



Mrs B Weddell
Hascombe Parish Council
2 Pond Cottages
Plaistow
West Sussex
RH14 0PX

26 April 2024

Dear Beverley

Re: Hascombe Parish Council
Internal Audit Year Ended 31 March 2024 – Year-End Audit report

Executive summary

Following completion of our year-end internal audit on 26 April 2024 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published AGAR. The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of this is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not. Where appropriate **recommendations for action are shown in bold text and are summarised in the table at the end of the report.**

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Hascombe Parish Council are well established and followed.

Regulation

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to “undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit's function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all Members to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement.

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Andy Beams of Mulberry & Co, who has over 30 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 13 years specialising in local government.

Your auditor is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

Engagement Letter

An engagement letter was previously issued to the council covering the 2023/24 internal audit assignment. Copies of this document are available on request.

Planning and inherent risk assessment

The scope and plan of works including fee structure was issued to the council under separate cover. Copies of this document are available on request. In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR.

It is our opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be "walk through testing" on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

Table of contents

		PAGE
A	BOOKS OF ACCOUNT	3
B	FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	3
C	RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE	5
D	BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES	6
E	INCOME	6
F	PETTY CASH	6
G	PAYROLL	7
H	ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS	7
I	BANK AND CASH	7
J	YEAR END ACCOUNTS	8
K	LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW	10
L	PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION	10
M	EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS – INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS	11
N	PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS	11
O	TRUSTEESHIP	11
	ACHIEVEMENT OF CONTROL ASSERTIONS	12
	AUDIT POINTS CARRIED FORWARD	13

A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Internal audit requirement

Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.

Audit findings

This is the first internal audit conducted by Mulberry LAS Ltd, having been appointed by the council this year. The audit was conducted on site with the Clerk, who also acts as the council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Clerk had prepared the information advised in advance of the visit, and overall, I have the impression that accounting records are neatly maintained and easily accessible. Other information was reviewed through discussion with the Clerk and a review of the council website www.hascombeparishcouncil.co.uk

The council maintained accounts manually during the year under review but is moving to the EasyPC accounting package for the next financial year.

B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Check the publication and minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit

The council correctly exempted itself from a limited assurance review last year and therefore does not receive an External Auditor's Report and Certificate. The Exemption Certificate has been published on the council website.

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms.

The council website provides details of the individual councillor's Register of Members' Interests forms, although of the five councillors listed, only three forms are on the website.

It is a statutory requirement for all Parish Councillors to complete a Register of Members' Interests Forms and for them to be published on the council's website in accordance with [Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011](#).

Confirm that the council is compliant with the relevant transparency code

As the council's income and expenditure is below £25,000, it is a statutory requirement to follow the requirements of the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, and this is commented upon in Section L of this report.

Confirm that the council is compliant with GDPR

The council is fully aware of GDPR and has undergone training. It was noted the council has not established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

The Clerk informed me that the council is in the process of moving to a gov.uk website and once this is in place, new common email addresses will be put in place.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's Guide (March 2023) contains updated guidance on the matter as below:

The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK

- 5.205. All authorities except parish meetings must now have an official website. To comply with GDPR, councils should provide official email accounts for their councillors as well as for their clerk and other officers.
- 5.206. When choosing a domain name for the council's website and emails, many local council websites are appropriately making use of the official GOV.UK domain (for example, ourparishcouncil.gov.uk), with email addresses being linked to that domain.
- 5.207. Using a GOV.UK domain for your council website and email accounts demonstrates the council's official local government status. Members of the public are increasingly cyber security awareness, so a GOV.UK domain can also help to build trust, and credibility and visibly demonstrates authenticity. Many people will now reasonably expect a local council to have a GOV.UK domain name.
- 5.208. For the purposes of user management, councils should ensure that the proper officer can add and remove member and staff email accounts. Commercial 'dashboard' email and web systems offer centralised searching of all data contained within the system for effective compliance with GDPR Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests.

