



# Colney Heath Parish Council

## Financial Management Risk Assessment 2020/21

“The greatest risk facing a local authority is not being able to deliver the activity or services expected of the Council.”

A risk assessment is a systematic general examination of working conditions, workplace activities and environmental factors that will enable the employer to identify any and all potential risks inherent in the place or practices. Based on a recorded assessment the employer should then take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible.

Employees are made aware of the results of the risk assessment and under Reg 14 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) Regulations 2006 it is a duty of an employee to inform the employer of any circumstances that may indicate any shortcomings in this assessment.

This document has been produced to enable the Parish Council to assess the financial and management risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them. In conducting this exercise, the following plan was followed:-

- identify the areas to be reviewed
- identify what the risk may be
- evaluate the management and control of the risk and record all findings
- review, assess and recommend revisions if required.

This risk assessment was completed by Responsible Financial Officer Lisa Chaplin 12/08/2020 to be discussed at Finance & Governance Committee 3 September 2020 where it was recommended to Full Council 24 September 2020 at which meeting it was adopted.

**Lisa Chaplin LGCI PSLCC CPFA CiLCA  
Clerk/RFO**



# Colney Heath Parish Council

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FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT 2020-2021				
Subject	Hazards and Risks Identified	Risk Level H/M/L	Management controls and measures in place to control risks	Assessment and/or controls needed
Council membership	Losing Councillor membership or having more than 5 vacancies at any one time	Low	When a Councillor vacancy arises, there is a legal process to follow which either leads to a lawful election or a co-option process. An election is out of the Parish Council's control. The co-option process begins with an advert, acceptance of applications, consideration of applicants and co-option vote at a Council meeting then appointment. If there are more than 5 vacancies at any one time on the Parish Council is likely to become inquorate. The legal process of St Albans District Council appointing members takes place.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented correctly.
Business continuity	Risk of Council not being able to continue to provide services to the community	Low	Business Continuity Plan is in place and therefore the risk level is assessed as Low. The plan is in place to inform staff of duties following major disruption of services and then reviewed periodically or if change requires a review. Separate continuity plan in place for COVID-19	Business Continuity Plan in place and a review is due Dec 2020.
Precept	Adequacy of precept	Low	The Precept is an agenda item at full Council in November. Prior to this the Council receives a budget update report, including actual position and projected position to the financial year end and indicative figures or costings for future projects produced by the Clerk/RFO. Earmarked reserves to be held for priority projects and rolling replacements. With all this information the Council should allow sufficient time to decide the required monies for standing costs and projects for the following year and apply specific figures to budget headings, the net total of which is resolved to be the precept amount to be requested from St Albans District Council.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly and in a timely manner by all staff.
	Requirements not submitted to St Albans District Council	Low	Dates for submitting the Precept request should be ascertained from St Albans District Council in a timely manner and the Precept figure is submitted by the Clerk in writing to SADC by the required deadline.	



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	Precept amount not received by CHPC.	Low	The Clerk/RFO monitors the bank statements and informs Council if the monies are not received (in April) Adequate contingency reserves of 4 months expenditure to be maintained in the accounts to cover emergencies or non-payment of precept by St Albans District Council.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly and in a timely manner by all staff.
Borrowing	Failure to Comply with borrowing regulations	Low	Appropriate legal processes to be followed and Council authorisation obtained. The RFO receives updates from the PWLB loan status and reports to Council annually.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly by all staff.
Financial controls and records	Inadequate records leading to Financial irregularities	Low	The Council has Financial Regulations which set out the requirements and are followed with all financial transactions. Annual review of Financial Regulations undertaken by the Council and when Internal Audit report was received July 2020.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Bank and banking	Inadequate account checks and/or errors by bank resulting in loss or incorrect charges	Low	<p>The Council has Financial Regulations governing cash handling, banking, and reconciliation of accounts which should be followed in all cases by staff. If the Bank does make occasional errors in processing cheques they should be discovered when the Finance Officer/RFO reconciles the bank accounts monthly when the statements arrive. These are reviewed by the Clerk, and spot checked by two Councillors who are not mandated signatories on the Bank Accounts. Any errors are dealt with immediately by informing the bank and awaiting/checking their correction.</p> <p>On-line banking is subject to similar controls, with two mandated "signatories" approving all electronic payments, based on the supporting evidence (approved invoices etc) provided by the Clerk/RFO.</p> <p>Business Interruption insurance cover in place in place Limits covered as per Zurich Insurance Policy and reviewed annually.</p>	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.



