

Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council

Report on the Review of the Corporate Governance Suite of Documents

**Dominic Stapleton, BA(Hons), FILCM
October 2016**

Introduction

1. The Corporate Governance suite of documents were reviewed and updated throughout 2016 following correspondence and meetings with the Town Clerk, Johnathan Bourne and Kalpesh Patel, the Accountant.
2. The purpose of this report is to accompany the documents and offer members details of some of the significant and important changes, it should be noted that all the changes were discussed and guided by conversations with the Town Clerk and the Accountant. It should also be noted that documents were changed only if required through legislation, changes in proper practice or to update as required in line with and by the time difference following the last review. It remains for the Council to consider the actual policy content and priorities within.

The Changes

3. To list all the changes made would not be practicable within the confines of this report and would provide an unwieldy and long list. Therefore, included below are some of the significant and important changes.

Standing Orders (SOs)

4. SOs have been updated to reflect changes in legislation such as contracts, the Code of Conduct and photographing and recording meetings which is now permitted, see para 11 below. They have also been changed to clarify and make it clear that delegations may be made to committee, sub-committees and officers but not to individual councillors.

Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) - Duties and Responsibilities

5. This document has been updated to reflect the appointment is made as required by legislation and reference to proper practices included as these have important implications for the RFO role.

Financial Management Strategy (FMS)

6. FMS has been updated to reflect changes in external and internal audit providers and legislation with the abolition of the Audit Commission. It has also been updated to reflect changes in the Council's service providers and capital projects.

Financial Regulations (FRs)

7. This document has been updated to reflect changes in the model financial regulations published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). It has also been updated in line with changes in the public contracts legislation, the audit and account regulations and proper practices. Another significant and important inclusion has been following the change in the legislation surrounding banking and cheque arrangements, and the FRs also now give the opportunity and flexibility for the Council to consider electronic banking should it so wish.

Scheme of Delegation

8. The scheme has been updated to clarify the proper officer duties and those decisions that may not be delegated by the Council to a committee. The amount of emergency expenditure by the Town Clerk outside of the agreed budget has also been increased in line with other councils to £25,000 from £5,000.

New Policies

9. A new policy has been drafted for the Model Publication Scheme in line with legislation, it is based on the model version from the Information Commissioners Office.
10. The Council's complaints policy has been re-written and the drafted version was based on best practice and cherry picking from a number of other policies available on the internet.
11. As previously mentioned in paragraph 4 above, the legislation on photographing and recording meetings has changed, and it is now permitted. Standing Orders have been changed to reflect this and to offer clarity to members and the public and to offer a procedural process, a separate new policy has also been drafted based on the legislation.

Other Policies

12. The other policies reviewed which had minor updates in terms of the reasons in paragraph 2 above, included the Treasury Management Policy, the Staff Recruitment and Retention Policy, the Policy Plan, the Performance Management Policy, Member and Employee Protocol, the Town Clerk job description, the guidance on classes of information available under the Freedom of Information Act, the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and the Annual Governance Statement.

Conclusion

13. Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council is a pro-active council that is involved in a number of significant projects, events and initiatives within the community. It provides a wealth of services and information to the public and it has in place a wide variety of appropriate and informative policy documents and procedural processes.

The parish and town council sector is changing fast and there will be many challenges ahead, with the suite of documents reviewed, Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council is well equipped to meet those challenges in terms of corporate governance.