

Local Council Documents & Policies (Version 7)

All parish and town councils operate to the same rules and regulations, often laid down in the Local Government Act 1972. The following is a list of documents and policies that all councils should have or consider having. If you do not have all the “must have” (red) documents, consider preparing and adopting them over time, it is not necessary to adopt them all at once. The purpose of having documents and policies is to guide the work of the council and to help it discharge its functions; they should be viewed as a help, not a hindrance. Examples of some documents can be found on the internet and/or from Northants CALC. (Helpful tip: when searching online, use quote marks to retrieve the most relevant pages. For example, if searching for example equality policies used by parish councils, search for “parish council” + “equality policy”).

BP – Best practice	Status	
SR – Statutory Requirement	RED	Must have
AR – Audit Requirement	AMBER	Good to have
CR – Contractual Requirement		

Section	Comments	Status	Check
Basic Governance			
Standing Orders	Model available from Northants CALC – 2018 Edition	AR/BP	
Financial Regulations	Model available from Northants CALC – 2019 Edition	SR¹	
Minute book	Not necessarily a “book” but the council must keep all minutes as a formal record of the council’s business	SR²	
Code of Conduct	All councils are required to adopt Code of Conduct. Examples available from Northants CALC	SR³	
Planning register	A list of planning applications received, their status and the council’s response.	BP	
Parish Emergency Plan	A document that describes what the council/community would do in the event of an emergency. Model available from Northants CALC.	BP	
Cllr attendance register	A register of attendance, recording whether or not absence was approved by council	BP	
Risk Assessment Policy ^{new}	Model available from Northants CALC	BP	
Risk assessment register	Detailed list of all risks in parish, their level, likelihood and what mitigating steps the council is taking.	AR	
Deeds of all land holdings	A list of all deeds, their scope, effect and lifespan. Should include a description of the location of the physical deeds and any copies.	BP	
Copies of all lease agreements ^{new}	Should include a description of the location of the lease agreement.	BP	

¹ Local Government Act 1972, s.135, Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015, reg.4

² Local Government Act 1972, Sch 12, para 41

³ Localism Act 2011 s27 (3a), 28

Insurance register	A list of the insurable interests of the council, the name of insurance provider, the amount covered and the term of the policy.	BP	
Members' Registers of Interest	A complete set of up to date registers of interest for all current councillors (copy held by Monitoring Officer).	SR ⁴	
Declarations of Acceptance of Office	Should be stored for the term of office plus one year	SR ⁵	
Members' Allowances Policy	A document that shows whether or not the council has a Parish Basic Allowance Scheme, and if so, details of same.	BP	
Register of gifts and hospitality ^{new}	Code of Conduct requirement	BP	
Contracts for the supply and receipt of services ^{new}	Copies of the contracts should be securely held by the clerk	BP	
Co-option Procedure ^{new}	Examples available from Northants CALC	BP	
Terms of Reference for committees ^{new}	Examples available from Northants CALC	BP	
Delegated authority in respect of officers and committees ^{new}	Examples available from Northants CALC	BP	
Motions book ^{new}	To cover motions received and rejected as described in Model Standing Orders	BP	
Openness & accountability			
Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information ACT	Model available from NALC.	SR ⁶	
Data protection/information security policy	A policy describing how the council intends to discharge its duties under GDPR	BP	
Subject Access Request (SAR) disclosure log ^{new}	Indicating the information that has been provided in response to subject access requests	SR ⁷	
Data breach policy ^{new}	A policy describing how the council reports data breaches	BP	
Data breach log ^{new}	A log of all data breaches (including those not required to be reported)	SR ⁸	
Complaints procedure	Model available from NALC. Not a statutory requirement for local councils but extremely inadvisable to operate without one.	BP	
CCTV Policy	If the council owns or operates CCTV there must be a written policy in place	SR ⁹	
Transparency Code compliance ^{new}	Checklist to ensure compliance with the Transparency Code for councils under £25,000 turnover, or those over £200,000 turnover. For councils in between £25,000 and £200,000 there is no statutory code, but they should follow the principles and guidelines in either or both codes as a matter of best practice.	SR ¹⁰ SR ¹¹	

⁴ Localism Act 2011 s29 (5) and (7)

⁵ Local Government Act 1972 s 83(4)

⁵ Freedom of Information Act 2000, s.20

⁷ Data Protection Act 2018, Chapter 4

⁸ Data Protection Act 2018, Chapter 4

⁹ Protections of Freedoms Act 2012 (CCTV Code of Practice)

¹⁰ The Smaller Authorities (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015, SI 494

