



Lowestoft Town Council

Corporate Risk Management

Corporate Risk Management

Introduction

The Council introduced a Risk Management Policy in May 2017 and within this policy included risk assessment criteria and an initial risk register.

The Council has grown substantially over the past seven years, going from a staffing team of four to a team of 27 (on completion of current recruitment process) with an annual income of c.£1.4m to £6m+. This income includes substantial capital grants and loans to deliver a programme of major projects such as the refurbishment of the Town Hall (£10m) and Marina Theatre (£3.4m).

As a result of this growth and the multi-faceted programme of work now being pursued by the Council it is appropriate that Council review and update its

- Risk Management Policy
- Risk Assessment Criteria and Council's Appetite for Risk
- Risk Register

What is risk management?

Risk management is the on-going process of identifying the actual and potential risks that an organisation is facing, assessing the impact of these risks and putting in place actions (controls) intended to lessen (mitigate) the risk to an acceptable level. Council officers and members should work together to review the risk register on a regular basis – in the case of Lowestoft Town Council this review is via Full Council – recognising that risks are unlikely to be fully eliminated, but through robust and timely management, can be brought to within an acceptable level.

In line with the newly issued *Model Financial Regulations for Local Councils*, updated April 2024, NALC states:

- ***The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.***



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- *The Clerk / RFO shall prepare for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.*

Annual approach to risk management

LTC has a robust approach to risk management that includes:

- A Risk Management Policy, adopted by Full Council and reviewed on an annual basis at Annual General Meeting (May) – see Annex 1.
- Internal Control Statement – reviewed and updated each year at the Annual General Meeting (May) – see Annex 2.
- Annual audit of accounts (internal auditor) with full internal audit report – submitted to Full Council, in June (accounts to be approved by 30th June)
- Submission of Annual Governance and Accountability Return (to government appointed external body)
- Risk Register, owned by Full Council and considered each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May – see Annex 3.
- It is proposed that each Committee review the full Risk Register and identify those risks which they should consider (e.g. AID should review the Assets & Facilities risks, Personnel the staffing risks, F&G the financial and governance risks etc).
- Full Council retains ownership of the full Risk Register with Committees reporting any recommendations for changes to the Risk Register reported on a monthly basis.

Summary of changes / updates to the Risk Management Policy

Lowestoft Town Council introduced a Risk Management Policy in May 2017. This policy has been updated and is included in Annex one. The updates that have been made are:

- A refreshed *Purpose* to better reflect that outcome that will be achieved by implementing the policy.



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- Previous text: *To involve members and officers in the ownership and accountability for corporate success and appropriate management of the associated risks.*
- New text: *To ensure the Council identifies, manages and mitigates risks which may impact Council members, officers, operational services and / or capital investments.*
- Clarification of the principles that underline the Council's approach to risk management:
 - *The following principles outline the Council's approach to risk management:*
 - *The Town Council, as a whole, has responsibility for overseeing its own risk management.*
 - *An open and receptive approach to managing risk is adopted by the Town Council;*
 - *The approach to assessing risk will be consistent and will include an assessment of likelihood and impact.*
- The addition of explanatory text on the Approach to Risk Management (s.6).
 - *Given the multi-faceted programme of work that is being taken forward by the Council it is not possible to eliminate all risks and the Council, through this policy, has agreed to be open and receptive to risk – ensuring appropriate measures (captured through the Risk Register) are in place to mitigate / manage risks.*
 - *The matrix below sets out the Council's approach to managing risk, demonstrating that activities with a medium to very high likelihood of occurrence (from 26-99%) and a major or serious impact will be managed down or terminated – as shown in the red squares.*

Updated Risk Register (2024)

The previous risk assessment has been fully reviewed and updated and is presented as the Lowestoft Town Council Risk Register 2024, available in Annex 3.



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Annex 1:

Risk Management Policy

1. Purpose

To ensure the Council identifies, manages and mitigates risks which may impact Council members, officers, operational services and / or capital investments.

2. Definition of Risk

An uncertainty of outcome of actions or events which impacts upon Lowestoft Town Council achieving its objectives or which might create legal, regulatory, financial or reputational exposure for the Town Council

3. Approach to Risk

Lowestoft Town Council is committed to good risk management as part of its wider internal control procedures. This ensures the Council can:

- Have increased confidence in achieving its objectives;
- Constrain threats to levels it considers reasonably acceptable;
- Take informed decisions about exploiting opportunities;
- Assist the Clerk in completing the annual governance statement; and
- Identify, monitor, and manage any exposure to legal, regulatory, financial or reputational risk

The Council recognises that to achieve its objectives it must manage risk within its assessment of reasonable levels. The following principles outline the Council's approach to risk management:

- The Town Council, as a whole, has responsibility for overseeing its own risk management;
- An open and receptive approach to managing risk is adopted by the Town Council;
- The approach to assessing risk will be consistent and will include an assessment of likelihood and impact.

