

DBS CHECKS FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS

AGENDA ITEM No. 12

MEETING: FULL COUNCIL

DATE: 22nd APRIL 2026

REPORTED BY: CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members with information regarding the feasibility of the Council implementing Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks for councillors, including the appropriate level of check to comply with the law.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Following a motion raised by Councillor Michael Stead at the Council Meeting on 11th March 2026, it was agreed:

- i) That all councillors, after every Town Council Election and on all new councillors elected via by-election or co-option, undertake a DBS check.*
- ii) That officers investigate the appropriate level of DBS check required, to include investigation of the feasibility of undertaking an 'enhanced' check, and report back with implementation arrangements.*
- iii) That the 2026/27 Revenue Budget Contingency Sum be used to undertake DBS checks for all serving Town Councillors as soon as practicable in the new financial year.*
- iv) That the appropriate budget provision to undertake future councillor DBS checks as set out above is made.*
- v) That all councillors are encouraged to participate fully in the process in the interests of safeguarding and transparency."*

2.2 There are three levels of DBS checks:

Enhanced – with or without barred lists – covers both spent and unspent convictions, as well as cautions, reprimands, and final warnings from the Police National Computer and any local records. Used for roles such as teaching, healthcare, care. There must be a legally defined eligibility for such a check.

Standard – as above, without the local records. There must be a legally defined eligibility for such a check.

Basic – covers unspent convictions and conditional cautions. No eligibility requirements, anyone can apply for a basic DBS check.

2.3 Advice has been sought from the Disclosure and Barring Service and North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO) regarding eligibility of councillors for DBS checks and the appropriate level for these. The reply from DBS is attached at Appendix 1. It is clear from the advice given and further research undertaken, that Town and Parish Councillors are *not* eligible for Enhanced or Standard DBS checks. They are, however, free to undertake a Basic DBS check.

3.0 Current Situation

- 3.1 The Town Council currently utilises the North East Regional Employers' Organisation (NEREO) to process DBS checks for new employees in specific roles and repeat checks where necessary. NEREO is a Registered Body in accordance with paragraph 120 of the Police Act 1997 for this purpose.
- 3.2 The personal information required for a DBS check for employees is entered onto a secure online platform hosted by NEREO. This is a two-part process, undertaken by the applicant and Corporate and Policy Officer:
 - i) The applicant, in conjunction with the Corporate and Policy Officer, supplies the required information which is entered onto the DBS checking platform. Specific official documents are required for this process, such as current UK passport, driving licence, birth certificate etc. A five-year address history is also required.
 - ii) The Corporate and Policy Officer is then required to check the documents and re-enter the details on a separate section of the platform. The information is then counter-signed by NEREO and passed to the DBS for processing.
- 3.3 When the check is completed, which can take anything from four days to two months, but is usually within two weeks, the Corporate and Policy Officer receives a notification from the DBS. The Council does not receive a copy of the DBS certificate, since this is personal to the applicant and is sent direct to them from the DBS. The Council instead receives a one-line email notification, which usually says 'Certificate Contains No Information', which means there are no issues to note. If a conviction, caution or other matter is revealed on the certificate then the email notification advises that the certificate be checked by the applicant's employer.
- 3.4 Historically, the Town Council carried out DBS checks on a number of employees in several roles, but this was changed some years ago following restrictions on roles eligible for checking being imposed by the DBS.
- 3.5 The Town Council currently carries out Enhanced DBS checks on specific roles in the Council's workforce. These are Pre-School staff and Park Patrol Operatives. These roles are eligible as the holders work or have regular, unsupervised contact with children and/or vulnerable adults. The Works and Environment Manager also holds an Enhanced check as he frequently works with school children, and the schools require this before he is permitted to do this. The Works Operative who is based in the Town Park also has an Enhanced DBS check as he may have unsupervised contact with anyone using the park.
- 3.6 The Corporate and Policy Officer and the Corporate Assistant also have an Enhanced DBS check as they sometimes assist in the Pre-School, while the Town Clerk has an enhanced DBS check as the OFSTED Nominated Officer for the Pre-School.
- 3.7 The Sports Complex Manager and Duty Managers at the Sports Complex have a Standard level check as this is required under their Personal Licence for operating the bar.
- 3.8 Pre-School staff undergo an updated check every three years, other staff are updated as required.

- 3.9 NEREO has advised that it does not offer a Basic level of check through its online platform at the current time. However, they have advised that this service is planned to be introduced for later this year.
- 3.10 A Basic level check may be obtained directly from DBS or the Post Office. However, Members should be aware that this would require the applicant to set up their own GOV.UK One Login online, prior to inputting their personal details and proving their identity. In addition, The Town Council has an account with NEREO to provide for payment for DBS checks on employees. Members would need to pay for their own checks via the DBS and seek reimbursement from the Council. Where an applicant does not hold both a valid passport and driving licence, specified other official documents are required for the check. Seeking checks personally would also remove the oversight of the seeking of DBS checks from the Council officers.
- 3.11 For these reasons, it would not be advisable for councillors to seek DBS checks directly, and officers would therefore recommend that the Council waits for this service to be offered via NEREO later in the year, and that officers oversee the undertaking of councillor DBS checks in the same way as presently takes place for officers.

4.0 Impact on Great Aycliffe Town Council

- 4.1 A requirement for Council members to hold a valid DBS Basic Check would give residents confidence and reassurance when dealing with their local councillor and help to ensure that safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is maintained.

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 This complies with the Council's Strategic Aim 1:

'To provide good quality governance and management of the council'

6.0 Staffing Implications

- 6.1 Should the Council decide to undertake Basic DBS checks for councillors; time would be required for each councillor to have an appointment with the Corporate and Policy Officer to undertake the DBS check process. Straightforward checks where both a passport and driving licence are available, take up to half an hour to input, and longer than this if other documents are required.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 A Basic level DBS check costs £21.50 per person. An additional fee for processing a Standard Check is charged by NEREO. It is not currently known what the additional fee will be for a Basic check with NEREO will be when this service commences, but a Standard check is currently £12 and it is anticipated that it will be a similar amount for a Basic check.
- 7.2 Assuming a £12 fee, the total cost for DBS Basic checks for 30 councillors at £33.50 each would be £1,005. However, it is noted that some members already hold a recent DBS certificate and may not require a further check.

8.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Equal Opportunity Implications

9.1 None

10.0 Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications

10.1 None.

11.0 Risk Assessment

11.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

12.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

12.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR? **YES**

12.2 Personal data would be required for the DBS check. This would be entered onto a secure, online platform for processing via NEREO, as detailed earlier in this report. Only the applicant and Corporate and Policy Officer would have access to the personal data.

13.0 Recommendations

13.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Receive the report and information at Appendix 1.
- ii) Consider if they wish to proceed with a Basic DBS check for all members.
- iii) If so, agree to delay the process of seeking councillor DBS Checks until NEREO's system accepts the Basic check, later this year.