

Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

Explanatory notes

Background: The Parish Clerk started 1st June 2024.

The 2024/25 IA high-lighted that the Council did not have all/up-to-date statutory documents in place. Previous IAs do not appear to have reviewed these statutory requirements and therefore, did not give the Council any opportunity to ensure it met its obligations.

During 2025 the Parish Clerk has worked many extra hours in an attempt to correct the weaknesses highlighted by the 2024/25 IA. The major weaknesses were addressed however the 2025/26 IA has shown a few discrepancies with the Council's processes. The Parish Clerk continues to learn the nuances of Council processes and finds the feedback from the IA very useful.

Assertion 1: No formal budget was done for 2025/26 and performance not monitored. Bank Reconciliation process not fully followed.

Historically the Chairman has prepared a detailed analysis that was issued to all councillors prior to the January meeting with Precept proposals for the coming year based on previous year's costs and future requirements. Following the 2024/25 IA, a Budget sheet was done for 2025/26 based on the previous year's costs, prior to the formal 2026/27 Budget. The Year-to-Date 2025/26 Budget with Expenditure was published on the Council website after January and March 2026 meetings although not included in the meeting minutes.

A formal budget for 2026/27 was prepared and agreed in January 2026. Performance against this budget will be reviewed and included in minutes of Council meetings and published on the Council website.

A Bank Reconciliation has been done by a Councillor checking Invoices against the Bank Statements between each Council meeting. A more inclusive Bank Reconciliation procedure is still being worked on to ensure correct process is followed in 2026.

Assertion 2: Bank mandate not approved during year. One new regular payment not approved. Employment obligations not fully complied with.

The current account Bank Mandate was amended in July 2025 however has not been approved since. The Bank Mandate will be reviewed and approved during future Annual Parish Council meetings.

The Council's bank started charging a monthly Account Maintenance Fee in January 2026. The Chair had received notification of this but not brought it to the attention of the Clerk/RFO or Council. Clerk raised the fee at the March 2026 meeting as a regular payment. The IA pointed out that the Council should have done a retrospective resolution to cover the fee during the March meeting.

The Clerk's contract is being drawn up and will be discussed shortly. Parish Clerk has attended many training courses through LALC as approved by Council. Annual appraisal still to be scheduled. Monthly payroll is done by the Clerk using HMRC Basic.

Assertion 3: Powers exceeded by purchasing a small value item with no power to do so.

A Post Office counter service was provided in the village one afternoon a week by a local lady. When she retired the Council wanted to buy her a gift in recognition of her long service to the public. The IA pointed out that the Council are not able to do this using public money. Council have acknowledged this feedback.

Assertion 7: Not all items actioned.

The 2024/25 External Auditor's report highlighted that Section 2 Accounting Statement Box 4 for 2023/24 should have been Restated as incorrect costs had been included in the Staff Cost figures by the previous Clerk. The Clerk/RFO had pointed out this discrepancy on the Explanation of Variances form. The EA report was discussed at the September 2025 meeting however the Clerk did not change the signed/published Section 2 as was not aware needed to do so.

Assertion 10: No IT Policy in place.

The Council moved emails on to a .gov Domain during late 2025. The Clerk had proposed using an IT Policy from the LALC website. However, the Council had found it very cumbersome and difficult to understand, and did not adopt it. Following a Cyber Security training course in March 2026, the Clerk had a simpler IT Policy more suited to a small authority. This will be reviewed and adopted by the Council at a future meeting.

The 2025/26 Internal Audit has shown that there is more work required to meet all statutory requirements in addition to those mentioned above. The above explanations have given a realistic timescale for the work to be done by part-time clerk and councillors.