In addition to corporate risk, members and officers have a responsibility to assess and appropriately manage risk as part of the evaluation of project proposals, business cases and grant applications including where the Town Council is working in partnership with external agencies.



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Officers will include the detailed outcome of project and business case risk assessment in any Council agenda item that considers major financial investment.

Where risks lie beyond the risk appetite of the Council, members and officers will take appropriate action to reduce those risks. A schedule of corporate risks will be maintained in a corporate risk register for review and approval by members. The approach to assessing risk will be consistent and will include an assessment of likelihood and impact.

Responsibility for assessing and managing Health and Safety risks associated with Council activity, events, serious and emergency situations will be managed by the Clerk with expert advice from the Town Council's appointed Health and Safety Consultant. Methods of safe working will be communicated to and adhered by members, officers and contractors.

Officers are responsible for assessing and managing risk as an integral part of their day-to-day role in ensuring the Council's objectives are met, recognising that all risk categories must be considered, including reputation, health and safety and financial risk. Where risks are identified which have the potential to impact upon the Council's objectives, these will be referred to the Clerk for consideration for inclusion in the corporate risk register.

Members are required to review (on an annual basis) the risk management policy and corporate risk register. This will include ensuring there is:

- A review of the risk assessment criteria, risk appetite and approaches to managing risk;
- An identification and updating of the schedule of risks;
- An evaluation of the likelihood and potential impact to the Council of each risk materialising;
- A decision on measures to avoid, reduce or control each risk, as appropriate; and
- A record made of the decisions reached.

4. Organisational Arrangements

The Clerk will ensure that all officers are aware of their responsibility in managing and reporting risk. Each officer shall make appropriate arrangements to ensure risk is continually assessed in relation to their area of responsibility.

The Clerk will initially review the corporate risk register at least annually in advance of it being submitted to the Council for review and ultimate approval.



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The Council will arrange for the approval of the risk assessment policy and corporate risk register on at least an annual basis.

5. Risk Assessment Rating Criteria

Risks will be rated based on the likelihood of occurrence and the impact that could result. The matrix below sets out the rating criteria and gradings.

LIKELIHOOD	RELATIVE					
	76-99%	4				
	51-75%	3				
	26-50%	2				
1-25%	1					
			1	2	3	4
			Minor	Moderate	Serious	Major
			IMPACT			
FINANCIAL IMPACT			Loss of up to £1000	Loss of up to £10,000	Loss of up to £50,000	Loss of over £50,000
and/or REPUTATIONAL IMPACT			Minimal / localised damage to reputation	Moderate and/or medium term damage to reputation.	Serious damage to reputation within the area and potentially beyond.	National and/or long-standing damage to reputation; intervention by Government
and/or HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT			No health and safety impact	Minor injury, possibly requiring treatment by health care professional	Serious injuries	Fatality or life-changing injuries
LEGAL/REGULATORY EXPOSURE IMPACT			<i>No legal/regulatory exposure</i>	<i>Moderate findings against the Council/moderate impact on the public/services/assets</i>	<i>Serious findings against the Council/serious impact on the public/services/assets</i>	<i>Major findings against the Council/major impact on the public/services/assets</i>



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6. Lowestoft Town Council Approach to Managing Risk

Given the multi-faceted programme of work that is being taken forward by the Council it is not possible to eliminate all risks and the Council, through this policy, has agreed to be open and receptive to risk – ensuring appropriate measures (captured through the Risk Register) are in place to mitigate / manage risks.

The matrix below sets out the Council’s approach to managing risk, demonstrating that activities with a medium to very high likelihood of occurrence (from 26-99%) and a major or serious impact will be managed down or terminated – as shown in the red squares.

LIKELIHOOD	Very high: 76-99%	4				
	High: 51-75%	3				
	Medium: 26-50%	2				
	Low: 1-25%	1				
			1	2	3	4
			Minor	Moderate	Serious	Major
			IMPACT			

Risks rated as **GREEN** are reasonably acceptable to the Council on the presumption that the identified control mechanisms remain in place and are followed. The risk level will remain monitored as part of the risk management.

Risks rated as **AMBER** are reasonably acceptable to the Council with identified measures to control the risk and so reduce exposure to the Council.

