

Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

Report for meeting on 21st January 2026 (updated from report circulated Sept 2025)

Subject: Changes for 2025/26 Proper practices within the AGAR

Prepared by: Cllr Wilson

1. SUMMARY OF PURPOSE

- 1.1 NALC have updated the Practitioners guide for Smaller Councils in particular there are significant changes to the proper practices in the Annual Governance Statement which now require that as a smaller Authority Sampford Courtenay Parish Council 'must' comply with certain criteria to meet the standards being assessed.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The new practitioners guide sets out changes throughout the document the full list can be found at <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/practitioners-guide-2025> copy attached at Appendix A
- 2.2 One of the key changes that impacts SCPC is Section 1 - Proper practices Annual Governance Statement - Assertion 10 regarding Digital and data compliance.
- 2.3 The Chair attended a free webinar on 10th July 2025 to understand the issues and have compiled this report for Cllrs (Members) to consider.
- 2.4 To warrant a positive response to this assertion, SCPC needs to have taken the following actions: (highlighting actions required prior to end of year completion of the Annual Governance report)
 - a) Email management - every authority must have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain, for example `clerk@abcparchcouncil.gov.uk` or `clerk@abcparchcouncil.org.uk` rather than `abcparchclerk@gmail.com` or `abcparchclerk@outlook.com`. **Action Required.**
 - b) All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must meet legal requirements for all existing websites regardless of what domain is being used. **Action Required.**
 - c) All websites must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. **Action Required.**
 - d) All websites must include published documentation as specified in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Transparency code for smaller authorities (where applicable). **Compliant.**
 - e) All smaller authorities, including parish meetings, must follow both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018. **Compliant**
 - f) All smaller authorities, including parish meetings, must process personal data with care and in line with the principles of data protection. **Action Required.**
 - g) The DPA 2018 supplements the GDPR and classifies a parish council as both a Data Controller and a Data Processor. **Compliant**

- h) All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must also have an IT policy. This explains how everyone - clerks, members and other staff - should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software. This relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment. **Action Required**
- 2.5 In SECTION TWO – PROPER PRACTICES THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS - the current practices of the Council following our adopted Financial Regulations will ensure compliance when it comes to the completion of the 2025/26 AGAR except for the required changes in Assertion 10.
- 2.6 Various companies are now offering the services to initiate and maintain the services of approves .gov emails and these vary in price see Appendix B for a list of some of the companies

3. OPTIONS/PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Cllrs are to acknowledge the requirement for compliance in the timescales set by the new Practitioners Guide agreeing for key spend to be available to achieve that result
- 3.2 Cllrs to Agree the New IT policy attached at Appendix C
- 3.3 Cllrs to Agree that whilst 3.4 is being delivered that to ensure compliance that The Clerk, the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Web Administrator communicate through the existing .GOV emails within the current contract.
- 3.3 Cllrs to consider three requested quotes to provide the website upgrade to include email upgrade to ensure compliance by 31st March 2026.
- 3.4 Cllr Agree to set up a sub group with the Website Administrator to review ongoing compliance and necessary action to ensure the website accessibility meets the necessary standards.