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Geoff Davis

Clerk to Southstoke Parish Council

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Ref: Internal Audit Southstoke Parish Council

26th April 2018

Dear Parish Council,

I conducted an internal audit for the Parish Council on 25th April 2018. Overall the system examined is addressing the requirements, but, I have the following concerns to raise with the Council.

2018 Audit recommendations

Councillors

- Some out of date information noted on the Councillors page of the Council website. To be updated and maintained to reflect current status.
- Declaration of interest forms reviewed, and inconsistencies and incomplete declarations found. Profession or employment status (ie Retired / Student) should be explicitly declared. Under Land – this should include the Councillor's residence, however held – (owner/ tenant /lessee etc); any place of business within the Council managed area; any additional land-holding. **These are particularly important to capture as they impact on the Councillor's position with regard to potential conflicts of interest for matters under discussion and votes on Council business.**

Governance / Transparency

- It was noted that some of the meeting minutes for the period on the Council website were still showing as draft when approved versions should have been uploaded. This is a maintenance issue and the website should reflect the current position within a reasonable time-frame after activities have taken place.
- Backups and security of data – it is recommended that the off-site data security (Chairman's copy of passwords and important documents) information is checked for currency periodically – perhaps annually or on some other suitable cycle.

GDPR compliance

- I note that the Councillors' names are listed on the website, without contact details, contact all being indicated through the clerk. This is satisfactory from the perspective of the protection of Councillors personal details. Council must review any other publications (noticeboard / newsletters etc) to ensure that consent for exposure and/or use of personal details has been obtained.

Risk Assessment and Asset Register

- I note that the Risk Assessment is displayed in narrative form rather than tabular. I feel it would represent better practice if the risk assessment was tabular, allowing the structure to indicate review processes have been undertaken, and that degrees of risk, potential impact, and mitigation actions where applicable have been evaluated to a consistent and formal method.
- The Asset Register is also in narrative form. Since a number of the assets are explicitly location sensitive (Lookout, Wansdyke information boards etc), I would like to see some location information recorded against the assets, of a form to be determined by the Council. As the Council is rich in location sensitive assets it would be pleasing to see them celebrated, perhaps in the form of a walking route or aerial plan.

Of the above concerns, I am confident that the majority are minor issues. My main concern is for the Council's ability to prove its objectivity in decision making. It is key to this proof that Councillors can clearly demonstrate their compliance with the Code of Conduct. Accurate declarations in the Register of Members' Interests is an important element of this demonstration.

Thank you for inviting me to perform your internal audit. I trust it will be of assistance to the Council in the continuation of its good work on behalf of the community.



Sarah Richardson

26 April 2018