South Hinksey Parish Council

Corporate Governance Questionnaire 2019-20***: for completion by the Council Chairman, not the Clerk / RFO***

Area	Response (please provide detail below or on supplementary pages)
Please confirm whether or not Standing Orders; Financial Regulations and a Member's Code of Conduct are in place. If so, when was each last updated and formally adopted by the Council? **(Please provide an electronic copy of each).**	All are in place. The Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct were re-adopted unamended by the Council at the 2019 Annual Council Meeting (minute refs 19/12 and 13 respectively). The Standing Orders were amended at the Council's September 2019 meeting (minute ref 19/109). All three can be found on the website here: https://southhinksey.org/parish-council/governance/
Where original minutes are not provided for our examination, please confirm that each page of the master copy is signed or initialled by the Chairman at the subsequent meeting when they are approved.	Pdf copies of the signed minutes of all meetings – apart from the March 2020 minutes, which still await approval – can be found on the website here: https://southhinksey.org/parish-council/minutes/
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	The Council did not meet both criteria for adoption of the General Power of Competence in respect of 2019-20: 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

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other) bodies, are the relevant powers considered and formally minuted? Where detail is only set out on an agenda paper, please provide an example.	minuted for every payment by the Council, including Section 137 which was used only once in 2019-20: see minute ref 19/149.
Please advise/confirm that the Council is complying with the requirements of the Transparency Code posting the required documentation on its website **and also 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 uses a parish website (https://southhinksey.org/) originally established by the Friends of South Hinksey, an organisation that has not functioned since 2008. During 2019-20 the volunteer who has kindly maintained the website for many years passed over to our Clerk the posting of items, which has much reduced the delay in getting them published.
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 2018-19 [minute ref: 19/66]. The Council has had several discussions about the level and structure of its burial ground fees without, yet, reaching a final consensus [minute refs 19/183c, 19/205c, 19/228c, 19/251c]. The Council certified itself exempt from external audit for 2018-19

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	[minute ref 19/69].
Where neither annual income or expenditure exceed £25,000, does, or is the Council opting to exempt itself from the "Limited Assurance review" process?	I anticipate that the Council will opt to exempt itself from external audit for 2019-20 when it formally considers the matter
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.**	The Council last reviewed and amended the financial risk assessment at its September 2019 meeting [minute ref 19/108]. A copy can be accessed on the website here: https://southhinksey.org/parish-council/governance/
Please provide a brief description of the approach taken to the preparation and approval of the Annual Budget and Precept (on a separate sheet if necessary).	The Clerk put a paper to the Council's November 2019 regarding the preparation of the 2020-21 budget and the Council agreed the recommendations it contained [minute ref 19/154]. I met with the Vice-Chair and the Clerk on 11th November. Our recommendations and draft 2020-21 budget were considered at the December 2019 meeting where the Council approved an amended budget and precept for 2020-21 [minute ref 19/177].
Please provide detail of the approved precept for 2019-20 and 2020-21, indicating whether any Support Grant is receivable in either	The Council approved a precept of £19,920 for 2020-21, an increase of £5,570 on the precept for 2019-20 [minute ref 19/177].

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year and the amount, including reference to the relevant approving minutes. **Please note that, if still received, the Support Grant should not be regarded as part of the precept in the AGAR Section 2.**	No Support Grant is receivable in either year
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).	Yes. These figures were clearly shown in the agreed 2020-21 budget, which can be viewed on the website [minute ref 19/199]
When approving payments for release, do those members signing cheques, BACS, 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.**	The two members signing payments examine and initial individual invoices before signing the payments and, in the case of cheques, initialling the cheque stubs
Are all individual 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.**	In 2019-20, the Council decided to set up direct debit and standing order arrangements for various regular charges: • Annual charge for a garden waste bin for the burial ground – bin refused by VoWHDC [minute ref 19/34d] • Monthly standing order to pay the Clerk's net salary for the final six months of 2019-20 [minute

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	ref 19/123] • Direct debit for monthly commercial waste charges at the burial ground – refused by the Council's bank [minute ref 19/117b]. 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.
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 **(Governance and Accountability Manual and model NALC Financial Regulations refer)**?	Bank reconciliations were presented to the October and December 2019 Council meetings, but the detail had not been verified by an individual councillor
Does the Council operate a petty cash account or hold any cash floats?	Not applicable
Has a recent physical examination and verification of the Councils stock of assets been undertaken with detail agreed to the Asset Register detail? **If so, when and by whom and has the register been updated accordingly, where appropriate??**	This check has not taken place due to the Clerk's ill health and the coronavirus restrictions

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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
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 Annual Return at the same value as the previous year, except where new assets are acquired or disposed of.	Asset values are based on purchase cost net of VAT where known. Where the purchase cost is unknown, asset values are reported on the Annual Return at the same value as the previous year.
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.	Not applicable

Certified by Chairman: Mich Cochrane

Date: 27 May 2020

Name in full: Michael Cochrane

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