Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2021-22 – Clerk's Report

Summary

In common with all Parish and Town Councils in England and Wales, the Council is required to complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which is externally audited. The submission documents and the results of the audit are published, and the accounts are open to inspection for a period of time.

Background

The Council has submitted returns for the past 3 or more years indicating failings and weaknesses, and this submission reflects this, as a Council recovering after a few years of turmoil, and specifically a year which started with a complaint and threat of "no confidence" from a number of influential residents.

There has been progress during the year, but this is not yet reflected in this return. This year's internal audit report largely re-states many of the known failings.

Process for completing the AGAR

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return comprises the following sections

- The Annual Internal Audit Report, which is attached as a paper in Item 5.2.
- Section 1, the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21, to be completed at the meeting, together with explanations for any negative responses. Both are to be approved in this meeting. More guidance is given below.
- Section 2, the Accounting Statements, which I have completed with the assistance of the Internal Auditor, and Council is asked to approve.
- Section 3, the External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2020/21 is provided to us by the External Auditors, normally in late summer.

Steps to follow at the meeting:

The steps are carefully prescribed (see appendix), and at the meeting we need to:

1. Receive the Annual Internal Audit Report
2. Approve The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1)
3. Approve The Accounting Statements (Section 2)
4. And then sign the Clerk and Chairman sign the Annual Governance Statement and the Chairman signs the Accounting Statements.

In addition, the following supporting documents are approved:

5. The cashbook (financial statement);
6. An analysis of any significant year on year variances;
7. A bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2022;
8. Details of the arrangements for the exercise of public rights

With respect to this last item, the dates for the public to view the accounting information this year will be 22nd June 2022 to Tuesday 2nd August 2022 (which complies with the requirement that it include the first 10 working days of July.

Following the meeting

- At the first opportunity, the day after the meeting, I submit the forms as approved, to the External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn
- Also on the day after the meeting, 22nd June 2022, I display the Notice of Public Rights (on a Noticeboard and on the Council's website)
- During a period of up to 3 months following this meeting, I answer any queries that PKF Littlejohn have.
- Before 1st October, on receipt from PKF Littlejohn, I display the External Auditor Report and Certificate, the audited Annual Governance Statement, and audited accounts.
- At the next meeting of Council, on 19th July, I propose to present for approval an action plan to address all of the weaknesses and observations from the Internal Auditor, and otherwise arising.

Richard Maccabee, Batheaston Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer

21st June 2022