

NANTYGLO & BLAINA TOWN COUNCIL CYNGOR TREF NANT-Y-GLO A BLAENAU

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Risk Management Policy 2023 / 2024

This Policy was revised and adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 28th February 2023

Signed by:

L. Harris

Councillor L Harris
Town Mayor /Chairman of the Council

Risk Management Policy 20223/24

Introduction:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is committed to the effective management of risk at every level within the Council.

The purpose of this Risk Management Policy is to state the various risk types, the approach to each risk and management of them and assess annually.

Report:

1. Risk Identification:

This involves identifying the specific risks that face Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. These include physical risks, environmental risks, risks relating to technology and damage to the Town Council's reputation.

2. Risk Assessment:

This is examining the potential for any risk of actually happening and categorising that as high, medium or low based upon best practice and available advice.

3. Risk Management:

This is managing the identified risk to:

- a) Minimise the impact
- b) Having contingency plans in place
- c) Taking steps to protect vulnerable items/assets
- d) Ensuring adequate insurance to cover the Asset Register which should be updated to include new purchases) and public and employee liability.

4. Contingency Planning:

Contingency planning is the pre-planning steps that need to be taken if a risk occurs. It is a plan for unforeseen events, including back-up procedures and emergency response.

These areas will be covered in detail as follows:

1. Risk Identification:

Usually seen as fire; financial liability; security; health and safety have been considered as the risks to be identified, assess and then managed. Other risks have been identified that impinge upon Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council include: pandemic risks; political risks; economic risks; social risks; technological risks; legislative/regulatory risks; environmental risk; customer/citizen risk; professional/managerial risk; partnership/contractual risk and the possibility of additional work and expenditure incurred by the Town Council as a result of services devolved from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

All of these factors have a greater or lesser relevance to Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council, but all are real factors that have to be regarded. They will be analysed in turn as they relate to the Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council.

Physical Risks:

Fire:

The threat of fire is always present be it accidental or deliberate. A substantial proportion of the Town Council's Asset List is held at the Blaina Institute where the Council Offices relocated to in July 2017 and destruction by fire is a real risk but too is the loss of accommodation if there is extensive damage to the building. NBTC also owns Salem Chapel located in Blaina town centre. This also presents a fire risk due to it being unmanned (but secured) for periods of time. The risk does not just relate to the loss of fixtures, fittings and furnishings (many of which are irreplaceable) but could result in the temporary/permanent loss of the facility if the building was extensively damaged.

Financial Matters:

This is another area of risk as Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council is a custodian of public money with which includes a precept collected by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council via the Council Tax. The Town Council benefits from financial regulations that are rigorously imposed by the Town Clerk / RFO. Quarterly budget monitoring reports and bank reconciliations on accounts held by the Town Council are prepared and submitted for Members' inspection. Monthly expenditure is listed for Council approval at the Monthly meeting of the Town Council. Budget monitoring in the form of actual compared to estimated expenditure and explanations of all variances greater 10%. Additionally, reports informing Members of the Council's reserve accounts are submitted to Council for consideration three times per year.

Security:

The security of the building in which the current Town Council Offices is located is the responsibility of Blaenau Gwent CBC and Blaina Community Institute Ltd (who took over the running of Blaina Institute in 2017). The building is alarmed when the building is closed. Although unlike the ICC Building (in which the Town Council Offices were previously located) there are no lockable gates to the property and it is unclear if the building benefits from CCTV. The adequacy of the alarm system of Blaina Institute has been questioned by some users of the building although there appears to have been many inspections made on the system. The Town Council Offices benefit from a lockable code system to the doors together with robust locks.

Security of Salem Chapel will always pose a security risk due to the fact it is located within the main street and unmanned for considerable periods of time. The Chapel does benefit from a security alarm and its central location within Blaina High Street ensures that the chapel is not isolated. The Chapel is inspected on a weekly basis by the Town Clerk and Assistant Officer.

Health & Safety:

This covers both the everyday tripping and falling hazards and other more complex issues. Access to the current Town Council offices in winter could be compromised by icy surfaces or surface water during wet weather. The health issues associated with computer use (eyesight and back problems) is well documented. There is also a risk posed to the Town Council by staff illness. The current location of the Town Council offices can also pose a personal risk to staff security due to regular periods when there are no other users in the building.

