

Nash Parish Council (NPC)

Risk Assessment – General 2024

Introduction

This paper identifies the risks that NPC could face, their likelihood of occurrence, impact, and possible means of mitigating their effect.

The following extracts from the Practitioners' Guide provide guidance to help inform the risk assessment of NPC activities.

- The greatest risk facing a local council is not being able to deliver the activity or services expected of it. NPC manages many of those risks when it reviews its insurance and its systems. The minutes are an essential record of such reviews. Budget setting and insurance review are annual activities; the review of systems may be less frequent. It is suggested that systems should be reviewed in some detail, unless triggered by external or internal audit reports, or change in risk, at least every four years. Minutes should be checked by internal audit for any unusual activity, and evidence that risks are being identified and managed.
- Risk management is the process whereby local councils methodically address the risk associated with what they do and the services they provide. The focus of good risk management is to identify what can go wrong and take proportionate steps to avoid this or successfully manage the consequences.

Risk management is not just about financial management; it is about ensuring the achievement of objectives set by NPC to deliver high quality public services. The failure to manage risks effectively can be expensive in terms of litigation and reputation, the ability to achieve desired targets, and, eventually, on the local community's Council Tax bills.

- Members are ultimately responsible for risk management because risks threaten the achievement of policy objectives. As a minimum, at least once each year members should:
 - take steps to identify and update the record of key risks facing NPC;
 - evaluate the potential consequences for NPC if an event identified as a risk takes place;
 - decide upon appropriate measures to avoid, reduce, or control the risk or its consequences; and
 - record any conclusions or decisions reached.

Responsibilities of Nash Parish Council

The responsibilities of NPC can be summarised under the broad headings below.

1 Maintenance of assets

Nash Recreation Ground (including the play area and play equipment)

Nash Village Pond and Nash Village Green

Nash Streetlighting

Street Furniture assets (noticeboards, seats, village sign, water pumps, bus shelter)

Office Equipment (laptop, printer and filing cabinet).

2 Maintenance of assets on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council

The Parish Council is responsible under devolved authority for cutting the grass in the village which belongs to Buckinghamshire Council.

3 Liaison with other councils and bodies

NPC comments on Planning Applications in Nash and, where appropriate, on applications and matters on land close to Nash which affect Nash residents. Buckinghamshire Council (Aylesbury Vale Area) is responsible for local planning matters.

NPC reports highway matters to the Bucks Council Highways team and seeks improvements where practicable and affordable. This includes matters relating to footpaths and rights of way.

NPC responds to consultations whether from the principal authority, government departments, other statutory or non-governmental bodies.

NPC sends one or more representatives to relevant discussion/briefing meetings organised by other bodies, mainly Buckinghamshire Council.

4 Finance

NPC is required to manage its finances in accordance with good practice (noting that it has a single part-time employee and no regular cash income or expenditure).

5 General

NPC will discuss any matter of general concern to Nash residents and take appropriate action, normally referring matters to other bodies or making representations to other bodies on behalf of Nash residents. Where appropriate, NPC calls public meetings, in addition to the annual parish meeting, to brief residents and/or obtain their views.

NPC communicates with Nash residents through the village newsletter¹, announcements on the noticeboard, website, and the Nash Alert email distribution list. All meeting agendas are published on the NPC noticeboard and website and minutes are published on the website. NPC leaflets all houses in the village only when matters of substantial importance arise.

NPC Risk Management

The information which follows explains how NPC manages and reduces risks.

Insurance

NPC reviews its insurance schedule annually to inform any required changes before the policy is due for renewal on 1 June. This includes a review of the asset register. The insurance value of insured assets is increased annually by an appropriate inflation factor.

Specific Activities

NPC prepares a risk assessment for any activity it organises. The 2021 Pond Volunteer Weekend risk assessment is provided as an example (**Appendix 1**). The risk assessment for the maintenance of the Moveable Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS) is also provided (**Appendix 2**).

