

**Agenda Item 1195/26 - Assertion 10 Compliance – Review by Clerk
Cllrs to decide if the PC will be fully compliant to Assertion 10 Regulations to be able
to tick the box on the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return
Assertion 10 — Digital and data compliance**

2025/26 has seen a new statement added to the Annual Governance Return known as Assertion 10. The requirements are:

Council's must NOW use authority owned email accounts and not just a dedicated email account to use for Parish Council Business.

- Using authority-owned email accounts ensures that sensitive information is handled in a controlled environment with appropriate security measures. This aligns with GDPR principles such as data minimisation, integrity and confidentiality.
- Accountability and transparency - authority-owned email accounts provide a clear record of communications, which is essential for transparency and accountability. This helps in maintaining an audit trail and ensures all authority-related communications are accessible for review if needed.
- Consistency, trust and professionalism - it is best practice to use .gov.uk domains for smaller authorities' emails and websites. This helps maintain a consistent and professional image for the authority and ensures all communications are easily identifiable as coming from the authority.
- Having authority-owned email accounts also makes Data Subject Access and Freedom of Information Requests easier to manage.

The PC has a dedicated .Gov email address for the Clerk to conduct PC Business. And dedicated .Gov email addresses for Councillors, whilst there is no legal obligation to do so, the government it is strongly recommended by government and national bodies as best practice to do this as it makes Data Subject Access and Freedom of Information Requests easier to manage.

Compliance with policies - All authorities should have an IT policy that mandates the use of authority-owned email accounts for official business.

- These policies are designed to ensure that all communications are conducted in a manner that is consistent with the authority's standards and legal obligations
- An IT policy prevents misunderstandings when using IT equipment for authority business and makes sure that there can be no excuses for anyone in the authority not protecting their data or working safely.

A new IT Policy is to be adopted at the March PC meeting to be reviewed annually.

Website accessibility

- At a minimum all authorities' website must include an accessibility statement on their website and keep it under regular review. This statement should include reasons for not meeting accessibility requirements, ways to source alternative copies of non-accessible documents and a point of contact.

An Accessibility statement needs to go on the website and be regularly updated by the PC.

Data Protection

To ensure compliance with data protection regulations, smaller authorities must:

- Appoint a Data Protection Officer to oversee data protection and ensure compliance with GDPR.
- Implement a Data Protection policy on data handling, storage and sharing.
- Provide regular training to ensure all staff and members are trained on data protection principles and practices.
- Secure data using appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect personal data from breaches.
- Adopt a Data Protection Road Map

Northants CALC appointed Data Protection Officer. Data Protection Policy adopted and reviewed annually. Regular training to be provided as required. NCALC are currently running 3 levels of Data Protection and GDPR online courses which I will be attending in April. I can update members of the PC of training afterwards. Data is secure, GDPR Compliance Checklists signed by councillors when elected/co-opted.

A new Data Protection Road Map is to be adopted at the March PC meeting to be reviewed annually.

The Freedom of Information Act places a duty on every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which details the publication of information by the authority and is approved by the Information Commissioner;

- Adoption of the Information Commissioners Office model publication scheme meets this requirement.
- Smaller councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000

The transparency code for smaller authorities came into effect on 1 April 2015. This code mandates that smaller councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 must publish specific financial and administrative information online, making it accessible to the public. The goal is to provide taxpayers with a clear understanding of the authority's activities, spending, and governance, thereby enhancing the community's ability to hold local public bodies accountable. Compliance is required for all parish and town councils with a turnover not exceeding £25,000.

Starting in April 2015, parish and town councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 must publish the following information online: All items of expenditure above £100, end-of-year accounts, annual governance statement, internal audit report, list of councillor or member responsibilities, details of public land and building assets, and minutes, agendas, and meeting papers of formal meetings.

Freedom of Information model publication scheme adopted and reviewed annually. Compliance to the Transparency Code fully adhered to and tested by our internal auditor annually. The Clerk uploads all the above documents listed to the PC's website.

Once the new IT Policy and Data Protection Road Map is agreed, and the new website up and running. I believe the PC will be Assertion 10 compliant and can confirm full compliance with Assertion 10 on the 2025/2026 Governance and Accountability Return.