Salem Chapel as a Grade II listed building also poses health & safety risks such as the entrance flooring and aisles might pose a hazard when wet. The stairs and raised stage area also pose an obvious hazard. The upstairs balcony poses a particular risk due to its low height. Although the Chapel is currently not in use due to dry rot, parts of the ground floor have been removed and as such are uneven and unsafe for use. This poses a risk for any staff conducting weekly inspections of the property. The presence of dry rot within Salem Chapel may also pose additional health and safety risks. Staff, Members and/or volunteers may also face additional risks whilst at Salem Chapel due to any lone working although information & guidance on lone working practices are issued to the Town Council and regular communication with staff & volunteers is maintained. The risks associated with lone working have reduced since the appointment of an additional member of staff.

Serious Public Health Risk / Pandemic (including Covid 19):

The Covid 19 pandemic first affected the UK in March 2020 and has continued to affect every part of life in the UK since then.

The Town Council, like every other sector has been affected and the Council, staff and Members have all needed to adapt its working practices to ensure that all relevant legislation is complied with and that the health and safety of its staff, members and users are safeguarded. The nature of the pandemic has meant that it has affected the Town Council and its way of functioning effectively and its planned service provision within the community for a prolonged period of time. In January 2021, the UK Covid alert level was set at level 5 (maximum) and has altered but since 28th January 2022 this has been reduced to level 0 [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-alert-level>], and there does not appear to be any published alert level at the current time (February 2023).

Terrorism:

Many countries worldwide (including the UK) constantly monitor and subsequently assess their risk as a result of terrorism. Currently (February 2023) the threat to the UK from international threats is substantial as is the threat to Great Britain from Northern Ireland related terrorism [<https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency>].

A terrorism related risk could affect the community in a broad range from the catastrophic (i.e. loss of life and the destruction of infrastructure) to the inconvenient and disturbing (i.e. the discovery of terrorism propaganda within the community).

Political Risks:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is a local council with members elected periodically by the electors of Nantyglo & Blaina. Many of the decisions taken by the Council are *political* in that they are debated in council – which is a public arena – and having taken a decision ensuring that action will follow. The usual motivating factors are a desire to help groups and organisations and to present the image of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council in the best possible light. As a group, the members also work to improve the quality of life for all of the residents. One of the political risks is a change in the political complexion of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. An alternative political group/ party may have a fundamentally different agenda with consequences for the services that Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council supplies to the public *free of charge*.

Economic Risks:

Whilst the Council holds no shares, it does however have a loan (payable to the Public Works Loan Board) in respect of the purchase of Salem Chapel. The main economic risk to the Town Council is the maintenance and running costs associated with Salem Chapel, a grade II listed building. At the present time the Town Council is only too aware of the serious financial risk posed by Salem Chapel which requires a substantial amount of work owing to dry rot infestation. Its listed building status complicates and adds further financial pressures and risk to the Town Council. A structural survey (December 2015) also highlighted substantial roof repairs are required within the next few years.

The Town Council can only attempt to limit further damage by carrying out the recommended repairs (using a suitably qualified tradesperson together with a competent and indemnified project manager) following a realistic building maintenance plan for Salem Chapel. It must be emphasised that the continued ownership of Salem Chapel together with possible future devolution of services to the Town Council may pose a substantial risk. The economic risk associated with Salem Chapel has been reported to and considered by Council in detail during 2018 due to the discovery of an unpaid gas bill. Please note that issues relating to this gas bill have now been resolved

Social Risks:

These are factors in relation as to how Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council applies its policies. The demographic situation in Nantyglo & Blaina indicates that the area is officially classed as a deprived area & has an ageing population and this needs to be reflected in the services/activities that Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council offers to its residents. Whilst in the past this may have impacted upon more in the Principal Authority, again with the possible future devolution of services to Town Councils, this may be considered a risk. Council should consider what policies it has in place against what it needs and correct the balance.

Technological Risk:

The risk to the Town Council could be caused by the failure or theft of its computer system. This could be caused by power surge or spike, theft or removal of the equipment. The risk is to the Council's ability to respond to this challenge by ensuring that essential files are

protected or at least backed up. Other risks are viruses and worms that can devastate a system. Additionally, a phishing 'blackmail' e-mail was received as a consequence of the e-mail account being hacked a number of years ago. The IT system, hardware and software has now been updated and professional IT support and security is ongoing which has greatly reduced the risk.

Legislative/Regulatory Risk:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council was set up under the terms of the Local Government Act 1972. In common with other areas of local government in England and Wales, Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council can only do those things that it is legally empowered to do.

Unless an action is specifically permitted it may not be done.

Acting against the law would be seen as an ultra vires action. The risk is that Members may wish to do something that they are not empowered to do and choose not to either seek or accept the Clerk's advice.

Unlawful financial decisions carry the risk of all Members being surcharged by External Audit if they act in an irresponsible manner. Under the terms of the Code of Conduct Members may also be suspended or even disbarred. Members of the Town Council are expected to act in a responsible manner at all times.