Risks rated as **RED** are high risk to the Council and must be monitored with immediate action(s) put in place to bring the risk down to a lower category. *Any action taken must be in accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.*



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Annex 2

Internal Control Statement for Year Ending 31 March 2025

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Lowestoft Town Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council is responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. THE INTERNAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

The Council:

The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and usually approves budgets for the following year at its November/December meeting. The January meeting of the Council usually approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The Council has appointed a Finance and Governance Committee. The Committee meets not less than 10 times during the financial year. Members of the Committee monitor progress against objectives, financial systems and procedures, budgetary control and carry out regular reviews of financial



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matters. The minutes of the meetings of the Committee are circulated to all members of the Council. A councillor responsible for bank reconciliation checks has been appointed.

The Full Council meets at least 11 times each year and monitors progress against its aims and objectives at each meeting by receiving relevant reports from the Finance and Governance Committee and the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

The Council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems and procedures.

Clerk to the Council/Responsible Finance Officer:

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk manages the Responsible Financial Officer who is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for advising on the day to day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing risks. The Clerk also provides advice to help the Council ensure that its procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to. The Responsible Financial Officer (or the Clerk in their absence) takes particular responsibility in relation to these responsibilities in relation to financial matters.

Payments:

All payments are reported to the Council or Finance and Governance Committee or Clerk for Approval where delegations permit. All payments must be reported to Council. Any delegations are only as authorised by s.101(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Council's financial regulations or as authorised by Full Council.

Two members of the Council must sign every cheque or order for payment. The signatories should consider each cheque against the relevant invoice, sign the invoice and initial the cheque counterfoil or relevant online banking paperwork. All authorised cheque signatories are members of the Council. No officer of the Council can sign cheques. All payments should align with the Council's financial regulations unless authorised by Full Council.



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Income:

All income is received and banked in the Council's name in a timely manner and reported to the Council.

Risk Assessments/Risk Management:

The Council reviews its risk assessment annually, usually in May, and regularly reviews its systems and controls.

Internal Audit:

The Council appoints an independent and competent internal auditor who reports to the Council on a half-yearly basis on the adequacy of its:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management

External Audit:

The Council's external auditors submit an annual certificate of audit which is presented to the Council.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS



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The Council has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and will also review the effectiveness of internal audit. The results of that review will be considered by the Council, which will also approve the related Statement on Internal Control.

Mayor

RFO/Clerk

Approved and adopted by Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting date:



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Annex 3

Lowestoft Town Council Corporate Risk Register (2024)

The Corporate Risk Register contains a total of 33 risks, categorised into seven headings:

- Financial
- Assets & facilities
- Governance
- Staffing
- Major projects
- Health & safety & emergencies
- Information & communications

Risk number	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk rating	Controls in place	Timeframe	Responsible officer
FINANCIAL							
F.1	Precept inadequate	3	1		Finance and Governance Cttee consider throughout year – quarterly review of budget to actual undertaken by Full Council. Annual Internal Audit – Risk Assessment and Management (Financial) review confirms appropriate procedures in place.	Precept submitted January	RFO
F.2	Breach of Financial Regulations	2	1		Standing Orders and Financial Regulations adopted by Full Council and reviewed / re-adopted on annual basis. Updated in line with changes to legislation and guidance from NALC. Members and officers are required to comply with Financial Regulations.	Monthly	RFO
F.3	Council overspend	3	1		Areas of spend closely monitored by RFO and Council. Regular reporting to Council.	Monthly	RFO



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					<p>Finance Officer regularly reviews spend against invoice, with all payments records validated by bank signatories (four members) who did not originally authorise the payment.</p> <p>Details of committed spend provided to members to inform decision making through the year and at budget planning stage. Reserves policy in place and reviewed annually.</p>		
F.4	Incorrect VAT claim and / or VAT non-compliance leads to a loss of income for Council.	2	1		<p>RFO scrutinises all invoices received to assess / Finance Officer trained in procedures for VAT. Specialist advice secured as needed.</p> <p>VAT registration has taken place. Making Tax Digital rules complied with including software upgrades.</p> <p>Annual Internal Audit – Risk Assessment and Management (Financial) review confirms appropriate procedures in place.</p>	As needed	RFO
F.5	Banking errors and charges arising / risk of reconciliation mis-match	1	1		<p>Bank reconciliations undertaken monthly.</p> <p>Regular scrutiny of financial records undertaken to ensure payments supported by invoices, authorised and minuted (undertaken by non-bank signatories to ensure transparency).</p> <p>Bank account opened with a reputable organisation.</p>	Monthly	RFO
F.6	Contracts & procurements processes do not match Financial Regulations / current legislation.	3	1		<p>Specialist procurement advice contracted for major projects.</p> <p>Financial regulations state threshold limits and all contracts monitored for adherence to these limits.</p> <p>Additional procurement training arranged as needed.</p>	As needed	RFO



