

Internal Audit Report for Westerfield Parish Council for the year ending 31st March 2021

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| Clerk | Rod Caird |
| RFO (if different) | |
| Chairperson | Peter Miller |
| Precept | £9,520.77 |
| Income | £9,537.64 (corrected) |
| Expenditure | £6,752.55 (corrected) |
| General reserves | £25,809.51 |
| Earmarked reserves | £41,000.00 |
| Audit type | Annual |
| Auditor name | Victoria Waples |

Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity and corruption

- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts and data

Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- carry out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being carried out as planned

| Section 1 – proper bookkeeping | | |
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| The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council’s accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified. | | |
| Evidence | | <i>Internal auditor commentary</i> |
| <i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i> | Yes | The council uses an excel spreadsheet which allows the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis. |
| <i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i> | Yes | The RFO has ensured that the cashbook is the focus for day-to-day accounting and is aware that the balancing off and reconciliation to the bank statement remains the most important control over the accounting system. |
| <i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i> | <i>Partly met</i> | The accounting records were spot checked, and the following were found: 1. two cheques were allocated as receipts (£146.80 (unpresented) & £301.28 returned cheque)). |
| Additional comments: Recommendation: Council should revisit the Accounting Statements as prepared and ensure that the above cheques are removed from income and offset against expenditure incurred to ensure that whilst the overall result might not affect the final numbers in the financial statements they will cause a distortion in the overall income received. The treatment of refunds and cancelled cheques should be a contra entry within payments and not allocated as a receipt. See section 11 for recommended amendments. | | |

| Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders | | |
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| The internal auditor will check the date the Council carried out its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC’S latest model which include legislative changes. | | |
| Evidence | | <i>Internal auditor commentary</i> |
| Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually? | Yes | The latest version of Council’s Standing Orders were reviewed at its meeting 15 th September 2020, a copy of which can be found on the Council's website and which are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018 which take into account changes in legislation since those produced in 2013. |

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| Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually? | Yes | Although Council reviewed its Financial Regulations at the same meeting, those uploaded to the website are still based on the Model Financial Regulations as produced by NALC in 2016. <i>Comment: Council should be aware that a new version of the Model Standing Orders were produced by NALC in 2019. Council is advised to adopt the latest version to ensure that it acts in accordance with changes in legislation and current procurement recommendations</i> |
| Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations? | Yes | The Council's current Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council. |
| Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? ¹ | Yes | In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), the Council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. Council's own Financial Regulations (1.8) state that the Clerk is the RFO and such an appointment was confirmed at the meeting of 27 th May 2020. |
| Additional comments: | | |

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| <p>Section 3 – Payment controls The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.</p> | | |
| Evidence | | <i>Internal auditor commentary</i> |
| Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation? | Yes | At each full Council Meeting a list of all payments is presented to the meeting with formal approval of such expenditure being given and the relevant finance report uploaded onto the Council's website to enable and evidence of such paperwork to be reviewed. Payments made away from |

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

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| | | the meeting are brought back to full Council as retrospective payments and approved at the next meeting. |
| Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved? | No | Council does not use internet banking. |
| Is VAT correctly identified, recorded and claimed within time limits? | Yes | VAT is clearly identified in the cash book with the year-end position of £382.39 being stated in the cashbook. The claim for the period under review has not yet been submitted. |
| Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ² | No | The Council has not adopted the General Power of Competence. |
| Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate? | Yes | There were no payments made under this power for the year under review. |
| Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements? | Not applicable | Council has no such loans. |
| Additional comments: | | |

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| Section 4 – Risk management | | |
| The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council. | | |
| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
| <i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i> | Yes | The risk assessment documentation submitted for Internal Audit details risks as identified in previous years and has been reviewed for all the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority. |

² Localism Act

³ Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the 1972 Act”) enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £8.12 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

