Meeting Type: Full Council	
Date of Meeting: 10.11.26	

OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Report Author: Dalia Gadir, Administrator	**Purpose:** Decision
Title: Governance Review	

Subject: Governance Review Quotations

Purpose

Council agreed to undertake a full governance document review (not HR documents as the current HR provider is supplying these). Three quotes have been obtained.

Quotes received summary:

	Quote 1	Quote 2	Quote 3
Price (excl. VAT)	£1,480 fixed	£1,800 – £2,600 estimate	£2,500 fixed
VAT	Plus VAT	Plus VAT	No VAT
Other costs	Mileage if travel is needed	Expenses; possibly employer's NI (approx. 12%)	Travel expenses
What is included	Review of existing documents; identify and draft missing documents	Review and update of 30 listed documents, checked against Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation	Governance review with report and action plan. Does not update documents
Who will carry out the review	An associate, allocated once the quote is accepted (not named)	A named consultant from the company	Not stated
Experience	Set up in 2018 by the national professional body for council clerks. Works with councils of all sizes on audits, staffing reviews, recruitment and policy work. Includes three testimonials from other councils	Consultant is an experienced council clerk and RFO, and a former council chief executive. Has written and maintained council policy portfolios and managed teams of up to 17 staff	Offered to member councils as a chargeable service. Based on the Local Government Association peer review process
Qualifications	Associates described as qualified; they follow the professional body's Code of Conduct and hold their own professional indemnity insurance	CiLCA; BA (Hons) Law; LLM Legal Research; Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice	Not stated
Timescale	Complete by 23 December 2026 if started by end of October	First drafts within 3–4 weeks	Not stated

Please see attached quotes.

Legal and Governance Implications

1. Legal compliance and statutory obligations

The Council needs to ensure that its policies, procedures and governance documents reflect current legislation and statutory requirements.

- Incorrect policies may direct councillors or employees to act in a way that is unlawful or inconsistent with their statutory duties.
- Out-of-date policies may refer to superseded legislation, outdated procedures or responsibilities that have changed.
- Missing policies may leave the Council without a documented framework for meeting particular legal obligations.

Depending on the document concerned, relevant legislation may include the Local Government Act 1972, Localism Act 2011, Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Freedom of Information Act 2000, UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, Equality Act 2010, Employment Rights Act 1996 and applicable health and safety legislation.

Not every policy is itself a statutory requirement. The review should distinguish between documents required by law, documents needed to support compliance with legal duties, and documents adopted as a matter of good practice.

2. Decisions, delegated authority and procedural validity

The Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, scheme of delegation, committee terms of reference and related documents establish how decisions are made and who has authority to make them.

Where these documents are inaccurate, inconsistent or incomplete, there is a risk that:

- Decisions may be made by individuals or committees without the necessary authority.
- Financial commitments, expenditure or contracts may be authorised incorrectly.
- Committee responsibilities may overlap, or important responsibilities may not be allocated.
- Meeting procedures, voting arrangements or declarations of interest may not be handled correctly.
- Decisions may be challenged, requiring legal advice, reconsideration or remedial action.

A review should therefore check that the documents work together as a coherent framework, rather than simply reviewing each policy in isolation.

Importantly, a procedural error does not automatically make every resulting decision invalid. The legal effect depends on the particular requirement, the nature of the breach and the circumstances.

3. Financial management, internal controls and audit

This is one of the most significant implications for a council, particularly where Financial Regulations, procurement procedures, banking controls or risk management arrangements are incorrect or missing.

The Council is responsible for ensuring that it has adequate and effective financial management and a sound system of internal control.

Potential consequences include:

- Inadequate controls over banking, payments, income, expenditure and financial authorisations.
- Increased risk of error, fraud, misuse of public funds or unauthorised expenditure.
- Inadequate procurement procedures, including failure to obtain or properly document quotations and tenders.
- Unclear responsibilities between the Clerk/RFO, councillors, committees and other officers.
- Adverse internal audit findings and difficulty demonstrating that appropriate controls were in place.
- Potential difficulties when completing the Annual Governance Statement, particularly the assertions concerning internal control, risk management and compliance.

A governance review can help the Council identify weaknesses before they lead to financial loss or adverse audit findings.

4. Transparency, public accountability and information governance

A council must be able to demonstrate that it conducts its business transparently, handles information lawfully and meets its publication and disclosure obligations.

The review should consider the implications of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, data protection legislation, the Council's publication scheme, records management arrangements and applicable transparency requirements.

Potential risks include:

- Failure to publish information that should be available to the public.
- Incorrect handling of Freedom of Information requests.
- Unlawful disclosure of confidential or personal information.
- Inadequate retention, disposal or security of records.
- Unclear rules on councillors' use of personal email accounts, social media and council IT systems.
- Inconsistent decisions about whether information should be disclosed or withheld.

5. Risk management and corporate governance

A comprehensive review enables the Council to identify governance risks arising from missing, conflicting or ineffective policies.

These may include operational, financial, legal, reputational, staffing, cybersecurity, safeguarding and property-related risks.

The Council should consider whether its risk register reflects the weaknesses identified and whether existing controls are adequate. For example, an outdated business continuity policy may leave the Council unprepared for the loss of its premises, IT systems or key personnel. The review should also establish whether each policy has:

- A clearly identified owner.
- An appropriate approval process.

- A review date and review frequency.
- Clear responsibilities for implementation.
- A process for monitoring compliance and reporting failures.

This makes the review part of an ongoing governance process rather than a one-off exercise.

6. Councillor and officer responsibilities

The review should clarify the respective responsibilities of the Council, its committees, the Chair, individual councillors, the Clerk and the RFO.

Ambiguous policies can lead to councillors becoming involved in operational matters outside their authority, officers acting without clear delegated authority, or committees making decisions they are not empowered to take.

For a council employing a Clerk/RFO, it is particularly important to distinguish between:

- The Council's responsibility for setting policy and making decisions reserved to it.
- The Clerk's responsibility for proper administration and implementation of Council decisions.
- The RFO's financial management and statutory responsibilities.
- The authority delegated to committees and officers.

The review should also ensure that the Council's scheme of delegation and committee terms of reference are consistent with its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

7. Reputational damage and public confidence

A council with visibly outdated or contradictory policies may struggle to demonstrate that it is well managed, particularly if governance concerns have already arisen.

The implications can include reduced public confidence, criticism from residents, adverse publicity, difficulty recruiting staff and councillors, and increased scrutiny from auditors or other relevant authorities.

A properly documented review demonstrates that the Council recognises the importance of good governance and is taking proportionate steps to improve its arrangements.

Conflict of Interest Declaration / Transparency

The company which the current locum Clerk/RFO works for was asked to quote. The Clerk/RFO obtained this quotation first, forwarded it to the Administrator and asked that she obtained further quotes and did not involve the locum in the process any further at all until all quotes had been received and this report submitted for the agenda.

Motion:

MOTION: Council to consider and decide upon quotes received to carry out a governance review.

For completion by the office

In Budget ☐	*Spend Authorised* ☐	*Budget Header:*	*Amount:*

Estimates ☐	*Quotes* ☐	*Emergency Spend* ☐	*Sole supplier* ☐	*Specialist* ☐	
P.O . ☐	*Invoice Checked* ☐	*Reason for spend:*			
Legal Power: Local Government Act 1972 *amend as necessary*		*Contract Finders* ☐	Supplier:		