Minutes

Date	13 February 2025
Time	09.00 - 11.00
Location	Teams
Item number	**Notes**
1	**Attendees**: Annie Child, SAAA **AC**; Sallyanne Jeffrey, ADA **SJ**; Matthew Hemsley, MHCLG **MH**; Derek Kemp, Chair **DK**; Andrew Kendrick, NAO **AK**; Alan Mellor, SLCC **AM**; Mark Mulberry, IAF **MM**; Robert Pritchard, SPCA (NALC Representative) **RP**; Carolyn Rossiter, SAAG (NAO Representative) **CR**; Sophie Squibbs, MHCLG **SS**; Naomi Whitmore, CIPFA **NW**. Claire Reed, secretariat **CLR.** **Apologies**: None
2	**New Members** The Panel welcomed Robert Pritchard of the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association (SPCA) as the new NALC Representative and Naomi Whitmore from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The Panel voted to co-opt Sophie Squibbs from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as a non-voting panel member.
3	**Declarations of Interest** DK declared a commercial interest as his business produces accounts under Proper Practices.
4	**Notes from the meeting held on 16 January 2025** **Agreed**
5	**Practitioners' Guide 2025** The following changes were agreed: ▪ A table should be added to show previous and new numbering/ page numbers. ▪ Paragraph 1.26 - amend to <u>Email management - every authority must have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain, for example clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abcparishcouncil.org.uk rather than abcparishclerk@gmail.com or abcparishclerk@outlook.com.</u> ▪ Paragraph 1.44 - amend and split into two paragraphs: 1.44 <u>If a local council is a sole managing trustee and has not discharged all of its responsibilities it should tick 'No'.</u> 1.45 <u>If a local council is not a sole managing trustee, it should tick 'N/A'.</u> ▪ Paragraph 2.10.1 - add sentence <u>If the 'lead' authority is holding balances belonging to the other authorities at the 31 March, these should be held in Ear-marked Reserves.</u>

	- Assertion 10 – add additional wording Assertion 10 added to clarify data compliance, previously covered under Assertion 3 - Paragraph 2.31 - change back to exclude any trust transactions or balances. - Paragraph 2.32 - change back to it should answer 'Yes'. - Paragraph 2.37 - amend first sentence to There is no provision in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for additional notes to provide a narrative on the cause of any variance in the figures shown in the accounting statements. - Paragraph 2.38 - amend second sentence to The RFO needs to produce explanatory figures with a written narrative on the amount and cause of significant variances…. - Paragraph 5.105 - add the word external before auditors. - Paragraph 5.118 - reinstate second sentence Separate minutes must be kept. In order to avoid confusion, trust business should always be minuted separately from authority business. Separate notices and agendas for meetings should be issued. - Paragraph 5.123 - change to Consistency, trust and professionalism - it is best practice to use .gov.uk domains for smaller authorities' emails and websites (excluding parish meetings). This helps maintain a consistent and professional image for the authority and ensures all communications are easily identifiable as coming from the authority. This is increasingly important as cyber scams are on the rise. For support on setting up a gov.uk domain for your smaller authority you can follow the guidance on moving your parish council to a .gov.uk domain. - Paragraph 5.126 - delete - Paragraph 5.128 IT Policies - change council to authority. - Paragraph 5.208 - amend to As authorities have no legal powers to hold revenue reserves other than those for reasonable working capital needs, or for specifically earmarked purposes, whenever an authority's year-end general reserve is less than three months or more than twelve months of net revenue expenditure an explanation should be provided to the external auditor.
6	**Review of Proper Practices - Governance** It was agreed that consultation with the sector was needed but no agreement on the format was reached – it was suggested a draft consultation was drawn up for discussion. CLR was asked to draft a project plan for discussion at the next meeting. **Action: CLR**
7	**Update on discussions with CIPFA** SAAA has met with CIPFA to discuss commissioning them to review/ re-write the Proper Practices. NW will lead the project and has joined the meeting for familiarisation. It was agreed that the new guide needed to belong to SAPPP

	and remain free to access. SAAA has taken legal advice on the legal basis for issuing Proper Practices.
8	**Any other business** ▪ AC updated the panel on the progress of producing accessible AGAR forms. SAAA are aiming to release the forms this year (for 2024-25) and will send them to SAPPP members for review in the coming weeks. ▪ SAAA have sought legal advice and it has been confirmed that SAPPP have the legal power to set Proper Practices. It was noted that there is more scope to revise governance practices than accounting practices as the latter are specified in accounting and audit regulations.

Claire Reed
Secretariat

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