The number of legislation impinging upon local councils, their Members and officers increase each year. More and more legal tasks are being placed upon local councils who have limited resources to be able to respond. The relatively recent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 also impact upon all Town / Community Councils.

Whilst Town Council staff currently work part time hours, those legislative bodies which require response and action by Town Council expect that response in the same time constraints as given by larger Councils which are staffed full time.

Environmental Risk:

The Town Council adheres to all recycling procedures within its offices and all such recycling etc is dealt with by Blaina Community Institute Ltd & Blaenau Gwent CBC. Salem Chapel currently poses a greater risk due to the current outbreak of dry rot (which is under investigation) and safe removal of waste. Some of the Christmas lights which are owned by the Council are now in less than perfect condition and require replacing and updating. The Town Council has reduced its carbon footprint and increased its energy efficiency whilst reducing running costs by replacing such lights with more energy efficient lights with the current plan to continue to replace the Christmas lights with more energy efficient lights being actioned.

Customer/Citizen Risk:

The residents of Nantyglo & Blaina are Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council's customers and they are all citizens with rights – rights of access, rights of inspection of documents and rights to challenge Members at local elections, and the right to dissolve Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The risk of failure to provide comprehensive, up to date coverage of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council's actions and informing the public at large of those actions

has been alleviated by the information provided on the Town Council's website and proposed Facebook page. Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council has identified publicity and distribution in its budget and will continue to keep the web site updated and has increased (& will continue to) its transparency and openness with the local electorate. Regular public consultation events and ongoing public consultation surveys also contribute to effective communication with the electorate of Nantyglo & Blaina.

Professional/ Managerial Risk:

This relates to the professionalism of the Council's staff.

Legislative changes, increased activity by both Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council and its involvement via the principal authority increase possible risk. The risks include giving incorrect advice, laying the Council open to public censure, failure to carry out properly authorised resolutions, failure to keep abreast of legislative changes that have or could have, an impact on the Members or the activities of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The failure to keep the accounts of the organisation in the proper fashion, which is mitigated by the strong Financial Regulations and strong regime imposed by the Town Clerk/RFO. The appointment of the Assistant Officer has helped reduce the risks previously identified in having only one member of staff.

Partnership/ Contractual Risk:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council procures supplies and services in order to carry out its main aim of service to the public of Nantyglo & Blaina. The main risk is that supplies required may not be delivered on time, are not for purpose or are damaged or defective. The Council's main partnership exists with the principal authority.

The decision to purchase Salem Chapel in the town centre has meant that the Council has entered into a series of contractual responsibilities dealing with the many facets of maintenance and services. It is the Clerk's responsibility to ensure that all contracts meet the requirements of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The risk is that this is simply not done. A partnership previously existed between the Town Council although this lease is in the process of being terminated via a formal deed of surrender (as requested by the Charter Group due to the unviability of both the group and the Chapel.

These then consist of the main risks, so far identified for Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council.

2. Risk Assessment:

Not all risk is present or imminent. They simply have to be addressed and assessed accordingly. All of the relevant literature suggests that risks can be categorised as high, medium or low dependent upon:

- a. History – has this risk ever happened?
- b. The potential for it happening – or happening again or
- c. Has not happened – yet.

Physical Risks:

Are tangible and although precautions are taken accidents will always happen.

Fire Risk:

The risk of a fire breaking out either through accident or deliberately is an ever-present risk but policies are in place that mitigates those risks.

Level: Medium

Justification: Blaina Institute – Fire alarm system in place, smoke alarms in all rooms, smoking forbidden within the building, accidental fires are unlikely at the present time. Members are reminded that Blaenau Gwent CBC and Blaina Community Institute Committee has responsibility for the building.
Salem Chapel – no smoking premises with fire and smoke alarms in place.

Financial Risk:

The professional press frequently carry stories of Clerks and other staff who have spirited away sums of public money ranging from a few pounds to thousands of pounds.

Level: Low

Justification: Here at Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council a number of regulations and security checks are in place based upon the Financial Regulations of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The first is that no cash payments are made. All cash income is banked intact. Secondly payment is by cheque drawn on the Council's account at the local bank against invoice and increasingly via online payments. These payments are processed by both the Town Clerk/RFO and an approved user via a secure process. All cheques have two signatories. The actual day to day accounts work is done by the Town Clerk/RFO and Assistant Officer. The balance at bank and the bank statement are reconciled on a regular basis and reported to the Council. Council also receives a quarterly budget against actual expenditure report at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting. The Internal Auditor visits on a half yearly basis as a minimum and reports his findings to the Council. These are tight, robust and effective controls.

