

15th June 2021

You are hereby summoned to attend an Extra-Ordinary meeting of the **SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL** to be held in the Council Chamber, Town Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks on **Monday 21st June 2021 commencing at 7pm**. Town Councillors are reminded that they have a duty to state a Declaration of Interest prior to the appropriate agenda item and to consider the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 s.17 when reaching a decision.

Please note that the proceedings of this meeting will be streamed live to YouTube for the public to watch via the following link: <https://youtu.be/irSuu5bbPOg> and may be recorded in line with regulations set out in the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014. A copy of Sevenoaks Town Council's procedure for the recording of meetings is available online at sevenoakstown.gov.uk or by request.

Members of the public wishing to address the Council Meeting should notify the Town Council by 12 noon on the day of the meeting. Zoom joining instructions will then be provided. Members of the public not wishing to be recorded should put this request to the Clerk at the earliest possible opportunity.



Town Mayor

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the agenda are asked to enquire of the Town Clerk prior to the day of the meeting.

AGENDA

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

To enable any questions previously submitted by members of the public on any matter to be drawn to the attention of the Town Council.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive and note apologies for absence. —

2 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

To consider written requests from Members which have previously been submitted to the Town Clerk to enable participation in discussion and voting on items for which the Member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest. (s.31 & s.33 of the Localism Act 2011). -

Town Council Offices
Bradbourne Vale Road
Sevenoaks Kent TN13 3QG

tel: 01732 459 953 fax: 01732 742 577
email: council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk
web: sevenoakstown.gov.uk

- 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
To receive any declarations of interest from members in respect of any items of business included in this report. —
- 4 ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021
- 4.1 To receive and consider:
- a) Internal Audit Report for the Year End Visit Attached
 - b) Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 Attached
- 4.2 To consider the following recommendations from the Report to the members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 7th June 2021 (*Minute 98.2, F&GP 07.06.2021 refers*);
- 98.2 Review of Internal Controls and Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2021**
- RESOLVED:** That, subject to the receipt of the final audit inspection report:
- 1) The Statement on the System of Internal Control be approved and signed by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the *[Finance & General Purposes]* Committee; and Attached
 - 2) The following reports be accepted and **RECOMMENDED** to the full Council for approval:
- Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21, Attached
including:
- Annual Governance Statement 2020/21
 - Accounting Statements 2020/21
- 5 NEW POST OFFICE SERVICE – 2 STATION PARADE TN13 1DL
To note the opening of Station Parade Post Office from Monday 12th July 2021 at 13:00
- 6 PRESS RELEASE
To consider any agenda item, which would be considered appropriate for a press release. —



Sevenoaks Town Council

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Date: 9th June 2021

Report Author: Amanda Palmer

Quality Assurance: Karen Herbert

The information contained within this report is strictly private and confidential. It may contain details of weaknesses in internal control including financial controls. If this information were to be available to unauthorised persons, this would create a greater exposure to the risk of fraud or irregularity. Therefore, this report is not for reproduction, publication, or disclosure by any means to unauthorised persons without the permission of the Head of Internal Audit.



1 SUMMARY

Under the requirements of local government legislation, Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2006, the Parish Council has a statutory responsibility to prove an adequate and effective system of internal audit.

The role of the Internal Auditor is to provide an independent review and appraisal of the Council's system of internal control. The Internal Auditor must be independent of the activities they audit in order to remain impartial and effect professional judgements and recommendations.

In accordance with the agreed audit plan (Appendix A) and following Internal Audit's testing throughout May/June 2021 remotely, testing of the following areas has been completed:

- Progress on Previous Issues Raised
- Expenditure
- Risk Assessments
- Budget Reporting
- Salaries and Wages
- Assets
- Account Books
- Bank Reconciliations
- VAT
- Year-end/Annual Return



2 FINDINGS

Progress on Previous Issues Raised From the 2019-20 audit visits:

Finding: Internal Audit were informed that the outstanding issues regarding Café on the Vine and the House in the Basement have been actioned. This will be formally reviewed by Internal Audit when lockdown restrictions have been lifted in 2021.

