the right to raise any matter affecting parish business at the Annual Parish Meeting. Members of the public are also able to come along and ask questions or raise issues during public question time at the start of every meeting of the Council and its constituent committee.

2. Definition of a complaint

A complaint is defined as 'any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Council, Councillors or staff, which affects an individual or group of individuals'.

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3. What the Complaints Policy will deal with

The policy will deal with:

- Neglect or unjustified delay
- malice, bias, or unfair discrimination
- failure to provide advice or information when reasonably requested
- providing misleading or inaccurate advice
- inefficiency, ineffectiveness, bad and unprofessional practice or conduct.

4. What the Complaints Policy will not deal with

The policy will not deal with:

- complaints for which there is a legal remedy or where legal proceedings already exists
- complaints about employment matters; these will be dealt with by the Council's internal grievance procedure
- complaints about an incident or matter which took place more than 12 months before a complaint is lodged

5. This Complaints Policy does not apply to:

- complaints by one employee against another employee, or between an employee and the Council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the Council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- complaints against Councillors. Such complaints will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct for Members, adopted by the Council at any given time. If a complaint against a Councillor is received by the Council, it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Somerset Council for investigation. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against Councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer at Somerset Council.

6. Equal Opportunities

- 6.1 The Council is committed to equal opportunities. Complaints/feedback will be used to highlight discriminatory practices, and to promote equality of opportunity.
- 6.2 Complaints by members of the public of discrimination and/or harassment by the Council will be dealt with through the complaints procedure unless it is a complaint that should be dealt with through a statutory procedure.

7. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

- 7.1 The stages of the procedure are designed to provide the complainant with a thorough and fair means of redress and to provide a framework for officers to work within. However, there may be occasions when a complainant makes an approach in a different manner and it is important that the procedure does not in itself become a barrier to effective communication.

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8. Informal Complaints

- 8.1 During the course of daily business, minor complaints may be made to officers regarding the service the Council provides. The appropriate officer or Clerk will usually deal with these. It is not appropriate for every comment received to be treated as a formal complaint. Every effort should be made to deal with these problems immediately, either by providing information, instigating appropriate action or explaining a decision.

9. Formal Complaints

The procedure for handling formal complaints is set out below:

Stage 1

- 9.1 A complainant may notify a complaint orally to a councillor or the Parish Clerk (as the Proper Officer of the Council). This will be recorded as a complaint and passed to the appropriate person to investigate.
- 9.2 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response they will be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Parish Clerk. An acknowledgement will be sent within 2 working days
- 9.3 If a complainant indicates that he/she would prefer not to put the complaint to the Parish Clerk then he/she should be advised to put it to the Chair of the Council. An acknowledgement will be sent within 2 working days.

Stage 2

- 9.4 The Parish Clerk or the Chair of the Council, will endeavour to settle the complaint directly with the complainant within 14 working days of receipt of thereof, but shall not do so without first notifying any person who is the subject of the complaint, providing an opportunity to comment.
- 9.5 If the investigation of the complaint is likely to take more than 14 working days, the complainant will be notified together with a reason for the extended investigation period.
- 9.6 Where the Parish Clerk receives a written complaint about his/her own actions, he/she shall immediately refer the complaint to the Chair of the Council.

Stage 3

- 9.7 The formal response to the complaint must also advise the complainant that, if having received a full response to the complaint, the issue remains unresolved, the complainant has the right to request, within 7 days, that the matter be referred to:
- a) the Committee responsible for the service or function for the next available meeting; or
 - b) the Staffing Committee, in the case of a member of staff, at the next available meeting.
- 9.8 A decision made by (a) or (b) above shall be considered final and the complaint considered closed.
- 9.9 If the complainant does not make such a request within 7 working days, the complaint is considered closed.

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Stage 4

- 9.10 If the complainant responds and requests the matter to be referred to the relevant committee, as detailed above, the Parish Clerk shall consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and the public. If the matter is such that the Council or the Parish Clerk believes that the matter may lead to a disciplinary hearing then the matter must be heard with the press and public excluded.
- 9.11 If the complaint is against any employee, even if the matter is being dealt with initially out of the act as set out in the Employment Relations Act 1999 s.10. The matter before the Council in this case will be to establish whether there is a factual basis to the complaint and the action that should then be taken. The proceedings at this stage cannot be a formal disciplinary hearing, which must be convened on a separate occasion in the proper manner.
- 9.12 If the complaint is against any elected member, which cannot be resolved at a local level, this will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Somerset Council.

Stage 5

- 9.13 The complainant will be notified, in writing, of the final decision within 14 working days of the meeting of the relevant committee.

10. Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints

- 10.1 In the event of repeated vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public the Council will consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant. If new evidence is provided, it will be evaluated in case the subject matter is sufficiently different from any previous vexatious or malicious complaint as to justify consideration as a new complaint.

11. Anonymous Complaints

- 11.1 Anonymous complaints should be referred to the Parish Clerk, and may be acted on at his/her discretion, according to the type and seriousness of the allegation.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL'S DISCIPLINARY POLICY 2025

Introduction

- 1 This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>).
- 2 It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf
- 3 The policy is designed to help Council employees improve unsatisfactory conduct and performance in their job. Wherever possible, the Council will try to resolve its concerns about employees' behaviour informally, without starting the formal procedure set out below.
- 4 The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 5 This policy confirms:
 - informal coaching and supervision will be considered, where appropriate, to improve conduct and / or attendance
 - the Council will fully investigate the facts of each case
 - the Council recognises that misconduct and unsatisfactory work performance are different issues. The disciplinary policy will also apply to work performance issues to ensure that all alleged instances of employees' underperformance are dealt with fairly and in a way that is consistent with required standards. However, the disciplinary policy will only be used when performance management proves ineffective. For more information see ACAS "Performance Management" at <https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6608>
 - employees will be informed in writing about the nature of the complaint against them and given the opportunity to state their case
 - employees will be provided, where appropriate, with written copies of evidence and relevant witness statements in advance of a disciplinary hearing
 - employees may be accompanied or represented by a companion – a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official - at any investigatory, disciplinary or appeal meeting. The companion is permitted to address such meetings, to put the employee's case and confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining his/her case
 - the Council will give employees reasonable notice of any meetings in this procedure. Employee must make all reasonable efforts to attend. Failure to attend any meeting may result in it going ahead and a decision being taken. An employee who does not attend a meeting will be given the opportunity to be represented and to make written submissions
 - if the employee's companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date

that is within 7 calendar days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date

- any changes to specified time limits in the Council's procedure must be agreed by the employee and the Council
- information about an employee's disciplinary matter will be restricted to those involved in the disciplinary process. A record of the reason for disciplinary action and the action taken by the Council is confidential to the employee. The employee's disciplinary records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the disciplinary procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition
- employees have the right to appeal against any disciplinary decision. The appeal decision is final
- if an employee who is already subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after the completion of the disciplinary procedure
- disciplinary action taken by the Council can include a written warning, final written warning or dismissal
- this procedure may be implemented at any stage if the employee's alleged misconduct warrants this
- except for gross misconduct when an employee may be dismissed without notice, the Council will not dismiss an employee on the first occasion that it decides there has been misconduct
- if an employee is suspended following allegations of misconduct, it will be on full pay and only for such time as is necessary. Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction. The Council will write to the employee to confirm any period of suspension and the reasons for it,
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the disciplinary procedure where appropriate (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process that requires the consent of affected parties

Examples of misconduct

6 Misconduct is employee behaviour that can lead to the employer taking disciplinary action. The following list contains some examples of misconduct: The list is not exhaustive.

- unauthorised absence
- poor timekeeping
- misuse of the Council's resources and facilities including telephone, email and internet
- inappropriate behaviour
- refusal to follow reasonable instructions
- breach of health and safety rules.

Examples of gross misconduct

- 7 Gross misconduct is misconduct that is so serious that it is likely to lead to dismissal without notice. The following list contains some examples of gross misconduct: The list is not exhaustive
- bullying, discrimination and harassment
 - incapacity at work because of alcohol or drugs
 - violent behaviour
 - fraud or theft
 - gross negligence
 - gross insubordination
 - serious breaches of council policies and procedures e.g. the Health and Safety Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy and any policies regarding the use of information technology
 - serious and deliberate damage to property
 - use of the internet or email to access pornographic, obscene or offensive material
 - disclosure of confidential information.

Suspension

- 8 If allegations of gross misconduct or serious misconduct are made, the council may suspend the employee while further investigations are carried out. Suspension will be on full pay. Suspension does not imply any determination of guilt or innocence, as it is merely a measure to enable further investigation.
- 9 While on suspension, the employee is required to be available during normal hours of work in the event that the council needs to make contact. The employee must not contact or attempt to contact or influence anyone connected with the investigation in any way or to discuss this matter with any other employee or councillor.
- 10 The employee must not attend work. The council will make arrangements for the employee to access any information or documents required to respond to any allegations.

Examples of unsatisfactory work performance

- 11 The following list contains some examples of unsatisfactory work performance: The list is not exhaustive.
- inadequate application of management instructions/office procedures
 - inadequate IT skills
 - unsatisfactory management of staff
 - unsatisfactory communication skills.

The Procedure

- 12 Preliminary enquiries. The council may make preliminary enquiries to establish the basic facts of what has happened in order to understand whether there may be a case to answer under the disciplinary procedure.
- 13 If the employee's manager believes there may be a disciplinary case to answer, the council may initiate a more detailed investigation undertaken to establish the facts of a situation or to establish the perspective of others who may have witnessed misconduct.
- 14 Informal Procedures. Where minor concerns about conduct become apparent, it is the manager's responsibility to raise this with the employee and clarify the improvements required. A file note will be made and kept by the manager. The informal discussions are not part of the formal disciplinary procedure. If the conduct fails to improve, or if further matters of conduct become apparent, the manager may decide to formalise the discussions and invite the employee to a first stage disciplinary hearing.

Disciplinary investigation

- 15 A formal disciplinary investigation may sometimes be required to establish the facts and whether there is a disciplinary case to answer.
- 16 If a formal disciplinary investigation is required, the Council's staffing committee will appoint an Investigator who will be responsible for undertaking a fact-finding exercise to collect all relevant information. The Investigator will be independent and will normally be a councillor. If the staffing committee considers that there are no councillors who are independent (for example, because they all have direct involvement in the allegations about the employee), it will appoint someone from outside the Council. The Investigator will be appointed as soon as possible after the allegations have been made. The staffing committee will inform the Investigator of the terms of reference of the investigation. The terms of reference should specify:
 - the allegations or events that the investigation is required to examine
 - whether a recommendation is required
 - how the findings should be presented. For example, an investigator will often be required to present the findings in the form of a written report
 - who the findings should be reported to and who to contact for further direction if unexpected issues arise or advice is needed.
- 17 The Investigator will be asked to submit their findings usually within 35 Calendar days of appointment where possible. In cases of alleged unsatisfactory performance or of allegations of minor misconduct, the appointment of an investigator may not be necessary and the Council may decide to commence disciplinary proceedings at the next stage - the disciplinary meeting (see paragraph 22).
- 18 The staffing committee will notify the employee in writing of the alleged misconduct and details of the person undertaking the investigation. The employee may be asked to meet an investigator as part of the disciplinary investigation. The employee will be given sufficient notice of the meeting with the Investigator so that they have

reasonable time to prepare for it. The letter will explain the investigatory process and that the meeting is part of that process. The employee will be provided with a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure. The Council will also inform the employee that when they meet with the Investigator, they will have the opportunity to comment on the allegations of misconduct.

- 19 Employees may be accompanied or represented by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official at any investigatory meeting.
- 20 If there are other persons (e.g. employees, councillors, members of the public or the Council's contractors) who can provide relevant information, the Investigator should try to obtain it from them in advance of the meeting with the employee.
- 21 The Investigator has no authority to take disciplinary action. Their role is to establish the facts of the case as quickly as possible and prepare a report that recommends to the staffing committee whether or not disciplinary action should be considered under the policy.
- 22 The Investigator's report will contain their recommendations and the findings on which they were based. They will recommend either:
 - the employee has no case to answer and there should be no further action under the Council's disciplinary procedure
 - the matter is not serious enough to justify further use of the disciplinary procedure and can be dealt with informally or
 - the employee has a case to answer and a formal hearing should be convened under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- 23 The Investigator will submit the report to the staffing committee which will decide whether further action will be taken.
- 24 If the Council decides that it will not take disciplinary action, it may consider whether mediation would be appropriate in the circumstances.

The disciplinary meeting

- 25 If the staffing committee decides that there is a case to answer, it will appoint a staffing sub-committee of 3 councillors, to formally hear the allegations. The staffing sub-committee will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. The Investigator shall not sit on the sub-committee.
- 26 No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-committee. The employee will be invited, in writing, to attend a disciplinary meeting. The sub-committee's letter will confirm the following:
 - the names of its Chairman and other two members
 - details of the alleged misconduct, its possible consequences and the employee's statutory right to be accompanied at the meeting
 - a copy of the information provided to the sub-committee which may include the investigation report, supporting evidence and a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure

- the time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing so that they have sufficient time to prepare for it
 - that witnesses may attend on the employee's and the Council's behalf and that both parties should inform each other of their witnesses' names at least 2 working days before the meeting
 - that the employee may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
- 27 The purpose of the disciplinary meeting hearing is for the allegations to be put to the employee and then for the employee to give their perspective. It will be conducted as follows:
- the Chairman will introduce the members of the sub-committee to the employee and explain the arrangements for the hearing
 - the Chairman will set out the allegations and invite the Investigator to present the findings of the investigation report (if there has been a previous investigation)
 - the Chairman will invite the employee to present their account
 - the employee (or the companion) will set out their case and present evidence (including any witnesses and/or witness statements)
 - any member of the sub-committee and the employee (or the companion) may question the Investigator and any witness
 - the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up
- 28 The Chairman will provide the employee with the sub-committee's decision with reasons, in writing, within 7 calendar days of the meeting. The Chairman will also notify the employee of the right to appeal the decision.
- 29 The disciplinary meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be further investigated by the sub-committee.

Disciplinary action

- 30 If the sub-committee decides that there should be disciplinary action, it may be any of the following:

First written warning

- 31 If the employee's conduct has fallen beneath acceptable standards, a first written warning will be issued. A first written warning will set out:
- the reason for the written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
 - that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action
 - the employee's right of appeal
 - that a note confirming the written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

Final written warning

- 32 If the offence is sufficiently serious, or if there is further misconduct or a failure to improve sufficiently during the currency of a prior warning, the employee will be given a final written warning. A final written warning will set out:
- the reason for the final written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
 - that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal
 - the employee's right of appeal
 - that a note confirming the final written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

Dismissal

- 33 The Council may dismiss:
- for gross misconduct
 - if there is no improvement within the specified time period, in the conduct which has been the subject of a final written warning.
 - if another instance of misconduct has occurred and a final written warning has already been issued and remains in force.
- 34 The Council will consider very carefully a decision to dismiss. If an employee is dismissed, they will receive a written statement of the reasons for their dismissal, the date on which the employment will end and details of their right of appeal. If the sub-committee decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file. Action taken as a result of the disciplinary meeting will remain in force unless it is modified as a result of an appeal.

The appeal

- 35 An employee who is the subject of disciplinary action will be notified of the right of appeal. Their written notice of appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving written notice of the disciplinary action and must specify the grounds for appeal.
- 36 The grounds for appeal include;
- a failure by the Council to follow its disciplinary policy.
 - the sub-committee's disciplinary decision was not supported by the evidence.
 - the disciplinary action was too severe in the circumstances of the case.
 - new evidence has come to light since the disciplinary meeting.
- 37 Where possible, the appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 members of the staffing committee who have not previously been involved in the case. This includes the Investigator. There may be insufficient members of the staffing committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a committee of 3 members

of the Council who may include members of the staff committee. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

- 38 The employee will be notified, in writing, within 14 calendar days of receipt of the notice of appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.
- 39 At the appeal meeting, the Chairman will:
 - introduce the panel members to the employee.
 - explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the disciplinary decision
 - explain the action that the appeal panel may take.
- 40 The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds for appeal.
- 41 The Chairman will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, usually within five working days of the appeal hearing.
- 42 The appeal panel may decide to uphold the disciplinary decision of the staffing committee, substitute a less serious sanction or decide that no disciplinary action is necessary. If it decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file.
- 43 If an appeal against dismissal is upheld, the employee will be paid in full for the period from the date of dismissal and continuity of service will be preserved.
- 44 The appeal panel's decision is final.

Date of policy: April 2025

Date of Council meeting: 07th April 2025

Policy version reference: ADP 2025

Supersedes: Ash Disciplinary Policy 2024

Policy effective from: April 2025

Date for next review: 2027

ASH PARISH COUNCIL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY – MAY 2025

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Our commitment

The council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination.

This policy is intended to assist the council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

The law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

The council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Types of unlawful discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they don't, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

Equal opportunities in employment

The council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

Recruitment

Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

Working practices

The council will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the council considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. The council will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. The council will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

Equal opportunities monitoring

The council will monitor the ethnic, sex/gender and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

The council treats personal data collected for reviewing equality and diversity in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the council's privacy notices.

Dignity at work

The council has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

People not employed by the council

The council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use the services provided by the council.

You should report any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others to the council who will take appropriate action.

Training and prevention

The council will [provide training in/raise awareness of] equal opportunities to those likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.

The council will [provide training to/raise awareness of] all staff engaged to work at the council to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the dignity at work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. [The council will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.]

[We have carried out an assessment to assess the risk of different forms of harassment, including sexual harassment and third-party harassment, occurring in our workforce, including in [different roles [and departments]], the steps we could take to reduce those risks and which of those possible steps are reasonable. This risk assessment will be reviewed [regularly OR annually]. [The current assessment is available on the [Intranet].

[We will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of staff. If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other branches of the business.]

Your responsibilities

Every employee is required to assist the council to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

Grievances

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use the council's grievance procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy.

The council will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored periodically by the council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. [In particular, the council will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation we receive to ensure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed; the ethnic and gender composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will review its equal opportunities policy in accordance with the results shown by the monitoring . If changes are required, the council will implement them.

Information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.]

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

Date of policy: May 2025

Approving committee: Full Council

Date of committee meeting: 06th May 2025

Policy version reference: May 01

Policy effective from: 06th May 2024

Date for next review: TBA

ASH PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS as amended March 2025

Adopted May 2025

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on 06th May 2025.

1. General

- 1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.4. In these Financial Regulations:
 - 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.
 - "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
 - "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
 - 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
 - *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC in England or Governance and Accountability for Local Councils in Wales – A Practitioners Guide jointly published by One Voice Wales and the Society of Local Council Clerks in Wales.
 - 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
 - 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.
- 1.5. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO;
 - acts under the policy direction of the council;
 - administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
 - determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
 - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
 - ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;

- seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
- produces financial management information as required by the council.

1.6. The council must not delegate any decision regarding:

- **setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);**
- **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**
- **approving accounting statements;**
- **approving an annual governance statement;**
- **borrowing;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors**

1.7. In addition, the council shall:

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or single commitment in excess of £5,000.00

2. Risk management and internal control

2.1. The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.

2.2. The Clerk/RFO shall prepare, for approval by Ash Parish Council [the council], a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk/RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.

2.4. At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.

2.5. The accounting control systems determined by the RFO must include measures to:

- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
- **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
- **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
- **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**

- **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
 - **ensure division of responsibilities.**
- 2.6. At every meeting , and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the council.
- 2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. The council shall put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

3. Accounts and audit

- 3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.2. **The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonably accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**
- **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
 - **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;**
- 3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.
- 3.4. The RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.5. **The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.**
- 3.6. **Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit** and shall, as directed by the council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or

external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.

3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by Ash Parish Council [the council] and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.

3.8. The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:

- is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
- reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
- can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
- has no involvement in the management or control of the council

3.9. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:

- perform any operational duties for the council;
- initiate or approve accounting transactions;
- provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
- direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.

3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as described in The Practitioners Guide.

3.11. The RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the accounts, including the opportunity to inspect the accounts, books, and vouchers and display or publish any notices and documents required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.12. The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

4. Budget and precept

4.1. **Before setting a precept, the council must calculate its [council tax (England)/budget (Wales)] requirement for each financial year by preparing and**

approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.

- 4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by Ash Parish Council [the council] at least annually in December for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the Council . {The RFO will inform committees of any salary implications before they consider their draft budgets.}
- 4.3. No later than December each year, the RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all [receipts and payments/income and expenditure] for the following financial year along with a forecast for the following [three financial years]], taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.
- 4.4. Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. {Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward (by placing them in an earmarked reserve) with the formal approval of the full council.}
- 4.5. The draft budget {with any committee proposals and [three-year]} forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the {finance committee and a recommendation made to the} council.
- 4.6. Having considered the proposed budget and [three-year] forecast, the council shall determine its [council tax (England)/budget (Wales)] requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January or date advised by Somerset Council for the ensuing financial year.
- 4.7. **Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.**
- 4.8. The RFO shall **issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February or date advised by Somerset Council** and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.
- 4.9. The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.
- 4.10. Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by the council

5. Procurement

- 5.1. **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.**
Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.
- 5.2. The RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.
- 5.3. Every contract shall comply with the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.4. **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulations 2024 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.5. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.12) obtain prices as follows:
- 5.6. For contracts estimated to exceed [£60,000] including VAT, the Clerk/RFO shall {seek formal tenders from at least [three] suppliers agreed by [the council]}
Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.
- 5.7. **For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation regarding the publication of invitations and notices.**
- 5.8. For contracts greater than [£3,000] excluding VAT the Clerk/ RFO shall seek at least [2] fixed-price quotes;
- 5.9. where the value is between [£500] and [£3,000] excluding VAT, the Clerk/RFO shall try to obtain 2 estimates {which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers}.
- 5.10. For smaller purchases, the clerk shall seek to achieve value for money.
- 5.11. **Contracts must not be split to avoid compliance with these rules.**
- 5.12. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:
- i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;
 - ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
 - iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;

- iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.

5.13. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the council {or relevant committee}. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.

5.14. The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

5.15. Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:

- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items below £500 excluding VAT.
- the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council, for any items below £2,000 excluding VAT.
- {in respect of grants, a duly authorised committee within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council.}
- the council for all items over [£5,000];

Such authorisation must be supported by a minute (in the case of council or committee decisions) or other auditable evidence trail.

5.16. No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order {unless instructed to do so in advance by a resolution of the council} or make any contract on behalf of the council.

5.17. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget for that type of expenditure other than by resolution of the council {or a duly delegated committee acting within its Terms of Reference} except in an emergency.

5.18. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £2,000.00 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to Ash Parish Council [the council] as soon as practicable thereafter.

5.19. No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless [the council] is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.

5.20. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £250 excluding VAT} unless a formal contract is to be prepared, or an official order

would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.

- 5.21. Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the RFO

6. Banking and payments

- 6.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the RFO and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The council has resolved to bank with Lloyds Bank plc. The arrangements shall be reviewed annually for security and efficiency.
- 6.2. The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the council's bank.
- 6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy, analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading and verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the council before being certified by the RFO. {Where the certification of invoices is done as a batch, this shall include a statement by the RFO that all invoices listed have been 'examined, verified and certified' by the RFO}.
- 6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.
- 6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking, in accordance with a resolution of the council or a delegated decision by an officer, unless Ash Parish Council [the council] resolves to use a different payment method.
- 6.6. {For each financial year the RFO may draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation (such as Salaries, PAYE, National Insurance, pension contributions, rent, rates, regular maintenance contracts and similar items), which the council may authorise in advance for the year}.
- 6.7. {A copy of this schedule of regular payments shall be signed by two members on each and every occasion when payment is made - to reduce the risk of duplicate payments.}
- 6.8. A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate meeting of the council for information only.

6.9. The Clerk/ RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments {only} in the following circumstances:

- i. {any payments of up to £500.00 excluding VAT, within an agreed budget}.
- ii. payments of up to £2,000.00 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises.
- iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 {or to comply with contractual terms}, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of [the council], where the Clerk and RFO certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council .
- iv. Fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £5,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council

6.10. The RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the agenda for the meeting, together with the relevant invoices, to the council. The council shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall authorise payment by resolution. The authorised schedule shall be initialled immediately below the last item by the person chairing the meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting.

7. Electronic payments

- 7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. The Clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.
- 7.2. All authorised signatories shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online.
- 7.3. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.
- 7.4. The Service Administrator shall set up all items due for payment online. A list of payments for approval, together with copies of the relevant invoices, shall be sent by email to two authorised signatories.

- 7.5. In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator an authorised signatory shall set up any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.
- 7.6. Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment using the online banking system.
- 7.7. Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment online and a printout of the transaction confirming that the payment has been made shall be appended to the invoice for audit purposes.
- 7.8. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next council meeting {and appended to the minutes}.
- 7.9. With the approval of Ash Parish Council [the council] in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are approved online by two authorised members. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by Ash Parish Council [the council] at least every two years.
- 7.10. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of Ash Parish Council [the council] provided that each payment is approved online by two authorised bank signatories, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to Ash Parish Council [the council] at the next meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 7.11. If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are signed or approved online by two members, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by Ash Parish Council [the council] at least every two years.
- 7.12. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by the RFO & a Councillor. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.
- 7.13. Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.
- 7.14. Remembered password facilities {other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification} should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

8. Cheque payments

9. Payment cards

- 9.1. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk/ RFO and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council in writing before any order is placed.
- 9.2. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used except for expenses of up to £250 including VAT, incurred in accordance with council policy.

10. Payment of salaries and allowances

- 10.1. **As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**
- 10.2. **Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.**
- 10.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or a duly delegated committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council
- 10.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.
- 10.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.
- 10.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook. Payroll reports will be reviewed by the Council to ensure that the correct payments have been made.
- 10.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.
- 10.8. Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

11. Loans and investments

- 11.1. Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary approval.

- 11.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.
- 11.3. The council shall consider the requirement for an Investment Strategy and Policy in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, which must be written in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 11.4. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 11.5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.
- 11.6. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

12.

13. Income

- 13.1. The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 13.2. The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk. The RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.
- 13.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.
- 13.4. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.
- 13.5. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.
- 13.6. Any repayment claim under section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 shall be made at least annually at the end of the financial year.
- 13.7. {Where significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the RFO shall ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first

instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control record such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken for the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.}

- 13.8. {Any income that is the property of a charitable trust shall be paid into a charitable bank account. Instructions for the payment of funds due from the charitable trust to the council (to meet expenditure already incurred by the authority) will be given by the Managing Trustees of the charity meeting separately from any council meeting.}

14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works

- 14.1. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.
- 14.2. Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by [the Clerk] to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

15. Stores and equipment

- 15.1. {[The officer in charge of each section] shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment [in that section].}
- 15.2. Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.
- 15.3. {Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.}
- 15.4. {The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores, at least annually.}

16. Assets, properties and estates

- 16.1. The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.
- 16.2. The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.

16.3. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

16.4. No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate where required by law).

16.5. No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed [£500]. In each case a written report shall be provided to council with a full business case.

17. Insurance

17.1. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the council's review of risk management.

17.2. The Clerk shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.

17.3. The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to Ash Parish Council [the council] at the next available meeting. The RFO/Clerk shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers

17.4. All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined [annually] by the council, or duly delegated

17.5. committee.

18. Charities

18.1. Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Clerk/ RFO shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial reports made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk/ RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.]

18.2.

19. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations

- 19.1. The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of clerk or RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.
- 19.2. The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.
- 19.3. The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 1 - Tender process

- 1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.
- 2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.
- 3) Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.
- 4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
- 5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order [insert reference of the council's relevant standing order] and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL GRANT-AWARDING POLICY

Objective

The Parish Council wishes to support activities and causes which benefit the parish of Ash. A grant is any payment made by the Parish Council for the specific purpose for which it is claimed and for the well-being of the community.

Eligibility

Any grant made by the Parish Council must directly benefit some or all of the residents of the parish of Ash. Applicants must set out how the community in Ash will benefit from the work funded by any grant. This is particularly important where an application is made by an organisation working regionally or nationally.

The following criteria must be met for a group to be considered for a grant: -

- The group must be a charity, voluntary or community organisation;
- The group must be able to demonstrate that any funding from the Parish Council will directly benefit the residents of Ash;
- The group must be formally constituted and have a management committee made up of volunteers.

Individuals, businesses, or political parties are **not** eligible for grant funding.

Conditions

- Multiple applications within a 12-month period will not normally be considered; although the only real limit is remaining funds.
- The Parish Council reserves the right to reclaim any grant not being used for the purpose specified on the application form. The Parish Clerk will, therefore, be allowed to verify that the monies have been spent accordingly;
- Proper evidence of actual or estimated expenditure must be supplied to the Parish Council prior to the payment of any grant. If the Parish Council is not satisfied with the arrangements, it reserves the right to request a refund of monies awarded;
- Grants cannot be awarded after the relevant project or event has been completed;
- An acknowledgement on receipt of the grant cheque is required

The following requests will not be considered:

- Support for projects outside of Ash Parish
- Core funding for projects (e.g., day to day running costs)
- General appeals from national charities
- Financial support for an individual or family
- Support for visits or charities outside the parish
- Support for minibus or transport appeals or car parks
- General advertising
- Political, lobby, pressure and campaigning groups or trade union activities
- Appeals intended to promote a particular political or denominational affiliation
- Medical research
- Projects for which organisations have any statutory duty

Application Process

- Applications should be made by completing the Grant Awarding Application Form.
- Applications must be accompanied by a copy of the organisation's most recent accounts, and its latest bank statement.
- An organisation which has not previously applied to the Parish Council must submit a copy of its constitution.
- Applications are accepted during the last quarter of the year, if funds are awarded they will be distributed after receipt of the annual precept.
- Applicants must set out any other funding they have been awarded or have applied for. Where the Parish Council is being asked to be the sole funder the applicant must explain the reason for this.
- Applicants are usually informed within two weeks of the relevant meeting.
- Grant recipients must submit an annual report showing how the funding has been used.
- Grant recipients are encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting (normally May) and mount a display or make a presentation.

Promotion

The Parish Council will ask for recognition from successful groups in the form of the promotion of the Parish Council in the organisation's newsletter or any press release. The Parish Council will also recognise successful groups in its own reports to parishioners.

