

Do the Numbers Limited

Southampton
27th February 2020

Claire Commons, Clerk
Shaftesbury Town Council,
Town Hall,
Shaftesbury,
Dorset SP7 8LY

Dear Claire,

Subject: Matters arising from interim Internal Audit year ending 31 March 2020

Further to my visit to the office today, please find below the matters arising.

During the visit I met with certain councillors and reviewed points they wished to raise. Where those points are within the [remit of my engagement](#), I have included them in this report. The report is therefore somewhat longer than recently, but the recommendations should allow further improvement in the operations of the council.

Overall I found the records and systems of the council to be in extremely good order and that the visit went well.

Control area	Issue	Recommended Action
Commuted sums	The LGR Commuted sums have not yet been invested but in light of current market volatility, a delay may be prudent.	The Proper officer should seek advice from CCLA as to when a good time to invest the funds would be.
External Audit	The 2017/18 and 2018/19 External audits are still with PKF awaiting completion following extensive elector queries.	It is understood that no amendments to the accounts will be needed but it may be worth finding out how much the extra fee will be for accruals purposes.
Transparency code	There are some pages on the council website which include out of date information, such as committee memberships and ward statistics.	Over the coming months, members should review all web pages and notify the proper officer by email of any information that needs updating.
Fixed Asset register	The Fixed asset register published by the council (here) does not include the acquisition date of items. It does not appear that the columns in reports can be adjusted.	The software company should be requested to update their system so that the full requirements of the transparency code can be easily met.
Staff appointments	During the summer of 2019 a member of staff was transferred from a temporary to a permanent contract.	Although the employment costs had not changed, it is good practice to minute the SCP and hours of all new starters.
Staff structure	The staff structure document does not clarify the pay bands of staff in a way that is useful to electors. There is no need to publicly list the actual grade of any employee.	The document should be updated to include this (a format such as 4 grounds staff on between SCP22 and SCP28 would be appropriate).

Staffing budget	The staffing budget that is approved by full council is a single figure which reduces both transparency and its effectiveness as a planning tool.	The published wages budget should show the split between gross pay, ERS NI and ERS pension for each of the three departments (Office, grounds, pool) of the council.
Grants policy	The council has GPC but the grant awarding policy needs to stay within the requirements of the legislation and be reviewed annually. This includes grants in kind eg free use of Council facilities	All members who decide grants should be aware of the legislation and guidance included in the Good Councillors Guide .
Internal Audit report	It appears that the internal Audit report was reviewed in detail at a committee but the action plan not agreed at full council.	All audit reports (internal and external) should be reviewed and actioned by full council.
Councillor attendance at committees	It would appear that when councillors attend committees of which they are not a member, they sit at the table rather than in the public area. This could cause confusion to other attendees at meetings.	Only those on the committee should sit at the table with voting and participation rights.
Reconvened meetings	There appears to have been a lack of clarity about how reconvened meetings are minuted and advertised. A reconvened meeting is the original meeting, covered by the original agenda notice.	When a meeting is suspended for any reason and for any period (including short interruptions such as fire drills) the minutes of the meeting should note both start and finish times, but the second session should commence where the first left off.
Councillor and Chairman's allowances	All councillor allowances are processed as PAYE. The Chairman's allowance, where it is fully supported by appropriate receipts need not be taxed.	At the start of each civic year the Chair should be able to decide whether to pay tax or submit receipts (which will be covered by FOI rules)
Terms of reference	It appears that there is some lack of clarity about the actual delegated powers of each committee.	It is good practice and will be useful to STC for the ToR of each committee in turn to be reviewed by the full council over the coming months.
Confidential session in meetings	It appears that there have been instances where non members of committees have been unwilling to leave during confidential sessions.	It is essential that all members understand that under employment law there may be instances where some councillors have to be excluded from certain discussions.

I will return to the office in May to complete my review. If either you or your members have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards



Eleanor S Greene