



[www.laxtonpc.org.uk](http://www.laxtonpc.org.uk)

17/01/2026

To: All Members of the Council

You are summoned to attend a meeting of **Laxton Parish Council** that will be held on **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 7pm** to transact the business set out below. The meeting will take place at Laxton Victory Hall, Station Road, Laxton, DN14 7TW. Members of the public and press are welcome to attend and may address the Council during the public participation section.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to the Council

## A G E N D A

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. To record declarations of interest by any member of the council in respect of the agenda items below.
3. To receive and sign the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, held on Wednesday 26 November 2025 and Wednesday 17 December 2025 as a true and correct record.
4. Public Participation - to temporarily suspend the meeting to receive questions from the public.
5. To agree to reopen the meeting following suspension.
6. To receive an update on the action log from the Clerk.
7. To receive an update from Ward Councillors.
8. To receive an update from Parish Councillors.
  - i. Assertion 10 (new data rules for parish councils)
9. To receive an update from Laxton Victory Hall.



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10. To discuss the following correspondence:
  - i. Safe Communities – Howdenshire Data
  - ii. Emergency Planning – Avian Influenza
  - iii. ERNLLCA – November Newsletter
  - iv. ERNLLCA – Health and Safety Training
  - v. ERYC – Confirmation report for damaged bench
  - vi. Electoral Service – updated register
  - vii. ERYC – precept guidance and confirmation of documents
  - viii. ERYC – Email address solutions
  - ix. ERNLLCA Email address solutions
  - x. ERNLLCA – December Newsletter
  - xi. Finding Fitness – Playground grants and funding
  - xii. ERNLLCA – January Newsletter
11. To approve the schedule of accounts for payment.
12. To receive agenda items for the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

## LAXTON PARISH COUNCIL

7pm 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025

**PRESENT:** Councillors Goulden (Chair), Huntley, Watson, Linfoot and S Yarrow.

Clerk: Poppy Hunt

87/25 **APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE** – Received from Cllr M Yarrow and Cllr Moore.

88/25 **DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS** – There were no declarations of interest.

89 /25 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – Resolved** – That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

90/25 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** – 2 PCSO's present for the meeting. They discussed with us about rural crime and a new system coming into place where Humberside are linking with South Yorkshire and other forces to share information on this. We agreed to write to farmers in the local area and ask if they would like their email addresses to be passed on to receive information regarding rural crime.

91/25 **TO APPOINT A VICE CHAIR – Resolved** – Councillor Tim Watson successfully appointed as vice chair of the council.

92 /25 **ACTION LOG – Agreed** – The clerk reported the following to the council:

- Allotment committee – the clerk is to write to tenants again asking if they would like to set this up and take ownership of the equipment.
- Email addresses – ERYC are seeing if they can get a bulk subscription to .gov email addresses, therefore new emails will not be set up until we hear back from them regarding this.
- Lease of land – resident has confirmed he would like to lease the land next to his house, near the allotments. Agreed to measure up and put this in place, mirroring the allotment fee prices.

93/25 **WARD COUNCILLOR UPDATE** – No update.

94/25 **PARISH COUNCILLOR UPDATE**

- Cllr Linfoot explained where the bulbs the council purchased had been planted and the plans for other suitable locations to plant the remainder of the bulbs.
- Cllr Watson gave feedback on his playground training from ERNLCCA. This covered aspects such as health and safety, maintenance, companies that provide equipment and where to access grants. The council decided we needed to ask the community what they would like, if anything, and a survey will be conducted before we proceed.

95/25 **VICTORY HALL UPDATE** – It was noted that the Village Hall are happy that all aspects of the community such as the Parish Council, Pub and the Church are starting to work together. Christmas events were discussed. The success of the Village Hall’s film nights and the bookings they have brought was noted, funding for this runs out in January so Cllr Linfoot agreed to help look at other funding to continue the momentum.

96/25 **CORRESPONDENCE – Resolved** – i) that the following correspondence should be received by the Council:

- i. ERNLLCA – September Newsletter
- ii. PWLB – Loan Repayment Notice
- iii. ERYC – Email Addresses
- iv. ERNLLCA – Eden Project, the big lunch
- v. ERNLLCA – Domestic Violence Abuse Partnership meeting slides
- vi. ERNLLCA – Allotment training
- vii. ERNLLCA – Notice around memorial maintenance
- viii. ERNLLCA – October Newsletter
- ix. Resident – lease agreement
- x. G H Fillingham – ground maintenance contact
- xi. Zurich – insurance policy renewal

97/25 **TO APPROVE THE SCHEDULE OF ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – Resolved** – The accounts were approved.

98 /25 **TO RECEIVE AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE 28<sup>th</sup> JAN**

- Set the precepts for 2026/27.

99/25 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS – Resolved**

- Printer – the clerk is to use a personal printer and look into getting the current one serviced/replaced.
- Bench down Jubilee Avenue is broken and unsafe – clerk to report to street scene.
- Poppies and Soldiers, 20 of each to be purchased from the Royal British Legion.
- Find out where the portrait of the King is, as it was given to ERYC on long term loan.

100/25 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING - Resolved** – that the date of the next meeting of the Parish Council would be 7pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

**SIGNED:**

**DATE:**

**LAXTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**7pm 17th December 2025**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Goulden (Chair), Watson (Vice Chair), Huntley, Linfoot and S Yarrow.

Clerk: Poppy Hunt

101/25 **APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE** – Received from Cllr M Yarrow and Cllr Moore.

101/25 **DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS** – There were no declarations of interest.

102 /25 **SETTING PRECEPTS FOR 2026/2027 – Resolved** – After reviewing last years expenses and the budget set for next year, the council have decided to keep the precept the same as last year. There was a discussion that by keeping this the same, it would mean the council will also have to use some of the reserves. The council wish to keep costs as low as possible, but it was noted that next year, there may have to be a price increase due to the remaining balance on the Village Hall roof repairs loan that has two years left. The council will do everything in their power to prevent this.

**SIGNED:**

**DATE:**

## Laxton Parish Council Action Log

Action	Status	Lead	Update
Check status of the Cotness Footbridge Bridge.	Ongoing	Clerk	ERYC /Landowner update meeting - W/B 21 November 2023. Outcome not yet clear but getting closer.
Check expected repair time of bridge at Skelton footpath.	Ongoing	Clerk	Badger Sett holding up works. 14/10 update - New bridge required, but badger sett underneath the footings and the placement site and so consultation with Natural England required / underway. Clerk asked Kiplin PC whether they have had update.
Review provision of equipment at the Allotment Gardens	Ongoing	Clerk	Letter to be sent.
Councillor Email Addresses	Complete	Clerk	Councillors now have access to their new email addresses.
Convene a playground committee meeting with Councillor Watson as the Parish Council's representative.	Ongoing	Clerk	Cllr Watson and Cllr Linfoot to look into funding & conduct survey to see demand in the parish.
Road Slippage	Ongoing	Clerk	Reported to ERYC, who will endeavor to address in 25/26
To finalise lease for land near allotments	Ongoing	Clerk	Measurements and photographs taken - Clerk to write lease agreement.
Email addresses - new councillors	Ongoing	Clerk	To review options from East Riding

## Laxton Parish Council Correspondence Record

**15<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

The Clerk will circulate correspondence when considered appropriate. If Councillors would like to see a copy of correspondence that has not been circulated, please notify the Clerk on [clerk@laxtonpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@laxtonpc.org.uk) or contact 07354601672.

From	Purpose of Correspondence
Safe Communities	Safe Communities data for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025.
Emergency Planning	<p>Since October 2025, there have been 38 confirmed cases of high pathogenicity H5N1 Avian Influenza in England, including one in <b>Little Kelk</b> near Driffield in the East Riding.</p> <p>You can view all active cases and disease control zones on the <a href="#">DEFRA Avian Influenza Interactive Map</a> and find the official declarations at <a href="http://www.gov.uk/animal-disease-cases-england">www.gov.uk/animal-disease-cases-england</a>.</p> <p>An <a href="#">Avian Influenza Prevention Zone</a> (AIPZ) is in place across England, including mandatory housing measures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flocks of any species of more than 50 captive birds.</li> <li>• Flocks of less than 50 captive birds if their eggs, poultry products or live birds are sold or given away. (These birds are defined as poultry in the declaration)</li> </ul>
ERNLLCA	November Newsletter
ERNLLCA	<p>Councils have a duty with regards to Health &amp; Safety. Your council must risk assess and decide on ways of mitigating any risk. One of the ways is to provide training for staff. We are able provide some basic training through an agreement with NALC for their Online Nimble courses. The cost is £14 plus VAT per person. If your council would like to register for any training then please get in touch. The latest newsletter contains some information focussing on H&amp;S from the recent IOSH training.</p>
ERYC	Confirmation of report – damaged bench.