Expenditure

Control: Invoices show order number, copy letter or contract authorising purchase of goods. Expenditure is authorised and reported to the relevant committee as per the financial regulations.

Finding: Sample testing confirmed that expenditure is within authorisation limits and is substantiated by appropriate invoices and receipts. Expenditure had been reported to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Risk Assessments

Control: The Council has undertaken a risk assessment and is managing the resultant risks identified.

Finding: Risk Assessments have been completed and reviewed at Committee. Risk owners, mitigating controls and risk owners are detailed. Internal Audit identified that the risks of Cyber-enabled crime against the Council have not been included. **(Issue 1)**

Budget Reporting

Control: Detailed expenditure and income for the current financial year to date against the budget set is reported at least quarterly if not included within the monthly reporting to committee.

Finding: The Council's position against budget has been reported at Finance & General Purposes Committee throughout 2020/21. Detailed income and expenditure versus budget reports are produced together with a variance explanation sheet.

Salaries and Wages

Control: Salaries and wages are reviewed annually and agreed at full council. Accurate salaries and wages are paid to staff.

Finding: Salaries and Wages have been reviewed for 20/21 and sample testing showed that staff were paid accurately in line with agreed amounts.



Assets

Control: All assets are recorded in an up-to-date asset register.

Finding: The Council asset register has been updated for 2020/21 however due to covid restrictions and the audit being carried out remotely Internal Audit could not confirm the existence of a sample of assets detailed on the asset register.

Account Books

Control: All account books are maintained and up to date.

Finding: Account books are maintained using an appropriate financial system and are up to date.

Bank Reconciliations

Control: Bank reconciliations are carried out regularly and are independently verified.

Finding: Bank reconciliations are completed monthly and although the majority are dated there were a few exceptions. In addition to this the reconciliations are not independently verified by a Councillor. Although the reconciliations are approved by another member of staff it is good practice for the reconciliations to be reviewed intermittently by a councillor.

(Issue 2)

VAT

Control: VAT returns are completed accurately and timely and VAT reimbursed has subsequently been received and shows within the accounts.

Finding: VAT returns are completed quarterly, submitted promptly and reimbursement received throughout 2020/21.

Year-end/Annual Return

Control: The financial statements are complete and accurate.

Finding: At the time of the audit the Financial Statement and Statement of Internal Control had not been agreed by Committee. The Internal Audit section of the annual return has been posted to the Clerk.

Internal Audit thank-you for your co-operation throughout 2020/21 and look forward to working with you again during 2021/22.



3 ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Issue 1 – Risk Assessment.

Risks of cyber enabled crime against the Council are not included in the Council Risk Assessment or Business Continuity Plan.

Issue 2 – Bank Reconciliations

All bank reconciliations should be dated and reviewed independently by a councillor.



Appendix A – Audit Plan 2020/21

The Amendments to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006 require that an internal audit plan is prepared for your Council to consider and formally approve.

The majority of the audit work will be done by sample testing a sufficient number of transactions to gain an assurance that the systems of financial control work effectively and provide accurate information to support the Council's activities. It is therefore proposed that a review of the following control objectives is carried out to ensure they are being achieved throughout the year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council:

- Significant risks are assessed by the Council to ensure objectives are achieved along with a review of the adequacy of the arrangements to manage these.
- Appropriate books of account have been kept accurately throughout the year.
- The annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process with progress against the budget regularly monitored and reserves appropriate.
- The Council's financial regulations have been met, payments supported by invoices with expenditure approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.
- Expected income fully received, based on correct prices, accurately recorded, and promptly banked; and VAT appropriately accounted for.
- Petty cash payments properly supported by receipts with expenditure approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.
- Salaries to employees and allowances to members paid in accordance with Council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements accurately applied.
- Complete and accurate Asset and Investments registers that are properly maintained.
- Regular and year-end bank account reconciliations accurately carried out.
- Accounting statements prepared during the year are prepared on the correct accounting basis, agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate debtors and creditors accurately recorded.
- Where applicable trust funds (including charitable) responsibilities as trustee are met by the Council.
- Awareness to the potential for fraud, error or non-compliance, and any issues that may increase this potential, including a review of the arrangements for the security of systems and data.

