South Hinksey Parish Council

Corporate Governance Questionnaire 2020-21

We remind clerks and members that this document serves to not only assist our assessment of the effectiveness of a Council's governance controls so that we may assign positive assurances in the AGAR IA Report, but to also act as an "aide memoire" to members when considering their responses to each item in the Governance Statement in the AGAR and help ensure compliance with best practice.

We also remind you that the document is for completion by the Council Chairman, not the Clerk / RFO

Area	Response (please provide detail below or on supplementary pages)
1. Please confirm whether or not Standing Orders; Financial Regulations and a Member's Code of Conduct are in place. If so, when were they last updated and formally adopted by the Council? **(If not on website, please provide an electronic copy of each).**	All are in place. The Financial Regulations were amended by the Council at its July 2021 meeting (minute ref 19/292). The Standing Orders were last amended at the Council's September 2019 meeting (minute ref 19/109). The Code of Conduct – the Council has adopted the Oxfordshire model agreed by all the Oxfordshire monitoring officers – was last re-adopted at the Council's 2019 Annual Council Meeting (minute ref 19/13. All three can be found on the Council's new website here: https://southhinksey-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/governance/
2. Where original minutes are not provided for our examination, please confirm that each page of the master copy is signed or initialed by the Chairman at the subsequent meeting or, in the current Covid situation, when next able	Pdf copies of the signed minutes of all meetings – apart from the March 2021 minutes, which still await approval – can be found on the Council's new website here: https://southhinksey-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/minutes/

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to.	
3. Does the Council meet the criteria for adoption of the General Power of Competence and, if so, has it been adopted? Please confirm minute reference. If reliance is still placed on S.137, etc, when considering the approval of grants and donations to local (and other) bodies, are the relevant powers considered and formally minuted? Where detail is only set out on an agenda paper, please provide an example.	The Council did not meet both criteria for adoption of the General Power of Competence in respect of 2020-21: two-thirds of the Council were declared elected in May 2019 but our Clerk does not hold a relevant qualification. The relevant powers are formally minuted for every payment by the Council, including Section 137 which was used only once in 2020-21: see minute ref 19/394.
4. Does the Council comply with the requirements of the Transparency Code and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (see AGAR front page), reporting all required documentation on its website? **Please advise the www.// address of the website, if not the straightforward Council's name.**	The Council seeks to comply with the Transparency requirements and publishes everything it believes is required – in almost every case by the required date. The Council commissioned a new website to meet accessibility requirements, which can be found here: https://southhinksey-pc.gov.uk/
5. We are now required to check and certify on the AGAR IA Report that the Council has complied with	The notice published on the website and noticeboard in 2020 can still be seen on the Council's new website here: https://southhinksey-pc.gov.uk/wp-

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legislative requirements posting a Notice of Public Rights to examine the financial records of the Council within the statutory time limits: please confirm compliance and provide a copy of the published notice. (Regulation 12 (3) of the Accounts and Audit Regs 2015 refers).	content/uploads/sites/32/2020/10/Notice-of-public-rights-exempt-authorities.pdf
6. Please confirm that all internal and external audit reports are presented to and agreed by members, also with agreement on the actions to be taken to address any issues identified. Again, please provide detail of the relevant meeting and minute reference.	The Council accepted the internal audit report for 2019-20 and discussed the auditor's comments [minute ref: 19/303]. The Council certified itself exempt from external audit for 2019-20 [minute ref 19/306].
7. Where neither annual income or expenditure exceed £25,000, does, or is the Council opting to exempt itself from the "Limited Assurance review" process? If so, the Council must comply with the requirements of the Transparency Code publishing all required information on the website.	Not applicable: the Council's receipts for 2020-21 have exceeded £25,000 although its payments have not