Liability:

As a public body, Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is liable to be sued if anyone is injured by its actions – or inactions – of the staff or Members of Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. In fact it may be argued that lack of action, which, can in extreme cases, amount to negligence – is more likely than any actions undertaken by staff or Members. The main occasions when such liability might occur is at functions organised by the Town Council such as The ARC Awards, Nantyglo & Blaina In Bloom, School Christmas Carol concerts, the Christmas Fun Nights and presentation evenings. The staffing of such events are carried out by staff and Members of the Council and are fully risk assessed by staff. Weekly inspection checks are undertaken by the Town Clerk at Salem Chapel and are reported to the Town Council on a monthly basis. Salem Chapel is currently closed to the public, although the physical condition of the public might pose a very real risk to the public. Members of the Town Council are covered by the Town Council's insurance for 'low level' litter picking and outdoor events subject to a risk assessment.

Level: High

Justification: Events held are covered by the Town Council's liability insurance and the Town Council's policies although the physical condition of Salem Chapel continues to pose a very real concern.

Security:

The Town Council offices relocated (July 2017) to Blaina Institute in Blaina and security of the building is the responsibility of Blaenau Gwent CBC and Blaina Community Institute Ltd and the security staff & measures deployed. However the ownership and insurance of the artefacts within the offices remain the responsibility of the Town Council. The office door has been fitted with a coded security lock which is used during periods of lone working. Locks have been fitted to both the office and chamber doors (storeroom was already lockable and secure).

Level: Medium

Justification: The level has been raised from low to medium due to the building benefitting from partial CCTV throughout and not having external gates which are locked at night and on bank holidays etc have proved effective security over recent years at the previous location (ICC building).

Salem Chapel – As previously stated security will always be a risk particularly when the Chapel is unmanned. An effective security and fire alarm together with weekly inspections helps lower the risk as does the fact that the Chapel is located in a prominent position within the High Street.

Level: High

Justification: An un-manned building leaves it vulnerable to acts of vandalism and attempted break-ins which has happened in the past.

Health and Safety:

Health and Safety legislations places a responsibility upon Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council as employers to ensure a good working environment for their staff. The employees have a duty of care both to themselves and their colleagues, which means not putting themselves at risk of harm. Health and Safety considerations also apply when members of the public visit the building. The recruitment of an additional member has helped to mitigate the risks of lone working and the level of strain currently experienced by the Town Clerk / RFO as the sole member of staff.

Level: Medium

Justification: Health and Safety Legislation is mandatory and directly applicable to Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council. The ramifications of the legislation are wide ranging.

Serious Public Health Risk/Pandemic (including Covid 19):

The emergence of the worldwide Covid 19 pandemic is arguably the most serious health threat to the UK in many decades. The legislation in respect of Covid 19 places responsibilities upon both individuals and employers (amongst others) to help maintain both personal, local and national safety. The Town Council, staff and Members have all adhered

to the wide range and frequently changing legislation, advice and best practise relating to Covid 19 whilst still maintaining service provision of the Town Council as far as possible. Such requirements are constantly monitored and are acted upon, usually at virtually no notice. There have been many effects of the pandemic upon the Council in terms of the way it has operated and the frequent changes in legislation (remote working, remote meetings, no council/community events etc) to other challenges being identified such as banking and IT issues.

Level: High

Justification: The worldwide Covid 19 pandemic is still ongoing but with NO restrictions in place (February 2023) The apparent unpredictable and sudden changes (as seen in December 2020 and 2021) in the pandemic further adds to the possible changes in risk level although the successful UK wide vaccination program has further reduced the risk. The Town Council will continue to adhere to all legislation and advice whilst continuing with maintaining service provisions as far as restrictions allow.

Salem Chapel – Although Salem Chapel is currently closed (due to dry rot), a weekly inspection of Salem Chapel is undertaken by the Town Clerk which is then reported to the Town Council on a monthly basis. The fabric of the building due to dry rot poses a risk for any member of staff, member of the council or trade person needing to access the building.

Level: High

Justification: The Town Council actively enforces and reports upon all health and safety aspects of Salem Chapel although it must be acknowledged that the ownership of such a facility will always incur a certain level of risk which has increased due to the physical condition caused by dry rot. This risk was further evidenced by a part of the kitchen floor breaking when walked upon by a Member of the Council in October 2018.

Terrorism – Currently (February 2023) the threat to the UK from international threats and the threat to Great Britain from Northern Ireland related terrorism is both substantial [<https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency>]. A terrorism related risk could affect the community in a broad range from the catastrophic (i.e. loss of life and the destruction of buildings and infrastructure) to the inconvenient and disturbing (i.e. the discovery of terrorism propaganda within the community).