Reviewed and adopted by Ash Parish Council on 06th May 2025

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

GRANT APPLICATION FORM
for Voluntary organisations in the parish

NAME OF ORGANISATION	
CONTACT NAME AND ADDRESS & PHONE NO:	
ORGANISATION ACTIVITIES	
NUMBER IN ORGANISATION	
DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT OR PURCHASE AND REASON FOR GRANT	
TOTAL COST	
AMOUNT OF GRANT REQUESTED	
HOW MUCH IS TO BE RAISED BY THE ORGANISATION TOWARDS THIS PROJECT	

DESCRIBE HOW YOU WILL RAISE FURTHER MONEY TOWARDS THIS PROJECT	
HAVE YOU APPLIED FOR OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS TOWARDS THIS PROJECT	
WHAT ARE YOUR BANK BALANCES AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION	
HAVE YOU RECEIVED A GRANT FROM THIS COUNCIL IN THE LAST 5 YEARS	
PLEASE ENCLOSE A COPY OF YOUR LAST 1 YEAR CERTIFIED FULL YEAR ACCOUNTS: NEW GROUPS NOT COMPLETED ONE YEAR WILL BE ACCESSED ON THEIR BANK BALANCE	
PLEASE USE THIS REMAINING SPACE TO GIVE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATING TO YOUR APPLICATION	
SIGNED	
POSITION	

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

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ASH PARISH COUNCIL'S GRIEVANCE POLICY

Adopted May 2025

Introduction

1. This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>). It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. (https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf). It aims to encourage and maintain good relationships between the Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complaints about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
2. Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager.
3. This policy confirms:
 - Employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a companion who can be a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official. This includes any meeting held with them to hear about, gather facts about, discuss, consider or resolve their grievance. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for his /her grievance/appeal and to confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining his/her case.
 - The Council will give employees reasonable notice of the date of the grievance/appeal meetings. Employees and their companions must make all reasonable efforts to attend. If the companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date
 - Any changes to specified time limits must be agreed by the employee and the Council
 - An employee has the right to appeal against the decision about his/her grievance. The appeal decision is final
 - Information about an employee's grievance will be restricted to those involved in the grievance process. A record of the reason for the grievance, its outcome and action taken is confidential to the employee. The employee's grievance records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
 - Audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition
 - If an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after completion of the disciplinary procedure
 - If a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if he/she raised the grievance in good faith
 - The Council may consider mediation at any stage of the grievance procedure where appropriate, (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process which requires the consent of affected parties

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- Employees can use all stages of the grievance procedure If the complaint is not a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. Employees can use the informal stage of the council's grievance procedure (paragraph 4) to deal with all grievance issues, including a complaint about a councillor Employees cannot use the formal stages of the council's grievance procedure for a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. If the complaint about the councillor is not resolved at the informal stage, the employee can contact the monitoring officer of Somerset Council who will inform the employee whether or not the complaint can be dealt with under the code of conduct. If it does not concern the code of conduct, the employee can make a formal complaint under the council's grievance procedure (see paragraph 5)
- If the grievance is a code of conduct complaint against a councillor, the employee cannot proceed with it beyond the informal stage of the council's grievance procedure. However, whatever the complaint, the council has a duty of care to its employees. It must take all reasonable steps to ensure employees have a safe working environment, for example by undertaking risk assessments, by ensuring staff and councillors are properly trained and by protecting staff from bullying, harassment and all forms of discrimination
- If an employee considers that the grievance concerns his or her safety within the working environment, whether or not it also concerns a complaint against a councillor, the employee should raise these safety concerns with his or her line manager at the informal stage of the grievance procedure. The council will consider whether it should take further action in this matter in accordance with any of its employment policies (for example its health and safety policy or its dignity at work policy) and in accordance with the code of conduct regime

Informal grievance procedure

4. The Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and as quickly as possible. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with the HR representative to see if an informal solution is possible. Both should try to resolve the matter at this stage. If the employee does not want to discuss the grievance with the HR representative (for example, because it concerns the HR representative), the employee should contact the Chairman of the Parish Council or, if appropriate, another member of the Parish Council. If the employee's complaint is about a councillor, it may be appropriate to involve that councillor at the informal stage. This will require both the employee's and the councillor's consent.

Formal grievance procedure

5. If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally and the employee's complaint is not one that should be dealt with as a code of conduct complaint (see above), the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Parish Council
6. The Parish Council will appoint a committee of three members to hear the grievance. The committee will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the committee.

Investigation

7. If the committee decides that it is appropriate, (e.g. if the grievance is complex), it may appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation before the grievance meeting to establish the facts of the case. The investigation may include interviews (e.g. the employee submitting the grievance, other employees, councillors or members of the public).
8. The investigator will summarise their findings (usually within an investigation report) and present their findings to the committee.

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Notification

9. Within 10 working days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance (this may be longer if there is an investigation), the employee will normally be asked, in writing, to attend a grievance meeting. The written notification will include the following:
- the names of its Chairman and other members
 - the date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will normally be within 25 working days of when the Council received the grievance
 - the employee's right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
 - a copy of the Council's grievance policy
 - confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend (or submit witness statements) on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of his/her witnesses as soon as possible before the meeting
 - confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence in advance of the meeting, usually with at least two days' notice
 - findings of the investigation if there has been an investigation
 - an invitation for the employee to request any adjustments to be made for the hearing (for example where a person has a health condition).

The grievance meeting

10. At the grievance meeting:
- the Chairman will introduce the members of the committee to the employee
 - the employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and present the evidence
 - the Chairman will ask the employee questions about the information presented and will want to understand what action does he/she wants the Council to take
 - any member of the committee and the employee (or the companion) may question any witness
 - the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up the case
 - a grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the committee.
11. The Chairman will provide the employee with the committee's decision, in writing, usually within five working days of the meeting. The letter will notify the employee of the action, if any, that the Council will take and of the employee's right to appeal.

The appeal

12. If an employee decides that his/her grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved by the committee, he/she may submit a written appeal to the Parish Council. An appeal must be received by the Council within five working days of the employee receiving the committee's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.
13. Appeals may be raised on a number of grounds, e.g.:
- a failure by the Council to follow its grievance policy
 - the decision was not supported by the evidence
 - the action proposed by the sub-committee was inadequate/inappropriate
 - new evidence has come to light since the grievance meeting.

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14. The appeal will be heard by a panel of three members of the Parish Council who have not previously been involved in the case. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.
15. The employee will be notified, in writing, usually within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will normally take place within 25 working days of the Council's receipt of the appeal. The employee will be advised that he/she may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.
16. At the appeal meeting, the Chairman will:
 - introduce the panel members to the employee
 - explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the decision of the committee
 - explain the action that the appeal panel may take.
17. The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of appeal.
18. The Chairman will inform the employee that he/she will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, within five working days of the appeal meeting.
19. The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the committee or substitute its own decision.
20. The decision of the appeal panel is final.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL 2025

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK – INCLUDING LONE WORKER POLICY

The Parish Council recognises and accepts its responsibility for providing a safe and healthy environment for its members; staff; volunteers; visitors; and for anyone affected by its activities.

The Council maintains this policy for the management of health and safety as its top priority and will do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure effective organisation and planning are established and maintained. The Council will also ensure that appropriate and effective audit and review mechanisms are used to inform the work of the Council, which undertakes to commit appropriate resources to manage health and safety

Our statement of general policy, below, is based upon that required by virtue of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Although the Council has a single employee, the principles of the Act and its underpinning Regulations as later published are taken by the Council as a minimum requirement for the safe and effective management of the Council and its activities.

Our statement of general policy is:

- To provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our activities;
- To consult with our staff on matters affecting their health and safety;
- To provide and maintain safe equipment;
- To provide sufficient information, instruction, and supervision of staff, volunteers and visitors as far as is reasonably practicable;
- To ensure all staff and volunteers are competent in their Council-related activities, and to provide adequate training as far as is reasonably practicable;
- To prevent accidents and activity-related ill health as far as is reasonably practicable;
- To maintain safe and healthy conditions for conducting the Council's business and the public facilities it provides; and
- To review and revise this Policy as necessary at regular intervals, but at least annually.

It is expected that all employees and members will promote and comply with safe working practices under this Policy. Each individual has a responsibility to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and for others who may be affected by their acts or omissions. All staff and members must co-operate with the Parish Council to enable them to carry out their statutory duties.

The Parish Office

All personnel using the office are advised not to leave personal items of value and money unattended as the Parish Council cannot accept responsibility for personal losses.

The office should be securely locked in periods of absence and at the end of the work period. The person responsible for locking up the office should as a matter of routine check all the following: -

That all office equipment is turned off

That all windows are closed and securely locked

That filing cabinets and other storage areas are secure
That all lights are turned off
That all entrances and exits to the building are firmly shut and securely locked if the building is unoccupied in other areas.

Any unusual circumstances whatsoever in relation to persons or property should be reported to the Chairman or Vice-Chairman.

Fire Precautions

All employees and members should familiarise themselves with the fire and evacuation procedures, the nearest fire extinguishers and how to raise the alarm. It is important to keep all fire doors closed and ensure that all corridors and fire exits are kept free from obstruction at all times when using public buildings.

Accidents

An accident or injury at work, however trivial it may appear at the time, must be reported to the Chairman or member responsible for personnel. Details of the accident should be recorded. In the event of a serious accident, dial 999 for the emergency services. The outer door should be unlocked to allow access. On no account should anyone who appears to be seriously injured be moved unless it is essential to do so for their personal safety e.g., in a fire.

Falls

The biggest cause of injury at work is falling due to a slip, trip or stumble. All employees and members should report any potential hazard. Suitable footwear and clothing should be worn. Keep working areas clear of obstruction and spills. When carrying items ensure that clear vision is maintained.

Substance Hazardous to Health

The legislation covering the control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) requires that all substances used in the workplace must be assessed in order to identify the risk to health. There are few hazardous substances in an office environment other than correction fluid which should be used responsibly.

Lifting, Carrying and Handling

Poor lifting and handling technique is a major cause of injury, not just to backs, but to shoulders, arms and even fingers and toes. If an item is too heavy to lift, please ask for help. Information on how to lift safely is available.

Electrical Equipment

Office electrical equipment should be tested regularly under the Portable Appliance Testing regulations (Electrical Installation Contractors (NICEIC) standards).

If any malfunction or abnormality is identified the appliance should be switched off and disconnected from the electricity supply immediately and the fault reported to the Clerk or the Chairman.

Lone Working Procedures

Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly higher risks than others who work together. Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency

situations e.g., fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Any one working alone is responsible for ensuring they comply with agreed procedures.

All staff and members shall be personally accountable for their actions and should be especially aware of safety when working alone. No activity that might be hazardous should be undertaken.

Any problems encountered when working alone should be immediately reported to the Chairman.

Employees should not make arrangements to meet members of the public that are unknown to them, except in a public place. Appointments made with members of the public in the parish office should always be accompanied by one or more councillors.

Reviewed and adopted by Ash Parish Council on: 06th May 2025

Signed: Chairman

INVESTMENT POLICY – MAY 2025

1. Introduction.

This 'Investment Policy' complies with the revised requirements set out in the Department of Communities and Local Government Guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd Edition) and takes into account Section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 and guidance within Governance and Accountability for Local Councils Practitioner's Guide 2018.

An investment strategy is required for all investments expected to exceed £100,000.00 at any time during the financial year.

The Local Government Act 2003 states that a local authority may invest:

- For any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment.
- For the purpose of prudent management of its financial affairs.

Ash Parish Council acknowledges the importance of investing the temporary surplus funds held on behalf of the community as part of its fiduciary duty.

This policy establishes formal objectives, policies and practices and reporting arrangements for the effective management and control of the Parish Council's investment activities and the associated risks and should be read in conjunction with the Parish Council's Financial Regulations.

2. Investment Objectives & Principles.

The Parish Council aims to invest its reserves in order to maintain the value of these funds in real terms, to support future service delivery.

The Parish Council is required to consider investments in line with the following principles:

- (a) Security – protection of the investment sum from loss of value and to minimise risk; and, (b) Liquidity – how quickly the invested funds can be encashed if required.

Once principles (a) and (b) have been determined, the Parish Council can reasonably consider suitable investments to maximise the Parish Council's income (yield).

The Parish Council should consider the appropriate balance between security, liquidity and yield in relation to risk when making any investment decisions and in order to achieve the optimum return on investment.

All investments shall be made in the name of the Parish Council and be deposited in sterling.

The decision to invest funds must be recommended by the full Council.

The choice of institution and length of the deposit shall be decided by Full Council.

The Parish Council will consider spreading its investments across financial institutions to minimise risk and to protect its funds.

Ash Parish Council

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Tel: 01935 571050

Should the Parish Council appoint an investment manager or financial advisor, this appointment shall be reviewed every five years. Advisors will be made aware of this policy as well as the regulatory and statutory framework applicable to Parish Councils.

All investments will be with financial institutions, banks and building societies registered in the UK.

The Investment Policy will be published on the Parish Council's website.

The Parish Council does not currently plan on investing in non-financial assets.

3. Short Term Specified Investments.

Short term specified investments are defined as those offering high security and high liquidity, made in sterling and with a maturity of no more than 12 months. Short term investments made with the UK Government or to a local authority or Parish Council will automatically be defined as a specified investment.

For the prudent management of the Parish Council's balances and in order to maintain adequate levels of security and liquidity the Parish Council may choose to invest short term funds with:

- Banks, building societies, local authorities or other public authorities who are all based in the UK;
- Other approved public sector investment funds.

4. Long Term Non-Specified Investments.

Non-specified investments are defined as any investments that do not meet the criteria of short term specified investments detailed in section 3. In general, non-specified investments have greater risk potential and include investment in money markets, stocks and shares.

Funds may be invested for periods of more than 12 months. In specifying the length of the investment, the Parish Council's anticipated expenditure requirement over the proposed investment period will be assessed to ensure sufficient funds remain available.

The Parish Council may place investments not required for current expenditure with long term nonspecified investments with a maturity period of up to 5 years, at which point the investment objectives should be fully reviewed to determine whether the investment should continue.

The Parish Council will determine the upper limits for the maximum amounts that can be held individually or accumulatively in non-specified investments and will confirm annually that the investments have remained within these limits.

The Parish Council will seek the advice of an independent financial advisor prior to making any long-term investments, as part of the risk management process.

5. Risk Management & Monitoring.

Investments will be spread over different providers where appropriate to minimise risk.

The Parish Council will monitor the risk of loss on investments by reviewing credit ratings for the investment institutions at least annually. This will be achieved by asking the institutions to confirm their current credit rating.

The Parish Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer, shall be the contact for the financial advisor and any other appointed counterparties and is authorised to deal with administrative matters and give instructions on behalf of the Parish Council as necessary to protect the Parish Council's investments.

6. End of Year Investment Report & Governance.

At the end of the financial year the Parish Clerk will supply an annual report to the Full Council.

The Parish Clerk is responsible for bringing to the Parish Council's attention any matters which may affect the security of the Parish Council's investments. The Full Council is responsible for agreeing any course of action required to safeguard its investments.

The Investment Policy will be reviewed annually prior to ratification by Full Council.

Any amendments required to the Investment Policy must be approved by Full Council prior to implementation. Amendments can be proposed at any time during the year, as required.

7. Investment Strategy 2025/26.

The Parish Council will continue to use Lloyds Bank plc as the primary banking provider.

The Parish Council will ensure it has adequate cash resources or standby facilities to enable it at all times to have the level of funds available which are necessary for the achievement of its service objectives.

Long-term investments are defined in the Guidance as greater than 12 months. The Parish Council does not currently hold any long-term investments.

For the financial year 2025/26 the Parish Council will invest as much of its balances as possible in low-risk products in order to achieve its investment objectives.

The investments will be split between:

- Lloyds Bank plc; current and instant access savings accounts and,
- Lloyds Bank plc 95 day call account.

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ASH PARISH COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT

Adopted May 2024

Introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed this Model Councillor Code of Conduct, in association with key partners and after extensive consultation with the sector, as part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. It is a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments.

All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct.

The LGA will undertake an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to city, town and parish councils.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a "councillor" means a member or co-opted member of a local authority. A "co-opted member" is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as "a person who is not a member of the authority but who

- a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
- b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee".

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, "local authority" includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, city and town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The LGA encourages the use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the Nolan Principles.

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Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and parish councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer will be able to advise on any matters that relate to the Code of Conduct.

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Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two

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occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's

identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the council

As a councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral. They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 I do not disclose information:

- a. given to me in confidence by anyone**
- b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless**
 - i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;**
 - ii. I am required by law to do so;**
 - iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or**
 - iv. the disclosure is:**
 - A. reasonable and in the public interest; and**
 - B. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and**
 - C. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.**

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4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in you or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

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7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse council resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:

- a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and**
- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.**

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.

Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers
- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

7B Consideration of advice

As a councillor:

7B. 1 I will, when reaching decisions on any matter, consider and pay due regard to any relevant advice provided to me by the Council's Responsible Finance Officer in accordance with their legal requirements.

7B. 2 I will give reasons for departing from the advice of the Responsible Finance Officer

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to have regard to advice from your Responsible Finance Officer where they give that advice under their statutory duties. As a councillor you must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any legal requirements and any reasonable requirements imposed by your local authority.

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8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

- 8.1 I will undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local County Association (SALC) or by the Monitoring Officer.**
- 8.2 I do not make trivial or malicious complaints against other councillors.**
- 8.3 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.**
- 8.4 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings including the complainant and any witnesses.**
- 8.5 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.**

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is

a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in **Table 1**, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Clerk or the Monitoring Officer.

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10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor:

10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.

10.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Clerk or Monitoring Officer for guidance.

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Appendices

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

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Appendix B Registering interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office or within 28 days of your interests changing you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non-participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

5. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in **Table 1**) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

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7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –

- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
- b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
- c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2**

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied.

8. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the parish affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest. In the event that your non-registerable interest relates to -

- (1) an unpaid directorship on a company owned by your authority or
- (2) another local authority of which you are a member,

subject to your declaring that interest, you are able to take part in any discussion and vote on the matter.

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Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.

Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You must register as an Other Registerable Interest :

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - i. exercising functions of a public nature
 - ii. directed to charitable purposes or
 - iii. one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)
 of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

Ash Parish Council

Procurement Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the procedures which will be followed when purchasing goods and services. The policy aims to give effect to and comply with S135 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Procurement Act 2023 & Procurement Regulations 2024.

Every contract shall comply with this Procurement Policy, the Council's adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. These regulations cover, amongst other things: the number of quotations to be sought and the tendering procedure.

A contract is an agreement between the Council and an individual or organisation for the individual or organisation to provide works, goods or services (including the engagement of consultants) in exchange for payment by the Council. The following contracts are exempt from the requirements of these rules:

- contracts relating solely to disposal or acquisition of land
- employment contracts
- individual agency contracts for the provision of temporary staff
-

The Council strives to attain best value for the goods, materials and services that it purchases.

Best value is defined as a balance of price, quality of product and local supplier services. Before commencing a procurement, it is essential that the authorised person leading the procurement has identified the need and fully assessed the options for meeting those needs. The best use of purchasing power shall be sought by bulk purchases wherever possible.

Exceptions from any of the following provisions of these Contract Procurement Rules may be made under the direction of the Council, in consultation with the RFO, where they are satisfied that the exception is justified in special circumstances. Every exception and reason therefore shall be recorded by a resolution of Council.

The RFO and officers must be mindful of avoiding conflicts of interest when obtaining quotations and awarding tenders.

Quotations cannot be obtained by Members without prior approval of the RFO.

Purpose

Ash (Somerset) Parish Council's Procurement Policy has four main purposes:

1. To obtain best value in the way that the Council spends money, so that it may in turn offer better and more cost-effective services to the public.

2. To support the ability of the Council's officers to procure and manage goods, services and suppliers effectively, including informing all Council staff of the appropriate procedures and responsibilities.
3. To enable the Council to comply with legal obligations that govern the spending of public money.
4. To contribute to the Council's duty towards biodiversity and environmental aims.

Local contractors preferred

The Council recognises the benefits to the economy of using local businesses and will seek out local contractors and suppliers, wherever possible.

Competence of contractors and due diligence

The Council shall only enter into a contract with a supplier if it is satisfied as to the supplier's suitability, eligibility, financial standing and technical capacity to undertake the contract by carrying out appropriate due diligence.

All contractors and suppliers working on Council sites and/or projects will be required to comply with the Council's Health & Safety policy and any rules specific to the site of operation. Provision of suitable risk assessments and safe working method statements will be a condition of all such contracts. The Council requires all contractors working on Council sites and projects to maintain adequate insurance, including but not limited to Public Liability insurance for £10 million.

All procurement will be in accordance with the Council's Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy and in line with legal obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 which makes it generally unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sex or marital status, disability and on the grounds of age.

Equality and sustainability

The Council recognises the importance of sustainability and will take into account the environmental, social and economic impacts of its purchasing decisions.

The Council recognises its duty to protect biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. To meet this duty the Council will wherever possible purchase products that follow the Council's Biodiversity Policy.

The Council will encourage the purchase of locally sourced products and, where possible, ensure that products and materials originate from sustainable sources and accredited sustainable companies. In order to:

- minimise waste and maximise efficiency
- minimise travel
- minimise energy consumption
- promote greater use of new sustainable technologies
- keep material consumption to a minimum.

The Council will

- wherever possible, purchase goods that meet international Fairtrade standards (or similar).

- consider the whole life cost of products when selecting a supplier (Energy efficient products for example often have an increased capital cost that is more than offset over time by the reduced operational cost)
- never buy products that are harmful to the environment if a less damaging alternative is available (for example never use tropical hardwood that is not independently certified as being from a sustainable forest).
- always specify goods, products and materials that cause minimum damage to the environment including the impact of their manufacture, distribution, use & disposal.
- aim to promote sustainability within all its contract and tendering documentation and promote awareness amongst members and officers.
- continually review the purchasing of goods and services through contract specifications, with the intention of decreasing the Council's environmental impact and increasing its positive impacts on society, the local economy and producers.
- aim to draw the sustainable elements of its Procurement Policy to the attention of key suppliers and communicate it as widely as is practicable to the potential supply market.

Prompt payment of invoices

The Council understands the importance of paying suppliers promptly and will wherever possible settle accounts within a maximum of 30 days, or earlier, by agreement. In order to comply with current legislation all payments (apart from petty cash payments) are made by BACS transfer or Direct Debit.

Community engagement

Where relevant, the Council will consult with residents and service users to better understand what is needed, who will use it and what the essential requirements are for an item of capital expenditure.

Pre-approval of contractors

In respect of contracts that may be exempt from the Procurement Act 2023 the Council may require access to pre-approved contractors to supply routine services (or who can be called on to provide emergency services) including but not limited to:

- Electricians
- General builders
- Glaziers
- HR advice
- IT support
- Legal advice
- Locksmiths

- Plant hirers
- Play equipment repairers
- Plumbing and heating engineers
- Sextons
- Tree surgeons
- Vehicle and machinery service engineers

Best value

Normally the Council will accept the quotation, estimate or tender that provides best value for money. However, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the Council is not obliged to accept the lowest of any tender, quotation or estimate.

Purchases on account

The Council maintains monthly accounts with suppliers of regular purchases. All purchases on Council accounts may only be made by authorised Council officers who must be provided with a receipt. An official purchase order shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £500 excluding VAT unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Limits will be set on each account on the maximum value of individual purchases and the overall balance on the account. Expenditure over these limits must be authorised in advance.

Specifications for tender process

Tendering processes ensure fair competition, achieve value for money and avoid anti-competitive behaviour. The tender process is detailed in Appendix 1 of the Council's adopted Financial Regulations.

Contracts

For contracts estimated to exceed £60,000 including VAT, the Clerk/RFO shall seek formal tenders from at least 3 suppliers agreed by Ash Parish Council.

For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation regarding the publication of invitations and notices.

For contracts greater than £3,000 excluding VAT the Clerk/ RFO shall seek at least 2 fixed-price quotes;

where the value is between £500 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk/RFO shall try to obtain 2 estimates (which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers).

For smaller purchases, the clerk shall seek to achieve value for money.

Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:

- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items below £500 excluding VAT.
 - the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council, for any items below £2,000 excluding VAT.
 - {in respect of grants, a duly authorised committee within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council.}
 - the council for all items over £5,000;
- Such authorisation must be supported by a minute (in the case of council or committee decisions) or other auditable evidence trail.

(*The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website if they advertise contract opportunities and also to publicise the award of contracts over £30,000 including VAT, regardless of whether they were advertised.)

Contract variations

Any necessary instructions to vary a contract shall be made in writing by the RFO or persons responsible for supervising the contract. Where a variation occurs during the currency of the contract that is material and cannot be met from within the original contract sum an immediate report shall be made to the Council who shall decide what further action is necessary.

Termination of contracts

Council reserves the right to terminate any contract immediately where a supplier commits a material breach of the agreement to deliver services, or fails to deliver agreed services, in the agreed timeframe without a plan to address the failings.

Compliance with other relevant legislation

In cases where any law, statutory instrument of Government regulation is found to be at variance with any section of this policy, then that shall be applied, and this document shall be amended accordingly.

Appendix 1 - Tender process

- 1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.
- 2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.
- 3) Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.

- 4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
- 5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order [insert reference of the council's relevant standing order] and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.

Adopted by Full Council at their meeting held on Monday 02nd February 2026

Ash Parish Council

Procurement standard terms and conditions

STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUPPLY OF GOODS OR SERVICES TO ASH PARISH COUNCIL (SOMERSET)

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The Council wishes to be supplied with the Goods and/or Services.
- 1.2 The Council has selected you to supply the Goods and/or Services and you undertake to supply the same on the terms set out below.

2. DEFINITIONS:

- 2.1 "Applicable law" means applicable law of the United Kingdom (or a part of the United Kingdom);
- 2.2 "Commencement Date" means the date specified in the Purchase Order;
- 2.3 "Contract" means the Contract between the Council and You consisting of these terms and conditions and related Purchase Order but excluding Your terms and conditions of sale or supply;
- 2.4 "Contract price" means the price exclusive of any applicable Tax, payable to You by the Council as set out in the Purchase Order;
- 2.5 "Controller"; "Data Subject"; "International Organisation"; "Personal Data"; "Personal Data Breach"; "Processing"; and variations; "Processor" shall have the meanings given in applicable Data Protection Laws from time to time (and related expressions, including process, processed and processes shall be construed accordingly);
- 2.6 "Council" means Ash(Somerset) Parish Council;
- 2.7 "Data Protection Laws" means all applicable law relating to the Processing, privacy and/or use of Personal Data, as applicable to either party or the Services; including (a) the UK GDPR; (b) the Data Protection Act 2018; (c) the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2426); and (d) any laws which implement or supplement any such laws;
- 2.8 "Data Protection Supervisory Authority" means any regulator, authority or body responsible for administering Data Protection Laws;
- 2.9 "Force Majeure Event" means any cause materially affecting the performance of the Services under the Contract arising from any act, events, omissions, happenings or non-happenings beyond the Parties reasonable control including, without limitation, acts of God, war, riot, fire, flood or any disaster affecting either of the Parties but will not mean any labour dispute between You and Your employees, agents or sub-contractors;
- 2.10 "Goods" means the goods to be supplied by You and specified in the Purchase Order;
- 2.11 "Prohibited Act" means:
 - (a) offering, giving or agreeing to give to any servant of the Council any gift or consideration of any kind as an inducement or reward:
 - (i) for doing or not doing (or for having done or not having done) any act in relation to the obtaining or performance of this Contract or any other contract with the Council; or

(ii) for showing favour or disfavour to any person in relation to this Contract or any other contract with the Council;

(b) committing any offence:

(i) under the Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889-1916;

(ii) under legislation creating offences in respect of fraudulent acts; or

(iii) at common law in respect of fraudulent acts in relation to this Contract or any other contract with the Council; or

(iv) defrauding or attempting to defraud or conspiring to defraud the Council;

2.12 "Processing End Date" means, in respect of any Protected Data, the earlier of (a) the end of the provision of the relevant Services related to the processing of such Protected Data; or (b) once processing by You of such Protected Data is no longer required for the purposes of Your performance or Your relevant obligations under this Contract;

2.13 "Protected Data" means Personal Data (as described in the Schedule) received from or on behalf of the Council, or otherwise obtained in connection with the performance of Your obligations under the Contract;

2.14 "Purchase Order" means the purchase order used by the Council to place an Order for supplies of Goods and/or Services;

2.15 "Services" means the services to be provided by You as identified in the Purchase Order;

2.16 "Staff" means all Your directors, officers, employees, agents, consultants and or those of any sub-contractor You engage in the performance of Your obligations under the Contract;

2.17 "Sub-Processor" means any Processor engaged by You (or by any other Sub-Processor) for carrying out any processing activities in respect of the Protected Data;

2.18 "UK GDPR" means the General Data Protection Regulation, Regulation (EU) 2016/679, as it forms part of domestic law in the United Kingdom by virtue of section 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (including as further amended or modified by the laws of the United Kingdom or of a part of the United Kingdom from time to time);

2.19 "Working Day" means a day (other than a Saturday or Sunday) on which banks are open for business in the City of London;

2.20 "You" and variations including "Your" means the party supplying the Council with the Goods and/or Services.

3. DURATION

The Contract and the rights and obligations of the Parties shall take effect on the Contract commencement Date and shall continue until the expiry of the Contract Term or earlier termination of the Contract.

4. CONTRACT FOR GOODS

4.1 SPECIFICATION

(a) All goods shall be of the quality or kind mentioned in the Purchase Order but otherwise the goods shall be in accordance with any specification of the British Standards Institute, or EU equivalent, which relates to the goods and is current at the date of the quotation or tender. The goods shall comply with the requirements of any statute or subordinate legislation in force at the time of the delivery of the goods to the Council.

(b) You shall indemnify the Council against all loss, damage, costs and expenses for which

the Council is or becomes liable as a result of any infringement or alleged infringement by You of any third party's rights.

4.2 NOTICES

Any notice, request, demand, consent or approval given under or in connection with this Contract must be given in writing. Any such notice, request, demand, consent or approval shall be sent to the registered office or principal business address of either party and, if sent by post, shall be deemed to have been received on the second working day following the date of posting.

4.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE

- (a) You shall give the Council access at all reasonable times to Your premises and allow them to inspect his quality systems and production methods and, if requested, to inspect, examine and test the Goods both during and after their manufacture and the materials being used in the manufacture.
- (b) Any costs incurred by You in arranging compliance with the quality standards required by the Council shall be borne by You.