Electoral Services	Updated electoral register.
ERYC	Precept guidance & confirmation of received set precept forms from the council.
ERYC SMARTICT	Information on email solutions.
ERNLLCA	Information on email solutions.
ERNLLCA	December Newsletter
Finding Fitness	Play Ground Grants & Funding
ERNLLCA	January Newsletter

Laxton Parish Council

Accounts for Payment – DEC / JAN 2025

**Payments made to be noted**

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Total £</b>
Tesco Mobile	Clerk Contract	21
Poppy Hunt	Printer - Argos	79.73
Victory Hall	Rent	175

**Receipts to be noted**

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Total £</b>
ERYC	VE Day Grant	480

**Payments to be Authorised**

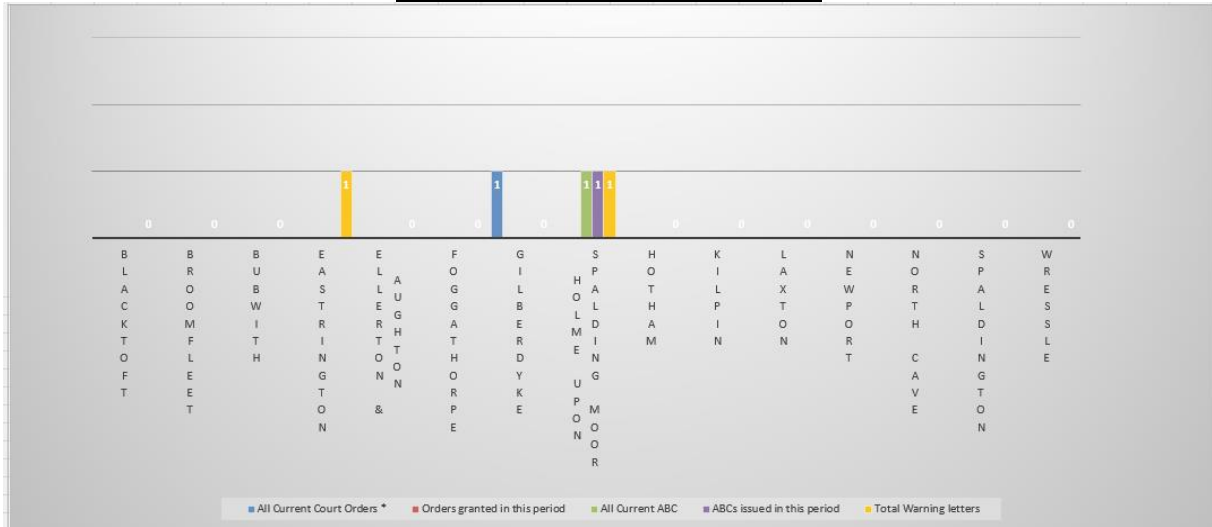
<b>Payee</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Total £</b>
Poppy Hunt	Dec and Jan	232.6
HMRC	Dec and Jan	41.2

# Howdenshire

Six month data represents 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025

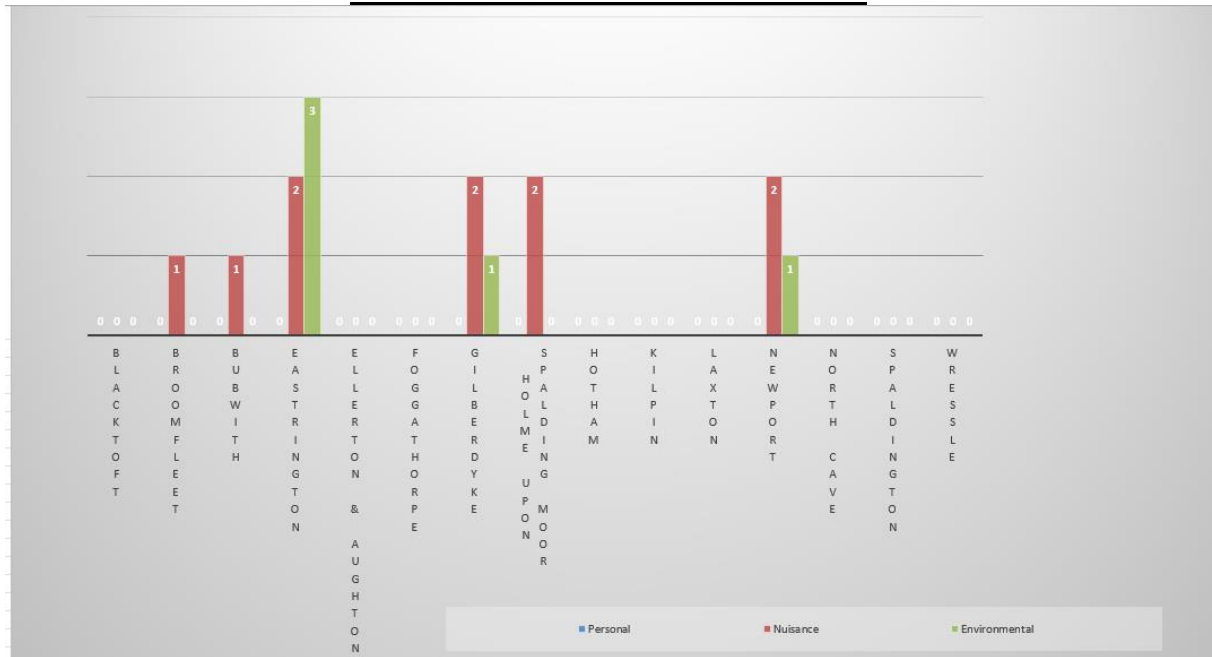
## Breakdown by Parish and Town Council area

### Interventions to Tackle ASB



\*Court Orders include ASBOs, Criminal Behaviour Orders and Civil Injunctions

### Calls for Service to the ASB Team

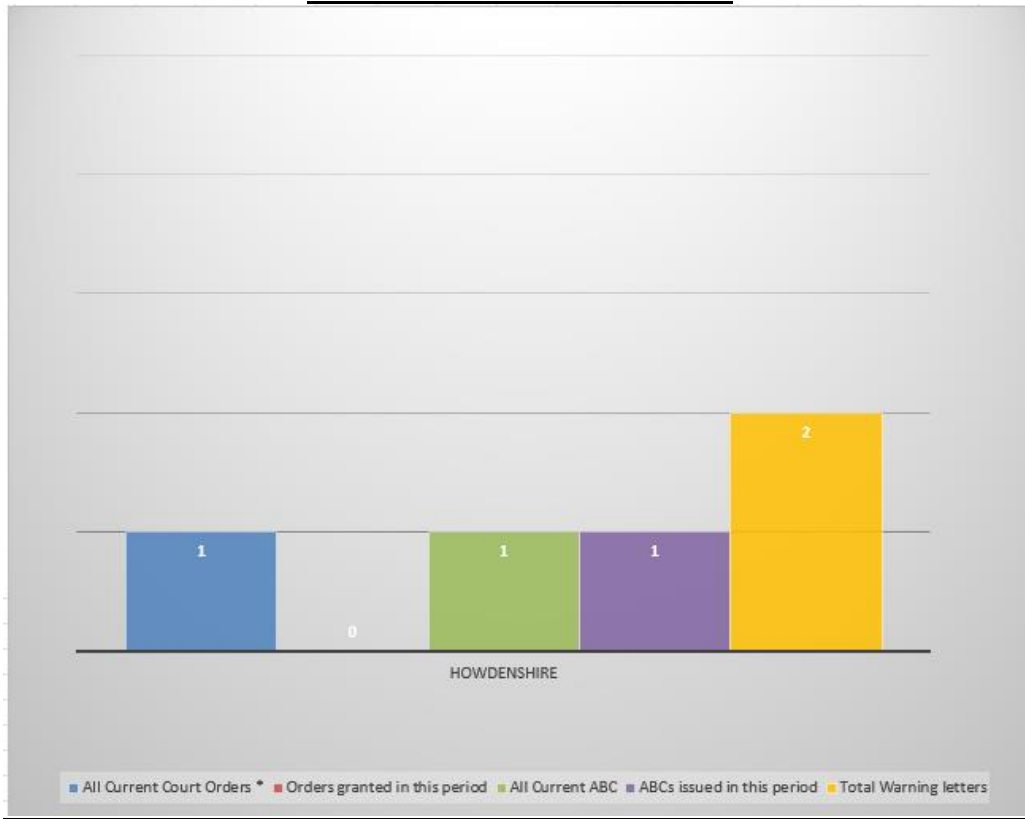


## Howdenshire

Six month data represents 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025