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| <p><i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i></p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Council has taken steps to identify, assess and record the risks associated with its actions and decisions it has taken or considered taking during the year that could have financial or reputational consequences and that appropriate action has been taken to ensure measures are in place to mitigate and manage the risk.</p> |
| <p><i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i></p> | <p>Partly met</p> | <p>Council has insurance in place under a Local Council Insurance Policy which shows core cover for the following: Public liability: £10m; Public/Products Liability: £10m; Business Interruption: £10k and Fidelity Guarantee of £150k. There is property damage insurance for one property. The level of Fidelity Guarantee meets the recommended guidelines which provides that the cover should be at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants.</p> <p><i>Comment: Whilst Council renewed its insurance, there is no minute to demonstrate that Council reviewed its insurance for the coming year. Council might wish to record that it has carried out an annual review of the insurance cover provided under its policy and confirm that the terms of the policy remain acceptable, and that cover is in place for all known risks and assets under the Council's remit.</i></p> |
| <p><i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i></p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control as described under its overall risk assessment documentation as adopted by the Council at its meeting of 15th September 2020.</p> <p>Comment: whilst Council has shown good practice and understands the requirement to have in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money, it might wish to evidence, on an annual basis and via a separate minute that it has sufficient measures in place to mitigate the risk and that the Council's system of internal control is effective and appropriate for the Council.</p> |

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

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| <i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit has been carried out during the year⁵</i> | Yes | <p>The minutes of 28th September 2020 show that Council reviewed the internal audit review and agreed to take appropriate action on the matters raised therein. The effectiveness of internal audit is reviewed and covered within the internal control statement adopted by the Council.</p> <p><i>Comment: By reviewing the terms of reference and effectiveness for internal audit, Council has followed guidance and demonstrated that it recognised that the function of internal audit is to test and report to the authority on whether its system of internal control is adequate.</i></p> |
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Additional comments:

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| <p>Section 5 – Budgetary controls The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed</p> | | |
| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
| <i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i> | Yes | The revenue budget for the year 2020–2021 in the sum of £7,740 was set at a full Council Meeting on 21 st January 2020. |
| <i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i> | Yes | The precept for the year 2020-2021 in the sum of £9,520.77 was approved by full Council at the same meeting of with the minutes evidencing that this would be a 0% change on the parish element of the council tax bills. |
| <i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i> | Yes | The minutes show that comparison between budgeted and actual income and expenditure is contained within the online cashbook which is circulated to all Councillors before each meeting and includes update budgeted tracking figures. The links to the online cashbook were verified and accessible from the council operated website. |

⁵ Governance and Accountability Guide

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| <p><i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i></p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Council's final accounts show general reserves in the sum of £25,809.51 and earmarked reserves in the sum of £41,000 (of which £16,384.21 is a restricted reserve – CIL).</p> <p><i>Council is reminded of the guidance as issued by Proper Practices which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure and should ensure that the level of general reserves adopted is in accordance with its General Reserve Policy. There is no upper limit for Earmarked Reserves, but they should be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level subject to regular review and justification (at least annually).</i></p> |
| <p>Additional comments: <i>Council demonstrates good practice, by ensuring that it follows the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process to be followed for the year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• decide the form and level of detail of the budget;</i> <i>• review the current year budget and spending;</i> <i>• determine the cost of spending plans;</i> <i>• assess levels of income;</i> <i>• bring together spending and income plans;</i> <i>• provide for contingencies and consider the need for reserves;</i> <i>• approve the budget;</i> <i>• confirm the precept or rates and special levies.</i> <p><i>Council should also note guidance as issued under the Practitioners Guide 2020 which states that an authority needs to have regard to the need to put in place a General Reserve Policy and that such Reserves are held in accordance with that Policy and that the level and purpose of all Earmarked Reserves are annually reviewed.</i></p> | | |

Section 6 – income controls
 The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.

