

The Parish Council of Little Harrowden

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The Council acknowledges that it was unable to answer “Yes” to Assertion 10 within the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement relating to arrangements for effective IT and data management.

During the financial year, the Council had in place a number of supporting governance and compliance documents including:

- Data Protection Policy
- Data Breach Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Records Retention Policy
- Transparency Code
- Publication Scheme
- Financial and General Risk Management arrangements

These documents collectively addressed elements of data protection, transparency, record management, risk management and information governance. The Council also maintained password protected systems, restricted access to financial information and secure handling procedures for council records and personal data.

However, the Council recognises that, although these supporting controls and procedures existed, there was no single overarching Information Technology (IT) and Digital Security Policy formally bringing together the Council’s arrangements for:

- IT governance,
- cyber security,
- device security,
- email and cloud storage controls,
- website management,
- business continuity,
- social media governance, and
- authorised digital communications.

The Council also identified that, whilst social media arrangements were being operated in practice, there was insufficient formal reference within the Council’s wider governance framework setting out how social media access, publishing authority and digital communications were managed and controlled. As a result, the Council concluded that it could not fully demonstrate compliance with the revised expectations of Assertion 10 for the 2025/26 financial year and therefore correctly answered “No”.

To address this weakness, the Council will:

- Create and adopt a formal overarching IT, Digital Security and Information Management Policy;
- Re-review all existing related GDPR, transparency and data management policies to ensure consistency and cross-referencing;
- Adopt a dedicated Social Media and Digital Communications Policy;
- Formally document authorised users responsible for council social media and digital publishing;
- Include reference to these arrangements within the Council’s governance and risk management framework.

The above policies and governance arrangements will be reviewed by Full Council and formally resolved for adoption at a the next properly convened Council meeting scheduled for July 2026.

The Council considers this to be a governance documentation gap rather than a failure of operational financial control. No data breaches, cyber incidents, financial losses or ICO enforcement actions relating to IT governance were identified during the year under review.