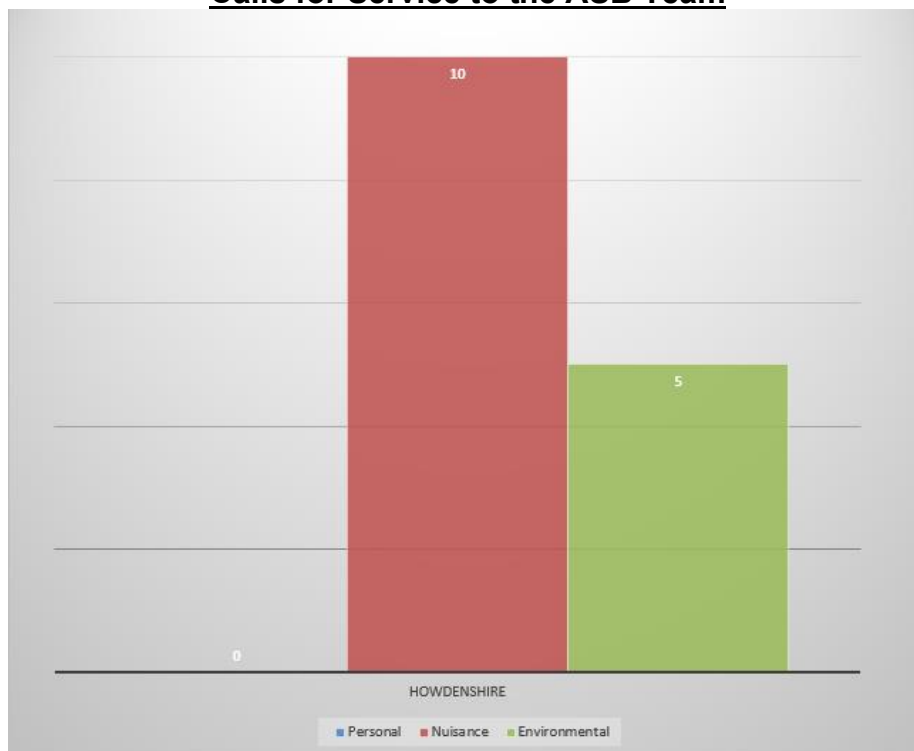
### Breakdown by Ward

#### Interventions to Tackle ASB



\*Court Orders include ASBOs, Criminal Behaviour Orders and Civil Injunctions

#### Calls for Service to the ASB Team





# Avian Influenza Prevention Zone with housing

An Avian Influenza Prevention Zone with mandatory housing is in place in this area

**If you:**

- **keep more than 50 birds or**
- **sell or give away eggs**

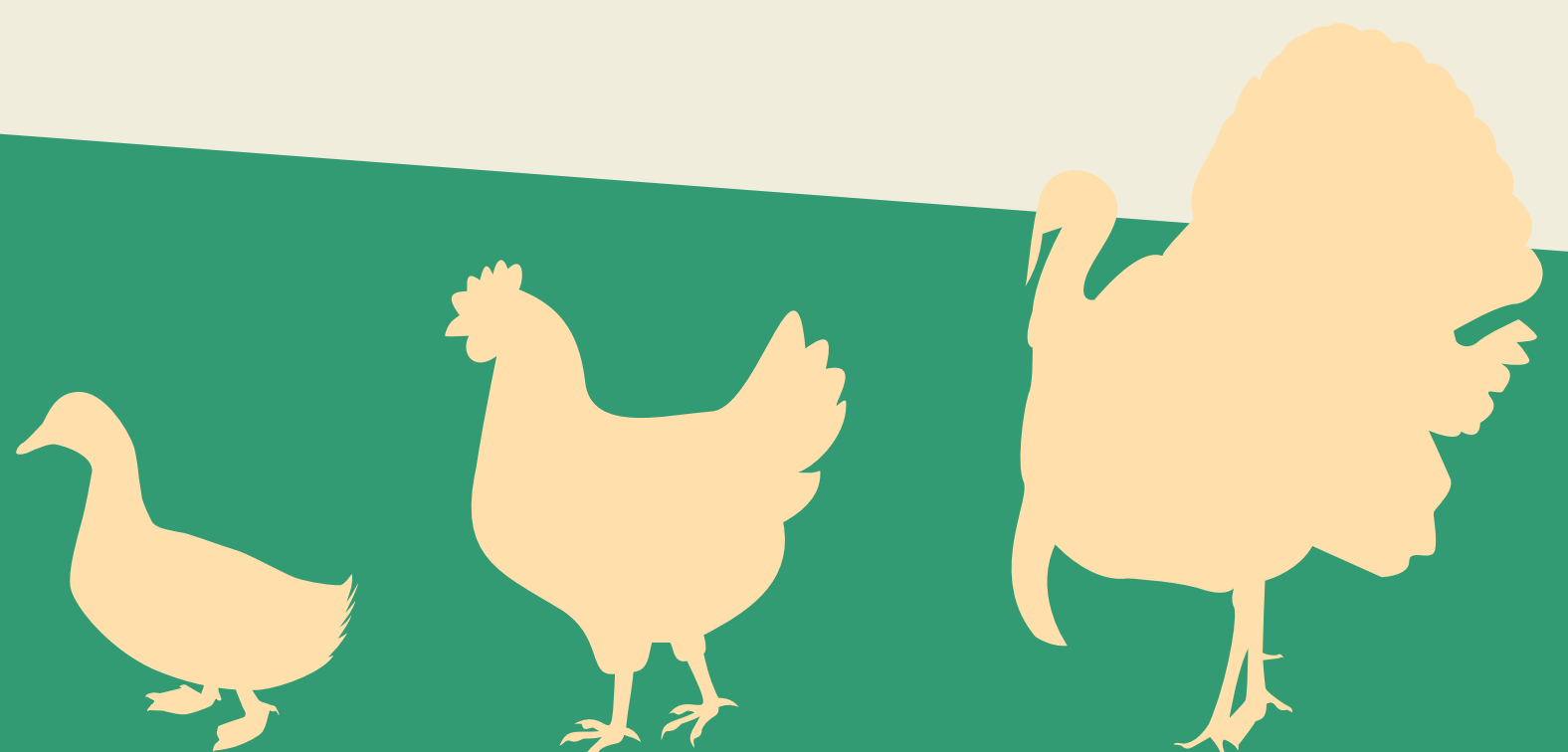
**you must house your birds and practice strict biosecurity to minimise the risk of them becoming infected with Avian Influenza.**

If you suspect bird flu in poultry or other captive birds, you must report it to APHA immediately by calling **03000 200 301**.

**Check [GOV.UK/birdflu](https://www.gov.uk/birdflu) for further information.**



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency





# November 2025 Newsletter

IOSH – Institution of Occupational Safety and Health



Recently, clerks and councillors undertook IOSH training delivered by WorkNest. It was an extremely useful day, reinforcing the importance of effective health and safety management across the parish and town council network.

Councils provide a wide range of services—such as playgrounds, cemeteries, open spaces, public buildings, water systems (including legionella control), and allotments—all of which require appropriate risk assessments and ongoing maintenance. Councils also have legal responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957.

It is essential to have a robust system in place for managing health and safety, including thorough record-keeping of inspections and maintenance. This not only ensures legal compliance but also protects councils in relation to insurance policies, which may not pay out if adequate procedures and records are lacking.

Please remember that small councils are not exempt. While it is only mandatory for workplaces with more than five employees to have a written health and safety policy, those with fewer than five staff must still have appropriate measures in place. Therefore, it is best practice for all councils—regardless of size—to adopt a formal health and safety policy.