Level: Low to Medium

Justification: Currently Nantyglo & Blaina (as Blaenau Gwent) is sufficiently removed from major cities and other areas (e.g. large sporting arenas, concert halls or airports etc.) which may be more likely to be targeted. Additionally, Nantyglo & Blaina has a higher than the UK average, percentage of residents who were born (and lived most of their lives) within the area which also lessens the risk (although it cannot be excluded totally). Such risks can and would alter depending upon inflammatory issues. Any risk from terrorism within the locality is likely to be classed as a lower risk such as a result of propaganda.

Political Risks:

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is a publicly elected body and as such the public are entitled to change their representatives.

Level: Currently High

Justification: The closer one gets to an election the higher the political risk (the next elections are due to take place in May 2026). A change of political complexion can have substantial ramifications such as reducing the precept and stopping ongoing projects or substantially increasing the precept to fund ambitious projects. The possibility of the proposed mergers for Borough Councils as suggested in the Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill and the future potential changes relating to the scope of the work of Town Council and their possible future mergers leaves Council with unknown political consequences, an uncertain future. The probability of boundary changes proposed for Blaenau Gwent (as previously reported to Council) and the proposed alteration of the Nantyglo / Brynmawr boundary is one example of this.

Economic Risks:

The main economic risk to the Town Council is its ownership of Salem Chapel. The Chapel was purchased in 2000 with a loan from the Public Works Loan Board, which it is still repaying at the agreed rate. Since its purchase the Chapel was extensively renovated with funding from a variety of sources including the Town Council itself, however, the Chapel has been plagued by maintenance issues ever since. The discovery of extensive dry rot within the main hall has made it necessary to close the Chapel to the public. Investigations by a structural surveyor and architect has confirmed that the dry rot is partly due to the blockage of air vents during extensive renovations in 2010/11 and that listed buildings consent is required to remedy the situation. Further repairs to the roof are also required within the next few years.

Ongoing cuts to the principal authority budget may also mean that the devolvement of services to the Town Council may increase with associated costs to the Town Council budget.

Level: High

If the dry rot is left untreated, current legislation means that the principal authority can serve notice on the Town Council making it a legal requirement to carry out the work (although in practise this is unlikely to happen). The current condition and limited useable space within the Chapel means it has limited income opportunities although removal of the pews within the main hall of the Chapel (with relevant listed buildings consent) would increase the viability of the Chapel. This and the remedial works (including architect and listed buildings consent fees) required in addition to usual maintenance and repairs due to possible vandalism means that the chapel poses a considerable financial risk to the Town Council. Another option available to the Council is to sell the building.

Social Risks:

Although still categorised as a deprived area and with an increasingly ageing population the

main impact for services will fall on the Principal Authority. However, the possible devolution of services may impact on the Town Council budget.

It is important to remember that “social media” is a growing influence on daily life. The perception and reputation of the Council can be damaged in a millisecond by an ill-judged or worded “post” or by entering into any argument on the Web. It must be remembered that although sometimes anonymous, each Councillor and the Council have a duty to uphold the Code of Conduct at all times. The adoption by Council of “Social Media: A guide for Councillors” has been taken to assist Members to mitigate the potential risk posed by the use of the various forms of social media.

Level: High

Justification: As above most of the risk will be to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as the Principal Authority, but possible devolution of services has to be taken into account. Regular reminders and / or training for Members regarding appropriate use of social media also helps to reduce any possible social risk of this nature. Negative social media comments posted by members of the public and others during December 2021 resulted in much adverse publicity for the Town Council.

Technological Risk:

The risk to this equipment is either from external factors such as fire or power surges or from theft either of the microchips or the whole system.

The term “technological” may also take into account possible risk from social media. The Town Council’s overhauled the IT system, IT support and equipment in September 2021 and these have proved vital in the Town Council’s staff being able to work remotely during the Covid 19 pandemic as well as allowing Council meetings to take place remotely in addition to in person. This ensures that the Council complies with the current legislation.

Level: Medium

Justification: The Town Council has purchased professional laptops & monitors etc for staff to use both in the office and at home if necessary. The professional set up of the new IT system and equipment together with the provision of professional IT support & security has lowered the technological risk. Members are aware of the inherent dangers of the internet. The ongoing Covid 19 pandemic has also meant that staff need to be able to work from home for long periods of time which the purchase of the two laptop computers have proved invaluable.

Legislative/ Regulatory Risk:

Legislation affecting local government seems to be increasing, particularly when local councils are being drawn into the net being cast for the big players e.g. the Principal Authorities. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a staff running into hundreds. Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council has a staff of two part-timers, yet the legislative/ regulatory demands are the same.

