

AUDLEY RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Draft October 2026 – to be reviewed Oct 2027

1. Statement of Intent and General Principles

Audley Rural Parish Council recognises and accepts its statutory responsibilities as an employer under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The Council is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for all its employees, contractors, sub-contractors, voluntary helpers, and visitors, as well as members of the public who may be affected by the Council's activities, events, and property operations.

The Council operates on a remote/home-working administrative basis and does not maintain operational public office premises. Where the Council owns physical assets and buildings leased to community organisations—specifically the building leased to the Audley Parish Bowling Club—health and safety responsibilities are governed through statutory landlord duties and formal lease covenants.

The Council considers the promotion of health, safety, and welfare to be a mutual objective for all members, officers, employees, and volunteers across all activities. To satisfy these statutory duties, the Council will provide, as far as is reasonably practicable, the necessary financial, technical, and operational resources to ensure full compliance with relevant safety legislation and codes of practice.

Where necessary, the Council will seek specialist technical advice and assistance on health and safety matters to support the Parish Clerk in executing the Council's responsibilities.

2. Policy Objectives

To ensure a systematic approach to occupational health and safety management, Audley Rural Parish Council commits to the following strategic objectives:

- **Defined Governance:** Establish and maintain an organisational structure that clearly defines responsibilities for health, safety, risk management, and property oversight.

- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure adequate financial and operational resources are available to control risks arising from Council activities and asset ownership.
- **Hazard Reporting Culture:** Encourage staff, volunteers, contractors, and tenant representatives to identify and report hazards proactively to foster continuous improvement in safety.
- **Leasehold & Property Safety:** Ensure Council-owned land and leased buildings are maintained in a safe condition through clear lease terms, annual inspections, and structural oversight.
- **Competence and Training:** Provide adequate information, instruction, supervision, and training to ensure all employees and volunteers are competent to carry out their duties safely.
- **Proportionate Risk Assessment:** Conduct and regularly review risk assessments to identify pragmatic, proportionate measures to control workplace, home office, and event hazards.
- **Contractor & Tenant Oversight:** Engage contractors who demonstrate due regard for health and safety compliance, and ensure tenants maintain robust fire and operational safety controls.
- **Mandatory Annual Review:** Review this policy at least annually and revise it as necessary to reflect operational changes, statutory updates, or emerging hazards. All revisions will be formally communicated to Council staff and members.

3. Organisational Structure and Allocation of Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for health and safety rests with the elected Council, while day-to-day operational management is delegated to the Parish Clerk.

3.1 Duties of the Full Council

The Full Council holds ultimate accountability for the health and safety performance of Audley Rural Parish Council. In fulfilling this role, the Full Council shall:

- Provide leadership in developing and sustaining a positive, proactive health and safety culture throughout the organisation.
- Ensure all formal decisions, policy resolutions, lease approvals, and project decisions reflect the Council's health and safety intentions.
- Allocate adequate annual financial budgets and operational resources to implement health and safety measures, risk controls, building maintenance, and insurance.

- Maintain comprehensive property owners', public liability, and employers' liability insurance policies covering Council activities and physical assets.
- Review safety reports and incident logs when completed at the next available Council meeting.

3.2 Duties of the Parish Clerk (Proper Officer)

The Parish Clerk is the designated officer responsible for day-to-day management, implementation, and compliance monitoring under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The Parish Clerk shall:

- Keep informed of relevant health and safety legislation, guidance, and statutory codes of practice.
- Advise the Council on the resources, equipment, and administrative arrangements necessary to fulfil its statutory duties.
- Ensure effective arrangements are in place to implement, monitor, and develop this policy continuously.
- Secure and maintain adequate compulsory Employers' Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance at all times.
- Facilitate regular communication and consultation with staff, home workers, volunteers, and tenant representatives on health, safety, and welfare matters.
- Ensure regular risk assessments are conducted for all work activities, home working environments, and Council-managed open spaces, recording findings in a central file and summarising key actions in Council minutes.
- Oversee leasehold compliance for Council property, ensuring tenants fulfil annual fire equipment maintenance, risk assessment, and insurance obligations.
- Maintain central records of all notified accidents, injuries, occupational ill-health, and "near-miss" incidents, conducting thorough investigations to prevent recurrence.
- Act as the official contact and liaison point for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and enforcing authorities.