Please find below a list of useful documents. A pre-recorded webinar on H&S will be released soon.

[Key documents for the management of Health & Safety \(H&S\)](#)

[Guide to Completing Risk Assessments – G](#)

[Template Risk Assessment](#)

[Template Safe System of Work](#)

[Template Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Template Incident \(accident\) Log](#)

[Health & Safety general information](#)

[H&S Contractors and Volunteers](#)

[Preparing for the Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Act 2025](#)

[Webinar Contractor Management with Brian Brookes Clear Councils](#)

[Webinar Insurance & Indemnity Limits Explained with Brian Brookes Clear Councils](#)

[Webinar Accident Investigation with Brian Brookes Clear Councils](#)

## NALC legal advice



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### *Can a parish or town council lend money to individuals or unincorporated bodies?*

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Sometimes councils ask if they can lend money to a third party, for example, a local community group. The answer is to proceed with caution. Lending money to individuals (including individuals who are trustees or members of unincorporated clubs) is a regulated activity under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and is also covered by the Consumer Credit Act 1974. Anyone lending in this way is likely to need to be registered with and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (although it is likely to be exempt from regulation if it is interest-free). Other considerations are the importance of having a written loan agreement, the council being satisfied with the persons or bodies requesting a loan and that they are clear who they are lending to.



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### *Can a parish or town council purchase gifts to recognise the achievements of local people?*

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One council wanted to purchase gifts for two local people to recognise them for achievements in representing their country in sport. The council doesn't have the general power of competence and would be unable to use section 137 of the Local Government Act

1972 because the gifts would be for individuals. NALC suggested Section 249 of the 1972 Act (honorary titles). Section 249 (5) provides that a relevant authority may admit to be honorary freemen or honorary freewomen of the place or area for which it is the authority: (a) persons of distinction, and (b) persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area. Subsection (9) says that a relevant authority may spend such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person on whom the authority has conferred the title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman under Subsection (5). NALC provides an [advice note on honorary titles and officers of dignity](#) contains further guidance.

## Assertion 10



### [Cloudy IT: Self-audit tool](#)

One day, as with all new things, Assertion 10 will be old news and we'll all be adept at WCAG 2.2 AA compliance or whatever future version we find ourselves navigating. But until then, we need all the help we can get. We know data protection is important, we want to make our websites an enjoyable and satisfactory experience for all visitors, and we want to ensure our councils are cyber secure. But let's be honest, this is a big ask for many councils. Cloudy IT can hopefully take some of the pressure off. They have developed a free, two-minute self-audit tool to assess your council's compliance with this new assertion. [Visit Cyber Security Audit for Councils | CloudyIT to start your audit.](#)

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### *IT Policy*

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Paragraph 1.54 of the Practitioners' Guide 2025 states:

All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must have an IT policy. This explains how everyone - clerks, members and other staff - should conduct authority business in a secure

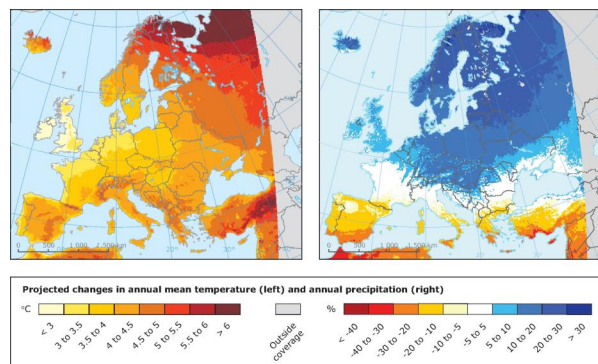
and legal way when using IT equipment and software. This relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment.

This template policy helps councils 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.

### Template IT Policy

## Climate change



NALC's AGM placed the climate emergency firmly at the centre stage, highlighting the growing role of parish and town councils in leading local action and strengthening national momentum behind the transition to net zero. The keynote presentation from Simon Oldridge, the lead organiser of the National Emergency Briefing, set out stark warnings about the accelerating climate and nature crisis. Please view ERNLLCA resources on [Governance Advice | ERNLLCA](#)

## Proper practices consultation

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) have [launched a new joint consultation to gather views on the proper practices](#) that guide how smaller authorities are governed and manage their finances. SAPPP and CIPFA want to hear from councillors, clerks, auditors and anyone with an interest in local governance, particularly on how accounts are presented and internal auditor competency. The consultation closes on 2 January 2026.

## NALC urge government to make standards reforms

NALC have [urged the government to act quickly in legislating for the reforms in its response to the consultation on standards and conduct](#) in local government. The government has accepted key recommendations NALC made earlier in the year, such as a mandatory national code of conduct, requiring councillor co-operation in misconduct investigations, restoring meaningful sanctions (including suspension and disqualification of repeat offenders), and reinstating standards committees with independent members.

However, NALC warned that further delay would risk undermining public confidence in local democracy and the success of devolution. Without timely change, parish and town councils may continue to struggle to address issues such as bullying and harassment, deterring candidates and eroding leadership in local government. They will continue to engage with the government on taking these reforms forward.

## Public Conveniences Survey



The British Toilet Association to [launch a national survey to find out parish and town councils' experiences with public conveniences](#) they currently manage or may manage in the future. The survey aims to understand the current situation particularly around liability transfers, limited financial resources, and the broader context of local government

reorganisation across England. Please take some time to [complete the survey](#) by 14 January 2026 and note that each council should submit only one response.

## Civility and Respect

The [national network](#) for women councillors heard from Dr Hannah Phillips, the respectful politics policy manager at The Jo Cox Foundation, who spoke about [how to address the problem of violence, abuse, harassment, and intimidation](#) toward elected representatives on all levels of government across the UK. You can visit their website to [learn more about their Respectful Politics work](#).

HR news provided by Chris Moses



*1 - Retention of Parish Council Property by Ex-Employees*

Clerks who work from home will no doubt keep a lot of confidential and/or important information, which the Council needs to be able to operate, at their home.

Should the employment relationship break down, and the Council are unable to have access to this information, it can result in upheaval. At this point a Council may need to get legal advice on how to try and retrieve its assets.

An ex-Employee's continued possession of the Council's documents, correspondence, and bank access materials is unlawful.

- These items are Council property, not personal property.
- By retaining them as leverage against the Council, the ex-Employee may be committing civil conversion (wrongful interference with property).
- Depending on the nature of what they are withholding (particularly if it includes login credentials or financial information), there may also be potential criminal implications, such as theft or unauthorised access under the Computer Misuse Act 1990. However this one is difficult to pursue and the Police are generally not interested.

The Council should make clear in writing to the ex-Employee that the Parish Council's documents, property and data must be returned immediately. Retention of these materials without authority constitutes wrongful interference with Council property and may be reported to the Police if not resolved promptly.

### Steps to Try and Resolve

#### Step 1 — Formal Letter Before Action

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*At this point a Council may need to get legal advice on how to try and retrieve its assets.*

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The Council could ask its Solicitor to send a formal written demand to the ex-Employee (by email and recorded delivery), stating:

- They must return all Council property and documents within 7 days.
- Failure to comply will result in:
  - A civil claim for recovery of property and/or damages, and
  - Referral to the police regarding potential offences relating to retention of property and unauthorised access to Council systems.

#### Step 2 — Civil Recovery (Small Claims or County Court)

If informal attempts fail, the PC may:

- Apply for a court order for the return of property (conversion claim), or
- Claim damages for any loss caused by his refusal.

Given the limited financial value, this would usually fall within the Small Claims Track of the County Court.

#### Step 3 — Data Protection

If the retained materials include any personal data, this could also represent a data protection breach under the UK GDPR legislation.

- The Council, as Data Controller, remains responsible.
- Report to the ICO if the risk to data subjects is significant.
- Include this point in the letter to emphasise the seriousness of the situation.

Other options can include retaining notice pay if the Employment Contract entitles the Council to do so until assets are returned. It is essential for the Contract to contain this

clause and for the Employee to have signed it. Without this clause the Employee may be able to pursue a claim at the Employment Tribunal for Unlawful Deductions from Pay.

Another way of avoiding the problem altogether is for essential information to be stored on a cloud based memory facility, with the Clerk, Chair and representatives of key committees holding the password.