The Clerk is responsible for keeping up to date on all legislative changes. These can come from the Welsh Assembly Government, the UK Government and even the European Commission and the Parliament in Brussels. Together with information received from OVV and the SLCC, this can be a very time-consuming process and due regard has to be given to the importance of this part of the governance of Council.

The Town Council has implemented a General Data Protection Regulation (2018) policy which is adhered to and the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has also impacted upon the Town Council.

Level: High

Justification: Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is a body set up by statute, governed by statute and statutory instruments. The law has to be complied with at all times. The Clerk as the Council's "first aid" legal officer is obliged to inform and warn council of impending or actual legal change.

Environmental Risk:

As a public body Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council is in a highly visible position whereby all of its actions are scrutinised. As such it needs to be exemplary in its environmental concerns and Members of the Town Council are pro-active in helping to maintain the local community via litter picks, weed clearing and re-cycling together with its biodiversity plan.

Level: Low

Justification: To maintain policies which comply with current and new regulations. The Town Council has provided a number of flower planters throughout both Nantyglo and Blaina together with a 'Butterfly Garden' located in each area. The Council has also embarked on a programme of renewing the Christmas Lights from the old 'light bulb' style to the much more energy efficient LED lights.

Customer/ Citizen Risk:

The risk to Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council relates to the provisions in the Local Government Act 1972 which allow a majority of at least 30% of the local electorate or 300 electors taking part in a referendum to abolish the Town Council which is why the Town Council needs to be seen as pro-active and not just an additional cost to the council-tax payer. The Council takes this risk extremely seriously.

Level: Very High

Justification: It is fact that there will always be some of the electorate who do not support the Town Council. With community asset transfer and the emergence of pro-active community groups it is possible that such an attempt to hold a referendum may arise at any time. Mis-communications with the public and Blaenau Gwent Ward Members at Christmas time 2021 illustrated the need for the Town Council to have a louder public voice and effective form of advertising (an official Council Facebook page is being considered).

Professional / Managerial Risk:

The Town Clerk acts as a manager, administrator and is also the legal officer of first recourse for the Town Council. The Town Clerk is also the appointed Responsible Finance

Officer and signs off the accounts and manages the financial element. The Town Clerk prepares and circulates agendas for meetings together with supporting documentation. The Town Clerk attends the meetings of the Council (and other meetings) and records the decision as part of the Minutes. Additional training for staff and Members is available and all Members and staff are made aware of current courses available.

In 2014, the then Town Clerk suffered a serious illness which led to him being on sick leave for several months. The Town Council was fortunate in that the Assistant Town Clerk was able (and as previously resolved at previous Town Council Meetings) to act as Town Clerk and provide the Town Council with continuity due to her experience and knowledge. However, this was a period whereby the Town Council suffered from a staff shortage and work was prioritised accordingly. The present Town Clerk / RFO has over 30 years' experience within Local Government and has attained Advanced Qualified Clerk status as a result of attaining the University of Gloucester's Local Policy qualification in addition to other professional qualifications such as Association of Accounting Technicians and the Institute of Leadership and Management. The Town Clerk / RFO has continued with her ongoing professional development such as completing OVW's Advanced Finance training in March 2016.

The Town Council has had serious issues with the resolution of staffing issues, although this has now resolved. The Town Council has been in a position whereby it needed to fulfil its planned programme of events and other statutory duties with a reduction in the number of staff. Council have learned from previous situations by trying to provide support to the remaining staff but whilst being mindful of the distinction between their remit as Councillors and staff's remit as Officers of the Council – crossing this line could have serious ramifications for the Council. The necessity of utilising Salem Chapel (if a decision was taken to renovate the building to a usable condition) to its fullest potential requires a large proportion of time and past experience has shown that this is not something that can be successfully achieved with current staff levels. It is vital to continue to monitor and have a suitable action plan in place in case of such an occurrence in the future so as to avoid a situation whereby there is a need to undertake restricted duties due to a lack of staff, skills/knowledge and how to mitigate the impact on both the Town Council's activities and its' remaining staff's (and Members) wellbeing.

Level: Medium to High

Justification: Although the current Town Clerk/RFO and Assistant Officer are both sufficiently qualified and experienced any absence or replacement of either member of staff impacts upon the fundamental basic knowledge of the Council's policies and good practice and would reduce the level of the Council's staff. Ongoing professional development is also vital (for staff and Members) to continue to administer and direct the Town Council in line with ever changing and challenging legislation, requirements and situations as is membership of appropriate bodies such as One Voice Wales. The ownership of Salem Chapel would also require adequate staffing resources for it to be utilised as appropriate.

