

# Shorne Parish Council

Borough of Gravesham



## Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

In accordance with the Annual Governance & Accountability Report guidance, the Parish Council is required to provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'NO' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified.

The Parish Council has responded 'NO' to the following:

<b>Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023 Actions Taken.</b>		<b>Response</b>
4	<p>We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</p>	NO
	<p><b>REASON FOR OUR 'NO' RESPONSE:</b></p> <p>During our internal audit for 2021/22, it was found that we had included incorrect dates in the notice of the period for the exercise of public rights published on our website on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This gave the impression that electors were not provided with the 30 working days required. It does not appear that Section 1 and Section 2 were included with the notice.</p> <p>In addition, it appears that Section 3 External Audit Report and Certificate was not published on our website until some time after the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Again, it does not appear that Sections 1 and 2 were included.</p> <p>In both cases, the notices were not easily identifiable on our website once the initial notification had passed, as they were filed under a general menu category entitled "Information".</p> <p><b>ACTIONS TAKEN:</b></p> <p>The omitted Sections 1 &amp; 2 have now been included with the notice for the exercise of public rights published for 2021/22. The website has now been amended to provide a separate, clearly identifiable menu category entitled "AGAR Annual Governance &amp; Accountability Returns".</p> <p>The Parish Council will ensure that the publication requirements and relevant dates are clearly understood and adhered to in future. These will be circulated in advance, and the website will be checked to ensure that the requirements have been met. This has been carried out for 2023/24.</p>	
2	<p>The External Auditor's limited assurance opinion has pointed out that the Internal Audit report identified significant weaknesses in internal control during 2022/23. However, the Council answered yes to assertion 2 of the annual governance statement.</p>	YES
	<p><b>REASON FOR OUR 'YES' RESPONSE:</b></p> <p>The Parish Council reviewed and approved its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations during 2022/23, it had proper payment authorisation processes in place, and it reviewed its expenditure at each Parish Council meeting. It is acknowledged that the Asset Register was not reviewed during this year, but</p>	

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	<p>there was no significant change in assets during 2022/23. The Parish Council therefore considers that the internal controls in 2022/23 were adequate for the period, although there was room for improvement.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS TAKEN:</b></p> <p>A programme of review of all internal controls has since been introduced, including the Asset Register and the introduction of regular bank reconciliations which had previously been carried out but not recorded at Parish Council meetings at the same time as the finance report.</p>	
5	<p>The External Auditor's limited assurance opinion has pointed out that the Council stated in Section 1, item 5, that it has carried out a risk assessment and taken appropriate action to manage those risks. However, no financial risk review has been carried out during 2022/23.</p>	YES
	<p><b>REASON FOR OUR 'YES' RESPONSE:</b></p> <p>The Risk Register was circulated to members on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and again on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022 for review. It was recirculated on 23<sup>rd</sup> February reflecting comments received. It was approved on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022.</p> <p>At the Parish Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023, members were requested to review the Risk Register. This was recirculated to members on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023. At the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023, no comments had been received, and it was decided to put it on the agenda for approval on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023. There was no meeting of the Council before this date. The Risk Register was formally approved without amendment at the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023.</p> <p>It is clear that the Risk Register had in fact been reviewed during 2022/23, and that the risks remained unchanged, although it is acknowledged that it was not formally approved until 14 days after the year end.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS TAKEN:</b></p> <p>A programme of review of all internal controls has since been introduced, including the Risk Register, to ensure that the reviews are formally recorded in the minutes during each financial year.</p>	