## Statutory Pay Rates from April 2025

### **Minimum Wage from April 2025**

Workers aged 21 and over (National Living Wage) £12.21

Workers aged 18 – 20 £10.00

Workers under 18, Apprentices under 19, or over 19 in first year £7.55

## M365 Tenant License

	Charge
Includes: Teams, Email (Outlook), OneDrive and Office 365, OneDrive (Including backup)	(plus VAT)
Option 1:	
<b>M365 Business Basic</b>	£5.75 per month per user
Office online	£69 per year per user (including management charge)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identity and access management</li><li>• Web and mobile versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook</li><li>• Chat, call, and video conference with Microsoft Teams</li><li>• 1 TB of cloud storage per user</li><li>• AI chat experience with web grounding, writing assistance, data analysis, and access to agents</li><li>• Automatic spam and malware filtering</li></ul>	
Option 2:	
<b>M365 Business Standard</b>	£12 per month per user
Installed version of Office (Desktop)	£144 per year per user (including management charge)
<b>Everything in Business Basic, plus:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Desktop, web, and mobile versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and other apps</li><li>• Webinars with attendee registration and reporting</li><li>• Collaborative workspaces to cocreate using Microsoft Loop</li><li>• Video editing and design tools with Microsoft Clipchamp</li></ul>	

## Domain Hosting

(.gov.uk email domain and link to existing or new website)

Application Registration fee (Central Govt)	£10 (one off charge)
Hosting Domain Annual fee	£199 per annum

<b>New Website Design</b>	Custom Package (Specification attached)	£575 Custom Package Setup charge (one off charge)
Schools-On Line <a href="#">Schools-Online - Home Page</a>		£325 per annum ERYC SmartICT support

<b>ERYC SmartICT support</b>	Domain Host application process Onboarding Support IT consultation/support End user device support	Remote and telephone support £750 per annum per Parish (up to 5 users)* *Additional users charged £75 per user per annum  On-site visit if required £175 per visit
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**ER Support : Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm (Excluding Bank holidays)**

[MyParishCouncil](#) support well over 100 Parish and Town councils with compliant websites, email and domain reg (which we do via 20i to ensure Assertion 10 compliance)

Our aims are simple

1. to provide compliant solutions
2. to keep the template we provide in-line with government guidelines
3. to make the back end as simple as possible for clerks to use as they are not all html experts
4. to ensure there is a complete set of council tools as well as community engagement tools available for the clerk.
5. to ensure [best value package](#) depending on the size of the council.

## Price and Feature Comparison

Features by Package	Essentials Package £9.99 p/m £119.88 p/a	Economy Package £13 p/m £156 p/a	Standard Package £26 p/m £312 p/a	Premium Package £48 p/m £576 p/a
<b>Compliance Features</b>				
.gov domain	Inc 1st Year	Inc 1st Year	Inc 1st Year	Included
Number of secure gov email	1	10	20	50
Agendas for Meetings	Included	Included	Included	Included
Council Members Info	Included	Included	Included	Included
Financials	Included	Included	Included	Included

<b>Features by Package</b>	<b>Essentials Package</b> £9.99 p/m £119.88 p/a	<b>Economy Package</b> £13 p/m £156 p/a	<b>Standard Package</b> £26 p/m £312 p/a	<b>Premium Package</b> £48 p/m £576 p/a
Minutes	Included	Included	Included	Included
Policies	Included	Included	Included	Included
WCAG Compliance	Included	Included	Included	Included
Royal Bridge Protocol	Included	Included	Included	Included

#### **Community Awareness Features**

Emergency Notice	Included	Included	Included	Included
Local Amenities	X	Included	Included	Included
Carousel Slides	Included	Included	Included	Included
FAQs	Included	Included	Included	Included
Local History	X	Included	Included	Included
Image Gallery	X	Included	Included	Included
Local Attractions	X	Included	Included	Included
Fix My Street Feeds	X	Included	Included	Included
Secure Members Area	X	Included	Included	Included

Features by Package	Essentials Package £9.99 p/m £119.88 p/a	Economy Package £13 p/m £156 p/a	Standard Package £26 p/m £312 p/a	Premium Package £48 p/m £576 p/a
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### Community Engagement Features

Calendar	Included	Included	Included	Included
Events	Included	Included	Included	Included
Helper Bot	Included	Included	Included	Included
News	Included	Included	Included	Included
Notices	Included	Included	Included	Included
Blogs	X	Included	Included	Included
Facebook Integration	X	Included	Included	Included

### Training & Support

Phone Support	X	X	Included	Included
Online Ticket Support	Included	Included	Included	Included
Kick Start Training	X	Included	Included	Included
YouTube & Web Training	Included	Included	Included	Included
Weekly Virtual Q&A	Included	Included	Included	Included

Features by Package	Essentials Package £9.99 p/m £119.88 p/a	Economy Package £13 p/m £156 p/a	Standard Package £26 p/m £312 p/a	Premium Package £48 p/m £576 p/a
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**Extras & Options**

Google Analytics Reports	X	Included	Included	Included
Quarterly Security Scan	X	Included	Included	Included
Monthly Security Scan	X	Included	Included	Included
Virtual Clerk Service	X	X	X	Included
Planning Applications (manual)	Included	Included	Included	Included
Planning Applications (auto)	(option £1 per month)	(option £1 per month)	(option £1 per month)	Included
Virtual Area Tour	X	Included	Included	Included
Business Directory	X	Included	Included	Included



# December 2025 Newsletter

## Christmas Office Closure

The last working day in the ERNLLCA office will be the 23rd December. The office will be closed from the 24th December and reopen on Monday 5th January.



Please use [enquiries@ernllca.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ernllca.gov.uk) to ensure that all emails are received and responded to as soon as possible.



**ERNLCA**

East Riding & Northern Lincolnshire  
Local Councils Association

## Christmas Training & SLCC event



Thank you to those that could join us for our Christmas Clerk's training event. A great opportunity for clerks and office staff to learn and network.

## Assertion 10

In 2025 Assertion 10 was added to proper practices ([Practitioners' Guide 2025](#)) for smaller authorities “to bring digital and data management to the fore”

Assertion 10 will appear for the first time in Section 1 of the 2025/26 AGAR. The biggest impact will most likely be on Clerks who previously used the same email account for multiple councils.

Going forward you can't use any free accounts such as Gmail or Hotmail. It will need to be a council owned domain. The recommended is .gov.uk, but .org.uk, .com, .co.uk are acceptable. It doesn't mention councillors' emails, but we would advise they have a corporate email address. For example:

- [cllr.bloggs@anywhereparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.bloggs@anywhereparishcouncil.gov.uk)
- [cllr.bloggs@anywhereparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:cllr.bloggs@anywhereparishcouncil.org.uk)

1.48 All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must meet legal requirements for all existing websites regardless of what domain is being used (org.com.gov).

1.49 All websites must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

[SLCC guide](#)

1.50 All websites must include published documentation as specified in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ([publication scheme](#)) and the Transparency code ([Less than £25k turnover/ More than £200k gross annual income or expenditure](#))

1.51 All smaller authorities must follow both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.

1.54 All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must also have an IT policy. [NALC IT Policy template](#)

NALC Assertion 10 hub: <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/assertion-10-hub.html>

Simple overview of the domain and website matters by Aubergine [Assertion 10 \(SAPPP 2025\) - a simple explanation for parish & town councils | Aubergine](#)

Simple overview of the data protection issues

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/breakthrough-communications-what-assertion-10-means-for-data-protection-and-why-councils-should-act-now.html>

Cloudy IT free, two-minute self-audit cyber security tool Visit Cyber Security Audit for Councils | [CloudyIT to start your audit](#)

## Upcoming Training



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*Free training*

*Our free Being a Good Councillor, Chairs Skills and Clerk Induction training are now available to book. Various dates and times.*

[Events | ERNLLCA](#)

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There are a number of webinars provided by Aubergine that are free and cover Assertion 10, website accessibility and how to make accessible word documents.

### [Training courses now available to book](#)

ERNLLCA are also offering e-learning courses that cover a wide range of topics and are £14 per person plus VAT per course.