¹¹ Local Government Transparency Code 2015

Communications			
Web site management policy ^{new}	Dependent on who is managing web site	BP	
Web Site Accessibility Statement ^{new}	Sets out what web site content is and isn't accessible and how users can contact the council for assistance	SR ¹²	
Social Media Policy ^{new}	Example available from Northants CALC	BP	
Press and Media Relations Policy ^{new}	Example available from Northants CALC	BP	
Calendar of council meeting dates inc. Annual Parish Meeting ^{new}	As agreed and minuted at a parish council meeting	BP	
Play Areas (Skip section if council does not own, manage or operate play areas)			
Record of play equipment inspections	A comprehensive listing of when, how and by who play equipment was inspected including details of any defects found during weekly visual inspections. The council must ensure its record keeping is exemplary as the records will be scrutinized should there be an accident investigation.	BP	
Record of Annual inspection and copies of inspection certificate	All play equipment should be professionally inspected on an annual basis (at least) and a certificate issued. Council has a legal duty of care towards those using the play area.	BP	
Record of contractors' insurance, including copies of contractor's liability insurance documents	Councils should ensure that wherever contractors are engaged that they are qualified, competent and carry sufficient insurance to carry out the work. Can be organised as a checklist of contractor's competencies.	BP	
Play Area Management and Improvement Plan ^{new}	This will help the council to plan for equipment replacement and should be considered alongside the inspection records.	BP	
Burial Authorities (Skip section if council does not own, manage or operate burial grounds)			
Burials Administration Policy ^{new}	To be open and transparent	BP	
Register and record of burials	Must retain documents indefinitely	SR ¹³	
Register of graves	Must retain documents indefinitely	SR ¹⁴	
Map of graves/cemetery	Must retain documents indefinitely	SR ¹⁵	
Record of exclusive rights of burial	A definitive listing of any grants made by the council for burial rights.	SR ¹⁶	
List of Cemetery charges	To be open and transparent	BP	
Allotments (Skip section if council does not own, manage or operate allotments)			
Allotments Register	Recording size, location, tenant, plot number etc	BP	
Allotments Plan	Visual representation of Allotment Register	BP	
Tenancy agreements	Including copies of those issued and a blank for new tenants	BP	
List of allotment charges	To be open and transparent	BP	
Copy of allotment rules	To be open and transparent	BP	

¹² Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹³ Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order SI 204

¹⁴ Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order SI 204

¹⁵ Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order SI 204

¹⁶ Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977, Sch 2 pt. II

Financial			
Accounts (e.g. daybook)	Normally kept in electronic format, e.g. Excel spreadsheet or specialised finance software.	SR ¹⁷	
Prior year Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)	Retain for audit trail	BP	
Bank mandate ^{new}	To list all signatories and authorisations	BP	
Bank statements	Retain for audit trail	BP	
Cheque books	Retain old books for audit trail	BP	
Paying in books	Retain old books for audit trail	BP	
Invoices and receipts	Should retain for 6 years plus current year (VAT requirement)	BP	
Insurance documents	Inc. Cert of employer's liability, public liability. Since 1 October 2008 there has been no legal requirement for employers to keep copies of out-of-date certificates. However, employers are strongly advised to keep, as far as is possible, a complete record of their employers' liability insurance	BP	
VAT reclaim record	HMRC can request to review records up to 6 years after the current financial year, so it is best to retain records for 6 years.	BP	
Investment Policy ^{new}	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Investment certificates / bonds	Retain indefinitely	AR	
Asset register (inc. Record of deeds)	Sample available from Northants CALC	AR	
Grant giving policy and application form ^{new}	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Record of grants made under S137	Recorded in accounts separately	SR ¹⁸	
Record of borrowings	To allow the council to fully appreciate its financial situation.	BP	
Financial risk assessment ^{new}	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Schedule of charges & fees for council information ^{new}	Model publication scheme	SR ¹⁹	
Reserves Policy ^{new}	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Internet Banking Policy ^{new}	Dependent on which bank the parish uses	BP	
Procurement ^{new}	Partly covered by Financial Regulations	BP	
Employment & Personnel			
Employing people procedures	Recruitment policy, induction arrangements, appraisal procedures etc.	BP	
Written statement of particulars of employment	Model available from NALC (2011 edition). Employers have a duty to supply on the first day of employment.	SR ²⁰	
Job description (Clerk)	Model available from NALC (2011 edition). Not a legal requirement as such but extremely inadvisable to employ someone without one as	BP	

¹⁷ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, SI 2003/533

¹⁸ Local Government Act 1972 s 137(4)