4.4 REJECTION AND REPLACEMENT

- (a) Without prejudice to or limitation of its statutory rights the Council may within the Warranty Period, notwithstanding the use or continued use by the Council of the Goods after the right to reject them has arisen, reject by notice in writing (without liability to the Council) any Goods which, in the opinion of the Council are not of satisfactory quality and/or fit for purpose and/or not in accordance with the Purchase Order.
- (b) Without prejudice to the Council's other rights and remedies, You shall in any event indemnify the Council against all costs and expenses incurred by the Council as a result of Your original supply of the rejected goods.
- (c) You shall remove rejected Goods within 14 days of the date of the Council's notice of rejection, failing which the Council may (as it sole option) deliver them to You, in either case at Your cost and risk.
- (d) Where such rejected Goods form part of a series of consignments, nothing in this Condition shall prevent the Council from accepting subsequent consignments if the Goods contained within such subsequent consignments are acceptable to the Council.

4.5 WARRANTY

Without prejudice to the Council's other rights and remedies, if during the Warranty Period, any defect occurs in any of the Goods due to the material, workmanship or design of the Goods not being in accordance with the Purchase Order or the Specification or any applicable statutory or regulatory standards, You shall as soon as practicable and in any event within a reasonable time as stipulated by the Council replace or repair such defective Goods at this own expense. Goods replaced or repaired under this Condition shall be subject to a fresh Warranty commencing on the actual date of delivery of the repaired or replaced Goods and continuing for the Warranty Period.

4.6 TITLE AND RISK

(a) Title in the Goods will pass to the Council upon payment to You, save where payment (either in whole or in part) is made for the Goods prior to their delivery to the Council, or where the Council has supplied materials to be incorporated in the Goods, in which cases Condition 4.7b) shall apply.

(b) Where under Condition 4.7a) this Condition 4.7b) (without prejudice to the Council's rights) title to the Goods shall vest in the Council from the commencement of their manufacture, and title to all materials and other items which You shall acquire or allocate for incorporation in any of the Goods shall vest in the Council from the time they are so acquired or allocated.

(c) The Goods shall be at Your risk until they are delivered to the Council notwithstanding that payment may have already been made and title passed to the Council, and You shall be responsible for any loss or damage and for arranging and paying for their storage, handling and insurance; the insurance shall be endorsed in the name of and protect the interests of the Council on an all risks basis and shall provide cover for loss or damage in transit.

5. CONTRACT FOR SERVICES

5.1 THE SERVICE STANDARD

You will at all times throughout the duration of this Contract:

(a) Provide the Services for the period specified in the Purchase Order in accordance with the Council's requirements as set out in the Purchase Order.

(b) Comply with the terms of this Contract.

(c) Exercise and continue to exercise the degree of skill, care and diligence reasonably to be expected of a skilled and competent provider of such services.

(d) Carry out all reasonable directions of the Council's representative.

(e) Use its reasonable endeavours to secure and achieve continuous improvement in the delivery of the Services during the Contract Term.

(f) Notify the Council in writing immediately on learning of any relationship or potential conflict of interest that might influence or be perceived to influence the provision of the Services.

6. PRICE AND PAYMENT

6.1 Ash (Somerset) Parish Council has committed to the UK Governments Transparency agenda (2010) by ensuring that ALL its expenditure over £500 along with a contract overview is made publicly available via the Councils website. Suppliers should be aware that the information published on a monthly/ quarterly basis includes the Suppliers Name, £ spend value, spend classification, contract start/ finish dates, total contract value. Commercially sensitive contract details/ price structures will not be published.

6.2 In consideration of the performance of Your obligation under the contract, the Council shall pay the price in accordance with the Contract.

6.3 The Council shall pay You the undisputed sums due in cleared funds within thirty (30) days of receipt and agreement of invoices, submitted monthly in arrears, for work completed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council.

6.4 The Council may reduce payment in respect of any goods which You have either failed

to provide or have provided inadequate goods.

6.5 No increase in the Price may be made (whether on account of increased material, labour or transport costs, fluctuations in rates of exchange or otherwise) without the prior written consent of the Council.

6.6 Payment by the Council shall be without prejudice to any claims or rights which the Council may have against You and shall not constitute any admission by the Council as to Your performance of Your obligation hereunder.

7. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

7.1 Any specification supplied by the Council to You or specifically produced by You for the Council, in connection with the Contract, together with the copyright, design rights or any other intellectual property rights in the Purchase Order, shall be the exclusive property of the Council.

7.2 All designs, drawing, specifications and information supplied by Council in connection with the Contract are confidential, and their use must be strictly confined to Your own works for the purposes of the Contract. All such designs, drawings, specifications and information and all copies thereof must be returned to the Council on completion of the Contract.

7.3 You shall indemnify the Council against all actions, claims and demands, costs charges and expenses awarded against or incurred by the Council as a result of or in connection with any claim that the Goods or their use or resale infringes the patent, registered design, trademark, copyright or other intellectual property rights of any other person except to the extent that the claim arises from compliance with the Purchase Order.

8. STATUTORY RIGHTS

8.1 A party who is not a party to this Contract is not entitled to enforce any of its terms under the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 except where this Contract expressly provides otherwise.

8.2 Without prejudice to or limitation of the Council's other rights, if You do not fulfil Your responsibilities and obligations under the Purchase Order You shall indemnify the Council against all costs for which the Council becomes liable and for which it would not otherwise be liable.

9. DATA PROTECTION

9.1 APPLICATION

(a) This clause 9 applies if You are processing Personal Data on behalf of the Council.

(b) You shall, comply with any notification requirements under the Data Protection Laws and both Parties shall duly observe all their obligations under the Data Protection Laws which arise in connection with the Contract.

9.2 CONFLICT

(a) Unless otherwise expressly stated in this Contract:

(i) Your obligations and the Council's rights and remedies under this clause 9 are

cumulative with, and additional to, one another and those under any other provisions of this Contract; and

(ii) this clause 9 shall prevail over any other provision of this Contract in the event of any conflict.

9.3 COMPLIANCE WITH DATA PROTECTION LAWS

(a) The Parties agree that the Council is a Controller and that You are a Processor for the purposes of processing Protected Data pursuant to this Contract. You shall, and shall ensure the Sub-Processors and each of Your Staff shall, at all times comply with all Data Protection Laws in connection with the processing of Protected Data and the provision of the Services. Nothing in this Contract relieves You of any responsibilities or liabilities under Data Protection Laws.

(b) You shall indemnify and keep indemnified the Council against:

(i) all losses, claims, damages, liabilities, fines, interest, penalties, costs, charges, sanctions, expenses, compensation paid to Data Subjects (including compensation to protect goodwill and ex gratia payments), demands and legal and other professional costs (calculated on a full indemnity basis and in each case whether or not arising from any investigation by, or imposed by, a Data Protection Supervisory Authority) arising out of or in connection with any breach by You of Your obligations under this clause 9; and

(ii) all amounts paid or payable by the Council to a third party which would not have been paid or payable if Your breach of this clause 9 had not occurred.

9.4 INSTRUCTIONS

You shall only process (and shall ensure the Staff only process) the Protected Data in accordance with the Schedule, this Contract and the Council's written instructions from time to time (including with regard to any transfer to which clause 9.8 relates) except where otherwise required by applicable law (and in such a case shall inform the Council of that legal requirement before processing, unless applicable law prevents it doing so on important grounds of public interest). You shall immediately inform the Council if any instruction relating to the Protected Data infringes or may infringe any Data Protection Law. You shall retain records of all instructions relating to the Protected Data received from the Council.

9.5 SECURITY

(a) You shall at all times implement and maintain appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect Protected Data against accidental, unauthorised or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, disclosure or access. Such technical and organisational measures shall be at least equivalent to the technical and organisational measures set out in Part B of the Schedule and shall reflect the nature of the Protected Data.

(b) You may not make any change to the security measures You apply to the Protected Data to the extent any such change would conflict with the provisions of this Contract.

9.6 SUB-PROCESSING AND STAFF

You shall:

- (a) not permit any processing of Protected Data by any agent, sub-contractor, Sub-Processor or other third party (except Your own employees that are subject to an enforceable obligation of confidence with regards to the Protected Data) without the prior specific written authorisation of that third party by the Council that takes effect by way of a binding variation to this Contract and only then subject to such conditions as the Council may require;
- (b) ensure that access to Protected Data is limited to the authorised persons who need access to it to supply the Services;
- (c) prior to the relevant Sub-Processor carrying out any Processing activities in respect of the Protected Data, appoint the relevant Sub-Processor under a binding written contract containing the same obligations as under this clause 9 in respect of Protected Data and that (without prejudice to, or limitation of, the foregoing):
 - (i) includes providing sufficient guarantees to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures in such a manner that the processing of the Protected Data will meet the requirements of all Data Protection Laws; and
 - (ii) is enforceable by You,and ensure each such Sub-Processor is at all times subject to a binding written contract which complies with such terms and that each Sub-Processor complies with all such obligations;
- (d) remain fully liable to the Council under this Contract for all the acts and omissions of each Sub-Processor and each of Your Staff as if they were its own; and
- (e) ensure that all persons authorised by You or any Sub-Processor to process Protected Data are reliable and:
 - (i) adequately trained on compliance with this clause 9 as applicable to the processing;
 - (ii) informed of the confidential nature of the Protected Data and that they must not disclose Protected Data;
 - (iii) subject to a binding and enforceable written contractual obligation to keep the Protected Data confidential; and
- (f) promptly provide all relevant details concerning, and a copy of, each Contract with a Sub-Processor to the Council on request.

9.7 ASSISTANCE

You shall (at Your own cost and expense) promptly:

- (a) provide such information and assistance (including by taking all appropriate technical and organisational measures) as the Council may require in relation to the fulfilment of the Council's obligations to respond to requests for exercising the Data Subjects' rights under Chapter III of the UK GDPR (and any similar obligations under applicable Data Protection Laws); and
- (b) provide such information, co-operation and other assistance to the Council as the Council reasonably requires (taking into account the nature of processing and the information available to You) to ensure compliance with the Council's obligations under Data Protection Laws, including with respect to:
 - (i) security of processing (including with any review of security measures);
 - (ii) data protection impact assessments (as such term is defined in Data Protection Laws);
 - (iii) prior consultation with a Data Protection Supervisory Authority regarding high risk

processing; and

(iv) any remedial action and/or notifications in response to any Personal Data Breach and/or any complaint or request relating to either party's obligations under Data Protection Laws relevant to this Contract, including (subject in each case to the Council's prior written authorisation) regarding any notification of the Personal Data Breach to Supervisory Authorities and/or communication to any affected Data Subjects;

(c) You shall (at no cost or expense to the Council) record and refer all requests and communications received from Data Subjects or any Data Protection Supervisory Authority to the Council which relate (or which may relate) to any Protected Data promptly (and in any event within 3 days of receipt) and shall not respond to any without the Council's express written approval and strictly in accordance with the Council's instructions unless and to the extent required by applicable law.

9.8 INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS

You shall not process and/or transfer, or otherwise directly or indirectly disclose, any Protected Data in or to any country or territory outside the United Kingdom or to any International Organisation without the prior written authorisation of the Council (which may be refused or granted subject to such conditions as the Council deems necessary).

9.9 RECORDS AND AUDIT

You shall (and shall ensure all Sub-Processors shall) promptly make available to the Council (at Your cost and expense) such information as is reasonably required to demonstrate Your and the Council's compliance with their respective obligations under this clause 9 and the Data Protection Laws, and allow for, permit and contribute to audits, including inspections, by the Council (or another auditor mandated by the Council) for this purpose at the Council's request from time to time. You shall provide (or procure) access to all relevant premises, systems, Staff and records during normal business hours for the purposes of each such audit or inspection upon reasonable prior notice (not being more than 2 Working Days) and provide and procure all further reasonable co-operation, access and assistance in relation to any such audit or inspection.

9.10 BREACH

You shall promptly (and in any event within 24 hours):

(a) notify the Council if You (or any of the Sub-Processors or Your Staff) suspects or becomes aware of any suspected, actual or threatened occurrence of any Personal Data Breach in respect of any Protected Data; and

(b) provide all information as the Council requires to report the circumstances referred to in clause 9.10 to a Data Protection Supervisory Authority and to notify affected Data Subjects under the Data Protection Laws.

9.11 DELETION/ RETURN

(a) Subject to clause 9.11 (b) You shall (and shall ensure that each of the Sub-Processors and the Staff shall) within not less than 2 Working Days and not more than 4 Working Days of the relevant Processing End Date securely delete the Protected Data (and all copies)

except to the extent that storage of any such data is required by applicable law (and, if so, You shall inform the Council of any such requirement and shall securely delete such data as soon as it is permitted to do so under applicable law).

(b) You shall (and shall ensure that each of the Sub-Processors and Staff shall) promptly comply (in a secure manner) with any requests from time to time from the Council for the return or disclosure to the Council of any Protected Data in such form and by such manner as the Council reasonably requests, provided such request is received within 2 Working Days of the relevant Processing End Date.

9.12 SURVIVAL

This clause 9 shall survive termination or expiry of this Contract for any reason.

9.13 COST

You shall perform all Your obligations under this clause 9 at no cost or expense to the Council.

9.14 RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS

Nothing in this Contract affects the rights of Data Subjects under the Data Protection Laws (including those in Articles 79 and 82 of the UK GDPR or in any similar Data Protection Laws) against the Council, You or any Sub-Processor.

10. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

10.1 You recognise the Council's current and future obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any codes of practice issued by the Government and the appropriate enforcement Agencies. You will comply with this legislation in so far as it places obligations upon the Council in the performance of its obligations under any contractual arrangement entered into. You will provide such assistance and support which may be requested from time to time by the Council for the purposes of enabling or assisting the Council to comply with the legislation.

10.2 In the event of a request made on the Council for access to information under the FOIA or any notice, recommendation or complaint made to the Council in relation to the FOIA, You will provide to the Council in relation to an access request, any details in respect of the information as the Council may request and a copy of the relevant information where the Council requests such copy; and in relation to any notice, recommendation or complaint, any background details, supporting documentation and copy information which the Council may request in order to deal with such notice, recommendation or complaint within 5 Working Days of the date of the request from the Council.

10.3 You acknowledge that the Council is obliged under the FOIA to disclose information, including information relating to its appointment under this Contract, to third Parties, subject to certain exemptions. You further accept and acknowledge that the decision to disclose information and the application of any such exemptions under the FOIA will be at the Council's sole discretion PROVIDED THAT the Council shall act reasonably and proportionately in exercising its obligations under the FOIA as to whether any exemptions

under section 43 of the FOIA may apply to protect Your legitimate commercial and trade secrets.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

11.1 Subject to Clause 9 (Data Protection) and Clause 10 (Freedom of Information) You shall not, without the prior written consent of the Council, during or after the termination or expiry of this Contract disclose, directly or indirectly, to any person any information relating to the contract or the Council any information of whatever nature which is not in the public domain. Your obligations under this Condition shall survive the expiry or termination of the Contract for whatever reason.

12. DEFAULT

12.1 The goods may be rejected by the Council if they are not supplied and delivered by You when and as ordered by the Council, or, if the goods are not of the sort or quality contracted for, or if the goods are deficient in the quality or number charged for or stated in the delivery or advice note accompanying or preceding the goods. In such matter the decision of the Council shall be conclusive as against You. In every such case the Council may, without prejudice to any other remedy for breach of contract, employ any other person to supply the Council with the goods on such terms and conditions as the Council thinks fit for the remainder of the term of the Contract or any part thereof. In such cases it is hereby agreed that You shall pay the Council or the Council may deduct from any sum due or that may become due to You under the Contract or otherwise, all additional costs, charges or expenses incurred by the Council arising from Your default.

13. TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

13.1 The Council may terminate the Contract with immediate effect by notice in writing to You on or at any time after the occurrence of any of the following events:

- (a) the passing of a resolution for Your winding up or the making by a court of competent jurisdiction of an order for the winding up of You or Your dissolution;
- (b) the making of an administration order in relation to You or the appointment of a receiver or administrative receiver over, or the taking of possession or sale by an encumbrancer of a material part of Your assets;
- (c) the making of an arrangement or composition with Your creditors generally or making an application to a court of competent jurisdiction for protection from Your creditors generally;
- (d) You commit any Prohibited Act;
- (e) a breach of Your obligations to take out and maintain required insurances;
- (f) a material and substantial breach of any of Your obligations under this Contract.

13.2 In the event of the Council having the right to terminate under clauses 13.1 a), b) or c), the Council may, at its sole discretion, give the receiver, liquidator or other person (as appropriate) the option of carrying out the Contract subject to a guarantee acceptable to the Council being provided for the due and faithful performance of the Contract.

14. ASSIGNMENT AND SUB-CONTRACTING

14.1 You shall not assign, transfer sublet or sub contract the whole or any part of this contract without the prior written consent of the Council.

15. INDEMNITY AND INSURANCE

15.1 You shall indemnify and keep indemnified the Council against injury (including death) to any persons or loss of or damage to any property which may arise out of the act default or Your negligence, any sub-contractor or their respective employees or agents, and against all claims demands proceedings damages costs charges and expenses whatsoever in respect thereof or in relation thereto arising from the provision of the goods and/or Services.

15.2 You shall effect, with a reputable company, public and employer's liability and other insurances necessary to cover the risks contemplated by the Contract and shall at the request of the Council produce the relevant policy or policies together with receipts or other evidence of payment of the latest premium due thereunder. Public liability and Employers liability cover of at least £10 million shall be obtained, unless agreed otherwise with the Council. Where the Supply is a supply of consultancy services You shall maintain professional indemnity insurance during the Contract period and for 6 years afterwards to cover its liability to the Council under the Contract.

16. FORCE MAJEURE

16.1 Notwithstanding anything contained in these terms and conditions neither the Council nor You shall be liable for any loss damage or expense suffered or incurred by one party if by reason of a Force Majeure event or any restriction or prohibition imposed by the Government or any duly authorised authority which could not reasonably have been prevented or avoided by the Council or You as the case may be, either:

- (a) The Council is prevented from or delayed in accepting delivery of any goods or any part of a delivery or in paying for the same or any part of a delivery at the due time; or
- (b) You are prevented from or delayed in the supply of any goods ordered by the Council.

17. NO WAIVER

17.1 No delay, neglect or forbearance on the part of either party in enforcing against the other party any term or condition of the contract shall either be or be deemed to be a waiver or in any way prejudice any right of that party under this contract.

18. CORRUPT GIFTS AND FRAUD

18.1 As soon as either party becomes aware of or suspects the commission of any Prohibited Act in respect of the provision of the Services it will notify the other party.

18.2 In circumstances where a person employed by You is reasonably suspected of having committed a Prohibited Act You will provide to the Council such information as is reasonable to satisfy the Council that appropriate action has been taken to safeguard the Service Users or the Council.

19. ACCRUED RIGHTS AND REMEDIES

19.1 The termination of the Contract will not prejudice or affect any claim, right, action or remedy that will have accrued or will thereafter accrue to either party.

20. RIGHTS AND DUTIES RESERVED

20.1 All rights, duties and powers which the Council has as a local Council or which the Council's officers have as local Council officers are expressly reserved.

21. SURVIVAL OF TERMS

21.1 The terms of the Contract will (except in respect of any obligations fully performed prior to or at the completion of the Services) continue in force and effect after the completion of the Services by You.

22. ANTI-SLAVERY

22.1 In performing Your obligations under the Contract You shall:

- (a) comply with all applicable anti-slavery and human trafficking laws, statutes, regulations and codes from time to time in force including but not limited to the Modern Slavery Act 2015; and
- (b) not engage in any activity, practice or conduct that would constitute an offence under sections 1, 2 or 4, of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 if such activity, practice or conduct were carried out in the UK; and
- (c) ensure that each of Your sub-contractors and suppliers shall comply with all applicable anti-slavery and human trafficking laws, statutes, regulations and codes from time to time in force including but not limited to the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

22.2 You represent and warrant that neither You nor any of Your officers, employees or other persons associated with You:

- (a) have been convicted of any offence involving slavery and human trafficking; and
- (b) having made reasonable enquiries, so far as You are aware, have been or are the subject of any investigation, inquiry or enforcement proceedings by any governmental, administrative or regulatory body regarding any offence or alleged offence of or in connection with slavery and human trafficking.

22.3 You shall implement due diligence procedures for Your sub-contractors, and suppliers and other participants in Your supply chains, to ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in Your supply chains.

22.4 You shall notify the Council as soon as You become aware of:

- (a) any breach, or potential breach, of the applicable anti-slavery and human trafficking laws, statutes, regulations and codes from time to time in force; or
- (b) any actual or suspected slavery or human trafficking in a supply chain which has a connection with this Contract.

22.5 The Council may terminate the Contract with immediate effect by giving written notice to You if You or any of Your supply chain commits a breach of the applicable anti-slavery and human trafficking laws, statutes, regulations and codes from time to time in force.

23. LAW

23.1 This Contract shall be governed by and construed in accordance with English law and the Parties submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

24. ENTIRE CONTRACT

24.1 This Contract is the entire Contract between the Parties and supersedes all representations, communications and prior Contracts between the Parties in that regard. Each party acknowledges that it has entered into this Contract in reliance only on the representations, warranties, promises and terms contained or expressly referred to in this Contract and, save as expressly set out in these terms and conditions, neither Party shall have any liability in respect of any other representation, warranty or promise unless it was made fraudulently.

SCHEDULE

PART A: DATA PROCESSING DETAILS

Processing of the Protected Data by You under this Contract shall be for the subject-matter, duration, nature and purposes and involve the types of Personal Data and categories of Data Subjects set out in this Part A.

1. Subject-matter of processing: For the performance of the Services.
2. Duration of the processing: Processing shall take place until the Processing End Date.
3. Nature and purpose of the processing: All operations on the Protected Data as may be required for the performance of the Services only including collection, recording, organisation, structuring, storage, adaptation or alteration, retrieval, consultation, erasure, destruction or other use.
4. Type of Personal Data: Name, address, date of birth, telephone number, email address or other Personal Data as may be processed in the performance of the Services.
5. Categories of Data Subjects: Council tenants, residents, members of the public, employees (including volunteers, agents, and temporary workers) or other categories of Data Subjects as may be required for the performance of the Services.

PART B: MINIMUM TECHNICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL SECURITY MEASURES

1. Without prejudice to its other obligations, the You shall implement and maintain at least the following technical and organisational security measures to protect the Protected Data:

1.1 In accordance with the Data Protection Laws, taking into account the state of the art, the costs of implementation and the nature, scope, context and purposes of the processing of the Protected Data to be carried out under or in connection with this Agreement, as well as the risks of varying likelihood and severity for the rights and freedoms of natural persons and the risks that are presented by the processing, especially from accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to the Protected Data transmitted, stored or otherwise processed, You shall implement appropriate technical and organisational security measures appropriate to the risk, including as appropriate those matters mentioned in Articles 32(1)(a) to 32(1)(d) (inclusive) of the GDPR.

1.2 Without prejudice to Your other obligations, including as appropriate:

- (a) encryption of data in transit by using suitable encryption solutions such as using https;

- (b) encryption of data at rest on all devices, including portable devices, using suitable encryption solutions;
- (c) only accessing data remotely using secure networks;
- (d) use of multi-factor authentication for internet facing systems;
- (e) timely decommissioning and secure wiping (that renders data unrecoverable) of old software and hardware;
- (f) secure disposal of hard copy documents;
- (g) completing regular software updates to all hardware and software;
- (h) real-time protection anti-virus and anti-malware software and web filtering on all systems;
- (i) firewalls and intrusion detection and prevention systems at the network edge;
- (j) the use of user access control management, including username and password restrictions, and audit logs;
- (k) enforcing unique passwords of sufficient complexity and regular expiry on all devices;
- (l) the use of data backup and disaster recovery measures and procedures;
- (m) procedures to ensure modifications to any systems, software or hardware are managed to ensure the ongoing confidentiality, integrity, availability of all data;
- (n) implementation of relevant policies covering Information Security, Data Protection, Bring Your Own Device, Acceptable Use and Clear Desk;
- (o) regular training of all Staff on confidentiality, data processing obligations, identification of Personal Data Breaches and risks;
- (p) suitable physical controls in place to protect data, networks and premises such as physical security on premises including reception or front desk, security passes, storage of documents in secure cabinets, secure disposal of materials, CCTV;
- (q) annual testing to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the security measures set out in this paragraph 1.2 of this Part B.

ASH (SOMERSET) PARISH COUNCIL

PURCHASE ORDER

Purchase Order Number:

Purchase Order Date:

Vendor's Name	Send To
	Zannette Bougourd, Clerk/RFO Ash (Somerset) Parish Council 9 Redgate Park Crewkerne TA197NL

Description of Items	Quantity	Unit Price	Total (£)
		Sub-total	
		VAT	
		Delivery	
		Other	
		Total (3)	

Comments or Special Instructions

If you have any questions about this Purchase Order, please contact Zannette Bougourd on 07471341433 /clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gpv.uk

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Zannette Bougourd, 9 Redgate Park, Crewkerne. Somerset. TA187N

Tel: 01935823268

E-mail@ clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk

Ash Parish Council Data Retention Policy

All data is backed up daily to an external hard drive. Files are kept securely on a dedicated device.

Hard copies are kept of minutes.

All files are backed up to Google Drive & pcloud

Data backup policy.

The 3-2-1 Rule is a data protection strategy that recommends having three copies of your data, stored on two different types of media, with one copy kept off-site.

As a widely embraced data backup strategy, the 3-2-1 Rule prescribes:

- Maintain three copies of your data: This includes the original data and at least two copies.
- Use two different types of media for storage: Store your data on two distinct forms of media to enhance redundancy.
- Keep at least one copy off-site: To ensure data safety, have one backup copy stored in an off-site location, separate from your primary data and on-site backups.

This rule is a robust guideline for data protection, ensuring redundancy, resilience, and the ability to recover data even in the face of unexpected events or disasters.

By mitigating single points of failure, enhancing data availability, and protecting against corruption, redundancy ensures the safety of critical information. It plays a pivotal role in disaster recovery, adapting to evolving technologies, and meeting compliance requirements. Diversified storage and off-site backups, as recommended by the rule, effectively mitigate various risks, contributing to the overall security and reliability of critical data.

Adopted 2026

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Councillors: S Davey, Chair, C Halfhide, vice Chair. Cllrs Z England, A Britten, M Trebley, A Groves, T Groves.

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ASH PARISH COUNCIL DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Adopted May 2024

Ash Parish Council believes that civility and respect are important in the working environment, and expect all councillors, officers and the public to be polite and courteous when working for, and with the council.

Purpose

Ash Parish Council is committed to creating a working environment where all council employees, councillors, contractors and others who come into contact with us in the course of our work, are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy. We aim to create a workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying

In support of this objective, Ash Parish Council has signed up to the Civility Pledge, as a commitment to civility and respect in our work, and politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Further information about the Civility and Respect Pledge is available [NALC](#) & [SLCC](#)

We recognise that there is a continuum where unaddressed issues have the potential to escalate and become larger, more complex issues and this policy sets out how concerns will be managed however the emphasis of this policy is on resolution and mediation where appropriate, rather than an adversarial process.

This document:

- explains how we will respond to complaints of bullying or harassment;
- ensures that we respond sensitively and promptly; and,
- supports our employees in ensuring their behaviour does not amount to bullying and/or harassment by giving examples.

Scope

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by clerks/chief officers and all employees engaged to work at Ash Parish Council. Should agency staff, or contractors have a complaint connected to their engagement with Ash Parish Council this should be raised to their nominated contact, manager, or the Chair of the Council, in the first instance. Should the complaint be about the chair of the council the complaint should be raised to the deputy chair.

Agency staff, or contractors are equally expected to treat council colleagues, and other representatives and stakeholders with dignity and respect, and the council may terminate the contract, without notice, where there are suspicions of harassment or bullying.

Complaints about other employment matters will be managed under the council's grievance policy.

It is noted that the management of a situation may differ depending on who the allegations relate to (e.g. employees, contractor, councillor), however, the council will take appropriate action if any of its employees are bullied or harassed by employees, councillors, members of the public, suppliers or contractors.

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The position on bullying and harassment

All staff and council representatives are entitled to dignity, respect and courtesy within the workplace and to not experience any form of discrimination. Ash Parish Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in our workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether harm is intended or not. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. You should also be aware that, if you have bullied or harassed someone (e.g. physical violence, harassment), in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

We expect all representatives of the council to treat each other with respect and uphold the values of the code of conduct, civility and respect pledge, equality opportunities policy, and all other policies and procedures set by the Council.

We expect you to demonstrate respect by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. See the grievance policy for further details regarding the process. Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. While we will assume that all complaints of bullying and harassment are made in good faith, in the event that allegations are found to be malicious or vexatious the person raising the complaint may be subject to action under the council's disciplinary procedure.

Harassment

- ◆ Where a person is subject to uninvited conduct that violates their dignity, in connection with a protected characteristic
- ◆ Behaviour that creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment in relation to a protected characteristic

Bullying

- ◆ Behaviour that leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. It does not need to be connected to a protected characteristic.

What Type of Treatment amounts to Bullying or Harassment?

'Bullying' or 'harassment' are phrases that apply to treatment from one person (or a group of people) to another that is unwanted and that has the effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- The offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances e.g. promotion, access to training
- Threats for rejecting sexual advances
- Demeaning comments about a person's appearance

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- Verbal abuse or offensive comments, including jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Unwanted nicknames, especially related to a person's age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- Lewd or suggestive comments or gestures
- Deliberate exclusion from conversations, work activities or social activities.
- Withholding information a person needs in order to do their job
- Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies or inappropriate birthday rituals
- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling
- Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property
- Display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person
- Isolation or non-cooperation at work
- Subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, whether directly and / or in front of others
- The use of obscene gestures
- Abusing a position of power

Bullying and harassment can occur through verbal and face to face interactions, but can also take place through sharing inappropriate or offensive content in writing or via email and other electronic communications and social media.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable and behaviour could be harassment when the person had no intention to offend. We all have the right to determine what offends us. Some behaviour will be clear to any reasonable person that it is likely to offend – for example sexual touching. Other examples may be less clear, however, you should be aware that harassment will occur if behaviour continues after the recipient has advised you that the behaviour is unacceptable to them.