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Risk number	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk rating	Controls in place	Timeframe	Responsible officer
ASSETS AND FACILITIES							
AF.1	Failure to comply with ownership responsibilities and law regarding assets	2	1		<p>Financial Regulations require a full asset register to be prepared and maintained by RFO. The asset register is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the F&G Cttee.</p> <p>Recruitment underway for a Facilities & Contracts Manager who will lead on all elements of asset management.</p>	Ongoing	TC
AF.2	Damage / loss or theft of assets	3	1		<p>Condition surveys undertaken on a 5 yearly cycle, with plan of works to be monitored by newly appointed Facilities and Contracts Manager.</p> <p>Regular inspections (RoSPA) undertaken by Qualified Inspectors for play areas / equipment.</p> <p>Assets to be kept secure and appropriately insured.</p> <p>Insurance levels reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	Ongoing	TC



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Risk number	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk rating	Controls in place	Timeframe	Responsible officer
GOVERNANCE							
G.1	Breach of Standing Orders	1	1		Standing Orders drafted. Induction and training arranged for officers and members – log of training held for members.	Annual	TC
G.2	New members not sufficiently trained / aware of roles	2	2		Member training and induction programme developed – all new members to complete relevant training in a timely manner. Planning Committee training to be undertaken within 3 months of Committee appointment.		
G.3	Spend and activity in areas in which the Council has no power (ie Council behaves <i>ultra vires</i>)	2	1		Clerk / RFO qualifications on the scope of Council's legal powers an essential criterion for role. Access to legal advice through the Council's solicitors. Appropriate training made available for councillors and provided for staff and particularly for the Clerk and RFO. Other specialist advisors and subscriptions provide support. Council has adopted "General Power of Competence" at term of office (once every 4 years)	Ongoing.	TC
G.4	Members fail to behave in accordance with the member code of conduct	3	2		Code of Conduct policy adopted by Council. All members to sign declaration of acceptance of office and attend induction / training on Code of Conduct / Nolan Principles of Public Office. Training to be reviewed on a regular basis if complaints are received. Complaints procedure in place. Monitoring Officer role in place (via East Suffolk Council)	After every election and as required	TC
G.5	Conflict of interest not declared or dealt with appropriately	1	1		A member-officer protocol has been adopted. All new members to attend induction / training. Monitoring Officer maintains register of interests which is published on the internet.	After every election and as required. Protocol and Code	TC



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						reviewed annually in May	
G.6	Referendum or by-election required	1	1		Annual provision included in budget for cost of a by-election or referendum	Autumn of the relevant year	RFO
G.7	Council meetings not quorate or not minuted correctly.	2	1		Attendance recorded as part of minute taking to evidence a quorum. House style has been developed and is regularly reviewed for agendas and meeting minutes. Minutes and agenda published as per legal requirements. Minutes approved by the Council as a true and accurate record.	Ongoing	TC



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Risk number	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk rating	Controls in place	Timeframe	Responsible officer
STAFFING							
S.1	Staffing complement not at capacity (due to recruitment delays, absence and / or restructuring of roles)	3	3		<p>Management and staffing structures and employment contracts regularly reviewed by Personnel Cttee to ensure resilience.</p> <p>Annual appraisals and annual personnel committee arrangements in place for the period preceding the budget discussions to ensure sufficient revenue dedicated to staffing.</p> <p>HR advice contract in place and development of Employee Handbook underway.</p> <p>Robust performance management procedures in place to provide resilience within team.</p>	Personnel Cttee reviews	TC
S.2	Inadequate staff training	2	1		<p>All new staff to take part in organisational induction programme with training needs identified and recorded in personnel file. Training plan (external, on the job) developed within 3 months of start date.</p> <p>Staff training policy established and regularly reviewed.</p> <p>All staff training needs and programme completions recorded in personnel files and reviewed as part of annual performance management reviews.</p> <p>Personnel committee receive annual updates.</p>	Ongoing	TC
S.3	Payroll inaccurate	2	1		<p>Using outsourced payroll provider and councillor checks in place.</p> <p>Based on recent review payroll to be brought in-house FY2024/25.</p>	Ongoing	TC
S.4	Fraud by staff	3	1		<p>Fidelity Guarantee value appropriately set.</p> <p>Electronic banking verified by two members prevents fraudulent transactions.</p>	Ongoing	TC