**Sevenoaks Town Council
21.06.2021**

Sevenoaks Town Council

STATEMENT ON THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Scope of responsibility

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control has continued to operate at the Council throughout this financial year and accords with proper practice.

The internal control environment

The system of internal control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability. Development and maintenance of the system is undertaken by managers within the Council. In particular, the system includes:

- comprehensive budgeting systems;
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- the preparation of regular financial reports which indicate actual expenditure against the forecasts;
- clearly defined capital expenditure guidelines;
- risk appraisal programmes to identify and manage risks and hazards in all the Council's areas of operation; and
- as appropriate, formal project management disciplines.

The council has contracted for the internal audit function to be carried out by Kent County Council's Corporate Services department (KCC). A member of KCC's internal audit staff visits

Sevenoaks Town Council

21.06.2021

the council a minimum of four times a year, and reports prepared by KCC are supplied to both the Town Clerk, the Responsible Finance Officer and the Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. All reports are presented to the council's Finance & General Purposes Committee for comment and approval. KCC also provides the Council with advice on risk assessment, statistical analysis and operating standards.

The internal auditor provides the Council with an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control.

Review of effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review and effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by:

- the work of managers within the council;
- the work of the internal auditor as described above; and
- the external auditors in their annual audit letter and other reports.

In the year to 31st March 2021, no significant weaknesses in the council's systems were identified.

Approval of statement

This statement was approved on 07 June 2021 at a meeting of the Council's Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Signed _____

Councillor T Clayton
Chairman – F&GP Committee

Signed _____

Mrs Rosalind Shaw
Responsible Finance Officer

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 Part 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** **must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** **must** be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2021**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2021**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2021
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2021 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2020/21**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2020/21**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2021 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020/21

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty), and is properly signed and dated. If the AGAR contains unapproved or unexplained amendments, it may be returned and additional costs will be incurred.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2021.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- Do not send the external auditor any information not specifically requested. However, **you must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the external auditor has to review unsolicited information, or receives an incomplete bank reconciliation, or variances are not fully explained, additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2020) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2021).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2021**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?		
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations from last year to this year been published?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2021 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

**Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices*, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21

Sevenoaks Town Council

www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2021, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2020/21 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2019/20, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2019/20 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L. If the authority has an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000, it publishes information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the Transparency code for smaller authorities.			✓
M. The authority, during the previous year (2019-20) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2019/20 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)</i> .	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

01/06/2021

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Amanda Palmer

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Date

09/06/2021

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

We acknowledge as the members of:

Sevenoaks Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLIC ADDRESS www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk PAGE ADDRESS


Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2020/21 for

Sevenoaks Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2020 £	31 March 2021 £	
1. Balances brought forward	2,283,552	3,953,736	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,141,385	1,215,276	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	3,467,244	500,311	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	926,174	910,441	<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	42,181	71,414	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	1,970,090	2,916,942	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	3,953,736	1,770,526	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	3,923,338	1,794,222	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	6,519,095	10,194,397	<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings	1,378,339	1,334,359	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
		✓	<i>N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2021 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval



Date 15/06/2021

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

as recorded in minute reference:

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2020/21

In respect of

Sevenoaks Town Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>.

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2021; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2020/21

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2020/21

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2021.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YY



Dear Customer

At the Post Office we are continually looking to refresh our network and ensure we meet our customer needs. I'm therefore pleased to let you know that we are planning to open a new Post Office in your area in Sans Express Ltd, 2 Station Parade, London Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1DL on Monday 12 July 2021 at 13:00.

The service will be one of our local style branches with a low-screened, open-plan Post Office service point carefully integrated into the retail counter. Customers will be able to carry out a wide range of Post Office transactions alongside retail purchases. The new service will offer long opening hours, with the Post Office opening hours in line with the retail business.