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Bank and banking cont.	<p>Failure to change account signatories</p> <p>Poor investment of funds, leading to loss of income</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Following an election, co-option of councillors, or AGM, the Council choose replacement signatories and the Bank is informed by the Clerk.</p> <p>Council reserves (around £150,000) are split between a NatWest Reserve account and a Metro bank account which holds £85,000 of the £150,000 this amount is covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. The Metro account is not interest-bearing, and the NatWest reserve account carries a relatively low rate of interest.</p>	Existing controls and procedures remain adequate for the amount noted in the reserves currently.
Cash handling and loss	Loss through theft or dishonesty	Low	<p>The Council has a consistent ordering/purchasing system in place at present with the Clerk authorising all orders.</p> <p>Financial Regulations set out cash-handling requirements that should be observed by all councillors/staff.</p> <p>No Petty cash has operated since 2016/17</p> <p>Any cash or cheques received transactions are banked within 48 hours</p>	Controls and procedures adequate if implemented correctly by all staff.
Litigation against Council	Potential risk of legal action being taken against the Council	Medium	Adequate Public liability insurance provided and includes cover for general personal injury claims where the Council is found to be at fault, but not spurious or frivolous claims - these cannot be insured against. Insurance level reviewed and updated annually.	Existing procedures and insurance are adequate for requirements but there could still be a risk of other claims.
Financial controls, reporting and auditing	Incorrect or fraudulent information provided and/or incorrect payments made by Council	Medium	<p>Monthly bank account reconciliation carried out by Finance Officer/RFO and subject to checks subsequently by two nominated councillors.</p> <p>A financial monitoring statement and payment schedule is produced by the Clerk/RFO quarterly and presented to the Finance &amp; Governance Committee of the Council, discussed, and approved at the meeting. The statement includes budget updates and a summary analysis of income and expenditure is checked against bank balances prior to submission to the Committee.</p>	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly by all staff.



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Financial controls, reporting and auditing cont.	Incorrect payments made by Council	Medium	Approvals are required on all electronic payments. Clerk/RFO checks and authorises monthly payroll inputs and any expenses claims. Every payment has a unique payment reference. The Clerk/RFO signs off all invoices for payment and these are processed in accordance with Financial Regulations which are reviewed annually and adopted by the Council.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly by all staff
	Non-compliance with audit requirements	Low	Non-budgeted expenditure and/or spending of reserves require full Council approval. Council systems are subject to statutory annual internal audit to ensure systems are operating properly and are fully compliant with the Fidelity Guarantee requirements. External audit requirements are met annually. This Council has had a good audit for the last two years 2018/19 and 2019/20 and for the first time in its recent history this coupled with a highly qualified RFO is why this is marked as low risk.	
Purchasing and payment invoicing	Goods not covered by formal order. Goods not supplied but billed. Incorrect invoicing. Payment payable incorrect.	Low	The Council has Financial Regulations which set out the requirements for the purchasing goods and services which are observed by all staff. Every invoice is control stamped twice once by the Clerk/RFO to confirm the goods or services have been received and the second control stamp where each order/invoice is checked by two councillors. Two independent Councillors carry out these checks on all invoices paid from the main Nat West Current Account.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Grants and support - payable	Improper use of funds granted to local bodies i.e. no power to make grant or grant not properly authorised by Council.	Low	Applicant completes an application form and is requested to supply set of accounts plus additional documentation for events/projects. All such grant applications go through the required Council process of approval, minuting and listing accordingly if a payment is made using the S137 power of expenditure or GPC. Parish Councillors request S137 rules if required. In past years, some applicants have not met criteria for submitting recent signed accounts, but grants have been approved by councillors. The Council operates under GPC since May 2019.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly and the Council retains GPC annually.



