

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

	Agreed		Yes means that this authority:	
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.		✓	prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.		✓	made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.	
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.		✓	has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.	
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.		✓	during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.	
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.		✓	considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.	
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.	
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.		✓	responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.	
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.	
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
		✓		

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

21/06/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

366.10

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

W. E. Heppard

Clerk

ONSLEY

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Annual Governance Statements

1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.

No – Until February 2023, bills for payment schedules were inaccurate and did not correspond with payments made. Payments were made before being approved by the Parish Council. Spend was agreed at meetings without an appropriate agenda item. Invoices sent out were incorrect / not sent. Debts to Council were not consistently followed up. Several payments were made twice once by BACs and once by cheque, resulting in slightly inflated payments and receipts. Earmarked reserves remained not understood or incorrectly allocated until March 2023.

2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.

No – Until March 2023, bank reconciliations, whilst produced, were not presented to Council quarterly as stated in the Councils Financial Regulations. Bank Reconciliations produced were incorrect. Not every receipt / payment was accompanied by documentation. Several payments were made twice once by BACs and once by cheque resulting in inflated payments and receipts. A regular contractor was overpaid throughout 2022/23 until February 2023. No financial information was publicly available on the Council's website, except for the AGAR (from November) and the first budget of the year. No internal audit reports were uploaded until February 2023.

3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.

No – Prior to February 2023 spend was agreed at meetings without an appropriate agenda item. No internal checks (except for the internal auditor) were in place. Transparency code best practice was not followed, and so no financial information was publicly available on the Council's website, except for the AGAR and the first budget of the year. No internal audit reports or regular budgets were uploaded until February 2023. VAT has been claimed twice for the first quarter of the year.

4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

No – The notice was published for the period of elector rights to be between the 13th of June and the 22nd of July 2022. Arrangements were made for an objector to exercise their rights. A list of what the objector wished to see was sent in advance of the meeting. The objector met with the Chairman on the 12th of July 2022, but the Clerk as the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) was not present. The Chairman was unable to answer the questions asked and not all the documentation requested was present. A further request to view the accounts on the 19th of July was refused. After a complaint to the External auditor was upheld the exercise of public rights was readvertised (26th July – 5th August). Whilst another opportunity was given to view the accounts there was no attendance from the Clerk / RFO and the pre-requested documentation was not present.

5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.

No – Whilst there was adopted a financial risk assessment during 2022/23 it wasn't reviewed between May 2021 and March 2023. The council do not feel that they can say yes to this assertion as there were elements of the risk assessment which were not followed throughout the year.

6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.

Yes – Bridget Bowen is employed to undertake the Annual Internal Audit.

7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.

No – No external audit reports existed for 2020/2021 & 2021/22 due to public challenge until May 2023. Internal audit exists. However, an email stream shows that the internal audit report received was only sent to the Parish Councillors 3 hours before the meeting when it was due to be considered, despite having been received over a week previously. The same recommendation from the internal auditor appears on internal audit reports since June 202, which was not resolved until February 2023.

The internal audit report received in March 2023 highlighted many concerns of which all except one have been resolved.

8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.

Yes - We believe that we have identified any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, that may have a financial impact on this authority and have included them in the accounting statements.

9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee, we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.

No – No separate trustee meetings have been held since February 2022. The trustee expenditure was not kept separate, and the play equipment funding was sourced and added without permission from the Trust. The Coronation Hall, where the Parish Council is Custodian Trustee, was included on the Asset Register.