

Growing Complexity of Local Council Governance

Town and Parish Councils have become more important elements of Local Government in recent years, and the range and quantity of statutory requirements, model policies, best practice and subjects within the scope of audit have increased significantly. Councils are expected to have clear policies and procedures in place on a wide range of matters - collectively known as the Governance Infrastructure. The requirements for a best practice governance infrastructure have evolved to become quite complex.

Councils will often review their governance infrastructure on a regular basis, implementing new areas of policy and updating existing areas every year or so. However, it is not uncommon for this updating to be overtaken by more pressing priorities or, being non-urgent, it fails to find its way to the top of the priority list at all. Even the best and most thoughtfully defined governance provision can decay over time and become unfit for purpose without a regular investment of effort.

The LGRC Governance Health Check

LGRC offers a low cost solution to assess the health of a Council's governance infrastructure and help ensure that any deficiencies are instantly rectified. We also offer a service to periodically review and help update these processes so that the Council does not need to commit its own resources to an ongoing audit of its procedures.

Developed by nationally recognised practitioners and drawing on current best practice methods, LGRC's structured methodology provides the framework for a comprehensive **Local Council Governance Health Check**.

We provide a detailed and confidential report into 46 separate areas of governance within six broad areas:

- **Constitutional**
- **Operational**
- **Financial**
- **Risk Management**
- **Community Interaction**
- **Human Resources**

We cover all the normally accepted aspects of Governance such as Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, the Scheme of Delegations and the Ethical Framework, but also go far further to look in depth at a host of different areas, such as:

- To what extent the decision making process is free from predetermination,
- Policies to address the risk of a council facing legal action,
- The level of training given on freedom of information,
- Staff retention policy,
- Chains of responsibility for assets.

Health Check Approach and Reporting

The review is conducted by one or more experienced LGRC practitioners, usually a former Town Clerk, who understands how councils are run and what is important in managing them. The review would normally be completed within a 4 week period, and we start by reviewing all available council governance documentation, spending up to 2 days at your Council having structured discussions with you and other key staff and council members to review how your governance operates in practice.

We will create and provide to you a comprehensive and confidential report giving a frank and detailed assessment of all your governance processes and how they compare to current best practice standards. We identify all the processes that meet the assessment criteria and, where we do find any issues that may require your attention, we make constructive recommendations on potential courses of action to address these.

What Client Councils Say

Linda Roberts, Clerk to Calne Town Council, one of the pilot councils for this initiative, has evaluated the LGRC Health Check and says:

“At Calne Town Council we were very pleased with the Governance review and confidential report that LGRC provided. It was professionally conducted by Dominic Stapleton, using the LGRC developed audit method, and we were given a thorough, objective and in depth review. Having assimilated the recommendations, we feel we can now be totally confident that our Governance processes are complete, up to date and lawful, able to withstand all scrutiny and meet any turn of events.”

If you would like to discuss how we could carry out our Governance Health Check at your Council, please phone LGRC on 01404 45973 and ask to speak to Nick Randle, or email us on info@lgrc.uk.

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