The council has a Privacy Notice on the council website, but **I was unable to locate a Website Accessibility Statement.**

The full name of the accessibility regulations is the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

The accessibility regulations came into force for public sector bodies on 23 September 2018. They say you must make your website or mobile app more accessible by making it 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'. You need to include and update an accessibility statement on your website.

The accessibility regulations build on your existing obligations to people who have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 (or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland).

Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year

The council meets on alternate months during the year. A diary of future meetings is available on the council website.

Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice

I was able to confirm that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. Whilst we have not tested every single committee and council meeting there was no evidence of non-compliance in giving three clear days' notice of the meeting.

I remind council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office (page 3 of this link) ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas.pdf

Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website

Draft minutes are uploaded to the council website and clearly annotated as draft.

Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months

The council resolved at the March 24 Meeting (minute ref 24/024) to adopt amended Standing Orders based on the current NALC model. The website currently shows the previous version and I recommend the new version is added as soon as possible.

Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations

Financial Regulations are based on the current NALC model and are due for review at the May 2024 council meeting. The regulations contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council.

Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed

The council has thresholds in place at which authorisations to spend must be obtained as below:

FR 4.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:

- *the council for all items over £5,000;*
- *a duly delegated committee of the council for items over £500; or*
- *the Clerk, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below £500.*

Such authority is to be evidenced by a Minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman.

Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

FR 4.2. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the council, or duly delegated committee. During the budget year and with the approval of council having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate ('virement').

FR 4.5. In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of council services, the clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the council which in the clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £500. The Clerk shall report such action to the chairman as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.

Based on the level of financial activity of the council, and through discussion with the Clerk, these authorisation thresholds appear appropriate although the committee threshold could be removed as the council has no committees,

Confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £9.93 per elector

The council has section 137 expenditure within the allowable threshold for the year under review.

Check receipt of VAT refund matches last submitted VAT return

The council normally submits its VAT return on an annual basis, although the latest submission covers the last two years. I reviewed the prior submission for previous two years which showed a refund amount due of £779.32 and was fully supported by the required details. I was able to confirm receipt of this amount to the council's bank account in June 2022. The council is up to date with its VAT submissions.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE

Internal audit requirement

This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

Audit findings

The council has a risk assessment process in place, which was last reviewed and approved by council on 11 September 2023 (minute ref 23/061a). I reviewed the risk assessment record, which includes details of each risk, an assessment of the impact and likelihood of each risk, the system of management in place, the person responsible and any actions required. This is a suitable approach and includes analysis of all risks typically associated with a council of this size.

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Aviva Insurance arranged through BHIB which covers the year under review. The policy includes Public Liability and Employers Liability cover of £10 million each and a Fidelity Guarantee level of £50,000 which is sufficient for a council of this size.

We discussed assertion 8 on the Annual Governance Statement and whether this had any impact on the council.

“We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.”

The Clerk confirmed that they were not aware of any event having a financial impact that was not included in the accounting statements.

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

Audit findings

The council set a precept of £7,200 for 2023/24. With a tax base of 173.8, this equates to a band D equivalent of £41.43 (compared to the average in England of £79.35).

The Clerk confirmed that the 2024/25 budget and precept were approved at the council meeting in January 2024.

The Clerk produces a management report showing receipts and payments against budget and this is shared with councillors periodically during the year.

The council holds £5,000 in an earmarked reserve for a weight restriction sign. Remaining balances are held in the general reserve at the end of the financial year.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner’s guide states *‘the generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority’s general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure’* (para 5.33).

The general reserve balance is higher than the recommended range and the council should keep this level under review.

E. INCOME

Internal audit requirement

Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Apart from the precept, the council receives no other regular source of income apart from any grants, bank interest and VAT refunds.

F. PETTY CASH

Internal audit requirement

Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

The council has no petty cash.

G. PAYROLL

Internal audit requirement

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

Audit findings

The Clerk is the only employee and has a signed contract of employment, based on the NALC template, and the council is a member of the NEST pension scheme.