Partnership/ Contractual:

The Town Council has a number of partnership agreements and contractual which relate to the supply of materials and services. No payment is made in cash; payment is only made

against invoices which are checked twice by the Town Clerk/RFO. The invoices are presented to Council on a monthly basis for inspection/query. The Internal Auditor scrutinises these on a random basis during his visits.

Level: Medium

Justification: Such arrangements may increase pending any decisions on the future devolution of services.

3. Risk Management

The Advice Note of the SLCC (AG8/2003) states:

There are three main ways of managing risk:

- Take out insurance
- Work with another party to reduce risk or
- Manage the risk yourself to Council's satisfaction.

Governance and Accountability in Local Councils in England and Wales (NALC & SLCC, ND 2002) Indicates areas where insurance can help manage risk:

- The protection of physical assets owned by Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council – furniture, equipment, Salem Chapel etc (as detailed in the Asset Register).
- The risk of damage to third party property, or individuals as a consequence of the Council providing services or amenities to the public (public liability).
- Risk of consequential loss of income or the need to provide essential services following critical damage, loss or non-performance by a third party (consequential loss).
- Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty (fidelity guarantee).
- Legal liability as a consequence of asset ownership (public liability). (Ibid.p.30)

The insurance cover is reviewed annually to ensure that it is adequate for the Council's needs.

Certain areas of risk are not manageable only by insurance. As an example Professional/ Managerial Risk. This being managed through staff development, staff appraisals and training.

Security at Salem Chapel is managed by a fire detection & alarm system both of which are professionally inspected annually in addition to weekly inspection visits by staff and appropriate policies in place.

Reputation:

Reputation is another uninsurable risk, it is nevertheless an asset that the Council squanders at its peril (*Larkin vii 2003*). Reputation is built on trust and belief – it cannot be bought. There are, however, a number of principles that underpin reputation risk management, they are:

- Acknowledge that reputation is a valuable asset and needs to be actively managed at Council level.

- Develop finely tuned radar and become a listening Council.
- Ensure as practically as possible, that each ward within the area receives the same consideration and services.
- Design clear and robust management systems that integrate with routine risk management processes.
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct and assure your licence to operate.
- Treat your stakeholders intelligently.
- Work as if everything you say and do is in the public domain.
- A requirement that the Council be pro-active, publicise itself and work positively and accurately.
- The Council to work together for the benefit of the community which it serves.

Reputation is a value judgement of the attributes of an organisation and is usually built up over time. Paradoxically it can be destroyed very rapidly. Some of the factors that put reputation at risk are:

- Security failure.
- Service shortfall (particularly in the Nantyglo Ward although services/events have increased here more recently).
- Competitor targeting.
- Bad behaviour.
- Unfair employment practice.
- Damage to health, safety or the environment.
- Inconsistency in policies and practice.
- Poor governance /ethics.
- Regulatory intervention.
- Adverse stakeholder perception.

At the end of the day, Members are ultimately responsible for risk management because risks threaten a Council's ability to achieve its objectives. It is the Clerk's responsibility to ensure that Members should:

- Identify the key risks facing the Council.
- Evaluate the potential to the Council of one of these risks taking place, and
- Agree measures to avoid reduce or control the risk and its consequences.

It is important to remember that "social media" is a growing influence on daily life. The perception and reputation of the Council can be damaged in a millisecond by an ill-judged or worded "post" or by entering into any argument on the Web. It must be remembered that although sometimes anonymous each Councillor and the Council have a duty to uphold the Code of Conduct at all times. All Members are issued with a copy of the Welsh Government's Social Media: A Guide for Councillors together with a copy of the Seven Principles of Public Life.

In conclusion it must be recognised that this document is a working paper and, in accordance with good practice, will be revised and updated on an annual basis.

Management of risk is something that affects us all and which we can affect too.

4. Summary of Contingency Plans:

Contingency planning is the pre-planning steps to be taken if a risk occurs. It ensures that there is a plan for unforeseen events including

Fire & Security of Office:

All current documentation and that required to be retained by legislation is stored in metal cabinets and all electronic documents are backed up.

All staff and Members are aware of the fire procedures & emergency exits, which are reiterated during Council meetings.

The office, storeroom and Council Chamber doors are security coded and the office and storeroom are also lockable. All are fitted with fire doors.

A legal user agreement with Blaenau Gwent CBC is in place which ensures that that BGCBC would need to provide the Town Council with suitable accommodation in the event of emergency.

Adequate insurance in such an event is taken out and reviewed regularly.

