

25 JUNE 2024

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report asks the Council to formally approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023-24 (Sections 1 and 2). **The Town Council must separately approve both of these sections in order.** In addition, must resolve that no conflicts of interest arise.
- 1.2 For the year 2023-24 only, this process must also be carried out for the former Parish Councils of Allington, Bradpole, and Bothenhampton & Walditch.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Each smaller authority is required by law
- to prepare Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 in the form required by proper practices (the relevant annual return, now known as the Annual Governance and Accountability Return or AGAR);
 - to approve and publish the AGAR including the Accounting Statements
 - to provide for the exercise of public rights; and
 - to publish the AGAR, including the signed external auditor report by 30 September 2024.
- 2.2 Section 1, the Annual Governance Statement, confirms the controls that are in place in respect of all aspects of the governance of the Council. This includes the preparation of the accounts, risk assessments etc.
- 2.3 Section 2 of the Annual Return is the Accounting Statements, prepared by the Town Council. The figures in the Statement are as in the Annual Accounts, as reported to, and approved by, the Finance and General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 10 June 2024. The Council's Internal Auditors have checked the calculations in Section 2.
- 2.4 The Annual Accounts for the former parish councils of Allington, Bradpole, and Bothenhampton & Walditch will be tabled for approval at or prior to the meeting.
- 2.5 **Prior to approving Section 1 and then Section 2, the Town Council must note the Annual Internal Auditor's Report**, in which they have assessed the Council's compliance with relevant procedures and controls.
- 2.6 Section 3 of the Statement, currently blank, is completed by the Town Council's External Auditor, BDO LLP, when they have completed the audit.

- 2.7 The Town Council is required to approve the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Accounting Statements by 30 June 2024, to then be forwarded with supporting papers to the Council's External Auditor.
- 2.8 The Council is also required to declare and minute whether or not there are any conflicts of interest with BDO LLP, and if there are, to list those conflicts.
- 2.9 At the time of drafting, the relevant AGAR forms are not completed and these will be circulated prior to the meeting.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Separately for each of the former parish councils of Allington, Bradpole, and Bothenhampton & Walditch, the Town Council is recommended to:
- (i) Approve the annual accounts;
 - (ii) note the Annual Internal Auditor Report;
 - (iii) approve the Annual Governance Statement;
 - (iv) approve the Accounting Statements for 2023/2024; and
 - (v) declare any conflicts of interest with BDO LLP.
- 3.2 For Bridport Town Council, the Town Council is recommended to:
- (i) note the Annual Internal Auditor Report;
 - (ii) approve the Annual Governance Statement;
 - (iii) approve the Accounting Statements for 2023/2024; and
 - (iv) declare any conflicts of interest with BDO LLP.

18 June 2024

**Will Austin
Town Clerk**