

abrdrn UK Smaller Companies Growth Trust plc

Corporate Governance Statement for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

The Company is committed to high standards of corporate governance. The Board is accountable to the Company's shareholders for good governance and this statement describes how the Company has applied the principles identified in the UK Corporate Governance Code as published in July 2018 (the "UK Code"), which is available on the Financial Reporting Council's (the "FRC") website: frc.org.uk

The Board has also considered the principles and provisions of the AIC Code of Corporate Governance as published in February 2019 (the "AIC Code"). The AIC Code addresses the principles and provisions set out in the UK Code, as well as setting out additional provisions on issues that are of specific relevance to the Company. The AIC Code is available on the AIC's website: theaic.co.uk. It includes an explanation of how the AIC Code adapts the principles and provisions set out in the UK Code to make them relevant for investment companies.

The Board considers that reporting against the principles and provisions of the AIC Code, which has been endorsed by the FRC, provides more relevant information to shareholders.

The Board confirms that, during the year, the Company complied with the principles and provisions of the AIC Code and the relevant provisions of the UK Code, except as set out below.

The UK Code includes provisions relating to:

- interaction with the workforce (provisions 2, 5 and 6);
- the role and responsibility of the chief executive (provisions 9 and 14);
- the need for an internal audit function (provision 25);
- previous experience of the chairman of a remuneration committee (provision 32); and
- executive directors' remuneration (provisions 33 and 36 to 41).

The Board considers that these provisions are not relevant to the position of the Company, being an externally managed investment company. In particular, all of the Company's day-to-day management and administrative functions are outsourced to third parties. As a result, the Company has no executive directors, employees or internal operations. The Company has therefore not reported further in respect of these provisions.

AIC Code Provision	How the Provisions are Applied
BOARD LEADERSHIP AND PURPOSE	
1 The board should assess the basis on which the company generates and preserves value over the long-term. It should describe in the annual report how opportunities and risks to the future success of the business have been considered and addressed, the sustainability of the company's business model and how its governance contributes to the delivery of its strategy. For an investment company, the annual report should also include the company's investment objective and investment policy.	Refer to Overview of Strategy on pages 12 to 19 of the Annual Report.
2 The board should assess and monitor its own culture, including its policies, practices and behaviour to ensure it is aligned with the company's purpose, values and strategy.	Refer to Promoting the Success of the Company on pages 20 to 23 of the Annual Report.

3	In addition to formal general meetings, the chair should seek regular engagement with major shareholders in order to understand their views on governance and performance against the company's investment objective and investment policy. Committee chairs should seek engagement with shareholders on significant matters related to their areas of responsibility. The chair should ensure that the board as a whole has a clear understanding of the views of shareholders.	Refer to Relations with Shareholders on pages 58 and 59 of the Annual Report.
4	When 20 per cent or more of votes have been cast against the board recommendation for a resolution, the company should explain, when announcing voting results, what actions it intends to take to consult shareholders in order to understand the reasons behind the result. An update on the views received from shareholders and actions taken should be published no later than six months after the shareholder meeting. The board should then provide a final summary in the annual report and, if applicable, in the explanatory notes to resolutions at the next shareholder meeting, on what impact the feedback has had on the decisions the board has taken and any actions or resolutions now proposed.	Board confirmation that this course of action would be followed.
5	The board should understand the views of the company's other key stakeholders and describe in the annual report how their interests and the matters set out in section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 have been considered in board discussions and decision-making. The board should keep engagement mechanisms under review so that they remain effective.	Refer to Promoting the Success of the Company on pages 20 to 23 of the Annual Report.
6	The board should take action to identify and manage conflicts of interest, including those resulting from significant shareholdings, and ensure that the influence of third parties does not compromise or override independent judgement.	Refer to Management of Conflicts of Interest on page 54 of the Annual Report.
7	Where directors have concerns about the operation of the board or the company that cannot be resolved, their concerns should be recorded in the board minutes. On resignation, a non-executive director should provide a written statement to the chair, for circulation to the board, if they have any such concerns.	Board confirmation that this course of action would be followed.
DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES		
8	The responsibilities of the chair, senior independent director, board and committees should be clear, set out in writing, agreed by the board and made publicly available. The annual report should set out the number of meetings of the board and its committees, and the individual attendance by directors.	Refer to the Directors' Report on pages 51 to 61 of the Annual Report.