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Grants - receivable	Failure to obtain available grants	Low	The Parish Council does not presently apply for or receive any regular grants. One off grant, e.g. from Locality for help, would be awarded if the Council in applying for grant satisfy the awarding body's terms and conditions. The Clerk/RFO is responsible for identifying and processing potential grant applications, subject to approval by the Council.	Existing procedures to apply for a grant are established and adequate if implemented properly.
Ordering and invoicing	Best value not achieved Work awarded Incorrectly Incorrect invoicing and loss of income Overspend on services	Low	Parish Council practice would be to obtain best value by seeking, if possible, three quotations for any substantial work required to be undertaken or goods. For major contract services, formal competitive tenders would be sought. If a problem is encountered with a contract the Clerk would investigate the situation, check the quotation/tender, research the problem and report to Council. This is covered in the Financial Regulations which should be followed by all staff and reviewed annually. Signing powers laid down in Financial Regulations. Council have approved a preferred contract list for 20/21.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly Financial Regulations and preferred contractor list updated annually.
Employee salaries and associated costs	Salary paid incorrectly e.g. wrong hours/rate paid	Low	The Parish Council authorises the appointment of all employees. HR advice and/or assistance is now sought when recruitment takes place. Staff have written contracts of employment and job descriptions.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
	False employees on payroll	Low	Salary rates are increased automatically and applied from 1 April each year and in line with NJC salary awards. Delayed April 2020. Real time PAYE implemented. Monthly salary payments submitted by Clerk to external payroll bureau (Hardcastle Blake) who produce tax calculations and payslips monthly following salary detail return provided by the Clerk/RFO together with a schedule of payments to HMRC (for Tax and NI). Prior to payment these are inspected and checked by two Councillors independently. All tax and NI submissions are reported by the by the external payroll bureau and amounts paid directly by the Council. Advice sought from Inland Revenue as required and the payroll company	
	Non-compliance with Inland Revenue requirements	Low		



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Employee salaries and associated costs cont.	Incorrect or unpaid Tax and/or NI contributions to HMRC	Low	is responsible for logging in to the HMRC site regularly to check account is correct.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
	Incorrect pension contributions	Low	Employee and employer pension contributions are calculated and submitted by the Clerk/RFO who makes instructs monthly payments to be made.	
Employer liability	Employee terms and conditions unlawful or in need of review	Low	All staff have written contracts of employment. Employment policies in place and reviewed periodically. Membership of HAPTC and professional HR support and legal advice obtained as necessary. Staff provided with some relevant training and technical support, as required to undertake the role.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
	Loss of staff	Medium	Business Continuity Plan should include loss of key personnel.	Monitor working conditions, health and safety requirements and Insurance at least annually.
	Misconduct or poor performance including fraud by staff	Medium	Disciplinary and capability procedures in place which must be followed in all cases and the requirements of the Fidelity Guarantee insurance to be adhered to with regards to fraud.	
Health and safety liability	Risk to health and safety of staff, volunteers, the public who access Council equipment/property and visitors	Medium	Full Health and Safety Policy maintained and reviewed and necessary arrangements in place. Risk assessments for all activities in place and available to staff and reviewed regularly or when new activities or changes occur. Fire risk assessment undertaken and monitored. Fire alarms and fire safety equipment provided at Council Offices and serviced and contract checked with landlords.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly by the Clerk and staff.



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Health and safety liability Cont.	Risk to health and safety of staff, volunteers, the public who access Council equipment/property and visitors	Medium	<p>Lone working policy in place.</p> <p>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided to staff where appropriate.</p> <p>First aid boxes provided at both sites.</p> <p>Periodic health and safety audit undertaken, and any necessary action taken</p> <p>Contractors health and safety policies and practices assessed and monitored.</p> <p>Alarm system and security door entry system installed at one Council Office.</p> <p>Health and safety training offered to staff.</p> <p>Safety inspections of play equipment, offices, and assets.</p> <p>Public events organised by another body required to provide PLI certificates, risk assessments, child protection policies and any other relevant certification.</p> <p>Public events organised by the Council – insurers notified, risk assessments undertaken, named and appointed Responsible persons, volunteers work under direction of the Council and led by competent person(s), qualified first aiders in attendance and police and fire brigade notified.</p>	
Councillor allowances	Councillors over-paid Incorrect income tax deduction	Low	<p>No allowances are currently claimed by Parish Councillors.</p> <p>Chairman Allowance paid by external payroll bureau after full receipts and all evidence received.</p>	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Election costs	Risk of - unlawful and extra election costs	Medium	<p>Risk is higher in an election year, but there is a risk that an election is called for any casual Council vacancies. There are no measures which can be adopted to minimise the risk of having elections, as this is a democratic process. The Council has a contingency budget each year in case of elections and will budget for the costs in an election year.</p>	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.