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8. Has the Council updated / reviewed its financial risk assessment and formally approved its re-adoption within the financial year (Governance and Accountability Manual refers)? **Please provide an electronic copy.**	Although the Vice-Chair and I identified an amendment to the Risk Assessment at the Budget Preparation meeting on 27th November 2020, the amended Risk Assessment was not tabled at any subsequent Council meeting – an unfortunate oversight
9. Please provide a brief description of the approach taken to the preparation and approval of the Annual Budget and Precept.	The Clerk put a paper to the Council's November 2020 meeting regarding the preparation of the 2021-22 budget and the Council agreed the recommendations it contained [minute ref 19/359]. I met with the Vice-Chair and the Clerk on 27th November. Our recommendations and draft 2021-22 budget were considered at the December 2020 meeting and approved without amendment, including the precept for 2021-22 [minute ref 19/378].
10. Please provide detail of the approved precept for 2021-22, indicating whether any Support Grant is receivable in either year and the amount, including reference to the relevant approving minutes. **If still received, the Support Grant should not be regarded as part of the precept in the AGAR Section 2.**	The Council approved a precept of £20,150 for 2020-21, an increase of £230 on the precept for 2020-21 but no change in the parish council element of the Council Tax [minute ref 19/378]. No Support Grant is receivable in either year.

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11. Does the Council formally consider and approve the level of reserves (General and Earmarked Funds) to be carried forward to the next financial year? (Such consideration should be minuted formally).	The 2021-22 budget, which can be viewed on the website, clearly showed provisions for an increase in the earmarked Elections reserve and the creation of a new earmarked Infrastructure reserve [minute ref 19/378]
12. When approving payments for release, do those members signing cheques, etc., check the payment detail to and sign-off / initial individual invoices? **Please provide a full description of the approval process from receipt of invoice through to release of funds, on a separate sheet -*this is particularly relevant in the light of Covid restrictions, so please advise the approach taken during "lockdown" periods.***	The two members signing payments examine and initial individual invoices before signing the payments and, in the case of cheques, initialling the cheque stubs
13. Are <u>all individual</u> payments by direct debit, bankers' standing order or internet (if in use), similarly examined and approved for payment by members? **Please provide detail of the controls in place over such payments, where different to those for cheque payments, *also bearing in mind the***	At its July 2020 meeting the Council adopted the provisions in the NALC Model Financial Regulations regarding direct debit, banker's standing order and internet banking. The Council has not, however, yet introduced internet banking. New direct debits have been agreed by the Council for commercial waste and business rates but have not yet come

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"lockdown" restrictions.	into force. The annual payment to the Information Commissioner's Office continues to be paid by a direct debit arrangement entered into in 2017-18 to take advantage of a discount for payment by direct debit. An annual standing order was set up in March 2020 to cover five annual payments to reimburse Oxfordshire County Council for implementation of the Hinksey Hill 30mph speed limit.
14. Does the Council / a nominated member review the detail of bank reconciliations routinely throughout the year and verify detail to underlying cashbooks and bank statements **(Practitioner's Guide and model NALC Financial Regulations refer)**?	Bank reconciliations were presented to the November 2020, December 2020 and February 2021 Council meetings, but it was not possible to arrange for the detail to be verified by an individual councillor due to Covid-19 restrictions
15. Does the Council operate a petty cash account or hold any cash floats?	Not applicable
16. Has a recent physical examination and verification of the Council's stock of assets been undertaken with detail agreed to the Asset Register? **If so, when and by whom and has the register been updated**	No such check took place as the Clerk minimized travel due to ill health and Covid-19 restrictions

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accordingly, where appropriate??	
17. Do members consider formally whether these assets should be included on the Council's insurance schedule or be regarded as "self-insured" (i.e. the Council would underwrite any loss rather than claim on the insurer)?	Members do not formally consider whether individual items should be included on the insurance schedule
18. Are asset values based on purchase cost net of VAT (where known)? Where detail of the purchase cost is unknown, asset values should be reported on the AGAR at the same value as in the previous year, except where new assets are acquired or disposed of.	Members do not formally consider whether individual items should be included on the insurance schedule
19. Has the Council considered preparation of a photographic record of physical assets owned? Such a record would assist the smooth progress of any insurance claim or police investigation following either accidental or willful damage to Council property.	Yes, and it has been started but it has not been completed due to Coviod-19 restrictions

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20. Where total funds exceeding £100,000 are held, the Council is now (w.e.f. 1 4 2018) legally required to develop and adopt annually a formal Investment Policy /Strategy. If applicable, please provide an electronic copy of the document and detail of the approving minute.	Not applicable

Certified by Chairman: Michael Cochrane

Date: Tuesday 30th March 2021

Name in full: Michael Cochrane

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