Payroll is processed in house by the Clerk using the HMRC PAYE Online Tools. I reviewed the payslips for February and March 2024 and deduction amounts appear correct. I reviewed the total figure being included within box 4 (staff costs) on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and was able to confirm from the accounting software that this includes only salary payments, HMRC payments and pension contributions.

The council has incorrectly been claiming the employment allowance for national insurance contributions. The HMRC guidance clearly states:

Who cannot claim Employment Allowance

You cannot claim if you're a public body or business doing more than half your work in the public sector (such as local councils and NHS services) - unless you're a charity

Having discussed this with the Clerk, the allowance has now not been claimed for the 2024/25 financial year. It is unlikely that any employer's national insurance would have been payable due to the total payroll being below the threshold.

There are no councillor allowances, although the Chair receives a Chair's allowance to reimburse them for costs and expenses.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Internal audit requirement

Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

Audit findings

The council has a fixed asset register in place, maintained in an Excel format, which includes details of asset location, date of acquisition, original purchase price, insurance value and custodian. Assets are correctly listed at cost/proxy cost, or where gifted/donated, given a nominal £1 value for the purpose of the asset register.

I confirmed the asset register total matches that included in box 9 (total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets) on the AGAR and was able to trace the changes to the previous year's total against the asset register.

The council has no borrowing. The council has a long-term investment with CCLA for the Hascombe War Distress Fund which is correctly included on the asset register.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.

Audit findings

Financial Regulation 2.2 states 'On a regular basis, at least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chairman shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification. This activity shall on conclusion be reported, including any exceptions, to and noted by the council.'

The Clerk confirmed that whilst this had been common practice in the past, this has not happened during the year under review and therefore the council has failed to meet the requirements of this internal control objective.

I reviewed the March 2024 bank reconciliation for all accounts and was able to confirm the year-end balances to the bank statements and found no errors, and that the total balances match the figure included in box 8 of the AGAR.

The council holds two accounts with Lloyds Bank. Balances held at the year-end are within the £85,000 protection limit offered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

Audit findings

The council, at its meeting to sign off the year-end accounts, must discuss Section 1 of the AGAR (Annual Governance Statement) and record this activity in the minutes of the meeting. **COUNCIL IS REMINDED THAT THIS MUST BE A SEPARATE AGENDA ITEM PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF SECTION 2 OF THE AGAR (ANNUAL ACCOUNTS).**

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

Based on the internal audit finding I recommend using the table below as the basis for that discussion.

	Annual Governance Statement	<i>‘Yes’, means that this authority</i>	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	YES – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	YES – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.
3	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	YES – the Clerk advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
4	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority’s accounts.</i>	YES – the requirements and timescales for 2022/23 year-end were followed.
5	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	YES – the council has a risk management scheme and appropriate external insurance.
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective</i>	YES – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor.

		<i>view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	YES – matters raised in internal and external audit reports have been addressed.
8	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	YES – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<i>has met all its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>	N/A – the council has no trusts

Section 2 – Accounting Statements

AGAR box number		2022/23	2023/24	Internal Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	23,056	20,629	Agrees to 2022/23 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	7,100	7,200	Figure confirmed to central precept record
3	Total other receipts	2,600	158	Agrees to underlying accounting records
4	Staff costs	3,613	4,124	Agrees to underlying accounting records. Includes only expenditure allowed as staff costs (see section G)
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Confirmed to PWLB documents
6	All other payments	8,514	6,163	Agrees to underlying accounting records
7	Balances carried forward	20,629	17,700	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet
8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	20,629	17,700	Agrees to bank reconciliation for all accounts
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	12,185	15,888	Matches asset register total and changes from previous year have been traced
10	Total borrowings	0	0	Confirmed to PWLB documents
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	NO	NO	No – the council is not a sole trustee
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	N/A	N/A	N/A – the council is not a sole trustee

Audit findings

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on a receipts and payments basis with no requirement to complete the box 7 and 8 reconciliation. The council is exempting itself again from a limited assurance review as both receipts and payments for the year are below the £25,000 threshold.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2022/23 and published on the council website. Although it does not need to be submitted to the External Auditor, the Clerk has completed the variance analysis to explain the variances exceeding 15% where required.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW

Internal audit requirement

IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")

Audit findings

The council correctly declared itself exempt in 2022/23 as both its income and expenditure were below £25,000. The council will again declare itself exempt for 2023/24.

