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*Dear Mark,*

On 10 January 2018 during the debate on the final day of report stage of the Data Protection Bill you raised the question of the impact on parish councils. I am writing to clarify the position, particularly because you have emailed me on this subject.

I stated that parish councils can share a data protection officer with other parish councils as well as with district councils. I also stated that parish clerks can also fulfil the role of data protection officer, in addition to their role as a clerk. On this latter point, I would like to clarify that since the debate, the Information Commissioner has given further advice that this would only be permissible where the professional duties of the employee are compatible with the duties of the data protection officer and do not lead to a conflict of interest.

This means that whether a parish clerk can also be the data protection officer will need to be considered on a case by case basis and a different approach might be necessary depending on the exact circumstances and whether a conflict of interest exists.

The Information Commissioner is currently preparing further advice on this matter. I hope this will avoid any misunderstanding on this matter.

I am copying this letter to all those who spoke in the debate and am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

*Yours ever*

*Henry*

**Lord Ashton of Hyde**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State