Details of the opening hours and the key products and services that will be available are provided overleaf. Please feel free to share this information with others who may be interested to hear about the new service. If there are any unforeseen changes which mean these dates change, posters will be displayed in store to let customers know.

We're carrying out this notification in line with our Principles of Community Engagement. A copy is available at the end of this letter.

We hope that you and the local community will support the Post Office network in your area.

Yours faithfully

Emily Dobson

Emily Dobson

Network Provision Lead

How to contact us:

comments@postoffice.co.uk

postofficeviews.co.uk

FREEPOST Your Comments

To get this information in a different format, for example, in larger print, audio or braille call 03452 66 01 15 or Textphone 03457 22 33 55.

Post Office opening times & services available
Monday – Friday 08:00 – 17:30 Saturday 08:00 – 13:00
Mail
First & Second Class mail
Stamps, stamp books (1st class 6 & 12 only, 2nd class 12 only)
Special stamps (Christmas issue only) & postage labels
Signed For
Special Delivery
Home shopping returns
Inland small, medium & large parcels
Express & contract parcels
British Forces Mail (BFPO)
International letters & postcards (inc. signed for & Airsure)
International parcels up to 2kg & printed papers up to 5kg
Articles for the blind (inland & international)
Royal Mail redirection service
Local Collect
Drop & Go
Withdrawals, deposits and payments
Post Office Card Account
Personal & Business Banking cash withdrawals, deposits & balance enquiries using a card. Also enveloped cheque deposits and barcoded deposit slips.
Postal orders
Moneygram
Bill payments
Automated bill payments (card or barcoded)
Key recharging
Travel
Pre-order travel money
Travel insurance referral
Mobile Top-ups & E vouchers
Cheques are NOT accepted as a method of payment
For information about product availability call 03457 223344. For details of maximum value of transactions, please speak to the operator. Customers can also shop online at www.postoffice.co.uk

Principles of Community Engagement on changes to the Post Office network

We are committed to engaging and supporting our customers and their representatives as we make changes to the Post Office network. The following Principles will be adopted when communicating about changes to your local Post Office branch.

We will **Notify** - where we are informing customers of changes around:

- Opening hours
- Temporary closure¹/ temporary service interruption
- Re-opening of a temporarily closed branch in the same site
- Opening a new branch unrelated to a previous closure
- Location used by a Mobile Post Office within a community

We will display a poster in branch (or nearby if appropriate) to notify customers of the above changes, providing four weeks' notice. Where four weeks' notice is not possible, we will provide notice as soon as we are able to. For temporary closures we will include details of the nearest alternative Post Offices and our customer helpline/textphone.

We will **Engage** - where we are seeking feedback on a decision that has been made on:

- Re-opening of a temporarily closed branch in a new location (where the branch has been closed for more than three months)
- Franchising of a Directly Managed branch in its existing site

While the decision to proceed will have already been made, we will welcome suggestions about specific aspects of the change such as access arrangements and the internal layout. We will provide four weeks' notice or, where extenuating circumstances prevent this, we will provide as much notice as possible.

During this period we will display a poster in branch and provide information online. We will contact locally elected representatives², the Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities³, providing clear information on any changes to services or access arrangements at the branch. We will ask locally elected representatives to share information with other key community outlets (such as notice boards, local charities, magazines, GP surgeries etc.). We will publish the outcome of the engagement online and in branch, providing a summary of key issues raised with a clear response to each and any changes made to our original plans.

We will **Consult** - where we are seeking feedback on proposals prior to a decision being made on the:

- Permanent closure of a Post Office branch⁴
- Permanent relocation of a Post Office branch (including the franchising of a Directly Managed branch to a new site)

We will carry out a six-week⁵ local public consultation, informing customers, locally elected representatives, Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities of the proposal. This information will also be made available online and for a Directly Managed branch a press release will be issued to local media. We will ask locally elected representatives to share information with other key community outlets (such as notice boards, local charities, magazines, GP surgeries etc.).