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Risk number	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk rating	Controls in place	Timeframe	Responsible officer
MAJOR PROJECTS							
MP. 1	Lack of funding for major projects	4	2		Project specific governance arrangements in place and external project managers appointed for largest projects (Town Hall / Marina Theatre).	Monthly	TC
MP2	Project slippage	3	2		Monthly project governance meetings to review project delivery.	Monthly	TC
MP. 3	Grant funding / joint project funding not used appropriately	2	2		Project managers appointed for major external capital projects – monthly meetings to ensure adherence to LTC / partner spend approvals. Annual Internal Audit – Risk Assessment and Management (Financial) review confirms claims applications and procedures are complied with.	Monthly	TC
HEALTH & SAFETY / EMERGENCIES							
HS. 1	Member of public, staff or members injured at Lowestoft Town Council premises or event	2	1		Health and Safety Policy in place Public & employers liability insurance in place. Contractors required to state liability insurance status prior to securing work with Lowestoft Town Council. All staff and members are aware of H&S responsibilities through Induction Programme. Independent H&S consultant contracted to carry out inspections (e.g. risk) and provide reports to Full Council.	Annually in May policy reviewed	TC
HS. 2	Emergency situations causing	2	1		Risk assessments made as needed.	As needed	TC



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	unforeseen health, safety, financial and other concerns			Events and Communications Officer leads on emergency planning and business continuity plans. Legal advice available via contract to update on changes to law / regulations.		
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Risk number	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk rating	Controls in place	Timeframe	Responsible officer
INFORMATION ASSETS							
1.1	Freedom of Information requests are complex and time-consuming to respond to with penalties for non-compliance	2	2		<p>ICO registration in place as data controllers (Council and councillors), subject to payment by the Council. Council policies developed and monitored.</p> <p>Publication Scheme in place.</p> <p>Minutes and spend over £500 published on the Lowestoft Town Council website.</p> <p>Public and press welcome to attend council meetings.</p>	Ongoing	TC
1.2	Loss of data	3	1		Backup system in place through Cloudy IT plus all contractors dealing with relevant data have secure and backed up systems.	Ongoing	TC
1.3	Corporate memory loss arising from staff or member loss of office / resignation	2	1		<p>Documents to be available on Lowestoft Town Council website where appropriate. Data Controller role held by DTC.</p> <p>Passwords to be protected as per Financial Regulations.</p> <p>Delegated decisions to be recorded as required in law.</p>	Ongoing	TC
1.4	Breach of data protection / information security	3	1		<p>All staff and members receive information security / principles of data protection as part of Induction Programme.</p> <p>Staff / consultancy contracts include information security clause.</p> <p>Staff / member policy developed.</p> <p>Network password protected.</p>	Ongoing. Policy reviewed annually in May	TC



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Risk number	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk rating	Controls in place	Timeframe	Responsible officer
					Breaches of data protection required to be reported to council. Council registered as a data controller with ICO		
REPUTATION & PARTNERSHIP WORKING							
R.1	Adverse press / social media coverage	2	2		Public and press welcome to attend/film Council meetings. Clerk, Chair and Comms Officer respond to media enquiries on behalf of the Council.	Ongoing	TC
R.2	Libel or slander claims received	2	1		Insurance in place with annual review to ensure sufficient coverage (goes through F&G Cttee) Record of all claims received maintained.	Last quarter of the preceding year and May annually	TC
R.3	Lack of community engagement and recognition	2	2		All Lowestoft Town Council activity is for the benefit of the people of its area. Promote and apply community engagement strategy including use of surveys and neighbourhood plan processes.	Ongoing	TC
R.4	Breakdown in partner relationships leading to a loss of joint working / goodwill / reputational damage to parties.	3	1		Regular engagement with ESC through both Clerk and Cllr liaison meetings. New members to be trained in different roles and responsibilities of a local council and a principal authority. On-going work to complete outstanding legal matters / land transfer follow Reorganisation Order and establish way forward on joint projects with ESC / partners. Lowestoft Town Council to engage with MP and decision-makers and influencers where appropriate.	Ongoing	TC



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R.5	Undue negative influence of political parties on council policy	2	2		<p>Election nominations open and promoted to all residents/workers who meet the qualification criteria</p> <p>Promote unencumbered outcome focused council working for the benefit of the community.</p> <p>Training sessions held for potential new candidates.</p>	Ongoing	TC
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TC = Town Clerk RFO = Responsible Financial Officer