

PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL ACTION PLAN

Action Plan to Address Weak Governance and Financial Management Concerns at Preston Parish Council:

1. Strengthen Governance Structure:

- a. Review and amend the Council's governance documents to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.
- b. Establish clear lines of communication and reporting between council members, staff, internal auditors, and external auditors.
- c. Establish a clear understanding of the code of conduct for council members and ensure its adherence to promote ethical behaviour and accountability.

2. Enhance Financial Management:

- a. Conduct a thorough review of the Council's financial policies and procedures to identify gaps and areas of improvement.
- b. Implement robust financial controls, including segregation of duties, proper authorisation procedures, and regular internal audits.
- c. Ensure staff and members undertake training in financial management to ensure accurate record-keeping, budgeting, financial reporting and audit responsibilities.
- d. Develop a long-term financial plan to address any existing financial challenges and establish a sustainable financial strategy for the Council.

3. Improve Transparency and Accountability:

- a. Increase transparency by regularly publishing financial statements, meeting minutes, and key decisions on the Council's website.
- b. Encourage public participation and feedback by organising regular public consultations and providing opportunities for residents to voice their concerns.
- c. Establish a mechanism for whistleblowers to report any suspected financial irregularities or governance issues anonymously.

4. Training and Capacity Building:

- a. Organise training sessions and workshops for council members and staff to enhance their understanding of governance principles, financial management, and relevant legal requirements.
- b. Encourage council members to attend external training programs and workshops to further develop their skills and knowledge.

5. Regular External Audit Reviews:

- a. Ensure that external auditors conduct regular audits of the Council's financial statements and governance practices.
- b. Ensure that an internal auditor conduct regular audits of the Council's financial statements and governance practices.
- c. Act promptly on the recommendations provided by the auditors and implement necessary changes.

6. Continuous Monitoring and Review:

- a. Establish a dedicated committee responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the action plan.
- b. Conduct periodic reviews of the Council's governance and financial management practices to identify any emerging issues or areas for improvement.

7. Seek External Support:

- a. Consider seeking assistance from external consultants or advisors specialising in governance and financial management to provide guidance and support during the implementation process, eg ERNLLCA.
- b. Collaborate with neighbouring councils or local government associations to share best practices and learn from their experiences.

By implementing this comprehensive action plan, Preston Parish Council can address the concerns regarding weak governance and financial management, paving the way for improved transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making.

Prepared by:

Kim Gray

Interim Parish Clerk/RFO

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