### [Health & Safety](#)

### [Data & Information](#)

### [HR & Working with others](#)

## Homeworking Tax Allowance changes

### **Update from Chris Moses**

The Budget confirms that from 6 April 2026 the government will remove the income-tax deduction for non-reimbursed homeworking expenses (e.g. additional household utility costs, business telephone calls) for employees required to work from home.

The existing relief (often claimed via a £6/week flat rate) that many home-workers have used will be abolished.

Importantly: the change does not prevent employers from reimbursing homeworking costs — employers *can* still reimburse eligible costs (or pay a homeworking allowance) tax-free, provided that the reimbursement meets the criteria.

Alongside that, the Budget extends certain “workplace benefits relief” exemptions: from 6 April 2026, reimbursements for items such as homeworking equipment (plus eye-tests, flu vaccinations) will qualify as tax- and NIC-free.

In short: the option for employees to claim homeworking costs via their personal tax return or via tax code is being removed — but employers can still reimburse costs, without tax or NIC liability.

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### *What this means for town / parish councils & clerks*

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For many clerks working from home, especially where councils have not reimbursed household costs but the clerk claimed via tax code, this means:

From 6 April 2026, such claims will no longer be available.

If nothing changes, the clerk’s take-home pay will reduce (relative to previous years) because they will effectively absorb the extra household costs themselves.

If councils want to maintain support for clerks working from home, they need to put in place a tax-free reimbursement or a bona fide homeworking allowance (or equivalent) before that date — rather than relying on clerks making claims via their tax code.

Such reimbursements must follow the rules to be tax- and NIC-free (i.e., treated as employer reimbursements, not taxable pay).

For councils this represents a policy decision but also a practical imperative: without some form of reimbursement, clerks may be worse off, and there could be morale, retention or equity issues (especially given increasing homeworking costs).

## ERNLLCA and NALC membership fees for 2026-2027

The ERNLLCA Executive Committee have approved the membership fees for the next financial year.

A Member Council's membership fees are broken down into two sections:

1. ERNLLCA membership fee
2. National Association of Local Councils (NALC) association fee

We are working hard to keep any increase for our 185 Member Councils as low as possible. For the next financial year, the ERNLLCA membership fee will increase by 1%.

NALC fees are not set locally and are instead determined at a national level. NALC have increased their association fee from 8.34 pence to 8.6 pence per elector. It will be capped at £2,216 for local councils with a very large electorate.

We have not yet worked out the membership fees for each Member Council. The total increase should however be somewhere in the region of 1%-2.5% for most.

It is currently difficult to be precise about the percentage increase for each individual Member Council. The amount will differ because of changes in the electorate amongst other factors.

You do not need to do anything at the moment.

We will email Member Councils around the first week of April with an invoice. This will inform your local council of its membership fee.

**Please don't pay your ERNLLCA membership fees before you have received the invoice from our office.**

## HR News

Advice by Chris Moses - Personnel Advice & Solutions Ltd



### Forthcoming Legal Changes which will require amendments to Employment Contracts **April 2026**

Key measures planned for April 2026 include:

- 'Day 1' maternity, paternity, shared parental leave and unpaid parental leave (i.e., rights from first day of employment). For example, currently a mother has to have been employed for 26 weeks at week 25 of her pregnancy to qualify for statutory payments, this will no longer apply.
- Removing the Lower Earnings Limit (LEL) and waiting-period for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) — meaning SSP from day one rather than waiting 4 days. Anyone who earns under £125 per week currently doesn't qualify. From April they will be entitled to 80% of their normal pay if it is below £125 per week, and this will be paid from day one of their sick leave.
- Doubling the maximum period of the protective award for collective redundancy failures.
- Establishment of the new Fair Work Agency (or framework for it) to enforce rights. The Employment Rights Act 2025 (currently the Employment Rights Bill) will create the Fair Work Agency, who will have a number of statutory powers:
- The ability to bring Employment Tribunal claims on behalf of workers – even if they don't want to claim themselves.
- The power to offer legal assistance for employment cases, with the Fair Work Agency's costs potentially recoverable from Companies if the claim succeeds.
- The authority to pursue Companies for unpaid holiday pay and sick pay, and impose financial penalties on top which go straight to the government.
- Companies who previously relied on Employee reluctance to claim may now find the Fair Work Agency stepping in instead.

#### **Proposed powers of the Fair Work Agency:**

- **Entry to Company Premises:** FWA officers are authorized to enter business premises to examine documents, require individuals to produce records, and inspect equipment used for processing or storing information. They also have the authority to seize relevant documents during their investigations.
- **Entry to Private Dwellings:** In certain circumstances, FWA officers may enter private residences of Company Officers if Company work activity is conducted at the premises. To do so, they must obtain a court warrant, demonstrating reasonable grounds for entry. This measure acknowledges the increasing prevalence of home-working and aims to ensure compliance with employment laws in such settings.
- **Arrest Powers:** Enforcement officers will possess powers comparable to those of the police, including the ability to make arrests during investigations into Employment Law breaches.

## **October 2026**

A further wave of reforms is planned for October 2026.

- Some key changes here:
  - Prohibitions / restrictions on “fire and re-hire” practices.
  - New obligations on employers regarding sexual harassment (e.g., taking “all reasonable steps”, duty to prevent third-party harassment).
  - Time limits for Employment Tribunal claims to be extended (e.g., 6 months for many claims).
  - Strengthened trade union rights (employer must inform workers of right to join, union access rights, etc.).
  - Additional reforms in areas such as public sector outsourcing two-tier code, tipping law reform, etc.

## **2027 and beyond**

Some of the more significant reforms are slated for 2027 or later.

- Month 6 protection from unfair dismissal (i.e., removal of the 2-year qualifying period) for many employees.

- Rights for pregnant workers; regulation of umbrella companies; ending exploitative use of zero-hours contracts (ZHCs) and applying ZHC reforms to agency workers.
- Mandatory menopause action plans and gender pay gap outsourcing measure (voluntary from April 2026, more likely mandatory in 2027).

### Changes to the Employment Rights Bill

Following further debate between the Government and the House of Lords, the following changes have been made to new employment legislation which will come into effect over the next 18 months.

- Abandoning “day-one” unfair dismissal rights originally proposed by the Government. The Bill now proposes a reduction in the qualifying period for Unfair Dismissal claims from two years to six months.
- However it appears that Employers will still be able to extend Probation Periods up to 9 months, following the recruitment of new Employees.
- This repositioning was framed as a compromise to secure broader political and employer support for the Bill.
- Part of that support is the complete removal of the compensation cap for ordinary unfair dismissal — aligning it with discrimination and whistleblowing awards (i.e., no statutory cap). This means that anyone winning a claim for Unfair / Constructive Dismissal has the right to claim unlimited compensation.

### Guaranteed hours and zero/low-hours contracts

Provisions debated on requiring employers to offer guaranteed hours contracts Employees who have Zero Hours Contracts, such as Caretakers, Community Centre Staff, Litter Pickers and grounds staff, but work regular hours — reflecting average hours worked. This means that if a worker on a Zero Hours Contract, but expects to work regular hours each week, and the Employer provides them with regular hours, their contract needs to be replaced with a guaranteed minimum hours version.

### Statutory Pay Rates from April 2026

#### Minimum Wage from April 2026

Workers aged 21 and over (National Living Wage)	£12.71
Workers aged 18 – 20	£10.85
Workers under 18, apprentices under 19, or over 19 in first year	£8.00

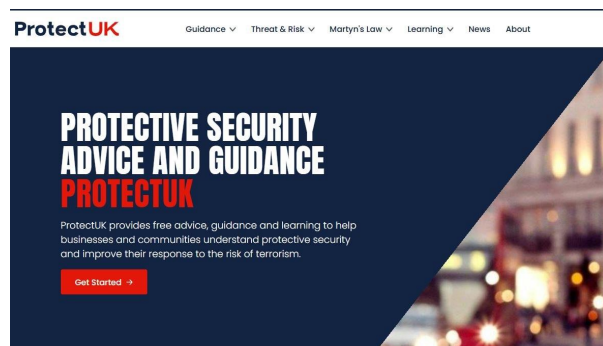


# January Newsletter 2026

Welcome back from the Christmas and New Year break. We hope you had a great time off. Lets hope 2026 is a fantastic New Year for us all. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

## Martyn's Law

Protect UK has produced some new advice notes regarding Martyn's Law. An [Overview](#) and [Myth Busters](#)



## National Recruitment Campaign

NALC has provided resources to help with promotion of and recruitment in the sector.