9	<p>When making new appointments, the board should take into account other demands on directors' time. Prior to appointment, significant commitments should be disclosed with an indication of the time involved. Additional external appointments should not be undertaken without prior approval of the board, with the reasons for permitting significant appointments explained in the annual report.</p>	<p>Prior to accepting an appointment, a new Director is required to confirm that, taking into account all of their other commitments, they are able to allocate sufficient time to the Company to discharge their responsibilities effectively.</p> <p>Directors are required to obtain the agreement of the Board before accepting additional commitments that might affect the time they are able to devote to their role as a Director of the Company.</p>
10	<p>At least half the board, excluding the chair, should be non-executive directors whom the board considers to be independent. The majority of the board should be independent of the manager. There should be a clear division of responsibilities between the board and the manager.</p>	<p>All Directors are considered by the Board to be independent and free of any material relationship with the Manager and of any material relationship which could interfere with the exercise of their independent judgement on issues of strategy, performance, resources and standards of conduct.</p>
11	<p>The chair should be independent on appointment when assessed against the circumstances set out in Provision 13.</p>	<p>Liz Airey has served as a Director since 21 August 2019 and as Chairman since 31 March 2020. On appointment as Chairman she was independent when assessed against the circumstances set out in Provision 13.</p>
12	<p>On appointment, and throughout the chair's tenure, the chair should have no relationships that may create a conflict of interest between the chair's interest and those of shareholders, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being an employee of the manager or an ex-employee who has left the employment of the manager within the last five years; • being a professional adviser who has provided services to the manager or the board within the last three years; or • serving on any other boards of an investment company managed by the same manager. 	<p>Since her appointment as Chairman, Liz Airey has had no such relationship.</p>
13	<p>The board should identify in the annual report each non-executive director it considers to be independent. Circumstances which are likely to impair, or could appear to impair, a non-executive director's independence include, but are not limited to, whether a director:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has, or has had within the last three years, a material business relationship with the company or the manager, either directly or as a partner, shareholder, director or senior employee of a body that has such a relationship with the company or the manager; • has received or receives additional remuneration from the company apart from a directors' fee; 	<p>The biographies of each of the Directors are shown on pages 48 to 50 of the Annual Report, setting out their range of skills and experience as well as length of service.</p> <p>All Directors are considered by the Board to be independent and free of any material relationship with the Manager and of any material relationship which could interfere with the exercise of their independent judgement on issues of strategy, performance, resources and standards of conduct.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has close family ties with any of the company's advisers, directors or the manager; • holds cross-directorships or has significant links with other directors through involvement in other companies or bodies. Directors who sit on the boards of more than one company managed by the same manager are entitled to serve as directors; however, they will not be regarded as independent for the purposes of fulfilling the requirement that there must be an independent majority; • represents a significant shareholder; or • has served on the board for more than nine years from the date of their first appointment. <p>Where any of these or other relevant circumstances apply, and the board nonetheless considers that the non-executive director is independent, a clear explanation should be provided.</p>	
14	<p>The board should appoint one of the independent non-executive directors to be the senior independent director to provide a sounding board for the chair and serve as an intermediary for the other directors and shareholders. Led by the senior independent director, the non-executive directors should meet without the chair present at least annually to appraise the chair's performance, and on other occasions as necessary.</p>	<p>Tim Scholefield has been appointed as the Senior Independent Director.</p>
15	<p>The primary focus at regular board meetings should be a review of investment performance and associated matters such as gearing, asset allocation, attribution analysis, marketing/investor relations, peer group information and industry issues.</p>	<p>The Chairman is responsible for leading the Board, ensuring its effectiveness on all aspects of its role and is responsible for ensuring that all Directors receive accurate, timely and clear information.</p> <p>Investment performance and associated matters, such as gearing, asset allocation, investor relations, peer group information and industry issues are agenda items at each Board meeting. The Company Secretary ensures that the Board receives all relevant management and financial information in a timely manner. Representatives of the Manager attend Board meetings where performance against the Company's investment objectives, portfolio risk and attribution analysis is reviewed.</p> <p>Directors are provided with a comprehensive set of papers giving detailed information on the Company's transactions and financial position prior to each meeting and all Directors have timely access to all relevant management, financial and regulatory information.</p>

