

South Hinksey Parish Council

Corporate Governance Questionnaire 2021-22

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)
<p>1. Please confirm whether or not Standing Orders; Financial Regulations and a Member's Code of Conduct are in place.</p> <p>If so, when were they last updated and formally adopted by the Council?</p> <p>(If not on website, please provide an electronic copy of each).</p>	<p>All are in place and can be found on the Council's website here: https://southhinksey-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/governance/.</p> <p>The Council re-adopted its Financial Regulations and the Code of Conduct without amendment at its 2021 Annual Meeting (minute ref 21/13 and 14).</p> <p>The Council reviewed its Standing Orders against the model ones produced by the National Association of Local Councils at its October 2021 meeting and agreed in principle to adopt the latter (minute ref 21/89) but a final version tailored to the Council's needs has not yet been approved by the Council.</p>
<p>2. Where possible, we will review minutes on the Council's website: consequently, please confirm that each page of the master copy is signed or initialled by the Chair at the subsequent meeting or, in</p>	<p>You will find pdf copies of the signed minutes of all meetings on the Council's website here: https://southhinksey-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/minutes/</p>

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the light of Covid, when next able to.	
<p>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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Where detail is only set out on an agenda paper, please provide an example.</p>	<p>The Council did not meet both criteria for adoption of the General Power of Competence in respect of 2021-22: two-thirds of the Council were declared elected in May 2019 but our Clerk does not hold a relevant qualification.</p> <p>Our Clerk formally minutes the relevant powers for every payment the Council makes, including Section 137 which was used only once in 2021-22: see minute ref 21/198a.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>The Council seeks to comply with the Transparency requirements and publishes everything it believes is required – in almost every case by the required date.</p>
<p>5. We are now required to check and certify on the AGAR IA Report that the Council has complied with</p>	<p>The notice that our Clerk published on our website and noticeboard in 2021 can still be seen on the Council's website here: https://southhinksey-pc.gov.uk/wp-</p>

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<p>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).</p>	<p>content/uploads/sites/32/2021/06/Notice-of-public-rights-2020-21.pdf</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Both were presented to and agreed by members, and the recommendations discussed: the internal audit report at the Council's June 2022 meeting (minute ref 21/39); the external audit report at the Council's October 2022 meeting (minute ref 21/93).</p>
<p>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?</p> <p>If so, the Council must comply with the requirements of the Transparency Code publishing all required information on the website.</p>	<p>Not applicable: the Council's receipts for 2021-22 have exceeded £25,000 although its payments have not.</p>

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<p>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.</p>	<p>The Council reviewed and updated its financial risk assessment at its January 2022 meeting (minute ref 21/169).</p>
<p>9. Please provide a brief description of the approach taken to the preparation and approval of the Annual Budget and Precept.</p>	<p>Our Clerk put papers to the Council's November and December 2021 meeting regarding the preparation of the 2022-23 budget and the Council agreed their recommendations (minutes ref 21/112 and 135).</p> <p>I met with our Vice-Chair and Clerk on 16th December.</p> <p>Our recommendations and draft 2022-23 budget were considered at the January 2022 meeting and approved without amendment, including the precept for 2022-23 (minute ref 21/156).</p>
<p>10. Please provide detail of the approved precept for 2022-23, including reference to the relevant approving minutes.</p>	<p>The Council approved a precept of £20,696 for 2022-23, an increase of £546 on the precept for 2021-22 and of 2% in the parish council element of the Council Tax (minute ref 21/156).</p>
<p>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).</p>	<p>The 2022-23 budget, which can be viewed on the website, clearly showed provisions for an increase in the earmarked Elections reserve (minute ref 21/156).</p>

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<p>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.</p>	<p>The two members signing payments examine and initial individual invoices before signing the payments and, in the case of cheques, initialling the cheque stubs</p>
<p>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 “lockdown” restrictions.</p>	<p>The Council has not yet used internet banking although it has been set up.</p> <p>The Council confirmed three pre-existing variable direct debit agreements at its 2021 Annual Meeting (minute ref 21/23) where it also voted to set up a monthly standing order for our Clerk’s salary and discussed issues with its annual standing order in favour of Oxfordshire County Council.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Our Clerk presented bank reconciliations to the September 2021, December 2021, February 2022 and March 2022 Council meetings, but I did not feel he should be required to sit down with a councillor to</p>

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statements (Practitioner's Guide and model NALC Financial Regulations refer)?	go through the detail of transactions while the Covid-19 pandemic continued.
15. Does the Council operate a petty cash account or hold any cash floats?	No
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 accordingly, where appropriate??	No such check took place in 2021-22 but our Clerk will carry one out in 2022-23.
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)?	No
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	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.

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where new assets are acquired or disposed of.	
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 wilful damage to Council property.	Yes, our Clerk has started one but not yet completed it.
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:

Date:

Name in full:

Hon. Michael Cochrane