[Recruitment resources.](#)

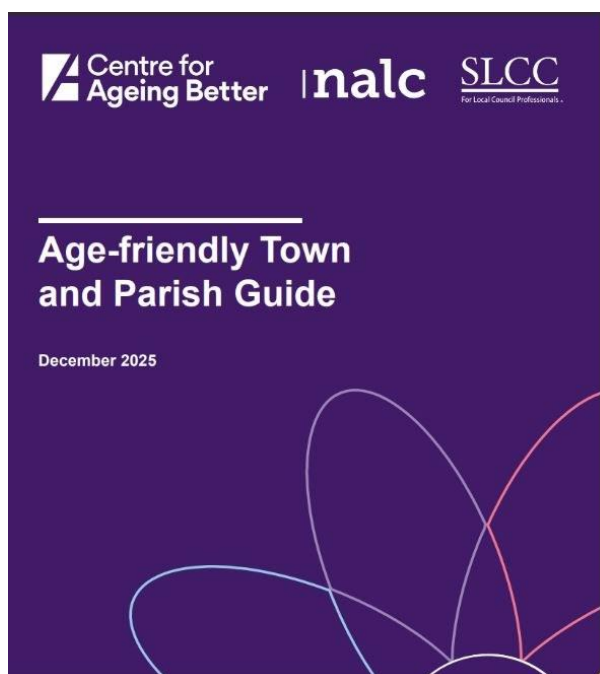


## Disciplinary Policy

There has been an update to the NALC disciplinary policy. You may wish to take a look at.

Please see the link to the policy [Disciplinary Policy](#)

## Age Friendly Town and Parishes

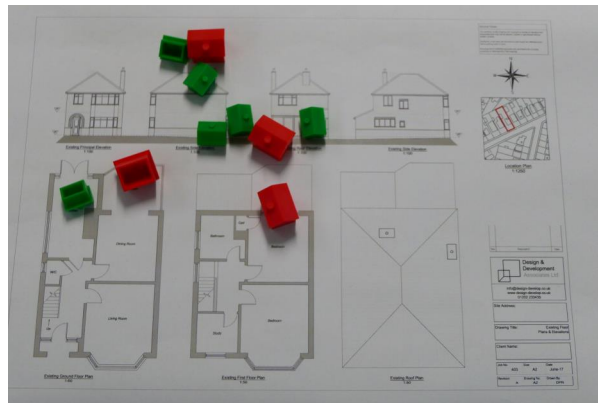


There is an age friendly town and parish guide that has recently been introduced with a free online event that shares how councils can improve life for older residents. The event will take place on the 29th January at 10am. For details and how to book please click on the following link [Age-friendly towns and parishes | Centre for Ageing Better.](#)

The guide can be seen here [Age-friendly-Town-and-Parish-Guide.pdf](#)

NALC provides a [Health and wellbeing](#) hub with lots of useful information in a councils journey to provide improved services for their local community.

## Planning



The government has published an updated [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) for its proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system.

Andrew Towler is leading a training session on the evening of 24th February at 6.30pm for further details and to book please use the following link [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system | ERNLLCA](#)

## NALC Free webinars to watch



The following cover a wide variety of topics from community engagement to biodiversity.

[Assertion 10 Made Simple: Strengthening governance and compliance](#)

[Staffing considerations following a community governance review](#)

[The Art of Communication: Navigating tough decisions](#)

[Planning for the Future: Navigating the new planning framework](#)

[Beyond the Precept: Exploring alternative income sources](#)

[Green Responsibilities: Navigating devolution in parks and open spaces](#)

[Is the fight for standards in local government a losing battle?](#)

[Engage, Lead, Resolve: Strengthening local connections](#)

[Navigating rural realities](#)

[Breaking the mould of local councils](#)

[Unleashing the power of local councils to tackle the climate emergency](#)

[The good, the bad, and the ugly of social media in the local council sector](#)

[Reconnecting communities through community transport](#)

## Procurement Thresholds from 1 January 2026

Councils must comply with the full rules of the Procurement Act 2023 where potential contracts have an estimated value (including VAT) of over: £207,720 (previously £214,904) for goods or services, or £5,193,000 (previously £5,372,609) for public works (construction). Where a contract will run for several years, it is the total (not annual) value that matters. PPN 023: 2026 Threshold Amounts (HTML) - GOV.UK

## Financial Services Compensation Scheme

The protection offered by the FSCS increased to £120,000 from December 2025. Not all councils are covered by the scheme, only “a small local authority with an annual budget of up to EUR 500,000” (about £430,589, using the required 3 July 2025 exchange rate). Not all deposits are covered. For example, Gilts are backed by the UK Government, money market funds spread their risk by placing deposits with many different banks and non-UK bank deposits are generally covered under a reciprocal agreement.

## Home Working Tax Change

Where a council does not pay staff a home working allowance, employees can currently claim tax relief (worth up to £62 a year for basic rate taxpayers) on their extra household costs. This tax relief will cease to be available for the 2026/27 tax year onwards. Income Tax: removal of the tax relief for additional homeworking expenses - GOV.UK There are no tax changes where councils pay staff a tax-free home working allowance of up to £26 a month.

## Communication & Compliance

The banner features the Breakthrough Communications logo in the top left corner. The main heading is "Tools, Training, Advice and Support" in blue, followed by the subtext "to help you communicate effectively and compliantly with your community." Below this is an illustration of a hand holding a sign that says "THEY'RE FREE!" with a yellow arrow pointing right. To the right of the sign are two buttons: a green one labeled "Free Resources" and a purple one labeled "Free Webinars".

Our communications and information compliance partners at Breakthrough Communications are sharing a series of New Year Communications and Compliance gifts to bring joy to your council's January. These free gifts are designed to help our parish and town councils engage more effectively, confidently and compliantly with their communities this January onwards.

Sign up now to unwrap your New Year Council Communication and Compliance gifts and set your council's new year resolutions up for success!

And here is a link to the sign up:

[https://forms.zohopublic.eu/breakthroughcommunications/form/StuffedChristmasStocking/formperma/NJ\\_DEXyhvc-WDXX\\_QXt9o9K4n0aMCxgn2EhSALz-TbQ](https://forms.zohopublic.eu/breakthroughcommunications/form/StuffedChristmasStocking/formperma/NJ_DEXyhvc-WDXX_QXt9o9K4n0aMCxgn2EhSALz-TbQ)

### Section 137 limit

**Section 137 expenditure limit** for parish and town councils in England for the 2026/27 financial year is increasing to £11.60 per elector, up from £11.10 in 2025/26.

### Latest Webinars from ERNLLCA

Health and safety – Risk assessment webinar for those that wish to understand their obligations for H&S and how to complete a risk assessment.

#### **Risk assessment webinar**

Role of the Chair - Understanding what the role of the chair is

#### **Role of the Chair**

## Upcoming Free training



### **Assertion 10 – preparing for AGAR 25/26 & beyond – Led by Aubergine**

What councils need to do to meet Assertion 10 requirements, including Domains, Emails, Website Accessibility, and IT Policies, helping councils stay compliant and operationally ready.

#### **Date**

19/01/2026

1:15 pm - 2:00 pm

### **Make Your Council Documents Accessible using MS Word – Led by Aubergine**

Tips and guidance for producing key documents such as agendas, minutes, and reports—and ensuring they are accessible to all members of your community.

#### **Date**

13/05/2026

1:45 pm - 2:30 pm

### **Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work – Led by Worknest**

New legislation requiring councillors and staff receive training on preventing sexual harassment, what it is and how to deal with it.

#### **Date**

18/06/2026

6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

### **What a Parish or Town Council Should Publish on Its Website – led by Aubergine**

Clear guidance & refresher on the legal requirements, best practices, and optional content councils need to publish on its website to improve accessibility, transparency, and engagement.

**Date**

16/07/2026

10:15 am - 11:00 am

**Web Accessibility Rules – WCAG 2.2AA Refresher – led by Aubergine**

Practical, day-to-day tips & techniques and tools to ensure your website is accessible and compliant with the latest standards.