3.3 Duties of Employees, Contractors, Voluntary Helpers, and Tenants

All Council employees, contractors, sub-contractors, voluntary helpers, and tenant representatives have a duty to take reasonable care for health and safety. All personnel must:

- Familiarise themselves with and conform strictly to the requirements of this Health and Safety Policy, lease covenants, and relevant work instructions.

- Observe safety rules, safe systems of work, and established operational standards at all times.
- Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and utilise safety devices, guards, and protective machinery provided.
- Report all accidents, personal injuries, occupational ill-health, and damage to Council property, tools, or equipment immediately to the Parish Clerk.
- Report all safety hazards and "near-miss" incidents as a matter of urgency to enable immediate corrective action.
- Know emergency procedures, fire safety protocols, evacuation routes, and the locations of firefighting equipment at their working or leased premises.
- Maintain good housekeeping standards across all workspaces, storage areas, and remote workstations.
- Refrain from intentionally interfering with, misusing, or removing safety guards, fire safety equipment, or protective devices.

4. Fire Safety Policy & Leasehold Property Management

As Audley Rural Parish Council does not operate physical staff offices, fire safety management focuses on Council-owned leased property—specifically the premises leased to the Audley Parish Bowling Club—as well as third-party venues hired for Council meetings and events.

4.1 Division of Fire Safety Duties for Leased Premises (Audley Bowling Club Building)

Fire safety obligations for the Council building leased to the Audley Parish Bowling Club on Church Street are strictly defined under the statutory duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the terms of the formal Lease Agreement:

Tenant (Audley Parish Bowling Club) Operational Fire Safety Obligations

- **Equipment & Alarms:** The Bowling Club is responsible for equipping the premises with all fire prevention, detection, alarm systems, and firefighting equipment required by law, insurers, or the Council, and keeping them in full working order.
- **Annual Servicing & Certification:** The Bowling Club must ensure all fire alarm systems, firefighting equipment, and sprinkler systems undergo formal testing and inspection at least annually by a competent engineer, providing copies of service certificates to the Parish Clerk.

- **Escape Routes & Exits:** The Bowling Club must maintain unobstructed access to all fire equipment and emergency exit routes at all times. Fire doors must never be locked or fastened while the building is occupied.
- **Hazardous & Flammable Materials:** Storing or bringing explosive, highly flammable, or specially combustible materials inside the main building is strictly prohibited. Petrol for mowers must be kept exclusively in a locked external storage shed. The release or use of sky lanterns on the property is banned.
- **Risk Assessments & Drills:** The Bowling Club officers must conduct and record regular Fire and Health & Safety Risk Assessments covering all club members, visitors, and event attendees, maintaining clear emergency evacuation protocols.

Landlord (Audley Rural Parish Council) Property & Structural Safety Duties

- **Building Insurance:** The Council maintains comprehensive building insurance against fire, lightning, explosion, and associated insured risks.
- **Annual Building & Safety Inspection:** The Council arranges and finances a formal annual building inspection to evaluate structural integrity, maintenance needs, and tenant health and safety compliance.
- **Structural & System Maintenance:** The Council maintains the building fabric (roof, external walls, foundations, main structure) and central utility supply connections (electricity, gas, water, drainage) at its own expense.
- **Compliance Oversight:** The Parish Clerk reviews and logs annual fire equipment service records, building inspection reports, and risk assessments supplied by the Bowling Club.

4.2 Hired Venues for Council Meetings and Events

- For Council meetings, committees, or public events hosted at third-party premises (e.g., local community halls), the Parish Clerk will verify that the venue possesses a valid Fire Risk Assessment, clearly marked emergency evacuation exits, and functional firefighting equipment prior to booking.
- Council staff and members attending off-site meetings must familiarise themselves with venue emergency exits and assembly points upon arrival.

5. Management of Contractors, Sub-Contractors, Visitors, and Events

The Council owes a duty of care to external workers, visitors, and members of the public present on Council property or participating in Council-managed activities.