Harassment can also occur where the unwanted behaviour relates to a perceived characteristic (such as offensive jokes or comments based on the assumption someone is gay, even if they are not) or due to their association with someone else (such as harassment related to their partner having a disability for example).

It is important to recognise that bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. Constructive and fair feedback about your behaviour or performance from your manager or colleagues/Councillors is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routines, and should not be interpreted as anything different.

All employees must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity and should feel able to challenge behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.

Victimisation

Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would

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include isolating someone because they have made a complaint or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e. you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and the council will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

Reporting Concerns

What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a member of the public or supplier (as opposed to a colleague)

If you are being bullied or harassed by someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with your nominated manager in the first instance or, with the clerk/or a councillor. Any such report will be taken seriously, and we will decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.

What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor: If you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor, please raise this with the clerk/chief officer or the chair of the council in the first instance. They will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you. There are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. The Informal Resolution is described below. Formal concerns regarding potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct must be investigated by the Monitoring Officer.

The council will consider reasonable measures to protect your health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties or change of work location, not attending meetings with the person about whom the complaint has been made etc.

What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to harassment or bullying: If you witness such behaviour you should report the incident in confidence to the clerk/chief officer or a councillor. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

What you should do if you are being bullied or harassed by another member of staff: If you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague or contractor, there are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. These are described below.

Informal resolution

If you are being bullied or harassed, you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to the council's policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask the clerk/chief officer, your nominated manager or a colleague to put this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

If the above approach does not work or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by your own nominated manager, you should raise the issue with the chair of the council. (If your concern relates to the chair, you should raise it with the chair of the personnel/staffing committee). The chair (or another appropriate person) will discuss with you the

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option of trying to resolve the situation informally by telling the alleged perpetrator, without prejudicing the matter, that:

- there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a member of the council staff
- such behaviour is contrary to our policy
- for employees, the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence

It may be possible for this conversation to take place with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. The person dealing with it will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances we may be able to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The chair (or another appropriate person) will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as extremely serious allegation or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step.

Raising a formal complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about bullying and harassment through the council's grievance procedure. You should raise your complaint to the clerk/chief officer or the chair of the council. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s) where they are employed.

The clerk/chief officer or the chair of the council will appoint someone to investigate your complaint in line with the grievance policy. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s),
- The nature of the harassment or bullying,
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred,
- The names of any witnesses and
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally.

The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be told your name and the details of your grievance in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, we will consider whether it is appropriate to make temporary adjustments to working arrangements whilst the matter is being investigated.

Where your complaint relates to potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct, these will need to be investigated by the Monitoring Officer. The council will consider any adjustments to support you in your work and to manage the relationship with the councillor the allegations relate to, while the investigation proceeds.

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Investigations will be carried out promptly (without unreasonable delay), sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. When carrying out any investigations, we will ensure that individuals' personal data is handled in accordance with the data protection policy.

The council will consider how to protect your health and wellbeing whilst the investigation is taking place and discuss this with you. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the Investigator may want to meet with you to understand better your complaint (see the grievance policy for further information, and details of your right to be accompanied).

After the investigation, a panel will meet with you to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation in accordance with the grievance procedure. At the meeting you may be accompanied by a fellow worker or a trade union official.

Following the conclusion of the hearing the panel will write to you to inform you of the decision and to notify you of your right to appeal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the decision. Your appeal will be heard under the appeal process that is described in the grievance procedure.

The use of the Disciplinary Procedure

If at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our disciplinary procedure. We will keep you informed of the outcome.

This is a non-contractual policy and procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

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Notes:

Protected Characteristics

A 'protected characteristic' is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and marriage and civil partnership. It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual because of any of the protected characteristics.

Discrimination includes treating people differently because of a protected characteristic. Employees can complain of harassment even if the behaviour in question is not directed at them. This is because the complainant does not actually need to possess the relevant protected characteristic. An employee can complain of unlawful harassment if they are related someone with a protected characteristic, or because a colleague believes they have a protected characteristic.

Examples of harassment related to a protected characteristic could include;

- Making assumptions about someone's ability due to their age, or denying development opportunities to someone based on their age. This could also include assumptions about their lifestyle or making inappropriate jokes related to age.
- Making fun or mimicking impairments related to a health condition, or using inappropriate language about disabilities. Constantly selecting social activities that make it impossible for a colleague with a disability to participate in.
- Refusing to treat a person as their new gender, or disclosing information about their gender identity could be harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment.
- Pregnancy/Maternity harassment could include refusing opportunities due to pregnancy or maternity leave, or inappropriate touching and invasion of personal space such as unwanted touching of a pregnant person's stomach.
- Harassment based on race could include derogatory nicknames, or stereotyping based on ethnicity. It could include racist comments or jokes, or assumptions about someone's lifestyle based on their ethnicity.
- Gender harassment could include not considering people for a job based on gender stereotyping roles, or implementing practices that disadvantage one gender over another. Rude, explicit jokes, even if not directed at an individual, or comments on individuals dress or appearance.
- Regularly arranging team meals over periods of fasting or religious occasions or failing to adjust a dress code to accommodate religious dress could be examples of harassment based on religion/belief.
- Excluding same sex partners from social events could be both sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership discrimination, as could not offering the same work-related benefits.

A person does not need to be employed or have 2 years qualifying service to make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.

- Job applicants who believe they have not been appointed because of a 'protected characteristic' can make a claim.
- New or established employees who are dismissed, or treated unreasonably because of a health condition can make a discrimination claim.
- An employee subjected to harassment can make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.
- An employee asked to retire can make a discrimination claim at a tribunal

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Legal risks

Successful unfair dismissal claims are limited to a compensation cap, whereas those for unlawful discrimination have no cap.

A positive employment culture, and swift action if conduct falls beneath acceptable standards will help mitigate the risks. An unhealthy culture will make it difficult to defend claims.

The time to defend and the cost of defending tribunal claims can be significant, irrespective of the outcome.

Culture and behaviour

We work in eclectic communities and working environments, and a positive culture within the council enables employees with different backgrounds and beliefs to share ideas and shape how the council achieves its objectives for their community.

It is important to recognise that different individuals may find different behaviours bullying or harassing so while there is not always intent to offend or cause harm, that does not mean that the effect of the behaviour has not caused harm or offence.

It can take people a period of time to decide to raise their concerns, as they worry about consequences (perhaps from peers by complaining about a colleague who is popular, or they fear victimisation from the perpetrator or others). The council should consider whether there are opportunities (such as 121s to offer opportunity to reflect on relationships/morale) to identify issues earlier and address negative behaviours. Individuals can often mention concerns they are experiencing but not want to take it further. The council should remind the complainant that it has a zero tolerance to bullying and harassment and remind them of the policy in place to address concerns. If the allegations mentioned are significant, the council may want to suggest that it will need to investigate further, even if a 'grievance' is not raised, so as to ensure that any concerns and risks are managed, and the council is meeting its responsibilities and duty of care as an employer.

Whilst both staff and councillors jointly determine the working culture, councillors are key in demonstrating what is and isn't acceptable behaviour. This is apparent from how councillors behave with each other in council meetings and also in how standards of behaviour are applied through the use of informal discussion and formal policies.

Scope

All council representatives are expected to uphold the values of the Dignity at Work Policy, however this policy sets out how allegations from employees will be managed. As indicated in the policy, concerns from a contractor, agency worker etc. should be raised to the identified person, and an appropriate approach will be considered based on the situation and relationship of the complainant with the council.

Likewise, concerns raised about the behaviour of a contractor or agency worker would not generally be managed via the full process (such as the disciplinary process) but appropriate action would be considered based on the situation. To treat people (such as contractors, or a casual worker) engaged by the council the same as an employee could blur the status of the employment relationship, so consider seeking professional advice if needed.

Managers

Recognising that councils are of varying sizes, where the term manager/nominated manager is used it is recognised this could be the clerk/chief officer, another employee of the council, or a councillor

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depending on the situation. It is good practice to have a clearly identified person who is the responsible 'line manager' or equivalent contact for an employee so that there is clarity on how the employee should report concerns to, who they notify if they are sick or to request leave etc. More often for council employees this may be the clerk/chief officer, and for the clerk/chief officer this could be the chair/deputy Chair, or possibly chair of a staffing/personnel committee.

Bullying and harassment & performance management

The policy sets out that bullying and harassment does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. It is not uncommon for an employee, when receiving critical feedback, to claim that this is bullying and/or harassing. It is the role of the nominated manager to provide effective and constructive feedback to encourage performance at the required standard.

Even when the feedback is not positive it should be fair, communicated in a professional and reasonable manner and shared with the objective of aiding understanding and achieving an improvement to overcome the shortfalls. There is no absolute definition of when the feedback may not be appropriate. Often it will be for the person/panel hearing the dignity at work complaint/grievance to determine whether the performance management has upheld the standards expected in terms of respect and civility and any feedback has been shared in a fair and professional way.

Responsibilities

All staff and representatives of the council are responsible for their own behaviour in the workplace and for taking steps to revise unacceptable behaviour and appropriately challenge that of others.

Leaders – councillors, clerks, chief officers, managers - are responsible for ensuring that these standards of treating people with civility, respect and courtesy are upheld, both through their own example, and by communicating and promoting these expectations to all employees. They are also responsible for ensuring that concerns raised are treated seriously and addressed in line with this policy in a timely manner.

During the investigation

Employers have a duty of care to provide a safe place of work. If a complaint is made, discuss how to manage working relationships whilst the allegation is being investigated and until the outcome is disclosed. This is as much for the protection of the alleged perpetrator as for the aggrieved.

Consider whether a neutral person should be offered as a 'listening ear' for both parties in the investigation. This could be a councillor or nominated manager who is not involved in the investigation or allegations and can be a point of check in as raising, or being subject to allegations can be stressful.

Offer other support that may be appropriate to the situation such as signposting to support groups, time off for counselling etc. If you have suspended a staff member, your duty of care continues and it is important to consider their wellbeing and mental health.

Ensure that you communicate regularly with both parties.

The investigation and any subsequent hearing should be completed in accordance with the grievance policy which sets out a process for dealing with concerns. You should ensure that the grievance policy adopted adheres to any local policies and procedures, with consideration of any timescales and escalation routes in your locally adopted policy.

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Confidentiality

It may be possible for concerns to be raised with the perpetrator without disclosing the name of the complainant however in a small council it is likely that it will be clear that the accused will know where the accusation has come from. The council representative (clerk/chief officer/councillor) speaking to the alleged perpetrator must be clear that the discussion is confidential and the individual would be at risk of formal disciplinary action if there is any sort of victimisation or retaliation for the individual raising their concern.

During any formal investigation it may be necessary to disclose the nature of the allegations and where they came from to ensure a fair and balanced investigation and process. This should be discussed with the person raising the concerns to understand any issues and how they may be mitigated. In some situations it may be appropriate to provide anonymised witness statements however this would be a last resort, and could compromise the fairness of the process. Where there is a genuine fear of consequences and this may need to be considered, it is recommended that professional advice is sought. For the same reason it can be difficult for a council to consider an anonymous complaint, however if the concerns are significant and compromise the council in their duty of care to employees, then consideration of how the deal with the matter may be required.

Victimisation

All employees have the right to raise genuine concerns without the fear of reprisals. If the aggrieved (or a witness) is treated differently / less favourably because they have raised a complaint, then this is victimisation. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint, cancelling a planned training event, or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload. Victimisation can lead to a claim to an employment tribunal.

False allegations

If an employee makes an allegation that they know to be untrue, or gives evidence that they know to be untrue, the council should consider the matter under the disciplinary procedure. Such an allegation would be potentially be gross misconduct.

Complaints against Councillors

Following the Ledbury case, the law is clear that any formal complaint about a councillor regarding a breach of the code of conduct must be referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation (either by the complainant, or the Council with agreement of the complainant). During the investigation, it is critical to ensure that where an employee of the council has made the complaint, that the council agrees reasonable measures with the employee to protect their health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties, change of work location, not attending meetings with the person about whom the complaint has been made etc.

Careful consideration is required where a grievance is raised against the council as a whole due to lack of support related to councillor behaviours. The specific allegations will need to be considered to determine whether the allegations can be addressed by the council, or require exploration of the councillors behaviour in order to respond, in which case the Monitoring Officer may be required to investigate the alleged behaviours of a/any councillors where this may relate to the code of conduct. It is a matter of fact whether the complaint is against the council and can therefore be dealt with by the council's grievance procedure or against a councillor and can only be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer.

Ash Parish Council

Scheme of Delegation 2026 - 2027

S101 delegation of powers

The Scheme of Delegation (s101 of the 1972 LGA), provides for delegating authority to the Clerk/Proper Officer for making decisions on behalf of the council as and when appropriate.

This scheme of delegation is a measure to facilitate effective decision-making during unforeseen situations including meeting disruption. It allows the Clerk/Proper Officer to take on the executive role during this time. If virtual meetings are unlawful but the Council are unable to meet, it ensures that Council activities can continue in the meantime.

Delegation of Power

Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides:

- That a Council may delegate its powers (except those incapable of delegation) to a committee or an officer.
- A Committee may delegate its powers to an officer.
- The delegating body may exercise Powers that have been delegated.

Any delegation to the Proper Officer shall be exercised in compliance with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and any other policies or conditions imposed by the Council and within the law.

The Proper Officer may nominate another named Officer to carry out any powers and duties, which have been, delegated to that Officer.

In an emergency the Proper Officer is empowered to carry out any function of the Council.

Where officers are contemplating any action under delegated powers, which is likely to have a significant impact in a particular area, they should also consult a minimum of two Members, and must ensure that they obtain appropriate legal, financial and other specialist advice before action is taken.

The following items may not be delegated to the Clerk:

- To appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in May each year
- To sign off the Governance Statement by 30th June each year
- To set the precept
- To appoint the Head of Paid Service (Clerk)
- To make byelaws
- To borrow money
- To consider any matter required by law to be considered by Council.

To the Proper Officer LGA 1972 s101

The Council's Scheme of Delegation authorises the Clerk to the Council to act with delegated authority in the specific circumstances detailed:

To take action:

1. To take action on any issue that cannot wait until the next Parish Council meeting; as a temporary measure the Proper Officer is empowered to take any and all decisions that would normally be taken by Full Council, or a committee or a working group, having consulted a minimum of two Members. Consultation may be by email or by telephone or by virtual meeting, followed by a confirmation email.
2. If circumstances do not permit the input of at least two councillors, the Clerk would normally be expected to consult the Chairman or Vice Chairman if the Chairman is unavailable and take his/her view into account.

Financial thresholds:

- 3 Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:

- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items below £500 excluding VAT.
- the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council, for any items below £2,000 excluding VAT.
- in respect of grants, a duly authorised committee within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council.
- the council for all items over £5,000;

Such authorisation must be supported by a minute (in the case of council or committee decisions) or other auditable evidence trail.

- 4 In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £2,000.00 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to Ash Parish Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 5 For the avoidance of doubt, this includes any payments that will be overdue before the next scheduled Council Meeting or where discounts may be lost to the Council; to include normal salaries and all items specifically budgeted for, contracted for or expenditure previously agreed by Council at a meeting.

Delegation Limitations, Record keeping & Reporting:

- 6 Records will be kept demonstrating a clear trail (particularly around decision making in any form) and the Clerk will use email to ensure Councillors are aware of issues as they arrive.
- 7 All decisions will be reported at the next available Full Council Meeting.
- 8 Delegated actions shall be in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in line with directions given by Council from time to time and this Scheme of Delegation, and where applicable any other rules/regulations and legislation.

Ash Parish Council Risk Management Scheme 2025 – 26

Reviewed: May 2025

Risk assessment is a systematic general examination of working conditions, workplace activities and environmental factors that will enable the Parish Council to identify any and all potential inherent risks. The Parish Council, based on a recorded assessment, will take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible. This document has been produced to enable Ash Parish Council to assess the risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them.

KEY	
HIGH	
MEDIUM	
LOW	

FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT

Subject	Risk(s) identified	Severity of hazard H/M/L	Management/control of Risk	Risk after Control H/M/L	Assess/Revise
Precept	Adequacy of precept in order for the Council to carry out its Statutory duties	H	To determine the precept amount required, the Council regularly receives budget update information usually monthly, at least quarterly. At the precept meeting Council receives a budget report, including actual position and projected position to the end of year and indicative figures or costings obtained by the Clerk and relevant Councillor. With this information the Council maps out the required monies for standing costs and projects for the following year and	L	Existing procedure adequate. Request deadline in November 2025 in order to plan the PC Precept meeting in a timely manner

			applies specific figures to budget headings, the total of which is used to agree the precept amount to be requested from Somerset Council (SC). The figure is submitted by the RFO in writing on the forms supplied by SC. The RFO informs the Council when the monies are received. Somerset Council not informing of date to submit the precept amount			
Financial Records	Inadequate records Financial irregularities	H	The Council has Financial Regulations which sets out the requirements. Back up of the accounting system	L	Existing procedure adequate Review the Financial regulations when necessary, at least annually. Backed up monthly to a Microsoft ONEDRIVE Account and external hard drive	
Bank and banking	Inadequate checks Management of income Bank mistakes	H	The Council has Financial Regulations which set out banking requirements. Bank reconciliation presented for approval. The PC receive income from both Cemetery and Pavilion users and the clerk manages the payments to the bank.	M	Bank reconciliations are presented at least quarterly (usually monthly) and signed by a member other than the Chairman and minuted. Cemetery income is managed by the Clerk and takes the form of BACs with occasional cheques. Pavilion income is a combination of BACs, cheques and cash. Hirers to be asked to pay via BACs or cheque.	

Reporting and auditing	Information communication	M	Financial information is a regular agenda item and discussed/reviewed and approved at each meeting. Internal and External auditors are commission to undertake yearly audits.	L	Existing procedures adequate. Note comments from Auditors and action them where necessary.
Grants and Donations	Power to pay	H	All such expenditure goes through the required Council process of approval, Clerk checks powers available (no GPC) being minuted and listed accordingly if a payment is made.	L	Existing procedure adequate.
Best value accountability	Work awarded Incorrectly. Overspend on services.	M	Normal Parish Council practice would be to seek, if possible, competitive tenders for major work. If problems encountered with a contract the Clerk would investigate the situation and report to the Council.		Existing procedure adequate. Include when reviewing Financial regulations.
Salaries and assoc. costs	Salary paid incorrectly. Unpaid Tax to Inland Revenue.	H	Salary rates are notified by NALC annually and contractual increases agreed and minuted by Council. Payslips and P30 generated through HMRC. All payments are approved monthly at FC meeting. The Parish Clerk/RFO has a contract of employment and job description	L	Payroll submitted to HMRC in RT, calculate HMRC payments monthly. Checked by Internal auditor
Employees	Fraud by staff Health and safety	H	Requirements of Fidelity Guarantee insurance adhered to with regards to fraud.	M	Monitor health and safety requirements and carry out risk assessments and review insurance annually.

			All employees to be provided adequate direction and safety equipment needed to undertake their roles.			
VAT	Reclaiming/charging	M	VAT is claimed back annually and recorded separately in the cashbook and minuted when received. VAT Invoices are checked to be made out to Ash Parish Council before VAT reclaimed. The council is not VAT registered so no VAT is charged.	L	Existing procedures adequate	
Annual Return	Submit within time limits	H	Employers Annual Return is completed and submitted online with the prescribed time frame by the Clerk. Annual Return completed and signed by the Council, submitted to internal auditor for completion and signing then checked and sent to External Auditor within time frame.	L	Existing procedures adequate.	
Legal Powers	Illegal activity or payments	H	All activity and payments within the powers of the Parish Council to be resolved at full Council Meetings. List of powers checked by clerk as necessary before payment approved.	L	Existing procedures adequate	
Minutes/agendas/ Notices Statutory Documents	Accuracy and legality	H	Minutes and agenda are produced in the prescribed manner by the Clerk and adhere to the legal requirements. Minutes are approved and signed at the next Council meeting. Agenda	L	Existing procedures adequate.	

	Business conduct			displayed according to legal requirements. Business conducted at Council meetings should be managed by the Chair.		Members adhere to Code of Conduct
Members interests	Conflict of interests Register of members interests	M	M	Declarations of interest by members at Council meetings. Register of members interest forms reviewed regularly and revisited annually.	M	Existing procedures adequate. Members take responsibility to update register and provide to SC.
Policies	Missing or not kept up to date	M	M	Policies available on website, notified by Clerk and checked by auditor and adopted annually at the APCM	L	Existing procedures adequate.
Insurance	Adequacy Cost Compliance Fidelity Guarantee	H	H	A broker is used and provides quotes from upto 3 providers to demonstrate competitive pricing. Council approve the most suitable cover. An annual review is undertaken of all insurance arrangements before the renewal date and at the same time as the Asset Register. Employers and Employee liabilities a necessity and within policies. Full Council take responsibility for checking levels and scope of cover is adequate. Measures are in place. Fidelity checks in place.	L	Existing procedure adequate. Insurance is in place and considered annually.
Data protection	Policy provision	H	H	The Parish Council is registered with the Data Protection Agency. Payments set up by Direct Debit.	L	Ensure annual renewal of registration

Freedom of Information	Policy Provision	M	The Council has a Model Publication scheme in place. The Parish Council is aware that if a substantial request came in it could create a number of additional hours work they can request a fee to supplement the extra hours	M	Monitor any requests made under FOI
Outside Spaces	Contact number on signs incorrect.	M	Check signs annually when reviewing parish assets	L	Ensure signs are kept up to date.

Physical Equipment or Areas

Subject	Risk(s) identified	Severity of hazard H/M/L	Management/control of Risk	Risk after Control H/M/L	Assess/Revise
Assets	Loss or damage Risk/damage to third party (ies) property	H	An annual review of assets is undertaken by 2 members of the PC locating and visually inspecting all assets for insurance provision Auditor checks all assets covered by insurance. Public Liability cover included with PC insurance.	M	Asset Register updated annually and checked alongside the insurance.
Maintenance	Poor performance of assets or amenities	M	All assets owned by the Parish Council are regularly reviewed and maintained.	L	Existing procedures adequate

			All repairs and relevant expenditure for any repair is actioned/authorised in accordance with the correct procedures of the Parish Council. Assets are insured.			
Play Equipment	Risk of damage Health & Safety Regular Inspections Repairs	H	Any reports of damage and faults must be reported to the Parish Council and dealt with in accordance of the correct procedures of the Council. Play Equipment is included in insurance cover. Regular reviews of the equipment must be undertaken and any damage or faults dealt with in accordance with the correct procedures of the Council. The Council employs an inspection company to inspect play equipment on an annual basis.	M	The Play Inspection Company carries out a full playground assessment annually and all issues are reported and considered at a full council meeting, with any repairs agreed. Playground Risk assessment is carried out annually. The required monthly checks are not being carried out currently due a lack of trained personnel. Consider employing a company or trained person to carry out monthly checks as required by the insurance company.	
Notice Board	Risk of damage	M	The Parish Council own 2 noticeboards that are used monthly to post the statutory notices. Any repairs/damage is reported at FC meeting. Noticeboards are insured.	L	Existing procedures adequate	
Meeting location	Adequacy Health & Safety	H	The Parish Council meeting is held in a venue considered to have appropriate facilities for the Clerk, members and the general public.	M	Need to carry out a Pavilion Risk assessment (inc. meeting Risk assessment) to ensure public,	

					members and employee safety is not compromised. Electrical safety checks need to be considered annually.
Pavilion	Adequacy Health & Safety	H	The Pavilion is managed by the PC and is hired out to a number of village groups. The PC has responsibility to ensure the building is safe for all users.	M	The building is currently awaiting refurbishment as part of an ongoing insurance claim. Pavilion risk assessment needs to be put in place and electrical safety inspections carried out.
Cemetery	Topple Testing	H	Any deficiencies are managed by Councillors upon notification. Insurance cover for public liability in place for the Cemetery.	M	Cemetery Risk Assessment required to ensure all risks are considered. Cemetery caretaker with responsibility for topple testing checks (NAMM certified) is being considered.
Council records – paper	Loss through: Theft Fire Damage	H	The Parish Council records are stored at the home of the Clerk. Records include correspondence, minutes, annual financial accounts and cemetery records	L	Damage and theft is unlikely and so provision is adequate. Measures are in place to archive documents to Somerset Heritage in Taunton. A Fire-safe could be considered for irreplaceable cemetery records. Minutes, correspondence and financial records are scanned and kept electronically, in the Cloud.
Council records – electronic	Loss through: Theft, fire damage or corruption of computer	H	The Parish Council electronic records are stored on the Council laptop held with the Clerk/RFO at home. Backups of electronic data is made at regular	L	Existing procedures considered adequate.

Council records – electronic Retained by Cllrs			Documents stored on personal laptops		H	intervals using external back up device and also cloud storage is used.	Councillors have been told that parish council business is not be to stored on personal devices.		M		Parish Council documents provided electronically to Councillors must not be stored on personal devices
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Ash Parish Council

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & SCHEME

1. Introduction

1.1 This document forms Ash Parish Council's Risk Management Strategy. It sets out:

- What risk management is;
- Why the Parish Council needs a risk management strategy;
- The Parish Council's philosophy on risk management;
- The risk management process;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- Future monitoring.

1.2 The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Further develop risk management and raise its profile across the Parish Council;
- Integrate risk management into the culture of the organisation;
- Embed risk management through the ownership and management of risk as part of all decision making processes; and
- Manage risk in accordance with best practice.

2. What Risk Management is

2.1 *'Risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives and to successfully execute its strategies. Risk management is the process by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled. It is a key element of the framework of governance together with community focus, structures and processes, standards of conduct and service delivery arrangements.'* Audit Commission, Worth the Risk: Improving Risk Management in Local Government, (2001: 5)

2.2 Risk management is an essential feature of good governance. An organisation that manages risk well is more likely to achieve its objectives. It is vital to recognise that risk management is not simply about health and safety, but applies to all aspects of the Parish Council's work.

2.3 Risks can be classified into various types, but it is important to recognise that for all categories the direct financial losses may have less impact than the indirect costs such as disruption of normal working. The examples below are not exhaustive:

Strategic Risk – Long-term adverse impacts from poor decision-making or poor implementation. Risks damage to the reputation of the Parish Council, loss of public confidence, in a worst-case scenario Government intervention.

Compliance Risk – Failure to comply with legislation, laid down procedures or the lack of documentation to prove compliance. Risks exposure to prosecution, judicial review, employment tribunals and the inability to enforce contracts.

Financial Risk – Fraud and corruption, waste, excess demand for services, bad debts. Risk of additional audit investigation, objection to accounts, reduced service delivery, dramatically increased Council Tax levels/impact on Parish Council reserves.

Operating Risk – Failure to deliver services effectively, malfunctioning equipment, hazards to service users, the general public or staff, damage to property. Risk of insurance claims, higher insurance premiums, lengthy recovery processes.

- 2.4 These risks can be broken down further into specific areas which could impact on the achievement of the Parish Council's strategic objectives and day-to-day delivery of services:

Political – Those associated with the failure to deliver local, regional or national policy;

Financial – Those affecting the ability of the Parish Council to meet its financial commitments; failure of major projects; internal and external audit requirements; failure to prioritise and allocate resources effectively; poor contract management; initiative overload.

Social – Those relating to the effects of changes in demographic, residential, or socioeconomic trends on the Parish Council's ability to deliver its strategic priorities;

Technological – Those associated with the capacity of the Parish Council to deal with the pace/scale of technological change, or its ability to use technology to address changing demands. This includes the consequences of internal failures on the Parish Council's ability to deliver its objectives;

Legal – The ability of the Parish Council to meet legislative demands affecting breaches of legislation (UK & EU);

Environmental – Those relating to the environmental consequences of progressing the Parish Council's objectives in terms of energy-efficiency, pollution, recycling, emissions etc;

Partnership/Contractual – Those associated with the failure of partners/contractors to deliver services to an agreed cost and specification and similarly failure of the Parish Council to deliver services to an agreed cost and specification; compliance with procurement policies (internal/external); ensuring open and fair competition;

Human Resources – Those associated with the professional competence of staff; training and development; over-reliance on key personnel; ineffective project management; recruitment and selection issues;

Organisational – Those associated with the review of services and delivering continuous improvement;

Health & Safety/Physical – Those related to fire, safety, accident prevention and health & safety which pose a risk to both staff and the public; safeguarding and accounting of physical assets;

Reputational – Those associated with the changing needs of customers and the electorate; ensuring appropriate consultation; avoiding poor public and media relations.

Not all of these risks are insurable and for some the premiums may not be cost effective. Even where insurance is available, a monetary consideration might not be an adequate recompense. The emphasis should always be on eliminating or reducing risk before costly steps to transfer risk to another party are considered.

- 2.5 Risk is not restricted to potential threats but can be connected with missed opportunities. Good risk management can facilitate proactive, rather than merely defensive responses. Measures to manage adverse risks are likely to help with managing positive ones.

3. Why the Parish Council needs a Risk Management Strategy

- 3.1 Risk management will strengthen the ability of the Parish Council to achieve its objectives and enhance the value of services provided.
- 3.2 The Risk Management Strategy will help to ensure that all Committees and service areas have an understanding of risk and that the Parish Council adopts a uniform approach to identifying and prioritising risks. This should in turn lead to conscious choices as to the most appropriate method of dealing with each risk, be it elimination, reduction, transfer or acceptance.
- 3.3 Strategic risk management is an important element in demonstrating continuous service improvement.
- 3.4 There is a requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to establish and maintain a systematic strategy, framework and process for managing risk.

4. Risk Management Policy Statement

Ash Parish Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage risks effectively in order to protect its employees, assets, liabilities and community against potential losses, to minimise uncertainty in achieving its aims and objectives and to maximise the opportunities to achieve its vision.

The Parish Council is aware that some risks can never be eliminated fully and it has in place a strategy that provides a structured, systematic and focussed approach to managing risk.

Risk management is an integral part of the Parish Council's management processes.

5. Implementing the Strategy

5.1 Risk Control

Risk control is the process of taking action to minimise the likelihood of the risk event occurring and/or reducing the severity of the consequences should it occur. Typically, risk control requires the identification and implementation of revised operating procedures, but in exceptional cases more drastic action may be required to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Options for control include:

Elimination – The circumstances from which the risk arises are removed so that the risk no longer exists;

Reduction – Loss control measures are implemented to reduce the impact/ likelihood of the risk occurring;

Transfer – The financial impact is passed to others e.g. by revising contractual terms;

Sharing – The risk is shared with another party;

Insuring – Insure against some or all of the risk to mitigate financial impact; and

Acceptance – Documenting a conscious decision after assessment of areas where the Parish Council accepts or tolerates risk.