18/09/2026

10:15 am - 11:00 am

To book onto any of these course please sign in and visit our events page [Events | ERNLLCA](#)

# Assertion 10 (SAPPP 2025):

## A simple explanation for parish and town councils

### Introduction

The Smaller Authorities' Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) has released the updated [2025 edition of the Practitioners' Guide](#), offering essential updates to support local councils and smaller authorities in managing governance and financial duties with greater clarity.

In addition to confirming councils must follow existing compliance (GDPR & DPA for security and privacy, FOI & Transparency Code for document publishing), the 2025 edition of the Practitioners' Guide states (Assertion 10: Digital and Data Compliance):

- Council clerks must operate from a generic (not person-specific) council-owned domain-based official email address.
- The website must continue to meet accessibility regulations (currently WCAG2.2AA).
- Councils must have an IT policy.

### Council-owned domain names

*(1.47) Email management. Every authority must have a generic email account hosted on an authority-owned domain, for example: clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abcparishcouncil.org.uk  
Not abcparishclerk@gmail.com or abcparishcouncil@outlook.com (which are free, non-council-owned services).*

**Free email services such as Gmail and Hotmail must no longer be used.**

### Why is this important?

- The Council does not own those free platforms or domain (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail etc).
- The data contained in it is not really yours.
- The Council has no legal rights over it.
- Getting access without the logins is impossible.
- Creates a GDPR exposures with FOI & SAR issues.
- No authenticity of message – anyone can set up a free email address!

## Council-owned domain names (continued)

### Which domain type should be used?

#### .gov.uk (recommended)

- It's the official domain for a Council.
- Elevated level of security.
- Improves compliance.
- Improves GDPR – and FOI & SAR situations.
- Added benefits and security services.
- More professional.
- Improved authenticity of message.
- Can only be used by authorised organisations.

#### .org.uk (acceptable)

- It's an acceptable UK-based domain for a Council.
- Elevated level of security above free emails.
- Helps with compliance.
- Improves GDPR – and FOI & SAR situations.
- Requires less scrutiny = less official than .gov.uk.

**You can also use** .com, .co.uk or other council-owned domain suffixes but not all are within the UK jurisdiction managed by Nominet.

### Best practice

- Claim your parish or town council .gov.uk address.
- Use it for matching email and website addresses. There are three naming options:
  - For parishes:** locationparishcouncil.gov.uk or location-pc.gov.uk or locationparish.gov.uk.
  - For towns:** locationtowncouncil.gov.uk & location-tc.gov.uk.
  - For community councils:** locationcommunitycouncil.gov.uk or location-cc.gov.uk.
- You CANNOT have location.gov.uk – these are reserved for central government (some authorities, nonetheless, acquired theirs before the rules were tightened).

## Website Accessibility Compliance

- The guidance is strangely silent on what other council staff and councillors must do in terms of email - but it is best practice for all those at the council to use the same domain-based email. And for all members to cease using personal email addresses.

*(1.49) All websites must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (where applicable).*

- All public sector bodies, including parish and town councils' websites must meet WCAG2.1AA standard since 2020.
- Regulations rose to WCAG2.2AA in October 2024.
- You must have a compliant website.
- Regardless of the domain type, SAPPP '25 & Public Sector Website laws require compliance.
- You must have an up-to-date and relevant Accessibility Statement.
- .gov.uk domains must not be used in a non-compliant way.
- Risks? Audit failure, withdrawal of your .gov.uk domain.

## IT Policy

*(1.54) All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must also have an IT policy. This explains how everyone – clerks, members and other staff – should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software. This relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment.*

As local authorities shift more of their operations online—emailing agendas, sharing sensitive documents, updating websites, and even engaging on social media—having clear digital protocols has become essential.

Without proper guidance, authorities risk:

- Data leaks from unsecured platforms (email, websites, shared files) or mishandled personal information.
- Lost communications when staff or councillors use personal accounts that are inaccessible when they leave.

## IT Policy (continued)

- Regulatory failures, such as non-compliance with accessibility laws or mishandling Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.
- Cybersecurity threats including phishing, malware, or compromised devices & email accounts.

A formal IT policy provides a simple, central document outlining how digital tools and information should be managed securely and professionally.

## Council IT Policy (with practical examples)

Here are some of the things you should consider go into your policy - and why each element matters:



### Purpose and Scope

Clearly define who the policy applies to:

- Councillors.
- Clerks.
- Contractors.
- Volunteers.

**Example:** "This policy covers all personnel using IT systems for council business, regardless of whether they are using council-owned or personal devices."



### Email Use Protocol

Require use of an official, generic council email (e.g. clerk@yourparishcouncil.gov.uk) for all correspondence on the council's own domain.

**Why?** If communications are tied to personal emails (e.g. helen.parishclerk@gmail.com) you risk losing access to records and violating GDPR if staff change.

- Establish permanent, shared email addresses.
- Prohibit email forwarding to private accounts.
- Outline password requirements and access control.



### Website and Accessibility Standards

Ensure the council website complies with WCAG 2.2 AA standards and publishes required content (minutes, AGAR, councillor information, etc.)

**Real-world risk:** A council failing to meet accessibility standards or omitting key

documents risks failing audit and losing their .gov.uk domain.

- Assign a named individual to maintain the site.
- Schedule regular audits for accessibility and link functionality.



### Data Protection Responsibilities

Reinforce the council's role as a Data Controller under GDPR.

**Example:** "No personal data should be stored unencrypted on personal devices or cloud platforms without council approval."

- Refer to the existing Data Protection Policy.
- Provide clear steps for managing FOI and subject access requests (SARs).



### Use of Council-Owned Devices

Outline expectations for those using council equipment.

**Example:** "Council laptops must not have software installed without prior consent."

- Specify ownership of devices and procedures when roles end.
- Provide guidance on requesting tech support or reporting issues.



### Cybersecurity Best Practices

Require anti-virus protection, regular updates, and two-factor authentication where possible.

**Example threat:** A councillor opens a phishing email from a spoofed HMRC address, inadvertently installing malware.

- Train staff to recognise suspicious emails.
- Ban password reuse across personal and council logins.
- Social Media and Communications.
- Set boundaries around public communication on platforms like Facebook or local forums.

**Example:** "Only the clerk or chair is authorised to post on the council's official social media pages."

- Clarify who can post, respond, or moderate online content.
- Define appropriate tone and messaging.
- Include guidelines for platforms like WhatsApp used for council business.



### Training and Review Cycle

Regular training ensures everyone understands their role in keeping the council secure.

**Example:** "Councillors and staff will complete annual refresher sessions on IT use and data protection."

- Define who is responsible for reviewing and updating the policy.
- Recommend annual reviews at a minimum.

### Common Pitfalls to Avoid

When drafting your IT policy, steer clear of the following:

- Overly technical language – Keep it accessible for all councillors.
- Redundancy – Don't replicate your Data Protection Policy; just link to it.
- Unrealistic rules – Avoid policies no one can reasonably follow (e.g. requiring weekly backups without the means to perform them).

## What councils should do next

### If you don't already have an IT policy in place:

- Use a template from your County Association, SLCC, or NALC as a starting point.
- Customise it to reflect your specific council setup and digital tools.
- Adopt the policy formally at a council meeting and record the decision in the minutes.
- Ensure training so all members understand their roles and responsibilities.

## Final word

### This is more than a paperwork exercise.

Following the Practitioners' Guide protects your council's data, maintains legal compliance, and supports good digital governance.

If you're unsure how to proceed, your internal auditor or support network is a good place to begin. Better to be proactive now than face challenges during the AGAR submission.



### This document was written by Mark Tomkins, 14 April 2025.

Mark Tomkins is the Founder and Creative Director of Aubergine, a specialist web and design agency established in 2002. With over 30 years in the creative and digital industry, Mark has been at the forefront of web accessibility and digital communication, particularly within the public sector. He is a champion of website accessibility, co-author of the NALC Website Accessibility & Publishing Guidebook, and a regular speaker on topics such as:

- Website accessibility compliance.
- .gov.uk domain registration and deployment.
- Best practice in council website design.
- Improving online visibility and search performance.
- Cyber security and GDPR compliance for councils.

Mark's webinars are known for their practical, plain-English advice, helping parish and town councils improve their digital presence, meet legal obligations, and better engage with their communities. His approach combines deep technical knowledge with a passion for inclusive design and communication.

In addition to his professional work, Mark is also a parish councillor, bringing real-world insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by local government bodies and is ILCA qualified.