¹⁹ Freedom of Information Act 2000

²⁰ Employment Rights Act 1996, pt. 1, s.1

	lack of clarity around roles is the biggest cause of employment grievance.		
Job descriptions (other staff)	To be written by the council and should be as accurate as possible to prevent misunderstanding of roles.	BP	
Working from home policy	Where relevant. Covers use of home, home security, lone working, access by other members of staff, councillors, and members of the public.	BP	
Expenses Policy	The level of expenses paid, including mileage rates, subsistence, telephone etc.	CR	
Working Time Policy ^{new}	TOIL, leave, hours, should be in contract or staff handbook	BP	
Grievance procedures	Model available from CALC. Guidance is provided in the form of the ACAS Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance. Including provisions for whistleblowing.	BP	
Disciplinary procedures	Model available from CALC. Guidance is provided in the form of the ACAS Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance.	BP	
Bullying and Harassment / Dignity at Work	ACAS produce advice leaflets	BP	
Equality & Diversity Policy	Very small councils with only a single employee may decide not to have a written policy but must nevertheless comply with relevant discrimination legislation (e.g. age/sex discrimination, disabled access etc). Councils with more than one employee should certainly have a written policy and the concepts of equal treatment extend to councillors as well as staff.	BP	
Computer use, electronic communications and telephone Policy	Sets out how/when computers will be used, the policy for backing up data, how e-mail and telephone communications will be dealt with etc. This policy applies to anyone using computers or sending or receiving phone and/or electronic communications on behalf of the council, including individual councillors.	BP	
Payroll Record	HMRC requirement – retain for 3 years	BP	
Notice of tax codes	Or copy of agreement to code out	BP	
Holiday record	To ensure the correct leave is taken	BP	
Sickness absence policy and records	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Business Continuity Plan ^{new}	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Health & Safety Policy	Including fire policy and procedures, computer screen usage, eye care generally, alcohol and drug policy, work station setup, food hygiene etc. Every council must have one, but if there are fewer than 5 employees this doesn't have to be written down.	SR ²¹	
Accident Book ^{new}	Available to purchase, or use Excel	BP	
Training Statement of Intent	All councils should have a statement outlining the CPD/training requirements for councillors and staff for the year. A model is available from Northants CALC.	BP	

²¹ Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Chapter 37

Training Record ^{new}	Detailing courses each councillor has been on	BP	
Pension & Retirement Policy	Sets out whether the council uses the Local Government Pension Scheme or another pension scheme. Includes details of how employees' contributions will be calculated for a pension and pension administration details. Will also include a statement in reference to working age requirements.	SR ²²	
Auto-enrolment Records ^{new}	Must be kept by law	SR ²³	
Family friendly policy	Including details of flexible working arrangements and provision for maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave.	BP	
Disabled Access Audit	To comply with the Equality Act 2010	SR ²⁴	
Employee Code of Conduct ^{new}	Employee Code dealing with, for example, provisions for disclosing pecuniary interests.	BP	
Lone working (other staff) ^{new}	To be written by the council and should be as accurate as possible	BP	
Use of own vehicles for work ^{new}	Should outline insurance provision and mileage reimbursements (if applicable)	BP	
Annual appraisal records ^{new}	Requirement under SO 19(c) in the Model Standing Orders (2016)	BP	
Environment			
Development control policy	A list of policies on which the council will base its responses to planning applications. May be, or include reference to, a Neighbourhood Plan, Village Design Statement, Parish Plan or Landscape Character Assessment.	BP	
Certificate of waste disposal	A copy is required for any dog waste bins that are owned, managed or controlled by the council.	SR	
Green space audit	To ensure compliance under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006	BP	
Lighting Policy ^{new}	For the provision and operation of street lighting	BP	
Trees Policy ^{new}	Detailing inspection method and frequency etc	BP	
Parish Map ^{new}	To be clear where all boundaries lie	BP	
Sustainability Policy ^{new}	Recycling, green energy, waste	BP	
Snow risk assessment ^{new}	To outline what the council will do	BP	
Buildings & Facilities			
Letting Charges and Hiring Policy ^{new}	To be open and transparent	BP	
Asbestos Risk Register ^{new}	Owners and occupiers of premises have a duty to manage asbestos	SR ²⁵	
COSHH Risk Assessment ^{new}	To cover any chemicals used or other hazardous materials. All councils in control of buildings or facilities must carry out a risk assessment and those employing five or more employees must also record significant findings.	SR ²⁶	

²² Pensions Act 2008 Chapter 30

²³ The Pensions Acts 1995, 2004, and 2008

²⁴ Equality Act 2010

²⁵ Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (Regulation 4)

²⁶ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

Security ^{new}	To highlight procedures when securing buildings	BP	
Council Management			
Controller documentation (Article 30 GDPR) ^{new}	Template available from Northants CALC	SR	
List of personal data consents ^{new}	Template available from Northants CALC	SR	
Business Plan ^{new}	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Partnership agreements ^{new}	Outlining the relationship between the parties	BP	
Parish Charter with principal councils ^{new}	Northamptonshire Councils Charter	BP	
Member/Officer Protocol ^{new}	Sample available from Northants CALC	BP	
Byelaws – copies of ^{new}	Should retain copies of all byelaws	BP	
Child Protection / Vulnerable Person Policy / DBS ^{new}	When using staff or volunteers that will have direct access to vulnerable or potentially vulnerable people	BP	
Customer Service Charter ^{new}	Setting out what standards members of the public can expect from the council	BP	
Document Management & Retention Policy ^{new}	Example available from Northants CALC	BP	
List of passwords ^{new}	Should be held securely by the Clerk and Chair	BP	

The current version of All UK legislation, including Acts of Parliament, Regulations and Statutory Instruments can be found at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk>.

This is a working document and is not intended to be a definitive list. We welcome feedback and suggestions as to what else should be included. Also, if you spot any error or omission please do let us know. Please contact info@northantscalc.com.