Recreation Ground

There is a nominated Councillor for the Recreation Ground. An annual safety inspection is undertaken by RoSPA. The annual safety inspection report is reviewed by the lead Councillor, who then reports to the next meeting of NPC. The discussion and any decisions about required actions are then recorded in the minutes. The litter bin in the Play Area is checked and if necessary emptied weekly by a Councillor during the period May to September and at least monthly from October to April. There is a rota in place for checking the litter bin. The Councillor responsible for the bin on the rota, is also asked to inspect the play area and play equipment, complete a safety checklist noting any defects or required remedial work before sending it to the Clerk.

Grass Cutting

NPC employs reputable contractors to carry out the work. The contractors must have public liability insurance cover of at least £5m for the areas owned by the Parish Council and at least £10m for the areas owned by Buckinghamshire Council.

Village Pond and Village Green

Nominated Councillors take the lead to ensure any problems and /or maintenance issues are reported to NPC. Historically, an annual safety inspection of the pond has been undertaken by RoSPA.

Streetlighting

NPC has a maintenance contract with EON to maintain its streetlights.

Street Furniture

Problems are reported by residents councillors. Periodic inspections are undertaken by the Clerk or at her request.

¹ Organised by the All Saints' Church.

Council Business

The routine work of NPC such as correspondence, preparation of agendas and minutes is the responsibility of the Clerk, who consults the Chair and/or NPC as appropriate. Significant risks arise in continuity of business when the Chair or the Clerk changes.

The following business related risks may arise.

- Illness/absence of the Clerk - ad hoc arrangements depending on length of absence.
- Illness/absence of the Chair - Vice-Chair or another experienced councillor deputises.
- Malfunctioning of the Clerk's laptop or printer, or loss of telephone and or internet service connectivity - use alternative equipment, ensure the laptop is regularly backed-up, use of effective anti-virus software.
- Identifying a councillor to attend an external meeting where it is important for NPC to be represented can be problematic if no-one is free to attend. Where appropriate and if s/he can the Clerk attends external meetings.
- The effectiveness of NPC's liaison role is dependent on the timeliness and quality of the response of the principal authority (Buckinghamshire Council) and other bodies.

Working Conditions of the Clerk

NPC does not have an office and the Clerk works from home. The Clerk has responsibility to ensure the office layout is appropriate in respect of health and safety. The Clerk may receive visitors on Parish Council business and so there must be some risk (however minimal) to the Clerk's safety if s/he is alone in the house when receiving Parish Council visitors. NPC has four noticeboards, three of which are used for general information. The noticeboard outside the Village Hall is the 'official' noticeboard where formal Parish Council documents such as agendas are displayed and other documents which legally must be displayed. As the noticeboards are outside, placing notices and other documents could potentially be dangerous in adverse weather (e.g. in strong winds or icy conditions). The activity is postponed in adverse weather conditions. The Clerk is employed and paid to work six hours per week. Inevitably there are workload peaks and troughs, with peaks around NPC meetings, major planning applications, financial year end and the annual audit. In the event of the Clerk being unavailable to deal with an unanticipated important matter, the Chair, and/or another councillor would need to step-in.

Finance

The following financial regulations / procedures are in place.

- 1 All payments are made by electronic transfer or cheque unless there are exceptional circumstances. All receipts are by bank transfer or cheque unless there are special or exceptional circumstances.
- 2 Payments under £100 are authorised by the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). Payments above £100 and all payments to the Clerk are authorised by the Chair (or in their absence by another councillor), by email. The Clerk retains the authorisation emails and annotates the invoice with the initials of those authorising the transaction.
- 3 All receipts and authorised payments are reported at a meeting of NPC. For major contracts, the RFO should seek to obtain three quotations for consideration at a meeting. Alternatively, authority can be delegated at a meeting to the Chair, RFO and at least one other councillor. Regular contracts should be annual contracts or longer.
- 4 At each ordinary meeting, NPC receives a report on the current balances on its accounts. The RFO reports any significant divergence from the budget.
- 5 NPC discusses its budget and precept for the following financial year, usually at its meetings in November and January.
- 6 A bank statement is obtained for NPC's current account on a regular monthly basis. The RFO reconciles the balance shown in the statement with the cash book record. Balances on the General Reserve and the Asset Reserve are also reconciled monthly. The Chair and the RFO sign the cash book record at the end of each financial year.
- 7 NPC meets the statutory requirements in respect of PAYE. VAT is recovered where possible.

