

Croughton Parish Council
Annual Governance Statement
YE 31 March 2015

Annual Governance Statement	Measures Taken
<p>1. We have approved the accounting statements prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations and proper practices</p>	<p>The Council has appointed the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) (Local Government Act 1972 s151).</p> <p>The annual accounts for Year Ending 31st March 2015 were formally approved at the Parish Council Meeting held 13th April 2015. (Minute No. 9.3)</p> <p>The Accounting Statement was brought to the Council for approval on 11th May 2015.</p> <p>The Council, through Northants CALC, appoints an independent Internal Auditor who completes section 4 of the Annual Return.</p>
<p>2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness</p>	<p>The Council approved Financial Regulations in June 2014. (Minute No. 11.4)</p> <p>The Council has scheduled in a review of its Standing Orders for October 2015.</p> <p>The Council appointed the Internal Control Councillor at its Meeting on 9th June 2014 (Minute No. 7.6), The Council included a new entry (Compliance with the Pensions Act 2008) in its Financial Risk Assessment document. This was approved on 8th December 2014 (Minute No. 11.4). The Internal Control Councillor carried out quarterly checks in July 2014, October 2014, January 2015 and April 2015. Each report was presented to the Council for information and action as required. (Minute No. 7.4, CPC 14.07.14; Minute No. 9.1. CPC 13.10.14; Minute No. 9.1. CPC 12.01.15; Minute No. 9.1 CPC 13.04.15)</p> <p>The Council monitors the Budget on a quarterly cycle and reviewed its Internal Control Processes on 14th July 2014. The Council adopted the recommendation of the review to amend Work Elements 'Bank Reconciliation' and 'Bank Statements'. (Minute No. 7.4).</p> <p>At the Annual Parish Council Meeting held 12th May 2014 the Council resolved to enter into its second 3 year long term insurance agreement with the current provider effective as from 1st June 2014. (Minute No. 12.1) The standard limit of Fidelity Guarantee has increased to £150,000 which is greatly in excess of current requirements. The Parish Council reviewed the level required at its Meeting held 9th March 2015. (Minute No. 9.3)</p> <p>The Council reviewed the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit for 2014/15 on 12th January 2015 and concluded that it was satisfied that it had an adequate and effective system of controls in place. (Minute No. 13.4.2)</p>
<p>3. We have taken all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice which could have a significant financial effect on</p>	<p>The Council is an affiliated member of National Association of Local Councils (NALC) by virtue of its membership of the County Association of Local Councils. The Clerk is a member of the Society of Local Council Clerks and has been awarded the Certificate in Local Council Administration. The Council does not exercise the General Power of Competence.</p> <p>Croughton Parish Council was awarded Quality Parish Council Status in January 2011. The Council has been awarded free Foundation Status for 2015 under the Local Council Award Scheme, which has</p>

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<p>the ability of the council to conduct its business or on its finances.</p>	<p>replaced the Quality Council Scheme.</p> <p>The Council receives advice from the Monitoring Officer (subsequently the Head of Law and Governance) at the District Council (South Northamptonshire Council SNC). The Council adopted the new interim model Code of Conduct published by NALC on 11th June 2012 (Minute No. 11.4) The final version of the Code with the inclusion of Appendix A' Disclosable Pecuniary Interests' was adopted on 9th July 2012. (Minute No. 2). To receive requests for Dispensations is a standing item on the Agenda.</p> <p>Standing Order 3l was amended in line with the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014 (CPC 13th October 2014 Minute No. 12.4.2) From January 2015 the Council has complied with the Regulations with the Chairman's announcement at the start of Meetings that Members of the Public are permitted to photograph, record, film, broadcast and report on the Meeting, and with the display of Public Notices at the Meeting venue and in the Noticeboards.</p> <p>The Council is considering the Openness and Accountability regime in respect of its website and compliance with the Transparency Code. Training on these matters has been undertaken by one Member and the Clerk.</p> <p>The Council amended the wording of its Corporate Complaints Procedure on 10th March 2014 (Minute No. 10.4.3).</p> <p>The Council renewed its Data Protection registration in March 2015.</p> <p>Section 137 expenditure does not exceed the statutory limit for the Council. The Council has not made any grants this year with the exception of a £25 grant for a poppy wreath. (CPC 13th October 2014 Minute No. 7.3)</p> <p>The Council has a training budget, reviewed its Training Statement of Intent in June 2014, maintains a training log, and has designated funds in reserve.</p> <p>The Council approved its Freedom of Information Publication Scheme on 10th March 2014 (Minute No. 10.4.4) The next review is scheduled for December 2015.</p> <p>The Council adopted an Equal Opportunities Policy at its Meeting on 14th April 2014 (Minute No. 10.4.4).</p>
<p>4. We have provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts & Audit Regulations</p>	<p>Council meetings are open to the public and allow for Public Participation. Agendas and Minutes are published on the web site.</p> <p>The Council held its Annual Parish Assembly on 20th April 2015. The Chairman presented the Annual Report 2014-15 at the Meeting. Copies of the report are available on the website and were inserted into the Croughton News (May 2015 issue) which is delivered free of charge to all households and businesses in the parish.</p> <p>The Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Electors' Rights will be displayed from 11th May to</p>