The consultation will ask specific questions on areas where we would like feedback on access to Post Office services and will confirm when the change will happen if the decision is made to proceed. We will provide clear information on any changes to services as well as access to and into the new branch.

We welcome all feedback with the following factors being taken into account in making our decision, which we expect to make within four weeks of the close of consultation:

- Customer access to, into and inside the new or alternative branch/branches with particular regard to vulnerable consumers
- Any local community issues which could be affected by or affect the proposal

At the end of the consultation process we will write to locally elected representatives, Consumer Advocacy Bodies and respondents to the consultation (where practical) to confirm our decision and provide a summary of key issues raised with a clear response to each. This information will be made available online and in branch (where possible).

These Principles have been agreed with Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland; the independent statutory consumer watchdogs.

What to do if you feel these Principles haven't been followed:

Please get in touch so we can investigate your complaint. We'll explain in our reply whether we believe we have followed our Principles of Community Engagement and will provide you with the contact details for the relevant consumer watchdog (Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland or the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland) if you're not satisfied with our response. The watchdog will independently assess whether we have followed the Principles of Community Engagement process (rather than the decision itself) and recommend any actions with respect to the complaint.

postofficeviews.co.uk
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¹We will provide an update to locally elected representatives if the status of the temporarily closed branch has not changed after 12 months.

² Locally elected representatives include but are not restricted to the Member of Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, or Northern Ireland Assembly, Local Authority Chief Executive, Ward Councillors, Parish or Community Council.

³ Selected charities are local Citizens Advice, Age UK, Northern Ireland's Disability Action and Northern Ireland's Rural Community Network. All parties referred to in 2 and 3 above are encouraged to share all information with local groups and organisations who they believe have an active interest in changes to their local Post Office.

⁴ There may be a small number of cases where due to circumstances outside our control we have no option other than to permanently close a branch in a particular location. In these cases the consultation will seek feedback on alternative Post Office service provision in the area.

⁵ If the consultation includes more than four weeks in July in Scotland and Northern Ireland or more than four weeks in August in England and Wales we will extend the period by one calendar week. We will not start any local public consultation during the two-week period which includes the Christmas and New Year bank holidays.

Modernising the network

Under our Network Transformation programme, we have modernised more than 7,650 branches up and down the country over the last six years, with more still in the pipeline.

This has been a huge success, but it is far from the end of the story for our network.

Why are you opening more branches?

The competitive landscape in the high street is changing and we must adapt and develop our network to meet the needs of our customers, both consumers and business. We need to offer convenient access to Post Offices when and where our customers want them in a competitive market place.

We've come a long way in the last few years – modernising more than 7,650 branches across the country – offering 200,000 extra opening hours and franchising many of our directly managed Post Offices to give customers bright modern branches in a vibrant local business. But there's more we need to do to make sure we can meet changing customer needs.

Over the last few years we have been opening small branches in areas where there wasn't previously a Post Office, especially urban areas, so that we can offer customers convenient access and longer opening hours. We know that customers want convenient access for everyday transactions like post, bill payments and withdrawing cash

What is a local Post Office branch?

Like most high street retailers, we have had to develop a more flexible approach to how we provide services to our customers. In local branches, instead of a separate Post Office counter area, customers access Post Office services at a low-screened, open-plan, modern serving point that's part of the retail counter. Local branches offer a wide range of Post Office products and services, often over longer opening hours and sometimes seven days a week, so customers can access their Post Office when it's convenient.

I'm interested in running a Post Office. How do I apply?

For more information or to search for business opportunities in your area, please visit our website runapostoffice.co.uk

I want more information about mail products and services

Royal Mail is responsible for all postal matters including the collection and delivery of mail and the location of post boxes. For more information, please visit royalmail.com

Why are you franchising Directly Managed branches?

Franchising Directly Managed branches is a successful approach to continue to offer Post Office services in communities in a more sustainable way – partnering with a retailer to offer a Post Office combined with a shop brings the benefits of shared footfall and overheads.