5.1 Contractor and Sub-Contractor Controls

- Prior to commencing work on behalf of the Council, all contractors and sub-contractors must demonstrate due regard for health and safety legislation and provide evidence of valid public and employers' liability insurance.
- Where required by the Parish Clerk based on task risk, contractors must supply a written Method Statement, Safe System of Work, and job-specific Risk Assessment prior to starting work.
- All contractors and sub-contractors will be issued a copy of this Health and Safety Policy and must ensure their personnel and sub-tier workers comply fully with its standards.

5.2 Protection of Visitors and the General Public

- Work activities conducted by or on behalf of the Council must not unreasonably jeopardise the health, safety, or welfare of members of the public, visitors, or voluntary helpers.
- Adequate safety measures, warning signage, and physical barriers must be deployed during maintenance, groundskeeping, or construction activities on Council land or property.
- For public events organised by or on behalf of the Parish Council, event-specific risk assessments, crowd management plans, and first aid arrangements must be finalised and approved by the Clerk prior to the event.

6. Health and Safety Obligations for Home Workers

Where Council staff work from home, the Council retains the same statutory health and safety obligations as for office-based personnel.

6.1 Employer Responsibilities for Home Working

To maintain a safe remote working environment, the Council shall:

- Conduct formal health and safety risk assessments for home working arrangements, covering workstation setup, lone working, and environment safety.
- Maintain compulsory Employers' Liability Insurance covering staff working from remote locations.

- Provide electrical tools, computing hardware, and office equipment that is fit for purpose and safe to operate.
- Ensure all portable electrical equipment provided by the Council undergoes regular Inspection and Testing (PAT) and routine maintenance.
- Ensure computer workstations conform to Display Screen Equipment (DSE) ergonomic standards, allowing staff to work comfortably without disturbing glare, excessive reflection, or physical strain.
- Ensure adequate lighting levels and ventilation are maintained in home office spaces.
- Ensure workstation setups avoid trailing cables or trip hazards in working and access areas.
- Provide adequate instruction, guidance, and training on safe remote working practices.
- Reimburse staff who regularly use display screen equipment for statutory eye and eyesight tests upon request.
- Maintain central records of any occupational ill-health, injuries, or accidents experienced by staff while performing home working duties.

6.2 Employee Duties in Home Working

Employees working from home must:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of co-habitants, visitors, or family members who may be affected by their work activities.
- Cooperate with the Council in completing DSE self-assessments and implementing ergonomic recommendations.
- Use Council-issued equipment correctly and report any defect, electrical fault, or damage immediately to the Clerk.
- Maintain a clean, tidy, and well-lit workspace free from physical hazards or trailing cables.
- Report any work-related incident, injury, or near-miss occurring during home working hours to the Clerk without delay.

7. Incident Reporting, Risk Assessment, and Policy Review

7.1 Risk Assessment Management

Risk assessment is a continuous operational process. The Parish Clerk will ensure that regular risk assessments are carried out for all council activities, physical assets,

open spaces, and administrative duties. Summaries of completed risk assessments and required corrective actions will be formally recorded in Council meeting minutes and stored in the central risk assessment file.

7.2 Incident Recording and Investigation

- **Accident Recording:** A central Accident Book will be maintained by the Parish Clerk to record all notified accidents, injuries, and health incidents.
- **Near-Miss Tracking:** All "near-miss" incidents—defined as unplanned events that did not result in injury or damage but had the potential to do so—must be reported to the Clerk, recorded, and investigated.
- **Corrective Action:** When an accident, ill-health occurrence, or hazardous near-miss takes place, the Clerk must take immediate action to eliminate the risk, prevent recurrence, and fulfil statutory reporting obligations under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) where applicable.

7.3 Mandatory Policy Review and Communication

This Health and Safety Policy shall be formally reviewed by Audley Rural Parish Council **at least annually** and updated whenever necessary to reflect changes in legislation, Council operations, property agreements, or organisational structure. Any modifications will be formally adopted by Council resolution and communicated promptly to all employees, contractors, tenant representatives, and voluntary helpers.