⁶ In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
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| <i>Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?</i> | Yes | Income is recorded in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. A number of items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statement and found to be in order. |
| <i>Is income reported to full council?</i> | Yes | Income received is reported to full Council within the financial reports submitted at each meeting and summarised as income received to date. The RFO ensures that monies received are promptly banked. |
| <i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i> | Yes | The council received precept of £9,520.77 during the year under review in April and September 2020. Evidence was provided showing details of the Precept form served on the Charging Authority to receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account. |
| <i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i> | Not applicable | Council did not receive any CIL receipts in the year under review. |
| <i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i> | Yes | In accordance with the 2010 Regulations, the Council ensured that the retained balance from 2019/20 of CIL funds was held within the Earmarked Reserves specifically allocated. |
| <i>Has an annual report been produced</i> | Yes | A copy of the annual report showing monies brought forward, expenditure incurred and retained balances was submitted for the year ending 31 st March 2021. |
| <i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i> | Partly met | The annual report for the year ending 31 st March 2021 showing retained balances of £16,384.21 is still to be uploaded onto the Council's website. |
| <i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁸</i> | Yes | Council is aware of the requirement to ensure that it complies with its duty to produce an annual CIL report for each financial year and that such a report is uploaded onto its website by 31 st December of that year. |
| Additional comments: | | |

Section 7 – petty cash

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

⁸ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

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| The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures and verification processes and that these are up to date. | | |
| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
| <i>Is petty cash in operation?</i> | <i>Not applicable.</i> | A petty cash system is not operated by the parish council. |

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| Section 8 – Payroll controls | | |
| The Internal Auditor will check salaries are approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. If the Clerk was recruited after 1 st April 201, evidence will be required to show compliance with the new requirements for the statement of employment, Induction, probation periods and training requirements. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips. | | |
| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
| <i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i> | <i>No</i> | Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.. Council had 1 employee on its payroll at the period end of 31 st March 2021. |
| <i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i> | <i>Yes</i> | |
| <i>Minimum wage paid?</i> | <i>No</i> | The minimum wage is not applied. |
| <i>Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?</i> | <i>Yes</i> | The payroll function is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Custom guidelines and outsourced. All expenditure and overtime is approved by full Council. |
| <i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i> | <i>Yes</i> | Deductions due to be paid to HM Revenue and Customs for the year under review were paid in accordance with the timescales required. |
| <i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁹</i> | <i>Yes</i> | During the previous year’s internal audit it was noted that Council had completed a re-declaration of compliance. |

⁹ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

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| <i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i> | Yes | Council approves all expenses due to be paid to the Clerk in accordance with its own Financial Regulations. <i>Comment: Council has noted guidance as issued in the Practitioners Guide for 2020 on the treatment of what can be included as employment expenses within the Annual Governance and Accountability Guide 2020 - section 2.16 refers and submitted within Box 4 of the AGAR.</i> |
| Additional comments: | | |

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| <p>Section 9 – Asset control The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.</p> | | |
| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
| <i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?¹⁰</i> | Yes | The Asset Register was reviewed during the Internal Audit Visit for year-end and reflects those items listed under insurance and within the Parish Council's remit for maintenance and ownership. |
| <i>Are the value of the assets included? (note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i> | Yes | It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2021) was £21,385 which shows nil movement. |
| <i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i> | Not applicable | No records of deeds, articles or land registry titles were reviewed or submitted during the internal audit process. |
| <i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i> | Yes | The asset register was signed off by the council at its meeting of 28 th April 2021 at which the AGAR was presented to full Council. |
| <i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i> | Yes | Council has insurance for its fixed assets under its policy for all risks under generic headings such as contents and street furniture. |
| Additional comments: | | |

¹⁰ Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – March 2019

Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2020 on the valuation of its assets and has ensure that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation is consistently applied. Should this be amended Council will need to publish and provide explanations in changes in value to any previously recorded assets.

