

Creeting St Peter Parish Council

Internal Audit Report Response & Action Plan 2022/23 - 17 July 2023

There were five recommendations and six comments encouraging further action included in the Council's internal audit report for 2022/23, dated 9 June 2023, prepared by Suffolk Association of Local Councils. The following responses and actions were agreed by the Council on 17 July 2023:

(REC01) Council must ensure at least annual reviews of its assets to ensure correct cover is held for all items under the Parish Council remit.

The Responsible Financial Officer will consider the adequacy of the insurance arrangements in place and make any recommendations for change when preparing the asset register for review and approval by the Council at its meeting in March 2024.

(REC02) In order to be compliant with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council must correctly demonstrate it has provided the exercise of public rights for the required period/dates.

At its meeting in June 2023, the Council reviewed and approved the Notice of Public Rights for 2022/23 which had been prepared by the Responsible Financial Officer. It was to commence its inspection period on 26 June 2023 following its publication on the Council's web site on 23 June 2023. This recommendation was therefore implemented in June 2023.

(REC03) In order to comply with the Publication Requirements, the Council must publish the information as detailed above for a period of five years on its web site.

Immediately following their review and approval by the Council at its meeting, all the documents identified for 2022/23 which had been prepared by the Responsible Financial Officer were published on the Council's web site in June 2023. This recommendation was therefore implemented in June 2023.

(REC04) Information required by the Transparency Code has not been published on the Council's web site for the period 2021/22.

Immediately following their review and approval by the Council at its meeting, all the documents identified for 2022/23 which had been prepared by the Responsible Financial Officer were published on the Council's web site in June 2023. This recommendation was therefore implemented in June 2023.

(REC05) It is noted that a General Privacy Notice was provided which had been adopted in March 2023 but had not yet been published. Council could look to update and increase its portfolio of documentation to include some of the following: Data Protection and Security Policy; Publication Scheme; Publication Policy Overview and Freedom of Information Approved Information Available and Schedule of Charges, Consent Form, Data Protection Management Policy, Privacy Notice Staff/Councillors, Security Breach Procedure and Subject Access Request Policy (SAR).

The Parish Clerk will publish the General Privacy Notice on the web site by the end of July 2023 and develop the Council's portfolio of GDPR documentation for review and approval in 2023/24.

(COM01) The minutes of the meeting held 28 November 2022 are not published on the Council's web site.

The Parish Clerk will ensure that draft minutes of meetings are published on the Council's web site within one month, in accordance with the Transparency Code, by the end of July 2023.

(COM02) At the next annual review, Council might wish to also review the Procurement Thresholds amendments (SI 2022/139) of the Public Contracts (Amendment) Regulations 2022 which came into force on 21 December 2022 and make the changes to the contract value limits from £25,000 to £30,000 for non-central government authorities. The contract value limits are to be calculated inclusive of VAT (effective from 1 January 2022). Council might also wish to add a review date to the documents uploaded to the web site to provide further evidence of such a review.

Financial Regulations were reviewed without amendment and approved by the Council at its meeting in May 2023. The Parish Clerk will therefore include the amendment to the procurement threshold and the date of the review and re-present the Financial Regulations to the Council for final review and approval at its meeting in July 2023.

(COM03) The budget was not available to view or published on the Council's web site.

A copy of the Council's budget for 2022/23 could not be located by the Responsible Financial Officer. The budget for 2023/24 was published on the Council's web site in June 2023. This comment was therefore addressed in June 2023.

(COM04) The council has confirmed employment contracts are not yet in place. It is noted in the minutes of the full Council meeting held on 20 March 2023 that this is to be addressed.

The Parish Clerk will arrange to address the outstanding matter of employment contracts for formal approval by the Council at its meeting in September 2023.

(COM05) The Asset Register on the Council's web site is dated 31 March 2021, with the actual summary information within the document detailed 31 March 2020. This requires updating. At a meeting held on 20 March 2023 it was agreed by full Council that this was to be reviewed by the Clerk and returned to the May meeting. An up to date Asset Register was provided.

Asset Registers for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were prepared by the Responsible Financial Officer, reviewed and approved by the Council at its meeting in May 2023 and published on the web site in June 2023. This comment was therefore addressed in June 2023.

(COM06) The link to the District Council's web site does not clearly direct you to the Register of Members' Interests. Council may wish to use a more direct link.

The Parish Clerk will update the Council's web site with a direct link to Mid Suffolk District Council's Register of Members' Interests web site by the end of July 2023.