Franchising forms part of the continuing modernisation of our network, to achieve commercial sustainability, and will help us to provide services that will meet customer needs and safeguard future service provision, now and for the long-term. The most effective way to secure the long term viability of Post Office services is through a carefully selected retail partner. The vast majority of our 11,500 Post Office branches, large and small, are successfully operated in this way with retail partners and we believe this is the best approach to keeping Post Offices in main shopping locations and at the heart of communities where they play an important role in local economies.

Alongside modernising our branch network, we're continuing to develop our services to remain relevant for customers. As well as traditional post and other services, today's Post Office network provides for the collection or return of online shopping, offers a 'click and collect' service for foreign currency available from over 3,500 branches and day-to-day banking for the majority of customers of UK banks - 99 per cent of UK personal banking customers and 75 per cent of business customers can now carry out day-to-day banking at any of our branches.

How will it affect me?

In most cases the branch will continue to offer the same wide range of products and services as currently and will still be operated by friendly, trained staff, often over extended opening hours. There will be a consultation or engagement period first to seek your views on things like accessibility and opening hours.

Why is my branch closed and how can I find out what's happening?

Sometimes unplanned changes happen to the Post Office network which are outside of our control. For example the postmaster might resign or there might be a building problem such as flooding. Where this is the case we'll try to let you know as soon as possible by displaying posters locally and further information will be available on our Consultation Hub. You can also find details of other branches in the area by visiting our website at postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder

If a branch closes we will work closely with the Postmaster to resolve any issues to enable us to restore a service as quickly as possible. Where this isn't possible or if the operator can no longer run the branch we'll seek to identify a new Postmaster in the local area and will advertise the opportunity on our website runapostoffice.co.uk. If you know of any retail partners who may be interested in a vacancy, please do share the link with them. As soon as we have a suitable plan in place for the area we'll let our customers and their representatives know and will ask for feedback on our plans.

How will I know if there are changes planned for my branch?

If there are any changes planned to the branch you use, information posters will be displayed in the branch. If we're carrying out a public consultation, customer leaflets will also be available in branch, which you can take home, explaining more about the changes. You can also search by branch name, code or postcode on our Consultation Hub to find out more. This will provide an information letter with full details of the change and when it's going to happen.

How will you take my views into account before making any changes?

We want to know what you think and as we plan changes, we will ask for your views on key areas.

If we are proposing to move your branch to new premises, we will carry out a six-week local public consultation before we make a final decision on the new location. During that time, you can let us know what you think about our plans. At the end of consultation, all feedback will be carefully considered before we make a final decision on the proposed move. More information on how we communicate change is available in our “Principles of Community Engagement” available on our Consultation Hub or at: postoffice.co.uk/modernising-post-office

What factors do you consider before making the decision to proceed with any changes?

Post Office Ltd welcomes all feedback but the key factors taken into account in coming to a decision are customer access to, into and inside the proposed new or alternative branches, with particular regard to vulnerable customers. We will also consider any local community issues affected by the proposal.

People often raise common issues such as car parking, traffic and road conditions. Naturally we will consider carefully any impact the changes may have on these local issues

How do I find out about the decisions you have made?

We will keep you informed by displaying posters in the branch to support you through any changes. Details will also be published on our Consultation Hub under closed consultations. If you have taken part in a local public consultation and registered your views electronically, you will also be sent a link to our Consultation Hub when the final decision is announced. If you have written to us, we will write to you to let you know our final plans.

What do I do if I think you haven't following the Principles of Community Engagement?

If you think we haven't followed the “Principles of Community Engagement” please get in touch so we can investigate your complaint. We'll explain in our reply whether we believe we have followed our Principles of Community Engagement and will provide you with the contact details for the relevant consumer watchdog (Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland or the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland) if you're not satisfied with our response. The watchdog will independently assess whether we have followed the Principles of Community Engagement process (rather than the decision itself) and recommend any actions with respect to the complaint.