Section 10 – bank reconciliation

The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.

| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
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| <i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i> | Yes | Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the online financial reports available to view prior to each meeting and uploaded onto the Council's website. |
| <i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i> | Yes | Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end (31 st March, the balance across the councils accounts stood at £66,809.51. |
| <i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i> | Yes | Bank Balances are submitted to the Council at each meeting. <i>Comment: the RFO has ensured that the Council is aware that in accordance with proper practices, the bank reconciliation is a key tool for management as it assists with the regular monitoring of cash flows and therefore aids decision-making.</i> |

Additional comments:

In accordance with Proper Practices, Council might wish to implement a system whereby a Councillor carries out a review of the Council's banking internal control by formally signing off the bank reconciliation. This is not only good practice but also is a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives.

Section 11 – year end procedures

| Evidence | | Internal auditor commentary |
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| <i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i> | Yes | Accounts are produced on a receipts and expenditure basis. |

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| <i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i> | Yes | There is an underlying financial trail from financial records to the accounts produced. |
| <i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR¹¹ documents been completed?</i> | Yes | As the Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it has completed Section 1 and 2 including the Certificate of Exemption of Part 2 of the AGAR which were approved by full Council at its meeting on 28 th April 2021. Recommendation: with reference to Section 1 above, Council is advised to revisit the signed AGAR and make the following amendments: Exemption Certificate: Total income should read £9,537.64 Total expenditure should read £6,752.55 Accounting Statements: Box 3 should read £16 Box 6 should read £4494 |
| <i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i> | <i>Not applicable</i> | As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was unable to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year 19/20. |
| <i>During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?</i> | Yes | The internal auditor was able to find the arrangements for the exercise of public rights for the period under review and can confirm that the dates set for the year ending 31 March 2020 were from 1 st September until 12 th October 2020. It is however noted that the form is undated. |
| <i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹²</i> | <i>Partly met</i> | Whilst a signed copy of the AGAR for the year 19/20 was submitted for internal audit, Council should note the publication requirements of the Regulations for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million. The following were not published |

¹¹ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

¹² Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

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| | | <p>on the public website operated by the Council for the year ending 31st March 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3 • Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20, page 4 - signed • Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20, page 5 – signed • Section 3 – External Audit Certificate and Report 2019/20 page 6 - signed • Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. |
| Additional comments: | | |

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| <p>Section 12 – internal audit The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.</p> | | |
| Evidence | | <i>Internal auditor commentary</i> |
| <i>Has the previous internal audit report been considered by the Council?</i> | Yes | The Annual Internal Audit for the year ending 31 st March 2020 was considered by full Council at its meeting of 15 th September 2020. |
| <i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i> | Yes | <p>The following recommendations were made in the internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2020:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of relevant powers to incur expenditure in accordance with statute and legislation 2. Minute to evidence the annual review of insurance cover 3. Evidence via a minute reference to confirm that the Council has complied with its duties under the Pensions Act 2008. 4. Requirement to submit an explanation for the high reserves held. |

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| <i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i> | Yes | The Clerk has confirmed that SALC was appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor at a meeting of the Council on 16 th March 2021 for the period under review. |
| Additional comments: | | |

| Section 13 – external audit for the period under review The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be taken into account. | | |
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| Evidence | <i>Internal auditor commentary</i> | |
| <i>Has the previous external audit report been considered by the Council?</i> ¹³ | No | The Internal Auditor is unable to verify from the minutes that the Council has considered the report submitted by the External Auditor dated 26 th November 2020 advising that they have certified the completion of their review and the discharging of their responsibilities. It is confirmed that the publication of the Notice of conclusion of audit along with the audited Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2020 was seen on the Council's website. The minutes of 17 th November confirm that approval of the payment of the external audit fee was forthcoming. <i>Comment: in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council should ensure that, following the completion of an audit, full Council and not a committee considers and receives the audit letter from the local auditor and that this shall be as soon as reasonably practicable. Evidence of this should be via a minute reference.</i> |
| <i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i> | Yes | Council has ensured that it complied with the comments made by the external auditor with regards to the level of reserves held when considering |