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VAT	Non-compliance with HMRC VAT Regulations and errors with VAT reclaiming and/or charging leading to loss.	Low	The Parish Council has Financial Regulations which set out the requirements which need to be observed. VAT must be correctly charged and reclaimed quarterly in arrears by the Finance Officer in accordance with the required timeframe.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Employers PAYE Annual Return	Incorrectly calculating, Paying and accounting for NI and income tax of employees' salaries	Low	Employer's Annual PAYE Return is completed by the payroll bureau under their remit, reviewed by the Clerk and submitted online by the legal deadline.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Internal and external audit	Failure to arrange annual internal and external audit and ensure completion within time Limits	Low	Internal auditor is appointed by the Council. Internal auditor is supplied with the relevant documents by the Clerk/RFO for the annual audit and the form to complete and sign for subsequent submission to the External Auditor – currently on 3-year contract with SIAS. Procedures and timeframe are all covered in the 'Review of Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit' which are observed by the Clerk/RFO and the Council and which is reviewed annually.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Annual Governance Return and Accounting Statement	Failure to complete or submit within time limits	Low	Annual Governance Return and Accounting Statement is completed by the Clerk/RFO, presented to the Council and signed by the Clerk/RFO and Chairman on behalf of the Council. They are submitted to the internal auditor for their review as part of the annual internal audit and form part of the annual external audit process within the time limit.	Existing procedures adequate if implemented properly.



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Legal liabilities	Ensuring all Council activities are within its legal powers, there is no illegal activity and incorrect payments are not made.	Low	<p>Qualified Clerk obtained CiLCA November 2018 and is currently studying Level 4 Community Governance at De Montfort University in Leicester having commenced in February 2019. In May 2020 became a Principal Member of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) which shows consistent commitment to CPD with a requirement of Principal members to carry out at least 18 hours per year.</p> <p>Clerk/RFO advises on legal position and implications of all existing and proposed activities to ensure that all activity and payments are within the powers of the Parish Council. All proposals to be considered, resolved and minuted at Full Parish Council Meetings, including if GPC is lost a reference to the power being used. All decisions are in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and/or Standing Orders. Council membership of NALC, HAPTC and the Clerk's support as member of SLCC enables the Council to obtain appropriate support and advice under normal circumstances.</p>	Existing controls and procedures are considered adequate with note to a highly qualified and experienced Clerk/RFO
Preparation of agendas, minutes/ agendas/ notices and statutory documents	Preparation of Agendas and minutes not meeting legal requirements and obligations; or leads to the dissemination of inaccurate information that adversely affects the conduct of Council business.	Low	<p>Minutes and agenda are produced in the prescribed method by the Clerk and adhere to the legal requirements and best practice guidelines. Minutes are approved and signed at the following Council meeting. Minutes and agenda are displayed according to the legal requirements and are available to the public on the Council website, on at least one Council Notice Boards and/or on request from the Council Offices. Business is conducted at Council meetings that are open to the public and managed by the Chair in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders. Public informed of news-worthy matters through press releases to local media or on Council website.</p>	<p>Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.</p> <p>Guidance/training to Members is available (HAPTC) and provided to Councillors' (if required). Members required to adhere to Code of Conduct.</p>



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Councillor propriety and Members' interests	Conflicts of interest Failure by Members to register Interests, gifts and hospitality	High	Register of Councillor Interests maintained and reviewed annually or as necessary by Councillors. Gifts and hospitality for Members and staff to be declared and recorded in Register. Register accessible on Council website. Original documents held by Parish Council with copy to Monitoring Officer at District Council. Declaring interests by Members an Agenda item at all meetings and Members must declare interests at all meetings Code of Conduct adopted by the Parish Council. Marked High risk due to several challenging conflicts of interests in recent and historical matters in this Council which require careful management in Committee and Full Council meetings to ensure decisions made are not later legally challenged.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly and members take responsibility for updating their Register and declaring interests regularly.
Insurance cover	Inadequate insurance cover or best value not achieved leading to loss.	Low	An annual review is undertaken (before the time of the policy renewal) of all insurance arrangements in place. Employers and Public liability insurance are a necessity and must be paid for. Ensure compliance measures are in place. Ensure Fidelity checks are in place. Public Liability insurance cover of £10m, Employer Liability insurance cover of £10m, Fidelity guarantee insurance cover of £1m, Business interruption insurance cover in place and reviewed annually.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly. Review insurance provision annually to obtain best value and compliance with adequacy of cover.
Data protection	Claims from public for breach of Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations.	Low	The Council is registered with the Information Commission. Action taken in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 with new Privacy and Data Protection Policies implemented. The Clerk is designated as the Officer responsible for data protection.	Ensure annual renewal of registration with Information Commissioner.