<p>16</p>	<p>The board should explain in the annual report the areas of decision making reserved for the board and those over which the manager has discretion. Disclosure should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a discussion of the manager’s overall performance, for example, investment performance, portfolio risk, operational issues such as compliance etc; • the manager’s remit regarding stewardship, for example voting and shareholder engagement, and environmental, social and corporate governance issues in respect of holdings in the company’s portfolio. <p>The board should also agree policies with the manager covering key operational issues.</p>	<p>Refer to pages 55 and 56 of the Annual Report.</p> <p>Refer to Management Engagement Committee on page 56 of the Annual Report.</p> <p>Refer to page 17 of the Annual Report.</p> <p>The Management Agreement includes investment guidelines and sets policies to cover key operational issues. The Board discusses operational matters regularly with the Manager, including corporate governance and voting in respect of portfolio holdings, and performance reporting terminology.</p> <p>Between meetings, the Board maintains regular contact with the Manager.</p>
<p>17</p>	<p>Non-executive directors should review at least annually the contractual relationships with, and scrutinise and hold to account the performance of, the manager.</p> <p>Either the whole board or a management engagement committee consisting solely of directors independent of the manager (or executives) should perform this review at least annually with its decisions and rationale described in the annual report. If the whole board carries out this review, it should explain in the annual report why it has done so rather than establish a separate management engagement committee.</p> <p>The company chair may be a member of, and may chair, the management engagement committee, provided that they are independent of the manager.</p>	<p>The Management Engagement Committee comprises the full Board and is chaired by Tim Scholefield. The main responsibilities of the Committee include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - monitoring and evaluating the performance of the Manager; - reviewing the Manager’s assessment of value under Consumer Duty; - reviewing, at least annually, the continued retention of the Manager; - reviewing, at least annually, the terms of appointment of the Manager including, but not limited to, the level and method of remuneration and the notice period of the Manager; and - reviewing the performance and remuneration of the other key service providers to the Company. <p>The outcome of the review of the Manager is set out on page 56 of the Annual Report.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>The board should monitor and evaluate other service providers (such as the company secretary, custodian, depositary, registrar and broker).</p> <p>The board should establish procedures by which other service providers, should report back and the methods by which these providers are monitored and evaluated.</p>	<p>The Management Engagement Committees reviews the performance and remuneration of the other key service providers to the Company.</p>

19	All directors should have access to the advice of the company secretary, who is responsible for advising the board on all governance matters. Both the appointment and removal of the company secretary should be a matter for the whole board.	<p>The Directors have access to the advice of the Company Secretary, abrdn Holdings Limited, through its appointed representative who is primarily responsible to the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for ensuring that Board procedures are complied with; • under the direction of the Chairman, for ensuring good information flows to the Board and its Committees, as well as facilitating induction and assisting with professional development as required; and • for advising, through the Chairman, on all corporate governance matters. <p>A representative of the Company Secretary attends each Board meeting as well as certain committee meetings and the Board maintains regular contact with the Company Secretary between meetings.</p> <p>Both the appointment and removal of the Company Secretary a matter for the whole Board.</p>
20	The directors should have access to independent professional advice at the company's expense where they judge it necessary to discharge their responsibilities properly.	There is a procedure for Directors to take independent professional advice, if necessary, at the Company's expense.
21	Where a new company has been created by the manager, sponsor or other third party, the chair and the board should be selected and bought into the process of structuring a new launch at an early stage.	Not applicable. The Company was founded in 1993.
COMPOSITION, SUCCESSION AND EVALUATION		
22	The board should establish a nomination committee to lead the process for appointments, ensure plans are in place for orderly succession to the board and oversee the development of a diverse pipeline for succession. A majority of members of the committee should be independent non-executive directors. If the board has decided that the entire board should fulfil the role of the nomination committee, it will need to explain why it has done so in the annual report. The chair of the board should not chair the committee when it is dealing with the appointment of their successor.	The Nomination Committee comprises the full Board and is chaired by Liz Airey. The main responsibilities of the Committee are set out on pages 56 and 57 of the Annual Report.
23	All directors should be subject to annual re-election. The board should set out in the papers accompanying the resolutions to elect each director the specific reasons why their contribution is, and continues to be, important to the company's long-term sustainable success.	All Directors are subject to annual re-election. The contribution made by each of the Directors seeking re-election is set out within the biographies of the Directors on pages 48 to 50 of the Annual Report.