5.2 Risk Register

The Strategic Risk Register will be regularly refined and updated as part of this Risk Management Strategy.

5.3 Risk Monitoring

The risk management process does not finish with putting risk control procedures in place. Their effectiveness in controlling risk must be monitored and reviewed. It is also important to assess whether the nature of any risk has changed over time. The Risk Management Plan will be reviewed at least annually by the Full Council.

The information generated from applying the risk management process will help to ensure that risks can be avoided or minimised in the future. It will also inform judgements on the nature and extent of insurance cover and the balance to be reached between self-insurance and external protection.

5.4 Risk Management System

Risk Identification – Identifying and understanding the hazards and risks facing the Parish Council is crucial if informed decisions are to be made about policies or service delivery methods. The risks associated with these decisions can then be effectively managed.

Risk Analysis – Once risks have been identified they need to be systematically and accurately assessed using proven techniques. Analysis should make full use of any available data on the potential frequency of events and their consequences. If a risk is seen to be unacceptable, then steps need to be taken to control or respond to the risk.

Risk Prioritisation - An assessment should be undertaken of the impact and likelihood of risks occurring, with impact and likelihood being scored Negligible (1), Low (2), Medium (3) and High (4).

		Impact			
		Negligible (1)	Low (2)	Medium (3)	High (4)
Likelihood	High (4)	4	8	12	16
	Medium (3)	3	6	9	12
	Low (2)	2	4	6	8
	Negligible (1)	1	2	3	4

The scores for impact and likelihood are scored as above. Risks scoring 12 and above will be subject to detailed consideration and preparation of a contingency/action plan to appropriately control the risk.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 It is important that risk management becomes embedded into the everyday culture and performance management process of the Parish Council. The roles and responsibilities set out below, are designed to ensure that risk is managed effectively right across the Council and its operations, and responsibility for risk is located in the right place. The process must be driven from the top but must also involve staff throughout the organisation.

6.2 **Councillors** – Risk management is seen as a key part of Councillors' stewardship role and there is an expectation that Councillors will lead and monitor the approach adopted, including:

- i) Approval of the Risk Management Strategy;
- ii) Analysis of key risks in reports on major projects, ensuring that all future projects and services undertaken are adequately risk managed;
- iii) Consideration, and if appropriate, endorsement of the Annual Governance Statement

- iv) Assessment of risks whilst setting the budget, including any bids for resources to tackle specific issues.

6.3 **Employees** – will undertake their job within risk management guidelines ensuring that their skills, experience and knowledge are used effectively. All employees will maintain an awareness of the impact and costs of risks and how to feed information into the formal process. They will work to control risks or threats within their roles, monitor progress and report on task related risks to their line manager or the Clerk.

6.4 **The Clerk**– will act as the lead officer on risk management, assisted by the Council, and be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Risk Management Strategy. The Clerk will:

- i) Provide advice as to the legality of policy and service delivery options; ii) Provide advice on the implications for service areas of the Parish Council's strategic aims and objectives;
- iii) Update the Parish Council on the implications of new or revised legislation; iv) Assist in handling any litigation claims;
- v) In consultation with the Parish Council's external advisors as necessary, provide advice on any human resource issues relating to strategic policy options or the risks associated with operational decisions and assist in handling cases of work related illness or injury;
- vi) In consultation with the Parish Council's external advisors as necessary, advise on any health and safety implications of the chosen or proposed arrangements for service delivery;
- vii) Assess and implement the Parish Council's insurance requirements; viii) Assess the financial implications of strategic policy options; ix) Provide advice on budgetary planning and control;
- x) Ensure that the financial information systems and processes allow effective budgetary control;
- xi) Ensure the Parish Council's Risk Register is maintained; xii) Effectively manage the Parish Council's investment and loan portfolio.

6.5 **Role of Internal Audit** – Internal Audit provides an important scrutiny role by carrying out audits to provide independent assurance to the Parish Council that the necessary risk management systems are in place and all significant business risks are being managed effectively.

Internal Audit assists the Parish Council in identifying both its financial and operational risks and seeks to assist the Parish Council in developing and implementing proper arrangements

to manage them, including adequate and effective systems of internal control to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of errors or fraud.

Internal Audit reports, and any recommendations contained within, will help to shape the Annual Governance Statement.

- 6.6 **Training** – The aim will be to ensure that both Staff and Councillors have the skills necessary to identify, evaluate and control the risks associated with the services they provide. Risk Management training and development is generally provided by the Local Association (CAPALC).
- 6.7 In addition to the roles and responsibilities set out above, the Parish Council is keen to promote an environment within which individuals and groups are encouraged to report adverse incidents promptly and openly.

7. Future Monitoring

- 7.1 **Review of Risk Management Strategy** – This Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Full Council.

8. Conclusion

The adoption of a sound risk management approach should achieve many benefits for the Parish Council. It will assist in demonstrating that the Parish Council is committed to continuous service improvement and effective corporate governance.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Zannette Bougourd, 9 Redgate Park, Crewkerne.

Tel: 01935 571050

E-mail: clerk@ashpcsomerset.com

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ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Zannette Bougourd, 9 Redgate Park, Crewkerne.

Tel: 01935 571050

E-mail: clerk@ashpcsomerset.com

1. RULES OF DEBATE AT MEETINGS

- a Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the chair of the meeting.
- b A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.
- c A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer may be treated by the chair of the meeting as withdrawn.
- d If a motion (including an amendment) has been seconded, it may be withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- e An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.
- f If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion (as amended) becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.
- g An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the chair of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the chair.
- h A councillor may move an amendment to his/her/their own motion if agreed by the meeting. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall be with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.
- i If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the chair of the meeting.
- j Subject to standing order 1(k), only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the chair of the meeting.
- k One or more amendments may be discussed together if the chair of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- l A councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- m The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.
- n Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply either at the end of debate on the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- o Unless permitted by the chair of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:
 - i. to speak on an amendment moved by another councillor;

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Zannette Bougourd, 9 Redgate Park, Crewkerne.

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- ii. to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since he/she/they last spoke;
 - iii. to make a point of order;
 - iv. to give a personal explanation; or
 - v. to exercise a right of reply.
- p During the debate on a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A councillor raising a point of order shall identify the standing order which he/she/they considers has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting he/she/they is concerned by.
- q A point of order shall be decided by the chair of the meeting and his/her/their decision shall be final.
- r When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:
- i. to amend the motion;
 - ii. to proceed to the next business;
 - iii. to adjourn the debate;
 - iv. to put the motion to a vote;
 - v. to ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;
 - vi. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
 - vii. to exclude the public and press;
 - viii. to adjourn the meeting; or
 - ix. to suspend particular standing order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory or legal requirements.
- s Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the chair of the meeting shall be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived his/her/their right of reply.
- t Excluding motions moved under standing order 1(r), the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed (3) minutes without the consent of the chair of the meeting.

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2. DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

- a No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the chair of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- b If person(s) disregard the request of the chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.
- c If a resolution made under standing order 2(b) is ignored, the chair of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

3. MEETINGS GENERALLY

Full Council meetings	●
Committee meetings	●
Sub-committee meetings	●

- a **Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.**
- b **The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.**
- c **The minimum three clear days' public notice for a meeting does not include the day on which the notice was issued or the day of the meeting unless the meeting is convened at shorter notice**
- d **Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.**
- e Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

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- f The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting in accordance with standing order 3(e) shall not exceed 15 minutes unless directed by the chair of the meeting.
- g Subject to standing order 3(f), a member of the public shall not speak for more than 5 minutes.
- h In accordance with standing order 3(e), a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.
- i A person shall raise his/her/their hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). The chair of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.
- j A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his/her/their comments to the chair of the meeting.
- k Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chair of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- l **Subject to standing order 3(m), a person who attends a meeting is permitted to report on the meeting whilst the meeting is open to the public. To “report” means to film, photograph, make an audio recording of meeting proceedings, use any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear the meeting as it takes place or later or to report or to provide oral or written commentary about the meeting so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.**
- m **A person present at a meeting may not provide an oral report or oral commentary about a meeting as it takes place without permission.**
- n **The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.**
- o **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chair of the Council may in his/her/their absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chair of the Council (if there is one).**
- p **The Chair of the Council, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chair of the Council (if there is one) if present, shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are absent from a meeting, a councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.**

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- q **Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors and non-councillors with voting rights present and voting.**

- r **The chair of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his/her/their casting vote whether or not he/she/they gave an original vote.**

See standing orders 5(h) and (i) for the different rules that apply in the election of the Chair of the Council at the annual meeting of the Council.

- s **Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor present and voting gave his/her/their vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.**

- t The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:

- i. the time and place of the meeting;
- ii. the names of councillors who are present and the names of councillors who are absent;
- iii. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
- iv. the grant of dispensations (if any) to councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
- v. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
- vi. if there was a public participation session; and
- vii. the resolutions made.

- u **A councillor or a non-councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on his/her/their right to participate and vote on that matter.**

- v **No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three.**

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See standing order 4d(viii) for the quorum of a committee or sub-committee meeting.

- w **If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted** and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting.
- x A meeting shall not exceed a period of 2 hours except in exceptional circumstances and as directed by the Chairman.

4. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

- a **Unless the Council determines otherwise, a committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by the committee.**
- b **The members of a committee may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Council.**
- c **Unless the Council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.**
- d The Council may appoint standing committees or other committees as may be necessary, and:
 - i. shall determine their terms of reference;
 - ii. shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee up until the date of the next annual meeting of the Council;
 - iii. shall permit a committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;
 - iv. shall, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c), appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee;
 - v. may, subject to standing orders 4(b) and (c), appoint and determine the terms of office of the substitute members to a committee whose role is to replace the ordinary members at a meeting of a committee if the ordinary members of the committee confirm to the Proper Officer 3 days before the meeting that they are unable to attend;
 - vi. shall, after it has appointed the members of a standing committee, appoint the chair of the standing committee;
 - vii. shall permit a committee other than a standing committee, to appoint its own chair at the first meeting of the committee;

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- viii. shall determine the place, notice requirements and quorum for a meeting of a committee and a sub-committee which, in both cases, shall be no less than three;
- ix. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee;
- x. shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meetings of a sub-committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, required for the meetings of a sub-committee;
- xi. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and
- xii. may dissolve a committee or a sub-committee.

5. ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS

- a **In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the councillors elected take office.**
- b **In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the Council decides.**
- c **If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6pm.**
- d **In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the Council decides.**
- e **The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the Council shall be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair (if there is one) of the Council.**
- f **The Chair of the Council, unless he/she/they has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until his/her/their successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.**
- g **The Vice-Chair of the Council, if there is one, unless he/she/they resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chair of the Council at the next annual meeting of the Council.**
- h **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, he/she/they shall preside at the annual meeting until a successor Chair of the Council has been elected. The current Chair of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council but shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- i **In an election year, if the current Chair of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, he/she/they shall preside at the annual meeting until a new Chair of the**

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Council has been elected. He/she/they may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chair of the Council and shall give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

- j Following the election of the Chair of the Council and Vice-Chair (if there is one) of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:
- i. **In an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Chair of the Council of his/her/their acceptance of office form unless the Council resolves for this to be done at a later date;**
 - ii. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council;
 - iii. Receipt of the minutes of the last meeting of a committee;
 - iv. Consideration of the recommendations made by a committee;
 - v. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;
 - vi. Review of the terms of reference for committees;
 - vii. Appointment of members to existing committees;
 - viii. Appointment of any new committees in accordance with standing order 4;
 - ix. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
 - x. Review of arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies and businesses.
 - xi. Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back;
 - xii. In an election year, to make arrangements with a view to the Council becoming eligible to exercise the general power of competence in the future;
 - xiii. Review of inventory of land and other assets including buildings and office equipment;
 - xiv. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks;
 - xv. Review of the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies;
 - xvi. Review of the Council's complaints procedure;
 - xvii. Review of the Council's policies, procedures and practices in respect of its obligations under freedom of information and data protection legislation (*see also standing orders 11, 20 and 21*);

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- xviii. Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media;
- xix. Review of the Council's employment policies and procedures;
- xx. Review of the Council's expenditure incurred under s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the general power of competence.
- xxi. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

6. EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

- a **The Chair of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.**
- b **If the Chair of the Council does not call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within seven days of having been requested in writing to do so by two councillors, any two councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council. The public notice giving the time, place and agenda for such a meeting shall be signed by the two councillors.**
- c The chair of a committee [or a sub-committee] may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee [or the sub-committee] at any time.
- d If the chair of a committee [or a sub-committee] does not call an extraordinary meeting within 7 days of having been requested to do so by 2 members of the committee [or the sub-committee], any 2 members of the committee [or the sub-committee] may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee [or a sub-committee].

7. PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS

- a A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 3 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.
- b When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 7(a) has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further six months.

8. VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS

- a Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council

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and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chair of the meeting.

9. MOTIONS FOR A MEETING THAT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE TO BE GIVEN TO THE PROPER OFFICER

- a A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting for which it is tabled and in any event shall relate to the performance of the Council's statutory functions, powers and obligations or an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.
- b No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least (7) clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.
- c The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 9(b), correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.
- d If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 9(b) is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it, so that it can be understood, in writing, to the Proper Officer at least (5) clear days before the meeting.
- e If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the chair of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.
- f The decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.
- g Motions received shall be recorded and numbered in the order that they are received.
- h Motions rejected shall be recorded with an explanation by the Proper Officer of the reason for rejection.

10. MOTIONS AT A MEETING THAT DO NOT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE

- a The following motions may be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer:

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- i. to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;
- ii. to move to a vote;
- iii. to defer consideration of a motion;
- iv. to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;
- v. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;
- vi. to change the order of business on the agenda;
- vii. to proceed to the next business on the agenda;
- viii. to require a written report;
- ix. to appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members;
- x. to extend the time limits for speaking;
- xi. to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or other information which is prejudicial to the public interest;
- xii. to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public;
- xiii. to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
- xiv. to temporarily suspend the meeting;
- xv. to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory or legal requirements);
- xvi. to adjourn the meeting; or
- xvii. to close the meeting.

11. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION

See also standing order 20.

- a **The Council shall have in place and keep under review, technical and organisational measures to keep secure information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. Such arrangements shall include deciding who has access to personal data and encryption of personal data.**
- b **The Council shall have in place, and keep under review, policies for the retention and safe destruction of all information (including personal data) which it holds in paper and electronic form. The Council's retention policy shall confirm the period for which**

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information (including personal data) shall be retained or if this is not possible the criteria used to determine that period (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980).

- c The agenda, papers that support the agenda and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential information or personal data without legal justification.
- d Councillors, staff, the Council's contractors and agents shall not disclose confidential information or personal data without legal justification.

12. DRAFT MINUTES

Full Council meetings	●
Committee meetings	●
Sub-committee meetings	●

- a If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on councillors with the agenda to attend the meeting at which they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read.
- b There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes shall be moved in accordance with standing order 10(a)(i).
- c The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the chair of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- d If the chair of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he/she/they shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:

"The chair of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of the () held on [date] in respect of () were a correct record but his/her/their view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings."

- e **If the Council's gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is higher) does not exceed £25,000, it shall publish draft minutes on a website which is publicly accessible and free of charge not later than one month after the meeting has taken place.**
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- f Subject to the publication of draft minutes in accordance with standing order 12(e) and standing order 20(a) and following a resolution which confirms the

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accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, the draft minutes or recordings of the meeting for which approved minutes exist shall be destroyed.

13. CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS

See also standing order 3(u).

- a All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council.
- b Unless he/she/they has been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he/she/they has a disclosable pecuniary interest. He/she/they may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he/she/they had the interest.
- c Unless he/she/they has been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which he/she/they has another interest if so required by the Council's code of conduct. He/she/they may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which he/she/they had the interest.
- d **Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer** as soon as possible before the meeting, or failing that, at the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.
- e A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by a meeting of the Council, or committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required and that decision is final.
- f A dispensation request shall confirm:
 - i. the description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or other interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;
 - ii. whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;
 - iii. the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding four years) for which the dispensation is sought; and
 - iv. an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- g Subject to standing orders 13(d) and (f), a dispensation request shall be considered at the beginning of the meeting of the Council, or committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required].
- h **A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 13(e) if having regard to all relevant circumstances any of the following apply:**

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- i. without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the meeting transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business;
- ii. granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the Council's area;
or
- iii. it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

14. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

- a Upon notification by the District or Unitary Council that it is dealing with a complaint that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the Proper Officer shall, subject to standing order 11, report this to the Council.
- b Where the notification in standing order 14(a) relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chair of Council of this fact, and the Chair shall nominate another staff member to assume the duties of the Proper Officer in relation to the complaint until it has been determined and the Council has agreed what action, if any, to take in accordance with standing order 14(d).
- c The Council may:
 - i. provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to investigate the complaint or is a legal requirement;
 - ii. seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter;
- d **Upon notification by the District or Unitary Council that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the Council's code of conduct, the Council shall consider what, if any, action to take against him/her/they. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office.**

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15. PROPER OFFICER

- a The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the Council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent.
- b The Proper Officer shall:
 - i. **at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee or a sub-committee,**
 - **serve on councillors by delivery or post at their residences or by email authenticated in such manner as the Proper Officer thinks fit, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda (provided the councillor has consented to service by email), and**
 - **Provide, in a conspicuous place, public notice of the time, place and agenda (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council convened by councillors is signed by them).**

See standing order 3(b) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a full council and standing order 3(c) for the meaning of clear days for a meeting of a committee;

- ii. subject to standing order 9, include on the agenda all motions in the order received unless a councillor has given written notice at least 5 days before the meeting confirming his/her/their withdrawal of it;
- iii. **convene a meeting of the Council for the election of a new Chair of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in his/her/their office;**
- iv. **facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors;**
- v. **receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities;**
- vi. hold acceptance of office forms from councillors;
- vii. hold a copy of every councillor's register of interests;
- viii. assist with responding to requests made under freedom of information legislation and rights exercisable under data protection legislation, in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures;
- ix. liaise, as appropriate, with the Council's Data Protection Officer (if there is one);
- x. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;
- xi. assist in the organisation of, storage of, access to, security of and destruction of information held by the Council in paper and electronic form subject to the requirements of data protection and freedom of information legislation and other legitimate

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requirements (e.g. the Limitation Act 1980);

- xii. arrange for legal deeds to be executed;
(see also *standing order 23*);
- xiii. arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with its financial regulations;
- xiv. record every planning application notified to the Council and the Council's response to the local planning authority in a book for such purpose;
- xv. refer a planning application received by the Council to the Chair or in his/her/their absence the Vice-Chair (if there is one) of the Council within two working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of the Council;
- xvi. manage access to information about the Council via the publication scheme; and
- xvii. retain custody of the seal of the Council (if there is one) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.
(see also *standing order 23*).

16. RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

- a The Council shall appoint appropriate staff member(s) to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Officer is absent.

17. ACCOUNTS AND ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

- a "Proper practices" in standing orders refer to the most recent version of "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners' Guide".
- b All payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the Council's financial regulations.
- c The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each councillor as soon as practicable after 30 June, 30 September and 31 December in each year a statement to summarise:
 - i. the Council's receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for each quarter;
 - ii. the Council's aggregate receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for the year to date;
 - iii. the balances held at the end of the quarter being reported andwhich includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or

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potential overspends.

- d As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide:
 - i. each councillor with a statement summarising the Council's receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for the last quarter and the year to date for information; and
 - ii. to the Council the accounting statements for the year in the form of Section 2 of the annual governance and accountability return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- e The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices and apply the form of accounts determined by the Council (receipts and payments, or income and expenditure) for the year to 31 March. A completed draft annual governance and accountability return shall be presented to all councillors at least 14 days prior to anticipated approval by the Council. The annual governance and accountability return of the Council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to the Council for consideration and formal approval before 30 June.

18. FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND PROCUREMENT

- a. The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:
 - i. the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;
 - ii. the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council;
 - iii. the work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually;
 - iv. the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the Council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and
 - v. whether contracts with an estimated value below **£25,000** due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.
- b. Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly and at least annually for fitness of purpose.
- c. **A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of £25,000 but less than the relevant thresholds referred to in standing order 18(f) is subject to the "light touch" arrangements under Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 unless it proposes to use an existing list of approved suppliers (framework agreement).**

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Tel: 01935 571050

E-mail: clerk@ashpcsomerset.com

- d. Subject to additional requirements in the financial regulations of the Council, the tender process for contracts for the supply of goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall include, as a minimum, the following steps:
 - i. a specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall be drawn up;
 - ii. an invitation to tender shall be drawn up to confirm (i) the Council's specification (ii) the time, date and address for the submission of tenders (iii) the date of the Council's written response to the tender and (iv) the prohibition on prospective contractors contacting councillors or staff to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process;
 - iii. the invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper and in any other manner that is appropriate;
 - iv. tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
 - v. tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least one councillor after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed;
 - vi. tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
- e. Neither the Council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value tender.
- f. **Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed the threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time, the Council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016 apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the Council must comply with procurement rules. NALC's procurement guidance contains further details.**

19. HANDLING STAFF MATTERS

- a. A matter personal to a member of staff that is being considered by a meeting of Council is subject to standing order 11.
- b. Subject to the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Council's most senior member of staff shall notify the HR representative or, if he/she/they is not available, the chair of absence occasioned by illness or other reason and that person shall report such absence to the council at its next meeting.
- c. The HR representative or in his/her/their absence, the chair of the Council shall upon a resolution conduct a review of the performance and annual appraisal of the work of the Proper Officer. The reviews and appraisal shall be reported in writing and are subject to approval by

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the chair of the Council.

- d Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Council's most senior member of staff (or other members of staff) shall contact the HR representative or in his/her/their absence, the chair of the Council in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Council.
- e Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by the Proper Officer relates to the HR representative, this shall be communicated to another member of the Council, which shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the Council.
- f Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of staff shall treat as confidential the written records of all meetings relating to their performance, capabilities, grievance or disciplinary matters.
- g In accordance with standing order 11(a), persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing order 19(f).

20. RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

See also standing order 21.

- a **In accordance with freedom of information legislation, the Council shall publish information in accordance with its publication scheme and respond to requests for information held by the Council.**
- b. *[If gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is higher) does not exceed £25,000]* **The Council shall publish information in accordance with the requirements of the Smaller Authorities (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015.**

OR

[If gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is the higher) exceeds £200,000] **The Council, shall publish information in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015.**

21. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION

(Below is not an exclusive list).

See also standing order 11.

- a The Council may appoint a Data Protection Officer.

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- b **The Council shall have policies and procedures in place to respond to an individual exercising statutory rights concerning his/her/their personal data.**
- c **The Council shall have a written policy in place for responding to and managing a personal data breach.**
- d **The Council shall keep a record of all personal data breaches comprising the facts relating to the personal data breach, its effects and the remedial action taken.**
- e **The Council shall ensure that information communicated in its privacy notice(s) is in an easily accessible and available form and kept up to date.**
- f **The Council shall maintain a written record of its processing activities.**

22. RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS/MEDIA

- a Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

23. EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS

See also standing orders 15(b)(xii) and (xvii).

- a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless authorised by a resolution.
- b **Subject to standing order 23(a), any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

The above is applicable to a Council without a common seal.

24. COMMUNICATING WITH DISTRICT AND COUNTY OR UNITARY COUNCILLORS

- a An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the ward councillor(s) of the District and County Council OR Unitary Council representing the area of the Council.
- b Unless the Council determines otherwise, a copy of each letter sent to the District and County Council OR Unitary Council shall be sent to the ward councillor(s) representing the area of the Council.

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25. RESTRICTIONS ON COUNCILLOR ACTIVITIES

- a. Unless duly authorised no councillor shall:
 - i. inspect any land and/or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or
 - ii. issue orders, instructions or directions.

26. STANDING ORDERS GENERALLY

- a All or part of a standing order, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, may be suspended by resolution in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda for a meeting.
- b A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory or legal requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice by at least 3 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9.
- c The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a councillor as soon as possible.
- d The decision of the chair of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT



ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

This website is run by Ash Parish Council. We want as many people as possible to be able to use this website. For example, that means you should be able to:

- zoom in without the text spilling off the screen
- navigate most of the website using just a keyboard
- navigate most of the website using speech recognition software
- listen to most of the website using a screen reader (including the most recent versions of JAWS, NVDA and VoiceOver)

We've designed this site with accessibility in mind. Some of the general features include:

- The use of clear, simple language which is easy to understand.
- The use of common web conventions.
- Avoiding the use of blinking or flickering elements.
- The site uses cascading style sheets (CSS) for visual layout. Where possible, we've also made our website navigable, usable and readable if your browsing device does not support style sheets
- Navigate most of the website using just a keyboard
- Careful use of text colours, size and background colours to help people with a range of visual impairments. Our site is usable by anyone with colour deficient vision. We've checked the site's font and background colour to ensure there are no combinations against the different colour blindness conditions and ensured that all information is still clear.
- We've designed all pages on our website so that all information that is conveyed with colour is also available without colour.
- We've made it possible to use our site without having to view graphics or images. All non-text elements, such as images, animations, symbols, audio, video and multimedia have text equivalents. We've done this by providing descriptive alt attributes for them. Purely decorative graphics or formatting images have empty alt attributes.

- We've made navigation links consistent between pages throughout the site
- Placed page items in a logical order and making the website easy to navigate helps people with visual impairments, motor deficiencies and cognitive disabilities.
- Our website does not use pop-up windows unless they are appropriate. Acceptable cases, for example, are when it is important to see the browser window you've just navigated from in the background.
- Forms and tables are clearly labelled to help readers to understand the content on a page and to fill in content into correct form fields.
- While we've used clear, legible font for all text and headings. In the Firefox browser you can select View, then Text Size, and then choose increase, or decrease the font size. [AbilityNet](#) also has advice on making your device easier to use if you have a disability.

How accessible this website is

We know some parts of this website are not fully accessible:

- you cannot modify the line height or spacing of text
- most older PDF documents are not fully accessible to screen reader software
- live video streams may not have captions
- you cannot skip to the main content when using a screen reader
- some of our code does not pass the w3c validation checker

What to do if you cannot access parts of this website

If you need information on this website in a different format: such as a hard copy, you can use our contact us form on our main menu at the top of most pages, or email ashvillagewebsite@gmail.com We'll consider your request and get back to you within 10 working days.

Reporting accessibility problems with this website

We're always looking to improve the accessibility of this website. If you find any problems not listed on this page or think we're not meeting accessibility requirements, you can use our contact us form on our main menu at the top of most pages, or email ashvillagewebsite@gmail.com

Enforcement procedure

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (the 'accessibility regulations'). If you're not happy with how we respond to your complaint, [contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service \(EASS\)](#).

Technical information about this website's accessibility

Ash Parish Council is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance

with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

This website is partially compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard, due to the non-compliances listed below.

Non accessible content

Some images do not have a text alternative, so people using a screen reader cannot access the information. This fails WCAG 2.1 success criterion 1.1.1 (non-text content).

We plan to add text alternatives for all images by September 2025. When we publish new content we'll make sure our use of images meets accessibility standards.

Navigation and accessing information

There's no way to skip the repeated content in the page header (for example, a 'skip to main content' option). This fails WCAG 2.1 success criterion 2.4.1 (bypass blocks).

It's not possible for users to change text size above 250% without some of the content overlapping. This fails WCAG 2.1 success criterion 1.4.4 (resize text).

Content that's not within the scope of the accessibility regulations

PDFs and other documents

Some of our older PDFs and Word documents do not meet accessibility standards – for example, they may not be structured so they're accessible to a screen reader. This does not meet WCAG 2.1 success criterion 4.1.2 (name, role value).

Some of our PDFs and Word documents are essential to providing our information. For example, we have PDFs with information on how users can access our information, and forms published as Word documents. By September 2025, we plan to either fix these or replace them with accessible HTML pages.

The accessibility regulations do not require us to fix PDFs or other documents published before 23 September 2018 if they're not essential to providing our services.

Any new PDFs or Word documents we publish will meet accessibility standards.

Live video

Live video streams do not have captions. This fails WCAG 2.1 success criterion 1.2.4 (captions – live).

We do not plan to add captions to live video streams because live video is exempt from meeting the accessibility regulations.

How we tested this website

The site is automatically tested each month using [Siteimprove](#). This is a third-party platform to test the accessibility quality and usability of the site.

We test: our main website platform, available at www.ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk

What we're doing to improve accessibility

We plan to improve accessibility on this website by:

- regularly monitoring the accessibility of our website
- making our PDF documents (created after 22 September 2018) as accessible as possible
- where possible, creating HTML pages rather than PDF documents
- The accessibility regulations don't require us to fix PDFs or other documents published before 23 September 2018 if they're not essential to providing our services but any new PDFs or Word documents we publish will meet accessibility standards.

Ash Parish Council is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the [Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) \(No. 2\) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#).

and this website is partially compliant with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1](#) AA standard. However, the council have assessed the cost of fixing the non-compliant issues and we believe that doing so would be a [disproportionate burden](#) within the meaning of the accessibility regulations.

We used an accessibility checker to test the pages across our main website platform at ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk. The website was last tested using [Siteimprove](#) on 29/04/26 and the test was carried out internally.

This statement was prepared on 30th January 2020. It was last updated on 30th April 2026.

Ash Parish Council Data Breach Policy - 2026

1 Purpose

This policy sets out how the Parish Council identifies, manages, reports, and learns from personal data breaches. It ensures compliance with:

UK GDPR

Data Protection Act 2018

ICO guidance on personal data breaches

The aim is to minimise harm to individuals, protect the Council's information assets, and maintain public trust.

2 Scope

This policy applies to:

All personal data processed by the Parish Council

All councillors, employees, volunteers, and contractors

All formats (paper, electronic, email, audio, images, website, social media, CCTV)

It covers accidental and deliberate breaches.