¹³ Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e.. All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.*

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| | | future precept requests and the setting of the period rights period for future years. |
| Additional comments: | | |

| Section 14 – additional information | | |
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| The internal auditor will look for some additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations. | | |
| Evidence | | <i>Internal auditor commentary</i> |
| <i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹⁴ <i>(note to auditor- emergency Regulations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic)</i> ^{f15} | Yes | Council did not hold an Annual Meeting during May 2020. <i>Comment: In recognition of this being unprecedented times and following the Government’s guidelines for staying at home and working remotely, the Government included within s.78 in the Coronavirus Act 2020 (made 4th April 2020) the ability for the Secretary of State the power to make Regulations to make provisions for the holding of meetings. The 2020 Regulations set out those provisions. This also repealed for the year under review, the requirement to hold an Annual Council Meeting. Council has followed these regulations and held its meetings online.</i> |
| <i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹⁶ | Yes | Council is reminded that minutes become legal once they are approved by the council and signed by the chairman of that meeting as an accurate record. Loose leaf minutes should be numbered consecutively and signed by the Chair of the meeting on each page. <i>Comment: Council should be mindful of its own Standing Order 12 on the treatment of Draft Minutes as the minutes on the Council’s</i> |

¹⁴ The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

¹⁵ The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

¹⁶ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972 and the Localism Act 2011

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| <p><i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i></p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Evidence was seen on the District Authority's website of the Register of Interests for all current Parish Councillors. <i>Comment: Council is reminded that whilst the monitoring officer of the District Council must arrange for the parish council's register of members' interests to be available for inspection in the district and must be published on the district council's website, where the parish council has its own website, its register of members' interests must also be published on that website. (Openness and transparency on personal interests - A guide for councillors – August 2012)</i></p> |
| <p><i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i></p> | <p>Not applicable</p> | <p>The council does not act as the sole trustee for any trusts.</p> |
| <p><i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i></p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Council is aware that to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller authorities (turnover not exceeding £25,000), the following should be published on a public website for the year 2020/2021 not later than 1 July: Internal Audit Report List of Councillors and Responsibilities Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT End of Year Accounts Annual Governance Statement Asset Register and that Agendas of Meetings; Associated Papers and Minutes should be published in accordance with the prescribed timescales as set out in the Transparency code for smaller authorities – December 2014.</p> |
| <p><i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁷</i></p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>The Council is correctly registered with the ICO as a data controller. Registration Certificate ZA366867 refers.</p> |

¹⁷ Data Protection Act 2018

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| <i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i> | <i>Partly met</i> | Council has adopted a General Privacy Statement. Recommendation: The Council will need to take steps to ensure compliancy and should consider the adoption of a suite of policies which will provide details as to the information held by the council, who it is shared with and how it is used. A Data Protection Policy would provide such a framework which would give the public information as to what can be expected in the handling of requests from individuals who have the right to know what data is held on them, why the data is being processed and whether it will be given to any third party. |
| <i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁸</i> | <i>No</i> | The Council has no website accessibility statement on its website and has still to demonstrate that it has checked the website for any accessibility problems or produced a plan to address these problems and fix them 'within reason'. Guidance can be found on SALC's website: https://www.salc.org.uk/advice/website-accessibility-regulations/ |
| <i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i> | <i>Yes</i> | The Clerk ensures that the Council's records are backup in the manner approved by the Council. |
| <i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i> | <i>Not applicable</i> | Council does not operate a committee system. |
| <p>Additional comments: Recommendation: As The Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 are now in force, Council should ensure that at the very minimum it publishes on its pages of the website, a Website Accessibility Statement, which has identified the areas which are not accessible and shows that Council has a forward plan so that it can make changes to improve this.</p> | | |

Signed: Victoria S Waples

Date of Internal Audit Visit: 12.07.21 & 13.07.21

Date of Internal Audit Report: 13.07.2021

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils

¹⁸ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018