- 8 NPC will arrange for an internal audit at least once a year to review whether the systems of financial and other controls are effective. The internal audit function will be sufficiently independent of NPC and the person or persons carrying out internal audit will be competent to carry out the role.

Nash Parish Council**Risk Assessment - Pond Clearing 5th and 6th September 2021****Project summary**

To remove sedge (reeds) from in the village pond and disposal of the plants, some roots and silt for collection by a hired grab lorry on Monday 6 September. The work will be carried out by village residents who have volunteered. An experienced member of the community will provide the volunteers with leadership and direction.

Description of the location.

The pond is roughly 30 metres in diameter. The water level is low and only covers about two-thirds of the pond base. Water level is a maximum of one metre deep. The water is clean (tested not long ago). The pond bed is natural clay covered with a thin layer of small stones. Silt has been deposited by the water entering the pond via the stream and is up to about 150mm thick. It can be sticky.

Description of the tasks

People with suitable clothing such as waders, will walk carefully into the deeper water with a wheelbarrow. They will pull the sedge from as low as they can and place the plant in the adjacent wheelbarrow. When the wheelbarrow is suitably full, they will pull it back to the shallow water or dry silt where other persons in wellington boots can take the barrow to the hired skip. Here it will be loaded into the skip. There is also likely to be a need to remove silt with shovels. The ditch which runs from the stream towards the centre of the village will also be cleared of sedges, weeds, and litter.

Hazards**Moving traffic**

Whilst villagers are working in and around the pond, traffic cones will be placed across the service road creating a visible barrier should a resident or visitor wish to pass through the work area. It will not be necessary for anyone to wear high-visibility clothing as the risk of injury is negligible. The grab lorry is being hired from a reputable company using a trained driver and a purpose-made vehicle. It has been booked for the morning after the volunteer weekend and will be supervised by the Clerk. The location for the vegetation etc. awaiting collection will be the service road by the pond. There is little vehicular movement occurs on this service road which is generally accessed and exited from the other end. There are no known hazards such as electricity power cables for the grab lorry to contend with.

Residual Risk – Low.

Drowning

The publicity for the event clearly stated it was not suitable for children. We will ensure this stipulation isn't breached. The water is up to one meter deep. There will always be several people working or observing. Should anyone require help, people will be in close proximity, many with mobile phones should one be necessary. A defibrillator is located at the village hall, a short distance away.

Residual Risk - Negligible.

Manual handling

Villagers have been told in advance what overall tasks are required and will volunteered accordingly. On the day, everyone will be reminded to only undertake tasks they are confident and fit to do. The amount of vegetation etc in wheelbarrows can be adjusted to suite peoples' capabilities. The skip booked has a front panel that can be lowered to the ground, facilitating loading.

Residual Risk - Low.

Nash Parish Council

MVAS Maintenance Risk Assessment

Risk	Severity	Precautions
At risk from passing cars when accessing data or changing battery	Medium	Wear high visibility jackets; work in pairs so that one person acts as look out for passing cars.
Movement of MVAS and post to another location.	Medium	Wear high visibility jackets; work in a team of three or more so that one person acts as look out for passing cars and the other two move the MVAS and post.
A car will be required to move the MVAS and post.	Medium	The car should be parked near the existing location and then moved to the new location. The parked car must not be a danger to traffic. Care to be taken to avoid damage to car in moving the MVAS. Maintain awareness of passing traffic at all times.
Damage to MVAS when moving it.	Low	Care to be taken in moving MVAS.
Battery is overcharged.	Low	Ensure the batteries are not charged for longer than the recommended maximum battery charging time.
Corruption of data on the MVAS.	Low	Regularly check data to ensure that it is working correctly.