

The Sampfords Parish Council

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Clerks Report Parish Council Meeting 15th October 2024

Policies and Procedures (P&Ps) Log and Review

A log (see appendices) of the policies and procedures was sent to councillors on 22nd August 2024 by the Clerk/ RFO

- It identifies those we already have, the last review (where identifiable).
- Reviewer and authoriser (no evidence in any existing P&P).
- Those Policies and Procedures that are missing, albeit this is a subjective view based on my research of other parish council records and recommendations from the EALC and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
- There are also some line items relating to the website that are impacted by policies and procedures.

Councillors were requested to review the log before the next council meeting to determine which P&Ps the council feel are appropriate and should be reviewed, updated, or created and who is going to do the work. We also need to consider the review / update frequency for each policy and procedure.

Following attendance by the Clerk / RFO at a Regulations & Compliance training course, it is evident that this matter now requires urgent attention. The EALC advised that auditors have been directed to focus attention to policies and procedures for the year 2024/25 assessment to ensure they are up to date, appropriate for the size of council, accurate and that there is clear evidence that regular reviews have taken place. This directive has been invoked due to many councils having out of date or few P&Ps, together with an increase in Local Council fraudulent activity. Hence, up to date P&Ps and evidence of appropriate reviews, together with evidence that councillors have read the P&Ps, will now be regarded as non-compliance.

Based on a practical exercise during the training, which included a review of the policies and procedures for each of the councils in attendance, The Sampfords were advised to urgently prioritise the following:

- Financial Regulations (SPC version is 2 years out of date). The Clerk / RFO issued a new version on 26th September, which requires input from councillors where options require a decision.

- Roles & Responsibilities definition. SPC does not have this. This was scheduled to be discussed at the September meeting but was missed.
- Risk Management Policy. SPC does not have this.
- Data Protection Policy. SPC does not have this.
- Code of Conduct. Significantly out of date and missing key components
- Standing Orders. The main point here is that it has not been reviewed since 2021 and it is clear that it is out of date and missing updated legislative requirements.
- Procurement Policy. SPC does not have this.
- Website Policies and Procedures – This may be best addressed when a hosting and email and data management provider has been selected:
 - Freedom of Information Policy
 - Electors & Interested Parties Exercise Rights relating to Annual Accounts
 - Terms of Use
 - Cookie Policy

There are other policies and procedures that need to be completed or updated, but are considered a lower priority such as:

- Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance procedures
- Community Emergency Plan
- Community Emergency Plan
- Corporate Environmental Policy
- Complaints Procedure (has references to Helion Bumpstead PC)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Health & Safety
- Health, Wellbeing and disability Access Policy
- Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Privacy notice
- Social Media Policy
- Training Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Recommendation

It is recommended that The Clerk / RFO undertakes the work to ensure policies and procedures are up to date. The target is to complete this by year end. **Councillors will need to provide feedback / input as and when required to ensure the deadline is achieved.**

To achieve this, the Clerk / RFO will require to spend far more time than the allocated weekly hours currently under contract. A timesheet of work completed to date against contract can be found in the appendices which provides evidence contracted time to date is being over utilised.

As a best estimate it will require approximately 27 days to initially prepare / update P&Ps, but this does not include time for any iterative process. It is suggested that this is considered as extra hours. Clearly, if there are available contracted hours then this will be used to complete the policy & procedures where possible. The Clerk / RFO will report back to the council at each meeting regarding progress against target.

Similarly, if the Clerk / RFO is required to allocate time to assist in the preparation of a website, email and data hosting requirements specification, this too will require extra time.

Appendix A – Policies and Procedures Log

Appendix B – Clerk Timesheet