24	Each board should determine and disclose a policy on the tenure of the chair. A clear rationale for the expected tenure should be provided, and the policy should explain how this is consistent with the need for regular refreshment and diversity.	The Board's policy on tenure is set out on page 54 of the Annual Report.
25	Open advertising and/or an external search consultancy should generally be used for the appointment of the chair and non-executive directors. If an external search consultancy is engaged it should be identified in the annual report alongside a statement about any other connection it has with the company or individual directors.	Board confirmation that it would intend to use the services of an independent search consultant for future appointments.
26	There should be a formal and rigorous annual evaluation of the performance of the board, its committees, the chair and individual directors. The chair should consider having a regular externally facilitated board evaluation. In FTSE 350 companies this should happen at least every three years. The external evaluator should be identified in the annual report and a statement made about any other connection it has with the company or individual directors.	Refer to page 57 of the Annual Report.
27	The chair should act on the results of the evaluation by recognising the strengths and addressing any weaknesses of the board. Each director should engage with the process and take appropriate action when development needs have been identified.	Refer to provision 26 above.
28	<p>The annual report should describe the work of the nomination committee, (including where the whole board is acting as the nomination committee) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the process used in relation to appointments, its approach to succession planning and how both support developing a diverse pipeline; • how the board evaluation has been conducted, the nature and extent of an external evaluator's contact with the board and individual directors, the outcomes and actions taken, and how it has or will influence board composition; and • the policy on diversity and inclusion, its objectives and linkage to company strategy, how it has been implemented and progress on achieving the objectives. 	<p>Refer to provision 22 above.</p> <p>Refer to provision 26 above.</p> <p>Refer to page 53 of the Annual Report.</p>
AUDIT, RISK AND INTERNAL CONTROL		
29	The board should establish an audit committee of independent non-executive directors, with a minimum membership of three, or in the case of smaller companies two. The chair of the board should not chair the committee but can be a member if they were independent on appointment. If the chair of the board is a member of the audit committee, the board should explain in the annual report why it believes this is appropriate. The board should satisfy itself that at least one member has	The Committee comprises all non-executive Directors other than the Chairman of the Board. The Committee is chaired by Caroline Ramsay who is a Chartered Accountant and has recent and relevant financial experience. The Board is satisfied that the Committee as a whole has competence relevant to the investment trust sector.

	<p>recent and relevant financial experience. The committee as a whole shall have competence relevant to the sector in which the company operates.</p>	
30	<p>The main roles and responsibilities of the audit committee should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring the integrity of the financial statements of the company and any formal announcements relating to the company's financial performance, and reviewing significant financial reporting judgements contained in them; • providing advice (where requested by the board) on whether the annual report and accounts, taken as a whole, is fair, balanced and understandable, and provides the information necessary for shareholders to assess the company's position and performance, business model and strategy; • reviewing the company's internal financial controls and internal control and risk management systems, unless expressly addressed by a separate board risk committee composed of independent non-executive directors, or by the board itself; • conducting the tender process and making recommendations to the board, about the appointment, reappointment and removal of the external auditor, and approving the remuneration and terms of engagement of the external auditor; • reviewing and monitoring the external auditor's independence and objectivity; • reviewing the effectiveness of the external audit process, taking into consideration relevant UK professional and regulatory requirements; • developing and implementing policy on the engagement of the external auditor to supply non-audit services, ensuring there is prior approval of non-audit services, considering the impact this may have on independence, taking into account the relevant regulations and ethical guidance in this regard, and reporting to the board on any improvement or action required; and • reporting to the board on how it has discharged its responsibilities. 	<p>The main roles and responsibilities of the Audit Committee are set out within the Audit Committee's Report on pages 66 to 69 of the Annual Report.</p>
31	<p>The annual report should describe the work of the audit committee including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the significant issues that the audit committee considered relating to the financial statements, and how these issues were addressed; • an explanation of how it has assessed the independence and effectiveness of the external audit process and the approach taken to the appointment or reappointment of the external auditor, information on the length of tenure of 	<p>The work of the Audit Committee is set out within the Audit Committee's Report on pages 66 to 69 of the Annual Report.</p>

	<p>the current audit firm, when a tender was last conducted and advance notice of any retendering plans;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the case of a board not accepting the audit committee's recommendation on the external auditor appointment, reappointment or removal, a statement from the audit committee explaining its recommendation and the reasons why the board has taken a different position (this should also be supplied in any papers recommending appointment or reappointment); and an explanation of how auditor independence and objectivity are safeguarded, if the external auditor provides non-audit services. 	
32	<p>The directors should explain in the annual report their responsibility for preparing the annual report and accounts, and state that they consider the annual report and accounts, taken as a whole, is fair, balanced and understandable, and provides the information necessary for shareholders to assess the company's position, performance, business model and strategy.</p>	<p>Refer to the Statement of Directors' responsibilities contained on page 72 of the Annual Report.</p>
33	<p>The board should carry out a robust assessment of the company's emerging and principal risks. The board should confirm in the annual report that it has completed this assessment, including a description of its principal risks, what procedures are in place to identify emerging risks, and an explanation of how these are being managed or mitigated.</p>	<p>Refer to Principal and Emerging Risks and Uncertainties contained on page 14 of the Annual Report.</p>
34	<p>The board should monitor the company's risk management and internal control systems and, at least annually, carry out a review of their effectiveness and report on that review in the annual report. The monitoring and review should cover all material controls, including financial, operational and compliance controls.</p>	<p>Refer to Internal Controls and Risk Management on pages 67 and 68 of the Annual Report.</p>
35	<p>In annual and half-yearly financial statements, the board should state whether it considers it appropriate to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing them, and identify any material uncertainties to the company's ability to continue to do so over a period of at least twelve months from the date of approval of the financial statements.</p>	<p>Refer to Going Concern Statement contained on page 58 of the Annual Report.</p>
36	<p>Taking account of the company's current position and principal risks, the board should explain in the annual report how it has assessed the prospects of the company, over what period it has done so and why it considers that period to be appropriate. The board should state whether it has a reasonable expectation that the company will be able to continue in operation and meet its liabilities as they fall due over the period of their assessment, drawing attention to any qualifications or assumptions as necessary.</p>	<p>Refer to Viability Statement contained on pages 18 and 19 of the Annual Report.</p>