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	<p>24th May 2015. The records will be made available between 26th May and 22nd June 2015. The Annual Return and Notice of Conclusion of Audit for YE 31st March 2013 were displayed in the parish noticeboards for 14 days from 15th August 2013.</p>
<p>5. We have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the council and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.</p>	<p>The Council entered into a 3 year agreement with Came & Company, specialists in local council insurance provision. The Defibrillator and bespoke cabinet have been added to the schedule. The Asset Register was updated accordingly, and carries a note to the effect that the Council's Lighting Assets are not insured. The 2 no. VAS devices are the responsibility of NCC.</p> <p>The Council approved the Asset Register to YE 31st March 2015 at the Parish Council Meeting on 9th March 2015. (Minute No. 9.1) An additional footway lighting column has been installed at the affordable housing development. Once adopted by the Parish Council it will be added to the lighting stock recorded on the Asset Register.</p> <p>The Council requires Contractors to have public liability insurance and to produce evidence of this. The Council's long term agreement for dog waste services runs until 31st December 2015 with the option to continue to 31st March 2020. (CPC Meeting 9th January 2012 Minute no. 6.4 refers; Also noted at CPC Meeting 12th January 2015 Minute No. 14.4.1) The Council resolved to continue with the current Grasscutting contract for 2015. (CPC Meeting 12th January 2015 Minute No. 14.4.1.2) Lighting Maintenance is under continual review.</p> <p>The Council does not own any play equipment.</p> <p>The Council allows local groups to hold events on its land on the strong recommendation that they take out insurance in the event of any legal liabilities arising from their event. The Council is developing a Pocket Park through The Friends of Portway Working Party which has its own insurance in respect of activities it undertakes on the land. Tenancy Rule 15 of the Policy for the Allotment Gardens covers this and tenants are all issued with this information at the commencement of their tenancy.</p> <p>Risk management is informed through regular inspections of Council property, commencing with the annual inspection of sites, amenities and lighting stock in June. A written record is held on file. The Council considers any recommendations and receives updates. (Minute No. 10.2 CPC 14th July 2014; Minute No. 10.2.2 CPC 11th August 2014; Minute No. 11.2.2 CPC 8th September 2014; Minute No. 12.2.2 13th October 2014)</p> <p>The Proper Officer keeps the Burial Records up to date and securely stored. The current tariff was reviewed on 12th January 2015, but no increases were made (Minute No. 14.4.4).</p> <p>Allotment tenants enter into a legal agreement. 2 residents were on the Waiting List for new plots at 31st March 2015. The policy will be reviewed in August 2015.</p> <p>Lighting Faults are reported to the Contractor for immediate attention. Lamp No. 18 is to be replaced at a</p>

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	<p>cost of £320 + vat. (CPC Meeting 13th April 201, Minute No.12.1) Reports on the condition of two other lamps are awaited. Householders have been asked to cut back any branches that are likely to interfere with power cables or lamps. The Council has no immediate plans to place electric cables underground. The Lighting Risk Assessment Schedule is integral to the Risk Assessment document.</p> <p>The Council appoints a Footpaths Warden who has attended a training course on Rights of Way and the Definitive Map and who reports back to Council. One Member is the designated Highways representative and reports minor highway defects via the Street Doctor online reporting system as appropriate.</p> <p>The Council has designated funds in respect of repairs to the allotments wall and water pipe, repairs to street lighting, the defibrillator, cemetery refurbishment and website. The Reserves are reviewed during the year and virements made as appropriate. The Council holds £5,600 in General Reserves.</p> <p>The Council enters into a s136 Agreement with Northamptonshire Highways to carry out grasscutting of highway verges. (Minute No. 7.5 CPC Meeting 8th December 2014)</p>
<p>6. We have maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council accounting records and control systems.</p>	<p>The Internal Control Councillor is appointed annually in June. The ICC carries out a quarterly review of the accounts and procedures and reports back to the Council.</p> <p>The Action Plan outcomes for 2014/2015 were reviewed quarterly and the final document approved on 13th April 2015 (Minute No. 13.4.1) and objectives for 2015/2016 were considered in November and December 2014, and in March 2015. The document was approved on 13th April 2015 (Minute No. 13.4.2).</p> <p>The Internal Auditor carried out a preliminary inspection on 5th February 2015. There were no issues arising from the Report which the Council considered on 9th February 2015. (Minute No.9.1) The Internal Auditor completes section 4 of the Annual Return. This is arranged for 6th May 2015.</p> <p>The Council has reviewed the following policies during 2014/2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Emergency Response Plan: Review in progress (CPC 9th June 2014; 14th July 2014) Rota updated 15th December 2014. Public Forums 15th December 2014 and 23rd February 2015. ii. Training Statement of Intent (CPC 9th June 2014 Minute No. 11.4.3) iii. Standing Orders: Approved 13th January 2014. SO3I revised (Minute No. 12.4.2 CPC 13th October 2014) iv. Community Engagement Strategy 2014/2017: Instigated 12th January 2015 (Minute No. 14.4.3) Agreed to focus on more closely after the local elections. v. Local Plan: To consider whether to move towards a Neighbourhood Plan (CPC Meeting 9th February 2015 Minute No 10.4) Agreed to defer decision pending publication of SNC Local Plan. vi. Special Meetings: Approved: 9th March 2015 (Minute No. 12.4.2) vii. Advertising on the Newsletter and on the Website: Reviewed 9th March 2015 (Minute No. 12.4.3)

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	The Council also Approved an Elections Plan and made a concerted effort to publicise the local elections in May 2015. (CPC 13 th October 2014 Minute No. 12.3) One Member attended a Recruitment Briefing in November 2014. The election was uncontested but the Council retained its electoral mandate.
7. We have taken appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	On 8 th September 2014 the Council Approved and Accepted the report of the External Auditor. (Minute No. 8.1) The Notice of Conclusion of Audit dated 27 th July 2014 was publicly displayed for the statutory period.
8. We have considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the council and, where appropriate have included them in the statement of accounts.	We have disclosed everything that is required of us to disclose about our business during the year. No post year-end events are planned.