Financial / Partnership / Contractual & Economic:

Adequate insurance is in place which indemnifies the Council in event of many financial risks. The robust and rigorous procedures in place together with an effective system of internal audit should ensure that any such risk is minimal.

Liability:

Any such liability incurred by the Town Council would hopefully be addressed via the precautions detailed above to ensure preventative action is taken. Adequate insurance is in place which should help protect the Town Council in the case of such events. Such insurance cover is reviewed regularly to ensure adequate cover is in place.

Political/ Social & Citizen Risk:

Political risks are notoriously difficult to plan and deal with for any government body. Whilst preventative measures are in place and all members are regularly updated, the Council needs to be visibly pro-active in the community at all times, acting in the best interests and representing the community and the people via continual consultation in a variety of ways and methods (effective PR needs to be constantly and consistently practised). The Town Council promotes and publicises its activities and is transparent and open in all its activities and decisions although it is apparent that a more efficient method of doing so is required. Evidence of this is retained by the Council and utilised if required. The Town Council would need to issue swift, efficient, far reaching and above all honest communication / press release in such circumstances. Trusted contacts in many organisations (e.g. local AM, MP, BGCBC, local groups and organisations and other public bodies) would help in such circumstances. The anticipated creation and adoption of a realistic, beneficial and practical Council Action Plan would also contribute to a contingency plan. A well managed social

media presence such as Facebook can also assist with this although extreme care is required as such a presence can act as a 'double-edged sword' for the Town Council.

Technological Risks:

Since the Council has purchased additional laptops, IT system and security, the associated risk has lessened. The council's IT provider (Orbits IT) runs weekly security checks on the Council's IT systems and also provides much needed ongoing professional IT support.

Legislative / Regulatory Risk:

Whilst both the staff and members of the Council actively keep informed and up to date of changes together with careful monitoring and reporting of necessary information at regular Council meetings, there will always be an associated risk. The Council has up to date membership of both One Voice Wales (OVW) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) which entitles the Council to much help and advice that might well be required in the event of such risk occurring. Additionally, the Council has many contacts with specific skills within both the public and private sector that can be contacted for specialised advice and help.

Professional / Managerial Risk:

Whilst many of the risks previously associated with this have now been mitigated by the appointment of a well-qualified Assistant Officer, there will always be an ongoing risk with qualified and experienced staff leaving. In order to minimise such a risk, it is advisable that the Personnel Committee prepares a report recommending that if the position of Assistant Officer (or equivalent) becomes vacant, then this position be advertised as soon as practical. It is also advisable that this be reviewed on an annual basis.

Emergencies / Terrorism:

Whilst it is very unlikely that the above would affect our area, emergencies can and do happen. The Civil Contingencies Team at Blaenau Gwent aim to reduce the chances of emergencies happening, and if they do, lessen the impact on our communities through planning; training and exercising; liaison and response.

Please click on the following link for more information:

<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/emergencies-crime-prevention/planning-for-and-responding-to-emergencies/>

Health and Safety:

This is a wide area which is covered by a wide range of legislation. Risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis. Other risks are avoided and minimised where possible by both officers and members by adhering to the appropriate advice, legislation, guidance and risk assessments. The council also has adequate insurance which would provide adequate indemnity in the event of many such circumstances.

Serious Public Health Risk/ Pandemic/ Covid 19:

At the present time (February 2023), the pandemic is still ongoing although there appears to not be an official published alert level and there are no restrictions. Many events are now able to go ahead although risk assessments are still required. At the current time and meetings of the council can only be held in person if the Council can also hold the meeting by remote means. This system has been operational since March 2022. The Council has a successful method of holding meetings via hybrid means which enables all members and members of the press and public to attend without any cost to the individual or the need for any equipment other than a telephone or computer. Council staff have needed to work from home intermittently as restrictions have dictated, to keep the Council's services functioning although there had previously been some challenges due to IT systems (now resolved). The Council has now implemented online banking which has enabled most payments to be made securely online.

Salem Chapel:

At the present time there are many risks associated with the ownership of Salem Chapel such as health and safety, financial, political, liability etc. Due to the present situation the Council is carefully identifying and considering each possible risk, then assessing and putting procedures in place to manage those risks. A public consultation took place in March 2021 and the Council is now in the process of working through several legal issues. In the event of many of the risks identified, adequate insurance is in place, and this is continually monitored to ensure the insurance is fit for purpose. Advice and current information is also provided and requested from the insurance company to ensure it is current. Members of the Council are regularly updated on all issues in respect of Salem Chapel and recommendations are actioned.

Tracy Hughes

Town Clerk /RFO

Revised: February 2023