REMUNERATION

37	The board should establish a remuneration committee of independent non-executive directors with a minimum membership of three, or in the case of smaller companies, two. In addition, the chair of the board can only be a member if they were independent on appointment and cannot chair the committee. Before appointment as chair of the remuneration committee, the board should satisfy itself that the appointee has relevant experience and understanding of the company. If the board has decided that the entire board should fulfil the role of the remuneration committee, it will need to explain why it has done so in the annual report.	As the Company has no employees, and the Board is comprised wholly of non-executive Directors, and given the size and nature of the Company, the Board has not established a separate Remuneration Committee. The Director's Remuneration Policy and level of Directors' remuneration are determined by the Nomination Committee, which is chaired by Liz Airey and comprises all of the Directors.
38	The remuneration committee should have delegated responsibility for determining the policy and setting the remuneration for the chair.	The Nomination Committee's duties include reviewing the Company's remuneration policy and determining Directors' remuneration, including for the Chairman. The Committee also considers whether there is a need to appoint an external remuneration consultant.
39	The remuneration of non-executive directors should be determined in accordance with the Articles of Association or, alternatively, by the board. Levels of remuneration for the chair and all non-executive directors should reflect the time commitment and responsibilities of the role. Remuneration for all non-executive directors should not include share options or other performance-related elements. Provision should be made for additional directors' fees where directors are involved in duties beyond those normally expected as part of the director's appointment. In such instances the board should provide details of the events, duties and responsibilities that gave rise to any additional directors' fees in the annual report.	<p>Directors' fees are set within the limits of the Company's Articles of Association which limit the aggregate fees payable to the Board of Directors per annum. The current limit is £200,000 per annum and may only be increased by shareholder resolution.</p> <p>The Company's policy is that the remuneration of the Directors, all of whom are non-executive, should reflect the experience of the Board as a whole and be fair and comparable to that of other investment trusts with a similar capital structure and similar investment objectives.</p> <p>Directors are not eligible for bonuses, pension benefits, share options, long term incentive schemes or other benefits.</p>
40	Where a remuneration consultant is appointed, this should be the responsibility of the remuneration committee. The consultant should be identified in the annual report alongside a statement about any other connection it has with the company or individual directors. Independent judgement should be exercised when evaluating the advice of external third parties.	Not applicable during the year ended 30 June 2023.

41	<p>The main role and responsibilities of the remuneration committee should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in conjunction with the chair, setting the directors' remuneration levels; and • considering the need to appoint external remuneration consultants. 	Refer to Provision 38 above.
42	There should be a description of the work of the remuneration committee in the annual report.	The Directors' Remuneration Report is included on pages 62 to 65 of the Annual Report.

Disclosure Guidance & Transparency Rules ("DTRs")

The following further information is disclosed in this statement in accordance with the Companies Act and DTR 7.2.6:

- The Company's capital structure and voting rights are summarised on page 51 of the Annual Report;
- Details of the substantial shareholders in the Company are listed on page 57 of the Annual Report;
- The rules concerning the appointment and replacement of Directors are contained in the Company's Articles of Association and are summarised above;
- Amendment of the Company's Articles of Association and powers to issue or buy back the Company's shares require a special resolution to be passed by shareholders;
- There are no restrictions concerning the transfer of securities in the Company; no special rights with regard to control attached to securities; no agreements between holders of securities regarding their transfer known to the Company; no agreements which the Company is party to that might affect its control following a takeover bid; and,
- There are no agreements between the Company and its Directors concerning compensation for loss of office.

By order of the Board

Liz Airey
 Director
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 24 August 2023