3 What is a Personal Data Breach?

A personal data breach is any incident that leads to:

Unauthorised access

Unauthorised disclosure

- Loss or theft

Destruction or alteration

Loss of availability

Examples include:

Sending personal data to the wrong recipient

Losing an unencrypted laptop or USB stick

Emailing documents to a personal account

Accidental deletion of key records

Website exposure of personal information

Ransomware or cyber-attack

4 Roles & Responsibilities

The Parish Council

Holds overall responsibility for compliance

Receives reports on breaches and approves corrective actions

Clerk / Responsible Officer

Acts as the Data Breach Manager

Leads breach investigation and documentation

Assesses risk and determines whether the ICO must be notified

Ensures affected individuals are informed where required

Maintains the Breach Register

Councillors, Staff, and Volunteers

Must report all suspected breaches immediately

Must not attempt to hide or resolve breaches informally

Must cooperate with investigations

5 Identifying a Breach

Any person who becomes aware of a possible breach must report it immediately to the Clerk. Delays increase risk and may breach the Council's legal duty to notify the ICO within 72 hours.

Indicators of a breach include:

Unexpected system behaviour

Missing files or unexplained deletions

Complaints from individuals

Suspicious emails or phishing attempts

Lost or stolen devices

6 Reporting a Breach

All suspected breaches must be reported using the Council's Data Breach Report Form.

Reports must include:

What happened

When and how it was discovered

What data is involved

Who is affected

Any immediate actions taken

7 Containment and Recovery

The Clerk will take immediate steps to limit the impact, which may include:

- Isolating affected systems
- Resetting passwords
- Recovering deleted data from backups
- Contacting IT support
- Securing physical records
- Requesting return or deletion of mis-sent information

8 Assessing the Risk

The Clerk will assess:

- The type and sensitivity of the data
- The number of individuals affected
- The potential harm (identity theft, distress, financial loss, reputational damage)
- Whether the data was encrypted or protected
- Whether the breach is likely to result in a risk to individuals' rights and freedoms
- This assessment determines whether the ICO and affected individuals must be notified.

9 Notification Requirements

9.1 Notifying the ICO

The Council must notify the ICO within 72 hours if the breach is likely to result in a risk to individuals.

The notification will include:

- Nature of the breach
- Categories and volume of data affected
- Likely consequences
- Measures taken or proposed
- Contact details for the Clerk
- If the Council decides not to notify the ICO, the reasoning must be documented.

9.2 Notifying Individuals

Individuals must be informed without undue delay if the breach is likely to result in a high risk to their rights and freedoms.

Notifications must:

- Describe the breach in clear language
- Explain potential impacts
- Provide advice on protective steps
- Give contact details for support

10 Documentation

The Clerk will maintain a Data Breach Register containing:

- Description of the breach
- Date discovered
- Risk assessment
- Decisions on notification
- Actions taken
- Lessons learned

This register must be retained in line with the Council's retention schedule.

11 Learning and Prevention

After each breach, the Council will:

- Review what went wrong
- Update policies or procedures
- Provide additional training if needed
- Improve technical or organisational controls
- Patterns of repeated breaches will trigger a formal review.

12 Training and Awareness

All councillors, staff.

13. Approval

This policy was adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting on: 18/05/2026

Signed: Chair of the Council Clerk / Responsible Officer

Ash Parish Council

Data Security Breach Reporting Form In the case of a breach or potential breach to be submitted to clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk

A data security breach can happen for a number of reasons: Loss or theft of data or equipment on which data is Stored; Inappropriate access controls allowing unauthorised use; Equipment failure; Human error; Unforeseen circumstances such as a fire or flood; Hacking attack; 'Blagging' offences where information is obtained by deceiving the organisation who holds it. Use this form to report such breaches.

Example: Reportable Theft or loss of an unencrypted laptop computer or other unencrypted portable electronic/digital media holding names, addresses, dates of birth and National Insurance Numbers of individuals. A manual paper-based filing system (or unencrypted digital media) holding the personal data relating to named individuals and their financial records etc. More information can be found using the below link:

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1562/guidance_on_data_security_breach_management.pdf

Breach Containment and Recovery

Article 2(2) of the Notification Regulation states:

The provider shall notify the personal data breach to the competent national authority no later than 24 hours after the detection of the personal data breach, where feasible. The provider shall include in its notification to the competent national authority the information set out in Annex I. The Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 (PECR) provide rules about sending marketing and advertising by electronic means, such as by telephone, fax, email, text and picture or video message, or by using an automated calling system. PECR also include other rules relating to cookies, telephone directories, traffic data, location data and security breaches. Detection of a personal data breach shall be deemed to have taken place when the provider has acquired sufficient awareness that a security incident has occurred that led to personal data being compromised, in order to make a meaningful notification as required under this Regulation.

Date and time of Notification of Breach	
Notification of Breach to whom	
Name	
Contact Details	

Details of Breach	
Nature and content of Data Involved	
Number of individuals affected:	
Name of person investigating breach Name Job Title Contact details Email Phone number Address	
Information Commissioner informed Time and method of contact https://report.ico.org.uk/security-breach/	
Police Informed if relevant Time and method of contact Name of person contacted Contact details	
Individuals contacted How many individuals contacted? Method of contact used to contact? Does the breach affect individuals in other EU member states? What are the potential consequences and adverse effects on those individuals?	

Confirm that details of the nature of the risk to the individuals affected: any measures they can take to safeguard against it; and the likely cost to them of taking those measures is relayed to the individuals involved.	
Staff briefed	
Assessment of ongoing risk	
Containment Actions: technical and organisational security measures have you applied (or were to be applied) to the affected personal data	
Recovery Plan	
Evaluation and response	

Adopted May 2026

Review May 2027

Ash Parish Council

Data Map – Assertion 10 (Digital and Data Compliance)

This Data Map is prepared to demonstrate Ash Parish Council's compliance with Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26, relating to digital and data governance. It outlines the categories of personal data processed by the Council, their purpose, lawful basis, and the measures in place to protect and manage that data in accordance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

Category of Data	Purpose of Processing	Lawful Basis (UK GDPR)	Data Subjects	Where Data Is Held / Stored	Access & Sharing	Retention Period	Security Measures
Councillor contact details (names, addresses, emails, declarations)	To enable lawful council business, publish contact details and manage declarations of interest	Public Task / Legal Obligation	Elected and co-opted councillors	Council's secure drive, official council email system, website (public contact details only)	Clerk, councillors, Monitoring Officer (interests)	As long as individual holds office + 1 year	Password-protected cloud storage, .gov.uk email, limited access.
Employee records (contracts, payroll, appraisals, leave)	Employment administration and legal obligations	Contract / Legal Obligation	Clerk, employees	HMRC online account. Parish Council external hard drive/exclusive laptop	Clerk, HMRC	6 years after employment ends	Password protected cloud storage/ external hard drive, secure deletion.

Resident correspondence (emails, letters, online forms)	To respond to queries, service requests, or complaints	Public Task / Consent	Residents, service users	Clerk's council email, contact form system	Clerk, relevant Councillor	2 years (or until resolved)	Council domain email only, antivirus, restricted access
Supplier & contractor data (invoices, bank details, contracts)	To manage payments and procurement	Contract / Legal Obligation	Contractors, suppliers	Accounting software, Council's secure drive, official council email system	Clerk, RFO, internal & external auditors	7 years (financial records)	Password protection, restricted drive access
Financial records (budgets, payments, receipts, audits)	Financial management and statutory reporting	Legal Obligation	Clerk, RFO, councillors	Accounting system, council network	Clerk, RFO, auditors, HMRC	7 years	Password protection cloud and external backups, limited access
Website content & accessibility logs	To provide public information and meet accessibility duties	Public Task / Legal Obligation	Members of the public	Council website	Clerk, web administrator	Ongoing	Accessibility compliance checks, secure hosting
Meeting minutes, agendas, recordings	Statutory record of council business	Public Task / Legal Obligation	Councillors, residents, officers	Website (public copies), secure drive	Clerk, councillors, public (published versions)	Permanent	Version control password protection/ cloud storage, backups, redaction of personal data

Planning and consultation responses	To respond to statutory consultations	Public Task	Residents, developers, consultees	Clerk's drive, email	Clerk, councillors, planning authority	2 years	Secure network storage
Trust fund / charity data (if sole trustee)	Manage assets and fulfil trustee duties	Legal Obligation	Trustees, beneficiaries	Clerk's records, accounting system	Clerk, trustees, auditors	7 years (financial), permanent (assets)	Secure storage, backups
Data protection requests (SARs, FOIs)	To comply with information rights	Legal Obligation	Residents, data subjects	Council's secure drive, official council email system	Clerk, councillors (if required)	3 years	Secure log, restricted access password protected cloud storage.

Supporting Governance Measures

To fully comply with Assertion 10, Ash Parish Council maintains the following governance measures:

- Data Protection Policy (UK GDPR / DPA 2018)
- Privacy Notice
- Records Retention Policy
- IT & Email Use Policy (requiring council-owned domain e.g. ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk)
- Website Accessibility Statement (WCAG 2.2 AA)
- Data Breach Procedure
- Freedom of Information & Publication Scheme

Ash Parish Council's Privacy Policy

This page explains how we collect and use information

Ash Parish Council Website & Privacy Statement

Last updated: April 2025

This page informs you of our policies regarding the collection, use and disclosure of Personal Information we receive from users of the Site.

The Councils Right to Process Information

General Data Protection Regulations

We use your Personal Information only for providing and improving the Site. By using the Site, you consent and agree to the collection and use of information in accordance with this policy.

Information Collection and Use

While using our Site, we may ask you to provide us with certain personally identifiable information that can be used to contact or identify you. Personally, identifiable information may include, but is not limited to your name ("Personal Information"). We may also run surveys from time-to-time, using third party websites such as Survey Monkey. We strive to anonymise the data we collect, and only use it for the improvement of the services we offer.

Log Data

Like many site operators, we collect information that your browser sends whenever you visit our Site ("Log Data").

This Log Data may include information such as your computer's Internet Protocol ("IP") address, browser type, browser version, the pages of our Site that you visit, the time and date of your visit, the time spent on those pages and other statistics.

In addition, we may use third party services such as Google Analytics that collect, monitor and analyse this data. This data is completely anonymised and does not include personal information such as name or email address.

How long will we keep your data?

We hold the data securely in line with our document retention and management procedure. We keep all data for as long as a) the project it's collected for is in operation b) on an ongoing basis but normally deleted after 10 years if our association with you is not active.

Communications

We may use your Personal Information to contact you with newsletters, should you opt into receive them.

Cookies

Cookies are files with small amount of data, which may include an anonymous unique identifier. Cookies are sent to your browser from a web site and stored on your computer's hard drive.

Like many sites, we use “cookies” to collect information. You can instruct your browser to refuse all cookies or to indicate when a cookie is being sent. However, if you do not accept cookies, you may not be able to use some portions of our Site. Please see our Cookie Statement for more information.

Security

The security of your Personal Information is important to us but remember that no method of transmission over the Internet, or method of electronic storage, is 100% secure. While we strive to use commercially acceptable means to protect your Personal Information, we cannot guarantee its absolute security.

Changes to this Privacy Policy

This Privacy Policy is effective as of April 2025 and will remain in effect except with respect to any changes in its provisions in the future, which will be in effect immediately after being posted on this page.

We reserve the right to update or change our Privacy Policy at any time and you should check this Privacy Policy periodically. Your continued use of the Service after we post any modifications to the Privacy Policy on this page will constitute your acknowledgement of the modifications and your consent to abide and be bound by the modified Privacy Policy.

Access to Information:

You have the right to request access to the information we have on you. You can do this by contacting our Data Controller: Zannette Bougourd (Parish Clerk), 9 Redgate Park, Crewkerne. TA187NL Telephone: 01935 571050, email clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk

Information Correction: If you believe that the information we have about you is incorrect, you may contact us so that we can update it and keep your data accurate. Please contact our Data Controller via email: clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk to request this.

Information Deletion: If you wish Ash Parish Council to delete the information about you please contact our Data Controller via email: clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk to request this.

Right to Object: If you believe that your data is not being processed for the purpose it has been collected for, you may object: Please contact our Data Controller via email: cclerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk to object.

Rights Related to Automated Decision Making and Profiling Ash does not use any form of automated decision making or the profiling of individual personal data.

Conclusion: In accordance with the law, we only collect a limited amount of information about you that is necessary for correspondence, information and service provision. We do not use profiling; we do not sell or pass your data to third parties.

We do not use your data for purposes other than those specified. We make sure your data is stored securely. We delete all information deemed to be no longer necessary. We constantly review our Privacy Policies to keep it up to date in protecting your data. (You can request a copy of our policies at any time).

Complaints If you have a complaint regarding the way your personal data has been processed, you may make a complaint to Ash Parish Council Data Controller via email: clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk and the Information Commissioners Office casework@ico.org.uk Tel: 0303 123 1113

Reviewed and adopted by Ash Parish Council on: 07th April 2025

Freedom of Information Act

This model publication scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner. It may be adopted without modification by any public authority without further approval and will be valid until further notice.

This publication scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits an authority:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.
- To publish any dataset held by the authority that has been requested, and any updated versions it holds, unless the authority is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so; to publish the dataset, where reasonably practicable, in an electronic form that is capable of re-use; and, if any information in the dataset is a relevant copyright work and the public authority is the only owner, to make the information available for re-use under the terms of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations

2015, if they apply, and otherwise under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act section 19.

The term 'dataset' is defined in section 11(5) of the Freedom of Information Act. The term 'relevant copyright work' is defined in section 19(8) of that Act.

Classes of information

Who we are and what we do.

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it.

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing.

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions.

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures.

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers.

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The services we offer.

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.

- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

The authority will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capability of a public authority, information will be provided on a website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, a public authority will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

Charges may also be made for making datasets (or parts of datasets) that are relevant copyright works available for re-use. These charges will be in accordance with the terms of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015, where they apply, or with regulations made under section 11B of the Freedom of Information Act, or with other statutory powers of the public authority.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

Written requests

Information held by a public authority that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME

Information available from Ash Parish Council under the model publication scheme

Ash Parish Council will make the information in this definition document available

- unless:
- it does not hold the information;
 - the information is exempt under one of the FOIA exemptions or Environmental Information Regulations exceptions, or its release is prohibited by another statute;
 - the information is readily and publicly available from an external website; such information may have been provided by the public authority or on its behalf. The authority must provide a direct link to that information;
 - the information is archived, out of date or otherwise inaccessible; or,
 - it would be impractical or resource-intensive to prepare the material for routine release.

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained
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ASH PARISH
COUNCIL 2026

Class1 - Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) This will be current information only.	Hard copy Email Website
Who's who on the Council and its Committees	Hard copy Email Website
Contact details for Parish Clerk and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address (if used)) Zannette Bougourd 9 Redgate Park Crewkerne TA187NL 01935571050 clerk@ash-somerset-pc.gov.uk	Hard copy Email Website Notice Boards
Location of main Council office and accessibility details	Email Website
Staffing structure	Hard copy Email Website
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it (Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit) Current and previous financial year as a minimum	Hard copy Email Website

ASH PARISH
COUNCIL 2026

Annual return form and report by auditor	Hard copy Email Website
Finalised budget	Hard copy Email Website
Precept	Hard copy Email Website

	Email
Borrowing Approval letter (where applicable)	N/A
Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	Hard copy Email Website
Grants given and received	Hard copy Email Website
List of current contracts awarded and value of contract/contractor details redacted as per GDPR	Hardcopy
Members' allowances and expenses (where applicable)	N/A

ASH PARISH
COUNCIL 2026

Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing Audits Current and previous year as a minimum	Hard copy Email Website
Business Plan	Hard copy Email
Annual Report to Parish Meeting	Hard copy Email Website
Class 4 – How we make decisions	
Timetable of meetings (Council and any committee/sub-committee meetings and parish meetings)	Hard copy Email Website Notice boards
Agendas of meetings (as above)	Hard copy Email Website Notice boards
Minutes of meetings (as above) – n.b. this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	Hard copy Email Website Notice boards

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COUNCIL 2026

Reports presented to council meetings – n.b. this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	Hard copy Email Website Notice boards
Responses to consultation papers	Hard copy Email
Responses to planning applications	Hard copy Email
Bye-laws	N/A
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities) Current information only	(hard copy or website)
Policies and procedures for the conduct of council business: Standing Orders Committee terms of reference Delegated authority in respect of officers Code of Conduct	ALL Hard copy Email Website
Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff: Internal instructions to staff and policies relating to the delivery of services Equality and diversity policy Health and safety policy	ALL Hard copy Email Website

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Recruitment policies (including current vacancies)	Website/SLCC
Policies and procedures for handling requests for information Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme)	Hard copy Email Website
Information security policy	Hard copy Email
Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive)	Hard copy Email
Data protection policies	Hard copy Email Website
Class 6 – Lists and Registers Currently maintained lists and registers only	(hard copy or website; some information may only be available by inspection)
Any publicly available register or list	Hard copy
Asset register	Hard copy Email Website

ASH PARISH
COUNCIL 2026

Disclosure log (indicating the information that has been provided in response to requests; recommended as good practice, but may not be held by parish councils)	Hard copy Email
Register of members' interests	Hard copy Email Website
Register of gifts and hospitality	Hard copy
Class 7 – The services we offer (Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses) Current information only	ALL Hard copy Email
Recreation Ground/Play Area	Website
Play equipment	Website

Contact details:

Mrs Zannette Bougourd (Clerk/RFO)

9 Redgate Park
Crewkerne
Somerset
TA18 7NL

Tel: 07471341433
Email: clerk@ash-somerset-
pc.gov.uk

ASH PARISH
COUNCIL 2026

SCHEDULE OF CHARGES

1. copies of any available document will be supplied to any resident within the Parish of Ash(Somerset) on payment of the actual cost of copying and postage, usually 0.25p per sheet/second class postage.
2. Any single copy of any available document, or multiple copies of same, will only be provided to any resident outside the Parish of Ash or to any company or corporate body, on payment of a sum not exceeding £25.00 for administrative expenses plus the actual cost of copying and postage.

Exempt Material

Personal information relating to Councillors (other than required to be declared in the Members' Register of Interests)

Personal Information relating to employees

Tenders and bids from contractors and suppliers

Note: Data Protection Legislation prohibits the publication of certain categories of information.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL DATA PROTECTION POLICY

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Purpose

The council is committed to being transparent about how it collects and uses the personal data of staff, and to meeting our data protection obligations. This policy sets out the council's commitment to data protection, and your rights and obligations in relation to personal data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

This policy applies to the personal data of current and former job applicants, employees, workers, contractors, and former employees, referred to as HR-related personal data. This policy does not apply to the personal data relating to members of the public or other personal data processed for council business.

The council has appointed Zannette Bougourd– Parish Clerk and RFO as the person with responsibility for data protection compliance within the council. Questions about this policy, or requests for further information, should be directed to them.

Definitions

"Personal data" is any information that relates to a living person who can be identified from that data (a 'data subject') on its own, or when taken together with other information. It includes both automated personal data and manual filing systems where personal data are accessible according to specific criteria. It does not include anonymised data.

"Processing" is any use that is made of data, including collecting, recording, organising, consulting, storing, amending, disclosing or destroying it.

"Special categories of personal data" means information about an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, health, sex life or sexual orientation and genetic or biometric data as well as criminal convictions and offences.

"Criminal records data" means information about an individual's criminal convictions and offences, and information relating to criminal allegations and proceedings.

Data protection principles

The council processes HR-related personal data in accordance with the following data protection principles the council:

- processes personal data lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
- collects personal data only for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- processes personal data only where it is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purposes of processing

- keeps accurate personal data and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that inaccurate personal data is rectified or deleted without delay
- keeps personal data only for the period necessary for processing
- adopts appropriate measures to make sure that personal data is secure, and protected against unauthorised or unlawful processing, and accidental loss, destruction or damage

The council will tell you of the personal data it processes, the reasons for processing your personal data, how we use such data, how long we retain the data, and the legal basis for processing in our privacy notices.

The council will not use your personal data for an unrelated purpose without telling you about it and the legal basis that we intend to rely on for processing it. The council will not process your personal data if it does not have a legal basis for processing.

The council keeps a record of our processing activities in respect of HR-related personal data in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Processing

Personal data

The council will process your personal data (that is not classed as special categories of personal data) for one or more of the following reasons:

- it is necessary for the performance of a contract, e.g., your contract of employment (or services); and/or
- it is necessary to comply with any legal obligation; and/or
- it is necessary for the council's legitimate interests (or for the legitimate interests of a third party), unless there is a good reason to protect your personal data which overrides those legitimate interests; and/or
- it is necessary to protect the vital interests of a data subject or another person; and/or
- it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller.

If the council processes your personal data (excluding special categories of personal data) in line with one of the above bases, it does not require your consent. Otherwise, the council is required to gain your consent to process your personal data. If the council asks for your consent to process personal data, then we will explain the reason for the request. You do not need to consent or can withdraw consent later.

The council will not use your personal data for an unrelated purpose without telling you about it and the legal basis that we intend to rely on for processing it.

Personal data gathered during the employment is held in your personnel file in hard copy and electronic format on HR and IT systems and servers. The periods for which the council holds your HR-related personal data are contained in our privacy notices to individuals.

Sometimes the council will share your personal data with contractors and agents to carry out our obligations under a contract with the individual or for our legitimate interests. We require those individuals or companies to keep your personal data confidential and secure and to protect it in accordance with Data Protection law and our policies. They are only permitted to process that data for the lawful purpose for which it has been shared and in accordance with our instructions.

The council will update HR-related personal data promptly if you advise that your information has changed or is inaccurate. You may be required to provide documentary evidence in some circumstances.

The council keeps a record of our processing activities in respect of HR-related personal data in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Special categories of data

The council will only process special categories of your personal data (see above) on the following basis in accordance with legislation:

- where it is necessary for carrying out rights and obligations under employment law or a collective agreement;
- where it is necessary to protect your vital interests or those of another person where you are physically or legally incapable of giving consent;
- where you have made the data public;
- where it is necessary for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims;
- where it is necessary for the purposes of occupational medicine or for the assessment of your working capacity;
- where it is carried out by a not-for-profit body with a political, philosophical, religious or trade union aim provided the processing relates to only members or former members provided there is no disclosure to a third party without consent;
- where it is necessary for reasons for substantial public interest on the basis of law which is proportionate to the aim pursued and which contains appropriate safeguards;
- where it is necessary for reasons of public interest in the area of public health; and
- where it is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest or scientific and historical research purposes.

If the council processes special categories of your personal data in line with one of the above bases, it does not require your consent. In other cases, the council is required to gain your consent to process your special categories of personal data. If the council asks for your consent to process a special category of personal data, then we will explain the reason for the request. You do not have to consent or can withdraw consent later.

Individual rights

As a data subject, you have a number of rights in relation to your personal data.

Subject access requests

You have the right to make a subject access request. If you make a subject access request, the council will tell you:

- whether or not your data is processed and if so why, the categories of personal data concerned and the source of the data if it is not collected from yourself;
- to whom your data is or may be disclosed, including to recipients located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and the safeguards that apply to such transfers;
- for how long your personal data is stored (or how that period is decided);
- your rights to rectification or erasure of data, or to restrict or object to processing;
- your right to complain to the Information Commissioner if you think the council has failed to comply with your data protection rights; and
- whether or not the council carries out automated decision-making and the logic involved in any such decision-making.

The council will also provide you with a copy of your personal data undergoing processing. This will normally be in electronic form if you have made a request electronically, unless you agree otherwise.

If you want additional copies, the council may charge a fee, which will be based on the administrative cost to the council of providing the additional copies.

To make a subject access request, you should send the request to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council. In some cases, the council may need to ask for proof of identification before the request can be processed. The council will inform you if we need to verify your identity and the documents we require.

The council will normally respond to a request within a period of one month from the date it is received. Where the council processes large amounts of your data, this may not be possible within one month. The council will write to you within one month of receiving the original request to tell you if this is the case.

If a subject access request is manifestly unfounded or excessive, the council is not obliged to comply with it. Alternatively, the council can agree to respond but will charge a fee, which will be based on the administrative cost of responding to the request. A subject access request is likely to be manifestly unfounded or excessive where it repeats a request to which the council has already responded. If you submit a request that is unfounded or excessive, the council will notify you that this is the case and whether or not we will respond to it.

Other rights

You have a number of other rights in relation to your personal data. You can require the council to:

- rectify inaccurate data;
- stop processing or erase data that is no longer necessary for the purposes of processing;
- stop processing or erase data if your interests override the council's legitimate grounds for processing data (where the council relies on our legitimate interests as a reason for processing data);
- stop processing or erase data if processing is unlawful; and
- stop processing data for a period if data is inaccurate or if there is a dispute about whether or not your interests override the council's legitimate grounds for processing data.
- complain to the Information Commissioner. You can do this by contacting the Information Commissioner's Office directly. Full contact details including a helpline number can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website (www.ico.org.uk).

To ask the council to take any of these steps, you should send the request to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.

Data security

The council takes the security of HR-related personal data seriously. The council has internal policies and controls in place to protect personal data against loss, accidental destruction, misuse or disclosure, and to ensure that data is not accessed, except by employees in the proper performance of their duties.

Where the council engages third parties to process personal data on our behalf, such parties do so on the basis of written instructions, are under a duty of confidentiality and are obliged to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure the security of data.

Data breaches

The council have robust measures in place to minimise and prevent data breaches from taking place. Should a breach of personal data occur the council must take notes and keep evidence of that breach.

If you are aware of a data breach you must contact the Clerk or Chairman of the Council immediately and keep any evidence, you have in relation to the breach.

If the council discovers that there has been a breach of HR-related personal data that poses a risk to the rights and freedoms of yourself, we will report it to the Information Commissioner within 72 hours of discovery. The council will record all data breaches regardless of their effect.

If the breach is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals, we will tell you that there has been a breach and provide you with information about its likely consequences and the mitigation measures we have taken.

International data transfers

The council will not transfer HR-related personal data to countries outside the EEA.

Individual responsibilities

You are responsible for helping the council keep your personal data up to date. You should let the council know if data provided to the council changes, for example if you move to a new house or change your bank details.

Everyone who works for, or on behalf of, the council has some responsibility for ensuring data is collected, stored and handled appropriately, in line with the council's policies.

You may have access to the personal data of other individuals and of members of the public in the course of your work with the council. Where this is the case, the council relies on you to help meet our data protection obligations to staff and members of the public. Individuals who have access to personal data are required:

- to access only data that you have authority to access and only for authorised purposes;
- not to disclose data except to individuals (whether inside or outside the council) who have appropriate authorisation;
- to keep data secure (for example by complying with rules on access to premises, computer access, including password protection, locking computer screens when away from desk, and secure file storage and destruction including locking drawers and cabinets, not leaving documents on desk whilst unattended);

- not to remove personal data, or devices containing or that can be used to access personal data, from the council's premises without prior authorisation and without adopting appropriate security measures (such as encryption or password protection) to secure the data and the device; and
- not to store personal data on local drives or on personal devices that are used for work purposes.
- to never transfer personal data outside the European Economic Area except in compliance with the law and with express authorisation from the Clerk or Chair of the Council
- to ask for help from the council's data protection lead if unsure about data protection or if you notice a potential breach or any areas of data protection or security that can be improved upon.

Failing to observe these requirements may amount to a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure. Significant or deliberate breaches of this policy, such as accessing personal data without authorisation or a legitimate reason to do so or concealing or destroying personal data as part of a subject access request, may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

This is a non-contractual policy and procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

Ash Parish Council 2025

— policy ends here —

Ash Parish Council

Document Retention and Disposal Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council accumulates a vast amount of information and data during the course of its everyday activities. This includes data generated internally in addition to information obtained from individuals and external organisations. This information is recorded in various different types of document.
- 1.2 Records created and maintained by the Council are an important asset and as such measures need to be undertaken to safeguard this information. Properly managed records provide authentic and reliable evidence of the Council's transactions and are necessary to ensure it can demonstrate accountability.
- 1.3 Documents may be retained in either 'hard' paper form or in electronic forms. For the purpose of this policy, 'document' and 'record' refers to both hard copy and electronic records.
- 1.4 It is imperative that documents are retained for an adequate period of time. If documents are destroyed prematurely the Council and individual officers concerned could face prosecution for not complying with legislation and it could cause operational difficulties, reputational damage and difficulty in defending any claim brought against the Council.
- 1.5 In contrast to the above the Council should not retain documents longer than is necessary. Timely disposal should be undertaken to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations so that personal information is not retained longer than necessary. This will also ensure the most efficient use of limited storage space.

2. Scope and Objectives of the Policy

- 2.1 The aim of this document is to provide a working framework to determine which documents are:
 - Retained – and for how long; or
 - Disposed of – and if so by what method.
- 2.2 There are some records that do not need to be kept at all or that are routinely destroyed in the course of business. This usually applies to information that is duplicated, unimportant or only of a short-term value. Unimportant records of information include:
 - 'With compliments' slips.
 - Catalogues and trade journals.
 - Non-acceptance of invitations.
 - Trivial electronic mail messages that are not related to Council business.
 - Requests for information such as maps, plans or advertising material.
 - Out of date distribution lists.
- 2.3 Duplicated and superseded material such as stationery, manuals, drafts, forms, address books and reference copies of annual reports may be destroyed.

- 24 Records should not be destroyed if the information can be used as evidence to prove that something has happened. If destroyed the disposal needs to be disposed of under the General Data Protection Regulations

3. Roles and Responsibilities for Document Retention and Disposal

- 3.1 Councils are responsible for determining whether to retain or dispose of documents and should undertake a review of documentation at least on an annual basis to ensure that any unnecessary documentation being held is disposed of under the General Data Protection Regulations.
- 3.2 Councils should ensure that all employees are aware of the retention/disposal schedule.

4. Document Retention Protocol

- 4.1 Councils should have in place an adequate system for documenting the activities of their service. This system should take into account the legislative and regulatory environments to which they work.
- 4.2 Records of each activity should be complete and accurate enough to allow employees and their successors to undertake appropriate actions in the context of their responsibilities to:
- Facilitate an audit or examination of the business by anyone so authorised.
 - Protect the legal and other rights of the Council, its clients and any other persons affected by its actions.
 - Verify individual consent to record, manage and record disposal of their personal data.
 - Provide authenticity of the records so that the evidence derived from them is shown to be credible and authoritative.
- 4.3 To facilitate this the following principles should be adopted:
- Records created and maintained should be arranged in a record-keeping system that will enable quick and easy retrieval of information under the General Data Protection Regulations
 - Documents that are no longer required for operational purposes but need retaining should be placed at the records office.
- 4.4 The retention schedules in Appendix A: List of Documents for Retention or Disposal provide guidance on the recommended minimum retention periods for specific classes of documents and records. These schedules have been compiled from recommended best practice from the Public Records Office, the Records Management Society of Great Britain and in accordance with relevant legislation.
- 4.5 Whenever there is a possibility of litigation, the records and information that are likely to be affected should not be amended or disposed of until the threat of litigation has been removed.

