

**REPORT TO PARISH COUNCIL : SKILLS AUDIT****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To identify any gaps in "skills, knowledge or expertise" within the Parish Council and to agree how any such gaps should be filled.

**BACKGROUND**

2. As part of the Council's Risk Management Strategy', the Council established a 'Skills Audit' whose objective was to identify any gaps in knowledge/expertise that might hinder its ability to deliver against key objectives. No distinction was made between the skills brought to the Parish Council by the Cllrs or by the Clerk. However, with the resignation of the current Clerk, it would be useful to establish what gaps, if any, exist in the current membership that it would be reasonable to expect the new Clerk to cover. This exercise would then be a guide when recruiting and interviewing potential candidates for the vacancy.
3. The Skills Audit was instigated in 2014. Since then, there has been a Local Election, with four new Cllrs out of five, and then one resignation/replacement. Having had a number of years 'in post' the Cllrs will have gained at first-hand how the Parish Council works, what it takes responsibility for, how it will move forward. In this respect, the Council agreed its Vision, Aims and Objectives (see paper on Aims and Objectives elsewhere on the Agenda), and what skills (knowledge and expertise) are necessary to deliver those outcomes.
4. It is recognised that there may well be gaps, but that there are a tranche of external support mechanisms that can be called upon including Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC), who provide each year a series of training sessions.
5. The Parish Council's Risk Management Statement included the following:-  
**Hazard:** Insufficient and/or lack of Councillors  
**Consequence:** Council is unable to fulfil its duties as not quorate, or sufficiently skilled to discharge duties effectively  
**Groups at Risk:** Residents

**Established Controls (in place)**

- Currently the Council is at full complement... This is still the case though we have one new Cllr attending his first meeting in September and we have received notice of resignation from Cllr Clare Kinnear with effect from February 2018.
- A broad range of skills and experience appear to be present, although a formal review has not been completed.
- All Councillors are invited and encouraged to attend Hampshire ALC training events which may benefit their knowledge of the role of the Council and Councillors. This support has been taken up by Cllr Hertz.

**Further Actions:** Complete a skills audit of those on the Council and consider any potential areas for development... **outstanding**

**Level of Risk:** **Medium**

6. The Clerk sought advice from NALC, HALC and searched the web, and found nothing specific on this topic for Parish Councils. HALC said they did not have anything nor planned to produce anything in the near future due to lack of resources, but sent me a document addressing 'development needs for Cllrs'. In discussion with HALC, I suggested that the level of analysis used for County Council Officers for identifying their training needs was probably neither appropriate nor necessary for a Parish Council with a budget of £5,500 pa; *"a bit like undertaking a risk analysis for sailing the Titanic when actually you are only trying to get your family across a rowing lake in the local park!!"* [She liked my analogy!!]
7. Nevertheless, there is still some merit in spending a few minutes checking if the Council has any 'gaps'.
8. The Skills Audit is looking at competences across the Parish Council and not of individual Councillors. It is NOT a competition between Councillors!! In its simplest form, the Council merely needs to 'self-assess' (and record) if it has the necessary skills, knowledge or expertise on all the key areas of responsibility of the Parish Council; and where it does not have them, to then agree how best to fill that gap.

## SKILLS AUDIT

9. The following is the analysis and 'assessment' presented to Council in September 2016. Councillors are encouraged to challenge, amend or add to any of the items, assessments and support etc listed below:-

SKILL	Met by Clerk	Met by Cllrs	Support (as necessary)
Local Government Financial Management, Accounts	met	<b>not met</b>	BDBC Finance Team
Audit and Risk Management	met	<b>not met</b>	Access to Internal Auditor
Local Government 'Governance'... eg Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Complaints etc	met	<b>not met</b>	Borough Councillors
Local Government HR, employment, tax and pensions	met	<b>not met</b>	HALC HR Support Section
Health & Safety; legislation and practicalities		<b>not met</b>	Note: since Sept meeting H&S contacts have been made and developed with BDBC Officers
Training			HALC Training Section, CPALC support
Highways; road safety, signage, Footpaths, Byways, Bridleways		met	HCC – Highways Dept
Broadband and Communications		met	Volunteer network, North Hampshire Ramblers Association, HCC ROW Countryside Team
Specialist Advisor, village email system		met	
Planning – Strategic eg neighbourhood plan		<b>not met</b>	BDBC Planning Department, Borough Councillors
Planning – Applications and general issues		met	Borough Councillors
Sound 'local knowledge'		met	Residents, land owners
Administration and management ...Agendas and minutes etc	met	met	HALC

**WARNING**

10. You will note that in a number of cases the level of expertise is held by the Clerk, and NOT by the Cllrs. This is quite understandable. The Clerk is a position in the Council required by law. The Clerk is an employee and is paid. The Clerk is therefore expected to have the necessary knowledge and skills... or s/he would not have been appointed! However, you should not think this reliance on the Clerk, absolves Cllrs from their responsibility nor is it an excuse should something go awry! Cllrs have responsibility, too. See the training/guidance note produced by CPALC: Appendix A attached).

Chris Pottinger

Clerk, Hannington Parish Council

5<sup>th</sup> September 2017