L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

Internal audit requirement

The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation

Audit findings

For councils with a turnover below £25,000, it is a statutory requirement to follow the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities and testing of compliance with this requirement is detailed below.

Information to be published	Audit findings
All items of Expenditure above £100	Information not on the council website
End of Year Accounts	Published on the parish council website
Annual Governance Statement	Published on the parish council website
Internal Audit Report	Published on the parish council website
List of councillor responsibilities	Published on the parish council website
Details of land and building assets	Information not on the council website
Minutes, agendas and meeting papers	Published on the parish council website

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

13(1) An authority must publish (which must include publication on that authority's website)

- (a) the Statement of Accounts together with any certificate or opinion entered by the local auditor in accordance with section 20(2) of the Act; and
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(3)

13(2) Where documents are published under paragraph (1), the authority must

- (a) keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and
- (b) ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

I was able to confirm that the relevant pages of the AGAR are available for review on the council website for financial years 2018/19 to 2022/23 inclusive. **The council is not complying with the statutory requirements to publish information under the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities as items of expenditure above £100 and land and building assets are not published on the council's website.**

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2023 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Proposed
Date AGAR signed by council	15 May 2023	13 May 2024
Date inspection notice issued	18 May 2023	14 May 2024
Inspection period begins	26 June 2023	3 June 2024
Inspection period ends	4 August 2023	12 July 2024
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes	Yes

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2022/23, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement can therefore be signed off by the council.

I was able to confirm that the proposed dates for 2023/24 meet the statutory requirements.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Before 1 July 2023 authorities must publish:

- *Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited*
- *Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2022/23, approved and signed, page 4*
- *Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2022/23, approved and signed, page 5*

Not later than 30 September 2023 authorities must publish:

- *Notice of conclusion of audit*
- *Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate*
- *Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.*

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

Audit findings

I was able to confirm that the Notice of Public Rights is published on the council website along with the Exemption Certificate that the publication requirements for 2022/23 have been met.

O. TRUSTEESHIP**Internal audit requirement**

Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

Audit findings

The council has no trusts.

Achievement of control assertions at year-end audit date

Based on the tests conducted during the year-end audit, our conclusions on the achievement of the internal control objectives are summarised in the table below and are reflected in the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report within the AGAR.

	INTERNAL CONTROL OBJECTIVE	YES	NO	NOT COVERED
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year	✓		
B	This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for			✓
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.		✓	
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>	✓		
L	The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation		✓	
M	The authority, during the previous year (2022/23) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N	The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Andy Beams

Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd

Year-End Audit - Points Carried Forward

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	<p>The council website provides details of the individual councillor's Register of Members' Interests forms, although of the five councillors listed, only three forms are on the website.</p> <p>It is a statutory requirement for all Parish Councillors to complete a Register of Members' Interests Forms and for them to be published on the council's website in accordance with Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011.</p>	
	<p>The council is fully aware of GDPR and has undergone training. It was noted the council has not established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.</p>	
	<p>I was unable to locate a Website Accessibility Statement.</p> <p>The full name of the accessibility regulations is the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.</p> <p>The accessibility regulations came into force for public sector bodies on 23 September 2018. They say you must make your website or mobile app more accessible by making it 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'. You need to include and update an accessibility statement on your website.</p> <p>The accessibility regulations build on your existing obligations to people who have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 (or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland).</p>	
I. BANK AND CASH	<p>The Clerk confirmed that whilst this had been common practice in the past, this has not happened during the year under review and therefore the council has failed to meet the requirements of this internal control objective.</p>	
L. PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION	<p>The council is not complying with the statutory requirements to publish information under the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities as items of expenditure above £100 and land and building assets are not published on the council's website.</p>	