5. Document Disposal Protocol

- 5.1 Documents should only be disposed of if reviewed in accordance with the following:
- Is retention required to fulfil statutory or other regulatory requirements?
 - Is retention required to meet the operational needs of the service?

- Is retention required to evidence events in the case of dispute?
 - Is retention required because the document or record is of historic interest or intrinsic value?
- 52 When documents are scheduled for disposal the method of disposal should be appropriate to the nature and sensitivity of the documents concerned. A record of the disposal will be kept to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.
- 53 Documents can be disposed of by any of the following methods:
- Non-confidential records: place in waste paper bin for disposal.
 - Confidential records or records giving personal information: shred documents.
 - Deletion of computer records.
 - Transmission of records to an external body such as the County Records Office.
- 54 The following principles should be followed when disposing of records:
- All records containing personal or confidential information should be destroyed at the end of the retention period. Failure to do so could lead to the Council being prosecuted under the General Data Protection Regulations.
 - the Freedom of Information Act or cause reputational damage.
 - Where computer records are deleted steps should be taken to ensure that data is 'virtually impossible to retrieve' as advised by the Information Commissioner.
 - Where documents are of historical interest it may be appropriate that they are transmitted to the County Records office.
 - Back-up copies of documents should also be destroyed (including electronic or photographed documents unless specific provisions exist for their disposal).
- 55 Records should be maintained of appropriate disposals. These records should contain the following information:
- The name of the document destroyed.
 - The date the document was destroyed.
 - The method of disposal.

6. Data Protection Act 2018 – Obligation to Dispose of Certain Data

- 6.1 The Data Protection Act 2018 ('Fifth Principle') requires that personal information must not be retained longer than is necessary for the purpose for which it was originally obtained. Section 1 of the Data Protection Act defines personal information as:
- Data that relates to a living individual who can be identified:
- a) from the data, or
 - b) from those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of the data controller.
- It includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the Council or other person in respect of the individual.
- 6.2 The Data Protection Act provides an exemption for information about identifiable living individuals that is held for research, statistical or historical purposes to be held indefinitely provided that the specific requirements are met.
- 6.3 Councils are responsible for ensuring that they comply with the principles of the under the General Data Protection Regulations namely:
- Personal data is processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless specific conditions are met.

- Personal data shall only be obtained for specific purposes and processed in a compatible manner.
- Personal data shall be adequate, relevant, but not excessive.
- Personal data shall be accurate and up to date.
- Personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary.
- Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of the data subject.
- Personal data shall be kept secure.

6.4 External storage providers or archivists that are holding Council documents must also comply with the above principles of the General Data Protection Regulations.

7. Scanning of Documents

- 7.1 In general once a document has been scanned on to a document image system the original becomes redundant. There is no specific legislation covering the format for which local government records are retained following electronic storage, except for those prescribed by HM Revenue and Customs.
- 7.2 As a general rule hard copies of scanned documents should be retained for three months after scanning.
- 7.3 Original documents required for VAT and tax purposes should be retained for six years unless a shorter period has been agreed with HM Revenue and Customs.

8. Review of Document Retention

- 8.1 It is planned to review, update and where appropriate amend this document on a regular basis (at least every three years in accordance with the *Code of Practice on the Management of Records* issued by the Lord Chancellor).
- 8.2 This document has been compiled from various sources of recommended best practice and with reference to the following documents and publications:
- *Local Council Administration*, Charles Arnold-Baker, 12th edition, Chapter 11
 - NALC LTN 40 – *Local Councils' Documents and Records*, January 2013
 - NALC LTN 37 – *Freedom of Information*, July 2009
 - *Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records* issued under Section 46 of the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*

9. List of Documents

- 9.1 The full list of the Council's documents and the procedures for retention or disposal can be found in Appendix A: List of Documents for Retention and Disposal. This is updated regularly in accordance with any changes to legal requirements.

Ash Parish Council

Freedom of information Policy

Ash Parish Council is committed to openness and transparency and wishes to make relevant information available wherever possible to individuals who may request it, subject to safeguarding the privacy of individuals and to legitimate considerations of national security, law enforcement and commercial interests where relevant. The Freedom of Information Act gives everyone a statutory right of access to information held by bodies such as the Parish Council.

Model publication scheme

This document is based on the revised model publication scheme issued by the Information Commissioner's Office. The model scheme is at www.ico.org.uk/model-publication-scheme.pdf

Information about the Parish Council

A significant amount of information about the Parish Council is available on its website. The Parish Council Clerk should be contacted if information is needed in an alternative format.

Making a request for information

Individuals or organisations may make a written request for other information which they believe the Parish Council holds. To request information under the provisions of the Act an email (or if not possible: a letter) should be sent to the Clerk at clerk@ashpcsomerset.com or by letter to the Clerk's address. This should include the full name and valid postal address of the person or organization making the request, as required under the Act, and a clear description of the information sought.

When a request is made, a preference about the desired format of the information may be made: for example: hard copy, an opportunity to inspect a record containing the information, or providing a digest or summary of the information. The Council will try to meet the preference as far as is reasonably practical or explain if it cannot do so.

It is noted that when forwarding on documents and especially emails in a digital format, that mistakes over GDPR regulations can easily be made. Names and contact information that should remain private can easily be sent out to third parties. It is further noted that it is impossible to redact forwarded emails, and that documents can include metadata, the disclosure of which can be contrary to GDPR regulations. It is also acknowledged that Ash Parish Council has inadvertently disclosed such information in the past, and consequently, and to avoid these mistakes being made, the Parish Council deems that it is reasonable to have a policy to only send out hard copies of any documents, and that before these documents are sent to the Requestor, they will be checked by a Councillor and any personal information redacted. Each page will be initialled by said councillor to indicate that it has been checked. To ensure that there is an adequate accountability and paper trail, the redacted documents will be sent Special Delivery.

Responding to requests

The Council will inform the person or organisation making the request in writing whether it holds the information requested and if so, provide it to not later than 20 *working* days after it receives the request. The Freedom of Information Act identifies several categories

of information which the Parish Council is not required to disclose under the Act. In this case, the Council will write stating the exemption which provides the basis for refusal within the Act and why it applies to the information requested. The Council will communicate this within the above 20-day time period.

Charges for providing information under the Freedom of Information Act

There is no 'flat rate' fee to receive information and in many cases the Council will provide the information free of charge. However, it should be noted that if the information sought is not readily available in the form in which it is requested, the Parish Council may charge a fee based on the costs associated with providing the information, for example photocopying and postage (known as 'disbursements'). The Freedom of Information Act does permit the Parish Council to refuse a request if it estimates that it will cost in excess of the appropriate cost limit (currently £450) to fulfil that request.

Freedom of information Fees Notice

If it is necessary to charge a fee for disbursements, or because the costs exceed the appropriate limit, the Council will write advising of the fee required within 20 working days of receipt of the request. This is known as a 'Fees Notice'. When a Fees Notice is issued, the noted 20-day limit for a response will stop, and will start again when the Council receives payment. If the fee is not received within three months the Council is not obliged to comply with the request.

The current printing and scanning costs are as follows:

A4 black and white print out: 17 pence per page

A4 colour print out: 60 pence per page

A4 scan: 50 pence per page

Transparency of requests

Ash Parish Council is committed to a policy of transparency and so will publish as much information about each request as it is legally allowed to. They will also publish information that allows parishioners to see the costs of every request, and information that will allow parishioners to see if multiple requests are being made, in order to allow Parishioners to check that the Parish Council are doing enough to tackle repeat and vexatious requests.

Transparency notwithstanding, Ash Parish Council will not publish any information that is contrary to the prevailing GDPR regulations.

Costs of requests

It is noted that any time that it takes to gather the information for any request may fall outside of the usual paid hours of any Council Officer or employee and in this case these hours will be payable at their usual hourly rate or the statutory rate of £25 per hour whichever is higher, and that this will be payable even if the total chargeable falls below the Fees Notice threshold.

Complaints

If anyone is dissatisfied with the way the Parish Council has responded to a request for information, they should write to: The Clerk, 9 Redgate Park, Crewkerne. TA187NL

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is responsible for enforcing the operation of

the Act, and issues may be raised with the ICO at any time.

More information can be found on the ICO website listed below, or by writing to:
Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9
5A

Ash Parish Council April 2025

ASH PARISH COUNCIL
IT POLICY
ADOPTED BY FULL COUNCIL FEBRUARY 2026
REVIEWED ANNUALLY.

Introduction

Each council will have its own IT setup and, as such, a single 'one-size-fits-all' IT policy is unlikely to be appropriate. Some smaller parish councils may operate with minimal equipment, while others may manage multiple devices connected to a central server. These guidelines are intended to help councils identify key considerations when developing or updating their own IT policy.

Councils that use external IT providers should ensure their policies accurately reflect current practices and contractual arrangements.

Purpose of the IT Policy

The purpose of an IT policy is to establish clear parameters for how councillors, staff, and other authorised users use council-provided technology or equipment in the course of their duties. A well-defined policy helps to:

- Set expectations for appropriate use of equipment and systems.
- Raise awareness of risks associated with IT use.
- Safeguard the council's data and digital assets.
- Clarify what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use.
- Outline the consequences of policy breaches.

Councils will also need to determine and clearly state whether limited personal use of IT equipment is permitted (for example, checking personal email or online shopping during lunch breaks).

Monitoring of IT Use

As an IT provider, the council has the right to monitor the use of its IT equipment and systems, provided there is a legitimate reason for doing so and councillors, employees and other authorised users are informed that such monitoring may take place. Any monitoring must be proportionate and comply with relevant data protection and privacy laws. Other persons may be included if they access or use council systems e.g. if they have a council e-mail address

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all councillors, staff, and other authorised users, regardless of their working location or pattern, including those who are home-based, office-based, or work

on a flexible or part-time basis. It sets out the expectations for the appropriate use of IT equipment and systems provided by the council.

Computer use

Hardware

- 1.1.1 Ash Parish Council computer equipment is provided for council purposes, however reasonable personal use is permitted (reasonable interpreted as in the opinion of the clerk). Any personal use of our computers and systems should not interrupt our daily council work in any way. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users are asked to restrict any personal use to official lunch breaks or before or after working hours.
- 1.1.2 All councillors, staff, and other authorised users must lock their computers when leaving their desks to prevent unauthorised access. This applies to both council-owned and personal devices used for work. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.
- 1.1.3 All computer and other electronic equipment supplied should be treated with good care at all times. Computer equipment is expensive, and any damage sustained to any equipment will have a financial impact on the council.
- 1.1.4 Computer and electronic hardware should be kept clean, with precautions taken to prevent food or drink spills.
- 1.1.5 All computer and mobile equipment will carry a number which is logged against the current owner of that equipment. A database of equipment issued will be kept.
- 1.1.6 Equipment should not be dismantled or reassembled without seeking advice.
- 1.1.7 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users are not to purchase any computer or mobile equipment (including software). Unless previously authorised.
- 1.1.8 Personal disks, USB sticks, CDs, DVDs, data storage devices etc cannot be used on council computers without the prior approval of the Clerk

1.1.9 All faults or necessary repairs must be reported to the Clerk

Equipment

2.1 Portable equipment

2.1.1 Portable equipment includes laptop computers, netbooks, tablets, mobile and smart phones with email capability and access to the internet etc.

2.1.2 It is particularly emphasised that council back-up procedures specific to portable equipment should be followed at all times.

2.1.3 All portable computers must be stored safely and securely when not in use in the office, i.e. when travelling or when working from home. Portable equipment (unless locked in a secure cabinet or office) should be kept with or near the user at all times; should not be left unattended when away from council premises and should never be left in parked vehicles or at any council or non-council premises.

2.1.4 It is important to ensure all portable devices are protected with encryption in case they are lost or stolen. All smartphones or tablets that hold council data, including emails and files, must be protected with a pin code. Where possible, these devices should also be programmed to erase all content after several unsuccessful attempts to break in. Any security set on these devices must not be disabled or removed.

2.1.5 Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) is a security process that requires users to verify their identity using two or more independent methods—for example, entering a password (something you know) and confirming a code sent to your mobile device (something you have). This significantly reduces the risk of unauthorised access to systems and sensitive data. NALC recommends implementing MFA as a best practice to enhance information security and support compliance with data protection obligations under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2.1.6 If an item of portable equipment is lost or damaged this should be reported to the Clerk.

2.1.7 To protect confidential information, unless it is a requirement of the job and this has been authorised, it is forbidden for photographs or videos to be taken on council premises, without the prior written permission of the Clerk. This includes mobile

telephones with camera function, camcorder, tape or other recording device for sound or pictures - moving or still.

- 2.1.8 Under no circumstances should any non-public meeting or conversation be recorded without the permission of those present. This does not affect statutory rights (under The Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014).
- 2.1.9 In addition, the council does not permit webcams (which may be pre-installed on many laptops) to be used in the workplace, other than for conference calls for council purposes. If there is any doubt as to whether a device falls under this clause, advice should be sought from the Clerk.

2.2 Use of own devices

- 2.2.1 Personal laptops and other computers or other devices should not be brought into work and used to access council IT systems during working hours, unless this has been authorised by their line manager. This is to ensure that no viruses enter the system, to prevent time being wasted during working hours on personal use and to assist in maintaining security, confidentiality, and data protection.
- 2.2.2 The council recognises that some councillors, staff, and other authorised users may wish to use their own smartphones, tablets, laptops etc to access our servers, private clouds or networks for normal council purposes, including, but not limited to, reading their emails, accessing documents stored on the council's website or to store data on the council's server(s) or access data in other services. Any such use of personal devices will be at the discretion of the council, but consent for standard systems (MS Windows) will normally be permitted. Such devices should be kept up to date so that any vulnerabilities in the operating system or other software on the device are appropriately patched or updated.
- 2.2.3 However, the same security precautions apply to personal devices as to the council's desktop equipment. For continuity purposes, calls made to external parties must be made on council landlines or mobile phone numbers to ensure that only these numbers are used and/or stored by the recipient, rather than personal numbers. Any emails sent from own devices should be sent from a council email account and should not identify the individual's personal email address.

- 2.2.4 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users that use council systems are expected to use all devices in an ethical and respectful manner and in accordance with this policy. Accessing inappropriate websites or services on any device via the IT infrastructure that is paid for or provided by the council carries a high degree of risk, and, for employees, may result in disciplinary action, including summary dismissal (without notice). For Workers or Contractors, we may terminate the worker agreement. This is irrespective of the ownership of the device used. An example would be downloading copyright music illegally or accessing pornographic material.
- 2.2.5 In cases of legal proceedings against the council, the council may need to temporarily take possession of a device, whether council-owned or personal to retrieve the relevant data.
- 2.2.6 Wherever possible the user should maintain a clear separation between the personal data processed on the council's behalf and that processed for their own personal use, for example, by using different apps for council and personal use. If the device supports both work and personal profiles, the work profile must always be used for work-related purposes.
- 2.2.7 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who intend to use their own devices via the council's infrastructure must ensure that they:
- use a strong password or fingerprint to protect their device(s) from being accessed. For smartphones and tablets this should lock the device after three failed login attempts.
 - configure their device(s) to automatically prompt for a password after a period of inactivity of more than 10 minutes
 - always password protect any documents containing confidential information that are sent as attachments to an email, and notify the password separately (preferably by a means other than email).
 - for smartphones and tablets, activate the automatic device wipe function (where available). Note that use of the remote wipe function may also involve the removal of the individual's personal data. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users are therefore advised to keep personal data separate from council data and where possible ensure secure Wi-Fi networks are used.

- ensure that work-related data cannot be viewed or retrieved by family or friends who may use the device.
- inform the Clerk if their device(s) is/are lost, stolen, or inappropriately accessed where there is risk of access to council data or resources. To prevent phones being used, they will need to retain the details of their IMEI number and the SIM number of the device as their provider will require this to deactivate it.

2.2.8 Personal data relating to councillors, staff, and other authorised users, residents, and external stakeholders should not be saved to any personal accounts with third-party storage cloud service providers as this may breach data protection legislation or create a security risk if the device is lost or stolen. This applies especially if the passwords used to store/access data are saved onto the device, or if the service permits councillors, staff, and other authorised users to remain logged in between sessions.

2.2.9 Personal information and sensitive data should never be saved on councillors, staff, or other authorised users own devices as this may breach confidentiality agreements, especially if the device is used by other people from time to time. The following data must never be accessed or processed on a personal device :

- Personal contact details (names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses)
- Financial information (bank details, payment card information, payroll data)
- Health or medical records
- Sensitive personal data (relating to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation)
- Criminal records or allegations
- Safeguarding information concerning children or vulnerable adults
- Commercially sensitive information (contracts, tenders, procurement details)
- Staff personnel files and disciplinary records
- Legal advice and correspondence
- Passwords, access credentials, or security information

Personal devices * include personal laptops, desktop computers, mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, iPads, USB drives, external hard drives, smartwatches, wearable devices, and home computers shared with family members.

- 2.2.10 If removable media are used to transfer data (e.g. USB drives or CDs), the user must also securely delete the data on the media once the transfer is complete.
- 2.2.11 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who open any attachments should ensure that any cached copies are deleted immediately after use. The Clerk will provide assistance or training in doing this if needed. Additional risks include data belonging to the council being accessed by unauthorised persons if the device(s) is lost, stolen, or used without the owner's permission.
- 2.2.12 Any work done on user's own equipment should be stored securely and password protected and should always be backed up in accordance with the council's standard backup procedures.
- 2.2.13 If transferring data, either by email or by other means, this should be done through an encrypted channel, such as a virtual private network (VPN) or a secure web protocol (<https://>). Unsecured wireless networks should not be used.
- 2.2.14 Prior to the disposal of any device that has work data stored on it, and in the event of a user leaving the council, councillors, staff, and other authorised users are required to allow the Clerk or IT services provider access to the device to ensure that all passwords, user access shortcuts and any identifiable data are removed from the device.
- 2.2.15 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users must take responsibility for understanding how their device(s) work in respect to the above rules if they are accessing council servers/services via their own IT equipment. Risks to the user's personal device(s) include data loss as a result of a crash of the operating system, bugs and viruses, software or hardware failures and programming errors rendering a device inoperable. The council will use reasonable endeavours to assist, but councillors, staff, and other authorised users are personally liable for their own device(s) and for any costs incurred as a result of the above.

Health and safety

- 3.1.1 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who work in council offices will be provided with an appropriate workstation.

3.1.2 The Council has a duty to ensure that regular appropriate eye tests, carried out by a competent person, are offered to employees using display screen equipment. Further details are set out in the council's health and safety policy.

3.1.3 Any VDU user who feels that their workstation requires changes to make it compliant must speak to the Clerk.

If any hazards are detected at a workstation, including 'noises' from the IT equipment, this should be reported immediately to the Clerk.

Password and Authentication Policy

4.1.1 All user accounts must be protected by strong, secure passwords. The council follows the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) recommendations for creating passwords using three random words (e.g. PurpleCandleRiver). This method helps create passwords that are both strong and easy to remember, while offering effective protection against common cyber threats such as brute-force attacks. This approach is endorsed in NALC guidance.

In addition to strong passwords, Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) should be enabled wherever possible. MFA requires users to provide two or more independent forms of verification—for example, a password (something you know) and a code sent to your phone (something you have). This significantly reduces the risk of unauthorised access to systems and personal data.

To further strengthen account security:

- Initial user account passwords must be generated by the IT provider.
- Default passwords provided by vendors or the IT provider must be changed immediately upon installation or setup.
- Service or System (e.g. Website) account passwords are generated and managed by the IT provider.
- The council recommends these practices as part of its commitment to robust information security and to support compliance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

For more guidance, see the NCSC's advice on password security: [NCSC Password Guidance](#)

4.1.2 Access to Passwords

- Passwords are personal and must not be shared under any circumstances.

- Only the assigned user of an account may access or use the associated password.
- In exceptional cases (e.g., incident response or employee offboarding), access to system credentials may be granted to authorised personnel from the IT provider with appropriate approvals and logging.
- Administrative credentials must be stored securely and only accessible to authorised personnel with a copy provided to the chair of council], in a sealed envelope, only to be accessed in an emergency.

4.1.3 Password Storage and Management

- Passwords must not be stored in plain text or written down in insecure locations.
- Passwords must be stored using a council-approved, encrypted password manager (e.g., LastPass, Bitwarden, or KeePass).

4.1.4 Password Change Requirements

- Immediately change password if compromise is suspected.

4.1.5 Password Access Control and Logging

- All access to administrative or shared credentials must be logged and auditable.
- Attempts to access unauthorized passwords will be treated as a security incident.

4.1.6 Responsibility

- Users are responsible for creating and maintaining secure passwords for their accounts.

4.1.7 The IT security provider is responsible for:

- Managing system/service credentials.
- Enforcing password policies. Auditing and monitoring password-related security practices.

Monitoring

- 5.1.1 The council reserves the right to monitor and maintain logs of computer usage and inspect any files stored on its network, servers, computers, or associated technology to ensure compliance with this policy as well as relevant legislation. Internet, email, and computer usage is continually monitored as part of the council's protection against computer viruses, ongoing maintenance of the system, and when investigating faults.

- 5.1.5 The council will monitor the use of electronic communications and use of the internet in line with the Investigatory Powers (Interception by Councils etc for Monitoring and Record-keeping Purposes) Regulations 2018.
- 5.1.6 Monitoring of an employee's or user's email or and/or internet use will be conducted in accordance with an impact assessment that the council has carried out to ensure that monitoring is necessary and proportionate. Monitoring is in the council's legitimate interests and is to ensure that this policy is being complied with.
- 5.1.7 The information obtained through monitoring may be shared internally, including with relevant councillors and IT staff if access to the data is necessary for performance of their roles. The information may also be shared with external HR or legal advisers for the purposes of seeking professional advice. Any external advisers will have appropriate data protection policies and protocols in place.
- 5.1.8 The information gathered through monitoring will be retained only long enough for any breach of this policy to come to light and for any investigation to be conducted.
- 5.1.9 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users have a number of rights in relation to their data, including the right to make a subject access request and the right to have data rectified or erased in some circumstances. You can find further details of these rights and how to exercise them in the council's data protection policy.
- 5.1.10 Such monitoring and the retrieval of the content of any messages may be for the purposes of checking whether the use of the system is legitimate, to find lost messages or to retrieve messages lost due to computer failure, to assist in the investigation of wrongful acts, or to comply with any legal obligation.
- 5.1.11 The council has software and systems in place that can monitor and record all internet usage.
- 5.1.12 The council reserves the right to inspect all files stored on its computer systems in order to assure compliance with this policy. The council also reserves the right

to monitor the types of sites being accessed and the extent and frequency of use of the internet at any time, both inside and outside of working hours to ensure that the system is not being abused and to protect the council from potential damage or disrepute.

5.1.13 Any use that the council considers to be ‘improper’, either in terms of the content or the amount of time spent on this, may result in disciplinary proceedings.

5.1.14 All computers will be periodically checked and scanned for unauthorised programmes and viruses.

Remote working

6.1.1 Increased IT security measures apply to those who work away from their normal place of work (e.g. whilst travelling, working from home or any other different venue as follows:

- if logging into the council’s systems or services remotely, using computers that either do not belong to the council or are not owned by the user, any passwords must not be saved, and the user must log out at the end of the session deleting all logs and history records within the browser used. If the configuration of the device does not clearly support these actions (for example at an internet café), council services should not be accessed from that device.
- the location and direction of the screen should be checked to ensure confidential information is out of view. Steps should be taken to avoid messages being read by other people, including other travellers on public transport etc.
- any data printed should be collected and stored securely.
- all electronic files should be password protected and the data saved to the council’s system/services when accessible.
- papers, files or computer equipment must not be left unattended at “non council” premises unless arrangements have been made with a responsible person at a “noncouncil” premises for them to be kept in a locked room or cabinet if they are to be left unattended at any time.
- any data should be kept safely and should only be disposed of securely.
- papers, files, data sticks/storage, flash drive or backup hard drives should not be left unattended in cars, except where it is entirely unavoidable for short periods, in which case they must be locked in the boot of the car. If staying away overnight,

council data should be taken into the accommodation, care being taken that it will not be interfered with by others or inadvertently destroyed.

- where possible the ability to remotely wipe any mobile devices that process sensitive information should be retained in the case of loss or theft.
- Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who work away from the office with sensitive data should be equipped with a screen privacy filter for mobile devices and should use this at all times when accessing such data away from the office.

Email

- 7.1.1 Council email facilities are intended to promote effective and speedy communication on work-related matters. Although we encourage the use of email, it can be risky. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users need to be careful not to introduce viruses onto council systems and should take proper account of the security advice below.
- 7.1.2 On occasion, it will be quicker to action an issue by telephone or face to face, rather than via protracted email chains. Emails should not be used as a substitute for face to face or telephone conversations. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users are expected to decide which is the optimum channel of communication to complete their tasks quickly and effectively.
- 7.1.3 These rules are designed to minimise the legal risks run when using email at work and to guide councillors, staff, and other authorised users as to what may and may not be done. If there is something which is not covered in the policy, councillors, staff, and other authorised users should ask the Clerk rather than assuming they know the right answer.
- 7.1.4 All councillors, staff, and other authorised users who need to use email as part of their role will normally be given their own council email address and account. The council may, at any time, withdraw email access, should it feel that this is no longer necessary for the role or that the system is being abused.
- 7.1.5 Email messages sent on the council's account are for council use only. Personal use is not permitted.

Use of the Internet

8.1 Copyright

- 8.1.1 Much of what appears on the Internet is protected by copyright. Any copying without permission, including electronic copying, is illegal and therefore prohibited. The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 set out the rules. The copyright laws not only apply to documents but also to software.

The infringement of the copyright of another person or organisation could lead to legal action being taken against the council and damages being awarded, as well as disciplinary action, including dismissal, being taken against the perpetrator.

- 8.1.2 It is easy to copy electronically, but this does not make it any less an offence. The council's policy is to comply with copyright laws, and not to bend the rules in any way.

- 8.1.3 Councillors, staff, and other authorised users should not assume that because a document or file is on the Internet, it can be freely copied. There is a difference between information in the 'public domain' (which is no longer confidential or secret information but is still copyright protected) and information which is not protected by copyright (such as where the author has been dead for more than 70 years).

- 8.1.4 Usually, a website will contain copyright conditions; these warnings should be read before downloading or copying.

- 8.1.5 Copyright and database right law can be complicated. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users should check with the Clerk if unsure about anything.

8.2 Trademarks, links and data protection

- 8.2.1 The council does not permit the registration of any new domain names or trademarks relating to the council's names or products anywhere in the world, unless authorised to do so. Nor should they add links from any of the council's web pages to any other external sites without checking first with the Clerk.

- 8.2.2 Special rules apply to the processing of personal and sensitive personal data. For further guidance on this, see the council's data protection policy.

8.3 Accuracy of information

- 8.3.1 One of the main benefits of the internet is the access it gives to large amounts of information, which is often more up to date than traditional sources such as libraries. Be aware that, as the internet is uncontrolled, much of the information may be less accurate than it appears.

Use of social media

- 9.1.1 Social media includes blogs; Wikipedia and other similar sites where text can be posted; multimedia or user generated media sites (YouTube); social networking sites (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, etc.); virtual worlds (Second Life); text messaging and mobile device communications and more traditional forms of media such as TV and newspapers. Care should be taken when using social media at any time, either using council systems or at home.
- 9.1.2 Personal use of social networking/media and chat sites are not permitted during working hours.
- 9.1.3 The council recognises the importance of councillors, staff, and other authorised users joining in and helping to shape sector conversation and enhancing its image through blogging and interaction in social media. Therefore, where it is relevant to use social networking sites as part of the individual's position, this is acceptable.

However, inappropriate comments and postings can adversely affect the reputation of the council, even if it is not directly referenced. If comments or photographs could reasonably be interpreted as being associated with the council, or if remarks about the council could be regarded as abusive, humiliating, sexual harassment, discriminatory or derogatory, or could constitute bullying or harassment, the council will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users should be aware that parishioners or other local organisations may read councillors, staff, and other authorised users' personal weblogs, to acquire information, for example, about their work, internal council business, and employee morale. Therefore, even if the council is not named, care should be taken with any views expressed.

- 9.1.4 To protect both the council and its interests, everyone is required to comply with the following rules about social media, whether in relation to their council role or personal social networking sites, and irrespective of whether this is during or after working hours:

9.1.5

- Contacts from any of the council's databases should not be downloaded and connected with on LinkedIn or other social networking sites with electronic address book facilities, unless this has been authorised.
- Any blog that mentions the council, its current work, councillors, employees, other users associated with the council, partner organisations, local groups, suppliers, parishioners, should identify the author as one of its councillors or employees and state that the views expressed on the blog or website are theirs alone and do not represent the views of the Council. Even if the council is not mentioned, care should be taken with any views expressed on social media sites and any views should clearly be stated to be the writer's own (e.g. via a disclaimer statement such as: "The comments and other content on this site are my own and do not represent the positions or opinions of my employer/ the council.") Writers must not claim or give the impression that they are speaking on behalf of the council.
- The Council expects councillors, staff, and other authorised users to be respectful about the council and not to engage in any name calling or any behaviour that will reflect negatively on its reputation. Any unauthorised use of copyright materials, any unfounded or derogatory statements, or any misrepresentation is not viewed favourably and could constitute gross misconduct.
- Photos or videos that include employees or other workers wearing uniforms or clothing displaying the council's name or logo should not be posted on social media if they could reflect negatively on the individual, their role, their colleagues, or the council. Additionally, photos, videos, or audio recordings must not be taken on council premises without explicit permission
- Comments posted by councillors, staff, and other authorised users on any sites should be knowledgeable, accurate and professional and should not compromise the council in any way.
- Inappropriate conversations with [residents and external stakeholders"] should not take place on any social networking sites, including forums.
- Any writing about or displaying photos or videos of internal activities that involves current councillors, staff, and other authorised persons, might be considered a breach of data protection and a breach of privacy and confidentiality. Therefore, their permission should be gained prior to uploading any such material. Details of any kind relating to any events, conversations, materials or documents that are meant to be private, confidential or internal to the council should not be posted. This may include manuals; procedures; training documents; non-public financial or operational information; personal information regarding other councillors, staff, and other authorised users anything to do with a disciplinary case, grievance, allegation of

bullying/harassment or discrimination, or legal issue; any other secret, confidential, or proprietary information or information that is subject to confidentiality agreements. This does not affect statutory requirements to publish information including under the Freedom of Information Act.