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Freedom of Information Act requests	Failure to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests in accordance with legal obligations.	Medium	<p>The Council has a model publication scheme for Local Councils in place and the Clerk is responsible investigating requests and preparing factual responses. The Clerk is aware that if a substantial request arrives then this may require hours of additional work.</p> <p>Risk marked as medium due to the regular and higher than expected number of requests from 2017 to date.</p>	Existing procedures adequate if implemented properly. Monitor and report any impacts of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act to the Council.
Physical assets	Protection of assets from e.g. loss or damage Risk of damage to third party/property	Medium	<p>An annual review of assets register is undertaken to ensure accuracy for insurance renewal, yearend accounts, storage, and maintenance provisions. Insurance cover reviewed annually Regular maintenance of physical assets. Annual review of risk and insurance cover and due diligence undertaken of insurance providers. Regular inspections of Council property including buildings, play equipment, notice boards, street furniture etc.</p>	Asset register to be updated as necessary and reviewed annually in accordance with Internal Audit suggestions.
	Security of buildings and equipment at all locations	Medium	Alarm systems at one office, no panic button, no front door entry controls, No CCTV installed at any assets	Review of office security required and CCTV installation pending
Maintenance of assets, buildings and equipment	Poor performance of assets or amenities Risk to staff and third parties causing loss of income and/or additional cost for the Council	Medium	<p>All assets owned by the Parish Council are regularly reviewed and maintained on an ad hoc basis and/or by annual inspection. Members and Council advised of the outcome for action and/or future planning and budget purposes. All assets maintained either by maintenance contract or on ad hoc basis as required.</p> <p>All repairs and relevant expenditure for the repairs and/or replacement are actioned/authorised in accordance with the correct procedures of the Parish Council. All assets are insured and reviewed annually as set out above.</p>	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly. Ensure planned and periodic building inspections carried out and outcomes reported to the Council.



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		Medium	All public amenity land is inspected regularly by the Clerk as Proper Officer of the Council and outcome reported to Council. Marked as medium due to loss of registration paperwork and ongoing land issues.	All identified repairs and maintenance works carried out as soon as possible. Risk currently under review, with a view to action being taken to reduce risk to low.
Notice boards	Need for repair Risk/damage/injury to third parties Roadside safety	Low	Parish Council has three Notice Boards sited around the Parish. Old damaged boards now removed restoring this risk back to Low.  All locations have been approved by relevant parties, insurance cover provided, inspected regularly by the Clerk and Council advised of the outcome. Any repairs/maintenance requirements are dealt with by the Clerk. Keys held by the Clerk and the Assistant to the Clerk.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Street Furniture, benches, bollards and seats	Need for repair Risk/damage/injury to third parties	Medium	The Parish Council is responsible for public seats, bollards, planters and bus shelters. These are inspected annually by the Clerk and Council advised of the outcome. Funds earmarked in Council budget for repairs. All reports of damage or faults are dealt with by the Clerk.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.
Meeting locations	Adequacy of facilities and health and safety of staff and members of the public	Medium	Parish Council Meetings are held in either the Highfield Park Visitor Centre or CH Community Room at the Village Hall These premises and the facilities are considered to be adequate for the Clerk, Councillors and Public who attend from health & safety and comfort aspects although currently not an appropriate size for meeting under COVID-19 social distancing measures which would restrict public numbers.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.  Review risks in Jan 2021



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Document control – legal liability	Loss through theft, fire or damage	Medium	The Parish Council document control was inadequate prior to 2016. The essential review of old documents is being slowly managed. Legal documents and key paper records were retrieved from the previous Clerk's home address. Minutes are now electronically stored, and originals have been sent to HCC archives. All Council owned land and buildings continues to be monitored and moved to legal registration at Land Registry.	Work continues on the backlog of historical documents.  Current filing of key documents is ongoing and stored on Dropbox/One Drive
Council records electronic.	Loss through inadequate back-up of key electronic data resulting from theft, fire, damage, illegal access to or corruption of computer hard and software.	Low	Public documents are made available on the Council website. Council's electronic records are stored on remote cloud based storage Backups are performed regularly to prevent onsite storage resulting in Council being open to major business dislocation if catastrophe were to occur (fire, flood etc); or to GDPR challenge. The Council Website will be regularly backed up on a portable hard drive and stored remotely by the IT support for the site. All data held is in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulations as shown above.	Existing controls and procedures adequate if implemented properly.

**Reviewed and Approved at meeting of the Full Council held on 24 September 2020**

**Signed by:  
Councillor Peter Cook  
Chairman 20/21  
Colney Heath Parish Council**