- Councillors, staff, and other authorised users must be aware that they are personally liable for anything that they write or present online (including on an online forum or blog, post, feed or website). Councillors should always be mindful of the Members Code of Conduct and Nolan Principles. Employees may be subject to disciplinary action for comments, content, or images that are defamatory, embarrassing, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous, or that can create a hostile work environment. They may also be sued by other organisations, and any individual or council that views their comments, content, or images as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous or creating a hostile work environment. In addition, other councillors, staff, and other authorised users can raise grievances for alleged bullying and/or harassment.
- Postings to websites or anywhere on the internet and social media of any kind, or in any press or media of any kind, should not breach copyright or other law or disclose confidential information, defame or make derogatory comments about the council or staff, or disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach data protection legislation.
- Contacts by the media relating to the council, should be referred to the Clerk or Communications Officer.
- Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who use sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook must ensure that the information on their profile is accurate and up to date and must update their profile on leaving the council.
- Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who use X.com, LinkedIn, or other social media/networking sites for council development purposes must ensure they provide the council with login details, including password(s), so that these sites can be accessed and updated in their absence.
- Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who have left the council must not post any inappropriate comments about the council or its councillors, staff, and other authorised users on LinkedIn, Facebook, X.com or any other social media/networking sites.
- During your employment/ involvement with the council, you may create or obtain access to a variety of professional contacts and confidential information. This includes, but is not limited to, contacts made through professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn, where those contacts have been established or maintained in your capacity as a councillor, member of staff, or

another authorised user. All such contacts will be considered council property and may be subject to disclosure upon request.

9.1.6 Note that the council may, from time to time, monitor external postings on social media sites. Any employee who has a profile (for example on LinkedIn or Facebook) must not misrepresent themselves or their role with the council. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users are also advised that social media sites are not an appropriate place to air council concerns or complaints: these should be raised with the council or formally through the grievance procedure.

9.1.7 It is important to note that resident and external stakeholder contact details and information remain the property of the council. In addition, councillors, staff, and other authorised users leaving the council will be required to delete all council-related data including resident and external stakeholders contact details from any personal device/equipment.

Misuse

Misuse of IT systems and equipment is not in line with the council's standards of conduct and will be taken seriously. Any inappropriate or unauthorised use may lead to formal action, including disciplinary proceedings or, in serious cases, dismissal.

Guidance

Where there is text in [square brackets] this part may be updated or be deleted if not relevant. An alternative option may have been provided.

Important notice

This document was commissioned by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for the purpose of its member councils and county associations. Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this document are correct at time of publication. NALC cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions and changes to information subsequent to publication.

Ash Parish Council Email Deletion and Retention Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the Parish Council manages, retains, and deletes emails in line with its obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and relevant local government records management guidance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all email communications sent or received through official Parish Council email accounts. The retention periods are different to any general Data Retention Policy as the regulations surrounding digital communications are more stringent.

3. Policy Principles

- Emails are considered a form of official record and must be managed accordingly.
 - Personal data contained in emails must be handled securely and only retained as long as necessary.
 - Emails should not be used for long-term storage of information - relevant data, such as quotes and disciplinary or legal matters, should be transferred to formal record-keeping systems, which will be managed by the Clerk.
-

4. Email Retention Periods

- It is not practical to expect unpaid Councillors to individually assess emails and have different retention periods for different categories of emails, so a single period is to be used.
 - This period is to be set at three years after the end of the current financial year.
 - Emails containing information or documents required for longer-term retention must be exported and passed to the Clerk for archiving once the email deletion period is reached. This includes, but is not limited to, contractual and legal matters, and these archived documents are to be kept according to the Councils document retention policy.
 - Emails must be deleted after the relevant retention period has elapsed.
-

5. Security and Access

- The PC email system is to be managed by the Clerk, or any appointed third parties, such as technical or legal support professionals.
- For the avoidance of doubt, this does not include any existing Parish Councillors, who are not permitted to not have access to any email account except their own.
- Only authorised individuals should access Parish Council email accounts. Proper digital security must be maintained on any devices where digital communications are stored
- When an individual leaves their role, their email account must be archived until the relevant deletion period has expired, when it may be deleted by the Clerk.
- If the Clerk or the Chair change, then their official email accounts must be archived and the accounts passed over without any messages present. People emailing either of these two official accounts do so in the expectation of privacy, and that these messages will not be read

by any third parties without authorisation, even if the job role changes.

- No access may be made to any current or archived account by the Clerk except by direct authorisation of the Parish Council and then only for legal or contractual reasons or to comply with any Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Subject Access Request.
-

6. Email Backup

Email systems may be backed up for disaster recovery purposes; however, backup copies are not used for routine access and will be retained no longer than necessary for technical purposes.

7. Responsibilities

- The Parish Clerk is responsible for overseeing compliance with this policy.
 - All councillors and staff must adhere to this policy. Failure to do this is a disciplinary offence.
-

8. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if there is a significant change in legislation or Council operations.

BIODIVERSITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Ash Parish Council has an important leadership role to play in creating a sustainable environment where biodiversity can thrive. It understands that biodiversity is a crucial component of the quality of life for the community it serves and is aware of its responsibility to conserve and enhance biodiversity and recognises it as an integral part of policy and decision making. It recognises existing and future responsibilities both to conserve and promote biodiversity and to take positive action through innovation in the management of open spaces and verges, as well as conservation of our natural areas.

ABOUT BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is the collective term for the variety and abundance of forms of life found in an area, including animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms like bacteria. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems to maintain, balance and support life.

It is well documented¹ that there has been a dramatic decline of species and habitats in recent decades. Restoring nature is critical to reversing the loss of biodiversity. Ecosystems don't need to be lost forever, it is possible to restore them by planting (and caring for) trees, shrubs and wildflower meadows. It is important that local communities take the lead in conservation projects, with benefits for people as well as nature.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006² states that: "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". This is known as the "Biodiversity Duty".

Section 41 of the NERC Act, requires government to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. This list is used to guide public bodies in implementing the "Biodiversity Duty" when carrying out their normal functions.

The Environment Act 2021³ further stipulates:

- That planning permission for development will only be granted where there is a "Biodiversity Net Gain";
- A strengthened legal duty for public bodies to conserve **and enhance** biodiversity;
- A new biodiversity reporting requirements for local authorities; and
- Mandatory spatial strategies for nature known as "Local Nature Recovery Strategies".

These are all requirements that apply to the Parish Council.

OBJECTIVES

- Protect and support the biodiversity of the land that Ash Parish Council owns or manages.
- Use Parish Council influence to support and enhance biodiversity in the Parish as a whole.
- Increase community awareness of, and involvement in, biodiversity issues.
- Support local biodiversity projects.

WHAT THE COUNCIL WILL DO TO PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY

- The PC will promote the collection and collation of information on biodiversity in the Parish.
- The PC will ensure the production and development of an ongoing “Biodiversity Action Plan” in conjunction with the local community.
- The PC will have due regard to “Nature Recovery Strategies” developed at County level.
- The PC will identify local sites for inclusion in “Nature Recovery Networks” at County level.
- The PC will declare “Local Nature Reserves” on sites that fit the accepted criteria.
- The PC will promote the biodiversity of the land it manages. Special care will be taken in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- The PC will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within areas of the parish.

The PC will, through its website and newsletters, raise public awareness of biodiversity issues and encourage involvement in conservation work as part of its leadership role within the local community.

- The PC will involve the community in promoting biodiversity and living areas on its land including, for example, tree planting, developing living areas and wilding areas.
- The PC will ensure that Biodiversity Net Gain is taken into account when commenting on planning applications.

Notes

BNG is to become a mandatory requirement of the planning system and is set to come into effect from November 2023. Planning permission for new projects above a certain size will be required to secure a 10% improvement in biodiversity, with 30-year management and monitoring.

A Biodiversity Action Plan is a public statement by the body of its biodiversity objectives and the methods by which it intends to achieve them.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature’s recovery and provide wider environmental benefits.

The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a network of wildlife-rich places. The aim is to expand, improve and connect wild places across the countryside to allow nature space to thrive.

Local Nature Reserves are declared by local authorities (Ash PC would ask SSDC or Somerset Council to declare). They’re usually areas of natural green space with public access, but other types of site can be declared as long as they have wildlife or geological interest.

1. <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/biodiversity/biodiversity-in-the-uk/>
2. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>
3. [World-leading Environment Act becomes law - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-leading-environment-act-becomes-law)

Ash Parish Council

ASH BIODIVERSITY WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. CONSTITUTION

Ash Parish Council hereby resolves to establish a working group of the Council to be known as the Ash Biodiversity Working Group. The Working Group shall have no executive powers other than those specifically delegated in these Terms of Reference.

2. FUNCTION OF THE GROUP

- promote, implement or enable projects within the Parish that contribute to protecting and enhancing local biodiversity;
- provide the Council with recommendations and ideas on ways to protect and enhance the environment;
- record local habitats and species and publish information on local biodiversity;
- raise awareness of biodiversity issues and support community involvement in habitat and species recording and monitoring;
- encourage Parishioners to get involved in conservation work;
- develop, within six months, an initial “Biodiversity Action Plan” for the Parish Council;
- share information, ideas and best practices and see what works for our community;
- liaise with the school, landowners, organisations & charities across the parish and neighbouring parishes to implement biodiversity projects;
- seek funding and resources from outside bodies.

3. WORKING GROUP COMPOSITION, MEETINGS AND DECISION MAKING

The Chair of the Working Group will be appointed by a majority vote of the members of the Group. The Group shall consist of a minimum of two Parish Councillors, one of which will act as the official link to the Parish Council.

Up to six members of the public may be appointed to the Group. In addition, the Group may co-opt members of the public with specific experience or expertise in a particular topic for the term of that project.

The Working Group shall meet at least quarterly. Copies of the notes of the meeting shall be circulated to all Members and the Parish Council within 10 workdays. Working Group meetings are not required to be held in public.

The Working Group shall recommend actions/decisions to the Council who will vote on them at the next relevant meeting and feedback accordingly so as not to delay actions unduly. The working party has no budgetary or spending powers. If expenditure of any kind is expected as a consequence of the working party recommendations it must be referred to the Council for approval.

4. REVIEW

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually at the Parish Meeting.

Ash Biodiversity Action Plan

This action plan documents what we will jointly do to help nature's recovery in the Parish. It is a framework for habitat and species conservation. It also recognises the benefits of wildlife to people and helps to identify ways to better promote, and engage people in, biodiversity conservation locally. Public bodies such as the Parish Council in the UK are legally required to "conserve and enhance" biodiversity. This does not mean that they are obliged to have a BAP, but having one will help them ensure that they are meeting their obligations.

Theme	Work	Description	Resources	Timescale	Lead	Status
POLICY & PROCEDURE	ABWG set up	Terms of Reference agreed	PC	January 2023	MW	Complete
	Admin	Roles and lines of communication agreed	ABWG PC	February 2023	MW	Complete
		Meetings arranged	ABWG	ongoing	MW	
	Policy	Document "Biodiversity Net Gain" guidance to aid PC decision making	A&MN	April 2023	MW	Complete
		Communicate BNG to PC	ABWG	April 2023	TG	Complete
		Develop a biodiversity policy for Ash PC	ABWG	May 2023	MW	Complete ON PARISH WEBSITE?
		Policy adopted	PC	June 2023	TG	
		Designate Ash Millennium Wood as a "Local Nature Reserve"	ABWG, PC, SC			DECISION NEEDED
PROJECTS	Verge by Village Car Park	Reduce grass cutting	PC SSDC	April 2023 ongoing	TG AG	Monitor for what plants grow
		Plant trees	PC community	November 2023	TG	PLAN FOR PLANTING SEASON?

	New Burial Ground	Plant hedgerow and trees	PC community	March 2023	TG	Complete
		Reduce grass cutting	SSDC	ongoing	TG	Monitor for what plants grow
	Recreation Ground	Plant trees	PC community	TBA	TG	
	Playground	Plant trees	PC community	TBA	TG	
		Reduce grass cutting	PC SSDC	ongoing	TG	
	Main /Burrough Street	Reduce grass cutting		ongoing	TG AG	
	“	Wildflowers	?	?	unallocated	
	“	Monitor tree health		ongoing	NP	
	Churchyard	Identify opportunities	PCC	ongoing	AW	
	Help Out Monday	Verge in front of school: tidy up, litter pick, shape trees, remove stakes, plant wildflowers	community	May 8th	MW AW	Complete
	Blue hearts	Produce and place in “wilding” areas	ABWG		unallocated	
	School	Restore pond	ABWG Ash PTA	?	MW	DECISION NEEDED
HABITATS	Habitat Map	Produce map showing Principal Habitats of Importance as recorded	A&MN	January 2023	MW	Complete
		Review and adopt	ABWG PC	February 2023	MW	Complete
		Explore use of Phase 1 habitat recording			MW CW	
	New habitats	Review method for habitat identification	ABWG		MW CW	

		Review criteria for unrecorded habitat sites	ABWG		MW	
		Identify habitats of local importance	ABWG		MW	
		Agree sites to be added to the list Identify candidate Local Nature Reserves	ABWG PC	ongoing	MW	
		Research benefit of “core”, “stepping stone” and “corridor” habitats			MW	
		Work with SC, SWT and SERC to identify nature recovery network in Ash			MW	
		Identify possible micro-habitat projects e.g. bird boxes, hedgehog highways, log piles, field margins		ongoing	unallocated	
	Millennium Wood	Tree inventory	MW	April	MW	Partially complete
	Millennium Wood	Biodiversity study	CW	November 2023	MW	
	PC land	Tree inventory	PC	ongoing	TG NP	
SPECIES	Collate species data	Analyse and present SERC species data	ABWG		MW	
		Identify short list of locally important species	ABWG		MW	
	Encourage better monitoring of local wildlife	Workshop event for iNaturalist	ABWG	February 2023	DG	Complete
		Invite community to help in wildlife surveys: e.g. water monitoring, hedgerow information, pond monitoring, SWT and other surveys	ABWG A&MN		unallocated	

		Bat Survey	ABWG	June 2023 on	CW	
		Reptile Survey	ABWG	April 2023 on	CW	
		Set up a bioblitz event	ABWG PC	June 2023	DG	
		Identify key species for action, e.g. stag beetles, great crested newts, swifts	ABWG	ongoing	unallocated	
PUBLICITY	Raise awareness	Collate information on biodiversity and put on Village website	ABWG	ongoing	AG	
		Social Media	ABWG	ongoing	AG	
		Collate advice leaflets for householders			unallocated	
		Collate advice for landowners			unallocated	
		Consider presentation/workshop			unallocated	
		Events for school/children			unallocated	
		Stories: conservation projects Stories: how nature has changed locally			unallocated	
		Village Survey: special or part of PC survey?	ABWG PC	?	MW	Lily Humby?

Abbreviations:

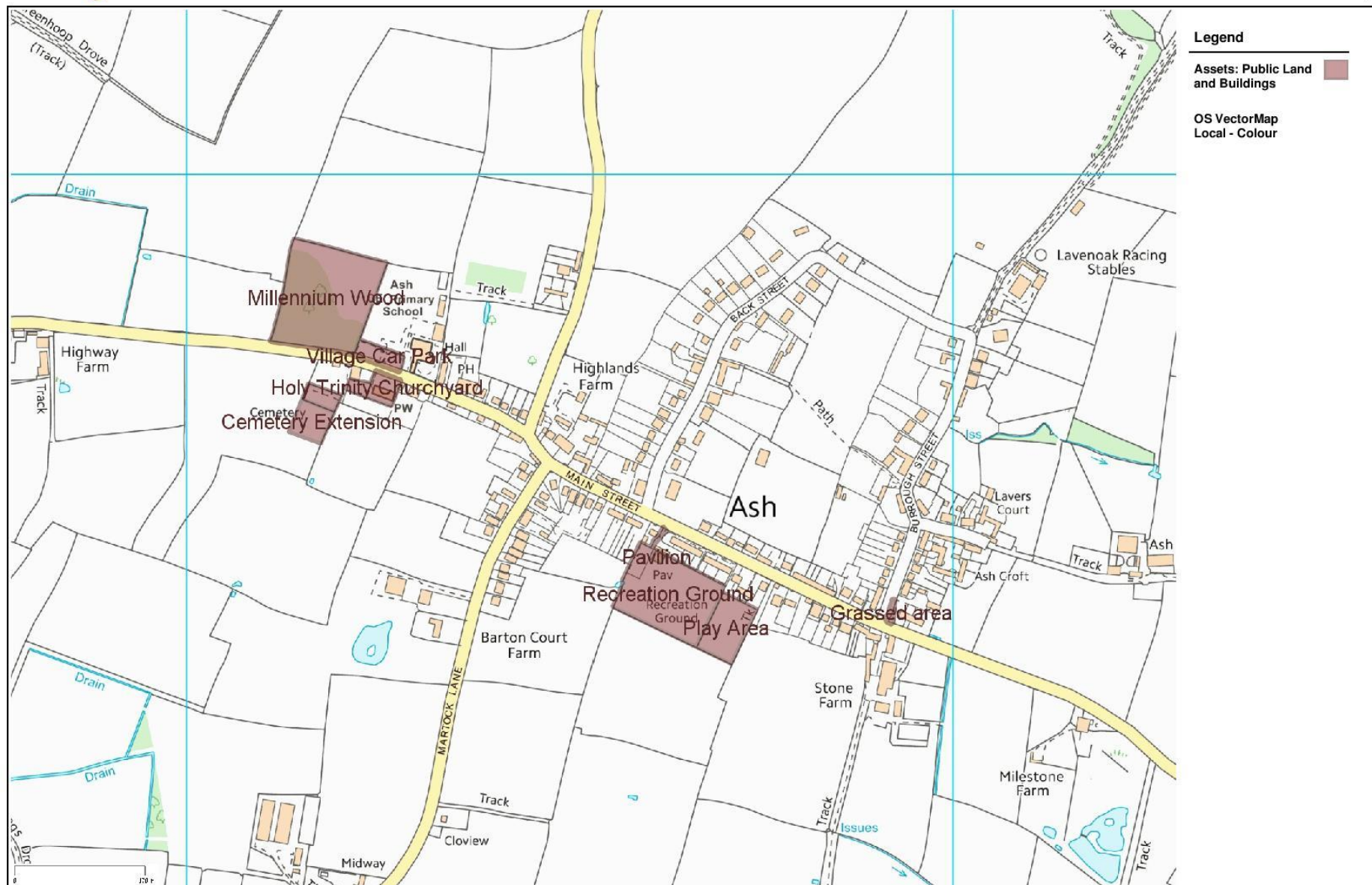
ABWG	Ash Biodiversity Working Group	SERC	Somerset Environmental Records Centre	SWT	Somerset Wildlife Trust
A&MNR	Ash and Martock Nature Recovery Group	SC	Somerset Council		
PC	Ash Parish Council	SSDC	South Somerset District Council		

Ash Parish Council: Asset Register of public land and buildings April 2018

The Land and Building Assets report provides information about public land and buildings within the Parish of Ash.

This is in accordance with the mandatory requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015

Site Description	Location	Owner or Custodian	Date of Acquisition	Cost of Acquisition or Proxy	Present Use
Recreation Ground	Main Street, Ash. ST476204	South Somerset District Council, managed by Ash PC	N/A	Unknown	Recreation Ground
Village Car Park	Main Street, Ash. ST472207	Ash PC	1978, 1996	£700.00	Public Car Park
Millennium Wood	Main Street, Ash. ST471208	Ash PC. Management delegated to AMWMG.	1998	£7,860.00	Community Wood
Play Area	Main Street, Ash. ST477204	South Somerset District Council, managed by Ash PC	N/A	Unknown	Childrens' Play Area
Cemetery	Main Street Ash. ST471207	Ash PC	1954	£75.00	Cemetery
Cemetery Extension	Main Street, Ash. ST471207	Ash PC	1954	£75.00	Agricultural
Holy Trinity Churchyard	Main Street, Ash. ST472207	C of E, maintained by Ash PC	N/A	N/A	Churchyard
Grassed area	Burrough Street, Ash. ST479204	Unknown ownership, Ash PC maintains	N/A	N/A	Grass verge
Pavilion	Main Street, Ash. ST476204	Ash PC	1980?	£213, 815.00 insurance value	Community facility



ASH PARISH COUNCIL

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Ash Parish Council Policy on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings March 2020

1. Introduction

Ash Parish Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it conducts its decision making. Recording, including filming, audio recording, taking photographs, blogging, tweeting and using other social media is permitted at Council meetings, which are open to the public, subject to the following policy.

2. Procedure at meetings

- 2.1 Anyone wishing to record is requested to let the Chairperson of the meeting know prior to, or at the start of, the meeting and the recording should be overt (i.e. clearly visible to anyone at the meeting) and not disruptive.
- 2.2 Anyone visually recording a meeting is requested to only focus on recording councillors, officers and the public who are directly involved in the conduct of the meeting. Any children present at the meeting should not be filmed unless they and their parents/guardians have given their consent.
- 2.3 At the beginning of each meeting, the Chairman will make an announcement that the meeting may be filmed or recorded.
- 2.4 Ash Parish Council supports the right of any member of the public not to be recorded. If anyone speaking at the meeting does not wish to be recorded they should let the Chairman of the meeting know.
- 2.5 Any person wishing to record Council meetings will be responsible for ensuring that any cabling, or electrical equipment they use has been properly tested and installed and adheres to health and safety requirements. The Council will not be held liable for any injuries to the individual or members of the public caused by the recording of its meetings.
- 2.6 The Chairman of the meeting has absolute discretion to request a person to stop or suspend recording if in the Chairman's opinion continuing to do so would prejudice proceedings at the meeting because:
 - recording is disrupting the proceedings of the meeting

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- there is public disturbance or a suspension of the meeting
- the meeting has resolved to exclude the public for reasons of confidential business

For these purposes recording equipment should not be left unattended at meetings.

However, if the person carrying out the recording is absent the Council reserve the right to turn off the equipment according to paragraph 2.6 above. The Council cannot accept liability for any equipment that is lost, stolen or damaged at its public meetings

2.7 The recording should not be edited in any way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or infringement of the Council's values or in a way that ridicules or shows a lack of respect for those in the recording.

2.8 If the Council resolves to discuss confidential information, and the public are excluded from the meeting, all recording equipment must be removed immediately from the room.

2.9 The use of flash photography or additional lighting will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the clerk in advance of the meeting and agreement reached on how it can be done without disrupting proceedings.

Guidance Notes

Please contact the Parish Clerk prior to the meeting you wish to record, and especially if the recording you wish to make involves large equipment or special requirements.

Recording and reporting the Council's meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those who undertake the recording and reporting to ensure compliance. This will include the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act, the Public Order Act Part III (1986 as amended), the Equality Act 2010, the laws of libel and defamation and any subsequent legislation or regulations.

The Council may itself photograph, film, record or broadcast its meetings and may retain, use or dispose of such material in accordance with its retention and disposal policies.

END.

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Safeguarding Policy

Adopted 7th November 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Everyone has a duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 1.2 This policy outlines practices that will promote the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults using Ash Parish Council facilities.
- 1.3 This policy will be reviewed regularly.

2. Definitions

- 1.1 Children and young people: anyone under the age of 18 years.
- 1.2 Vulnerable adult: anyone over 18 who is unable to care for themselves; unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation; or may need community care services.

2. To whom this policy applies

- 2.1 This policy applies to anyone working for or on behalf of Ash Parish Council whether in a paid, voluntary or commissioned capacity.

3. Promoting a safe environment

3.1 In order to promote a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults, Ash Parish Council wishes to promote a safeguarding culture in its premises and activity areas. In order to achieve this, Ash Parish Council will:

- provide safe facilities and undertake regular safety assessments.
- ensure that employees and councillors are aware of safeguarding expectations.
- make available on public noticeboards and to employees and councillors relevant contact details.

3.2 Employees, councillors and volunteers all have a duty to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults but are not responsible for deciding whether abuse is taking place. If they have concerns, these should be passed on to the authorities as detailed below as soon as possible.

4. Allegations against staff and volunteers

4.1 All staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child or vulnerable adult. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.

4.2 No attempt should be made to investigate or act on any allegation before

consultation with the Somerset Safeguarding Childrens and Adults teams (contact details below).

Somerset Safeguarding Adults

Please don't stay silent to report a safeguarding concern call:

Adult Social Care on 0300 123 2224 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm, Saturday and Sunday closed).

The phone number for Adults and Mental Health out of hours is 0300 123 23 27

Email: Adult Social Care on adults@somerset.gov.uk

Police: 101 or in emergency 999

Somerset Safeguarding Children

If you are worried about a vulnerable child, **please don't stay silent** to report a safeguarding concern call:

Early Help Advice Hub on 01823 355803

Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224

Consultation line for DSLs and GPs on 0300 123 3078

Email: childrens@somerset.gov.uk

Police: 101 or in emergency 999

If you know a child already has a social worker then contact the social worker's telephone number.

Somerset Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

If you are worried about a vulnerable adult and would like help, contact:

Phone Adult Social Care on 0300 123 2224

Email at adults@somerset.gov.uk

If you would like to speak to a social worker outside of office hours please phone Adults and Mental Health out of hours on 0300 123 23 27

Police: 101 or in emergency 999

Area-wide

Urgent enquiries will be made to understand the situation by the Somerset Safeguarding teams and they will make decisions about what needs to be done next, to make sure people are safe. All calls will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

You should always call 999 in an emergency – for example when someone's life is at risk or someone is seriously injured or critically ill.

Avon and Somerset Police – 101
NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 500

5. Whistleblowing

5.1 We recognise that children or vulnerable adults cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff or volunteers fail to do so.

5.2 All staff and volunteers should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues and appropriate advice will be sought from the Safeguarding Teams at Somerset County Council.

6. What should be a cause for concern

6.1 Staff and volunteers should be concerned by any behaviour, action or inaction, which significantly harms the physical and/or emotional development of a child or a vulnerable adult. A child or vulnerable adult may be abused by parents, other relatives or carers, professionals and their peers, and abuse can occur in any family OR in any other area of society, regardless of social class, wealth or geographical location.

6.2 Abuse falls into four main categories:

- physical abuse
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- neglect

6.3 All staff and volunteers need to have an awareness that there are many other forms of abuse ranging from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) through to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

6.4 Ideally, staff and volunteers who engage with children or vulnerable adults will have accessed appropriate training.

6.5 Further information about types of abuse, signs to look for and what to do if you are concerned are also available on the Somerset County Council website.

Signed:

Date:

Tree Policy for Ash Parish Council

Background

Why are trees important?

- a) They make our village more attractive and desirable
- b) Absorb air pollution and noise
- c) Intercept rainfall and reduce runoff and flooding
- d) Provide shade and shelter for people and animals
- e) Create a variety of habitats for wildlife
- f) Help to emphasize the changing season
- g) Produce fruits, nuts and seeds
- h) Produce firewood
- i) Help to combat climate change by sequestering CO₂
- j) Are a source of inspiration and have health and well being benefits

Why should Ash Parish Council (PC) take positive actions to protect and plant trees?

Throughout the county medium sized elm trees are still dying from elm disease. These are the latest victims of a disease which has killed millions of trees in Somerset and probably many hundreds in every parish and town.

As ash dieback disease also becomes more prevalent over the next few years we are likely to see many more dead trees appearing. The ash is the most common species over much of England and this area is no exception. While the elms that die are relatively small trees, there are many large ash which will be susceptible and the loss of these will be visually a very significant loss to the Village or the Parish.

Action to address continuing tree loss and promote tree planting

- 1) When applications are made to fell trees and agreement is given, the PC will, whenever possible, request that a suitable replacement tree, or trees, are planted, either on or near the felled tree or on an alternative site to be agreed with the owner.

Action: For every tree lost then as far as possible a new tree will be planted.

- 2) The PC will seek an agreement with the local district council (as Planning Authority) that where reasonable a replanting condition will be included in all consents which are granted in the Parish.

Action: An agreement will be sought with the District Council in respect of replacement planting.

- 3) The PC will take an active interest in ensuring that all trees, shrubs and hedges which are planted on development sites (as a condition of planning consent) are complimentary to the area, actually planted and that they survive.

Action: The PC will notify the District Council about non-compliance with planting conditions on development sites.

- 4) The PC will take an active role in finding suitable sites for planting new trees and have an annual tree and shrub planting programme. The relatively low cost of this will be met from a variety of sources including the Parish precept or Community Infrastructure Levy or S106 funds. Unlike high tiers of Local Government, their precept is not presently capped. As tree planting is a relatively low cost activity and Parish Councils are close to the 'grass roots' of local affairs, they are well placed to take tree planting initiatives. Local volunteers may be prepared to help plant the trees. In some locations shrubs may be preferable to trees.

Action: The PC will identify opportunities for tree planting in the parish, help with funding packages for tree planting (if practicable), and involve the community as volunteers where possible.

- 5) If ready identification of sites for tree planting proves difficult a local survey will be conducted to identify suitable planting sites. Notices will be placed in local publications asking the public to offer up or identify sites which could then be explored to check their suitability. The PC will then endeavour to produce a parish map showing sites which are considered suitable. Some sites may be more suitable for new shrubs rather than trees, in locations under overhead wires for example.

Action: Working in co-operation with local landowners, the Council will endeavor to identify and encourage further opportunities for tree plantings in the wider area of the Parish.

- 6) The PC will consider the appointment of a dedicated volunteer Tree Warden – who might or might not be a member of the PC.

Action: The PC will consider the appointment of a volunteer Tree Warden to inform the Council about tree matters, advise on suitable actions and lead on the co-ordination of tree planting projects.

- 7) The PC will use reasonable endeavours to support the creation of new community woodlands and the maintenance of existing community woodlands and community orchards in the Parish.

Action: The PC will promote, publicise and support the creation of new community woodlands and community orchards and the maintenance of existing ones in this parish.