

## Internal Audit Report for Leavenheath Parish Council for the period ending 31 March 2023

Clerk	Debbie Hattrell
RFO (if different)	
Chairperson	Councillor Paul Mortlock
Precept	£ 19,461.00
Income	£ 28,488.84
Expenditure	£ 23,402.75
General reserves	£ 24,784.81
Earmarked reserves	£ 44,803.00
Audit type	Annual
Auditor name	<b>Victoria Waples</b>

### 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:

- conduct 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 2022/23 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 conducted as planned

<b>Section 1 – proper bookkeeping</b>		
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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council uses an excel spreadsheet to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	The Responsible Financial Officer (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. The cashbook is reconciled on a monthly basis.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	A number of spot checks were carried out and the functionality of the cashbook overall was found to be in order.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders</b>		
The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted 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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council last reviewed its Standing Orders at its meeting of 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2023. Those seen on the Council’s website are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018 and take into account changes in legislation since those produced in 2013.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Financial Regulations (FR), as seen on the Council’s website show a review date of 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2023 and are based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations 2019. <i>Comment: at the next annual review, Council might wish to also review the Procurement Thresholds amendments (SI 2022/139) of the Public Contracts</i>

		<i>(Amendment) Regulations 2022 which came into force on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and make the changes to the contract value limits from £25,000 to £30,000 for non-central government authorities. The contract value limits are to be calculated inclusive of VAT (effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022).</i>
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	Council has ensured that its Financial Regulations are tailored to the Parish Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? <sup>1</sup>	Yes	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), the Council appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. Council's own FR 1.8 details the Clerk is so appointed.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<p><b>Section 3 – Payment controls</b>                  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>		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	At each relevant full Council Meeting a list of all payments is presented to the meeting with formal approval of such expenditure being shown in the minutes and evidence of such paperwork in the files submitted for internal audit. A spot check of payments made under contractual terms were further analysed and all were found to be in accordance with agreed schedules and sums approved.  <i>Comment: The Parish Council shows good practice by ensuring that payments made away from the meeting are submitted to full council as</i>

<sup>1</sup> Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

		<i>retrospective payments for approval in accordance with Council's Own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.</i>
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	Internet banking is operated in accordance with the Council's own Financial Regulations. Council continues with the procedure implemented whereby evidence is retained showing which Councillors authorised the release of the payment by having the invoice initialled by the members who authorise the online payment. <i>Comment: within Council's internal control statement, there is evidence that council has considered specific control procedures for payments by bank transfer or other electronic means to ensure that the risks brought about by the ease and speed of such transactions and the difficulties faced in unravelling them should there be errors are mitigated.</i>
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is identified within the cashbook and claimed in accordance with the guidelines for local authorities and similar bodies. The year-end position as seen in the cashbook was verified as £857.41. The claim for the previous year in the sum of £1621.57 was verified as having been settled in May 2022.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? <sup>2</sup>	N/A	Council does not used the General Power of Competence.
Are payments under s.137 <sup>3</sup> separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	Payments made under this power for the year under review totalled £300.00 and were within statutory limits and deemed to be of benefit to those living in the area.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	The Council has no such loans.
<b>Section 4 – Risk management</b>		
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.		

<sup>2</sup> Localism Act

<sup>3</sup> 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 £8.82 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i>	Yes	<p>Council formally considered the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and agreed the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks at its meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has demonstrated that, in accordance with Proper Practices, the risks are being annually reviewed, assessed and appropriate measures are in place to protect public money.</i></p>
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	Yes	<p>Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus not only on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money, but also on the activities and services undertaken and being offered by the council. A review of the minutes for the year demonstrate that overall the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences.</p>
<i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee <b>and</b> has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i>	Yes	<p>Council has insurance in place under a Local Councils Policy which shows core cover for the following: Public liability: £10million; Employer's Liability: £10million and Fidelity Guarantee of £250thousand. The level of Fidelity Guarantee is within 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>There is no minute to reference that, during the year, being aware that it is the responsibility of the Council as a whole to satisfy itself that insurances are adequate and that all steps have been taken to mitigate and manage identified risks with appropriate insurance, annual reviews of the Council's insurance were undertaken prior to renewal.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is advised to ensure that it is able to demonstrate that it has reviewed the risks facing the Council in transacting its business and has taken out appropriate insurance to manage and reduce the risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things).</i></p>

<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed<sup>4</sup></i>	Yes	At the meeting of the full Council of 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2022, Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, confirmed that the financial and management systems of the council were sound and adequate and internal control arrangements were efficient and effective to address the risks associated with the management of public finances. The internal control review, as carried out, arose from the adopted Internal Control Statement as reported to the same meeting. <i>Comment: In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Regulation 6, Council is aware that it should formally review the effectiveness of its system of internal control to ensure that it has mitigation measures in place to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.</i>
<i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment<sup>5</sup></i>	Yes	In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Parish Council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements within the internal control statements as adopted.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<p><b>Section 5 – Budgetary controls</b>                  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>		
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Internal auditor commentary</b>	
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The budget for the year 2022-2023 was approved at the Council meeting of 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2022 following a recommendation from the Finance Committee as per its meeting of 15 <sup>th</sup> December 2021. <i>Comment: for clarity and transparency Council is advised to ensure that the minutes show the actual figures being approved.</i>

<sup>4</sup> Accounts and Audit Regulations

<sup>5</sup> Practitioners Guide

<p><i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The precept was set at £19,461 for 2022/2023, as confirmed at the same meeting with the minutes demonstrating that this equated to a nil% increase for a Band D property over that set for the previous year.</p>
<p><i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i></p>	<p>Partly met</p>	<p>During the year under review, Council considered the comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure at its meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 (six monthly accounts).  <b>Recommendation: it is suggested that Council should be mindful of its own Standing Order – Accounts and Accounting Statements 17c, which provides details on the frequency on the submission of the Council’s receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for each quarter; the Council’s aggregate receipts and payments (or income and expenditure) for the year to date; the balances held at the end of the quarter being reported and which includes a comparison with the budget for the financial year and highlights any actual or potential overspends. If Council chooses to submit such reports on a half-yearly basis, it is recommended to change the frequency within its own Standing Orders to ensure that it is adhering to the Orders as written.</b></p>
<p><i>Reserves held – general and earmarked<sup>6</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>At year-end Council’s accounts show general reserves in the sum of £24,784.81 with earmarked reserves in the sum of £44,803.00 which includes the restricted CIL Reserve of £11,532.00  <i>Comment: as previously advised Council should note 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 held is in accordance with an adopted 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>  <b>Recommendation: although Council adopted a General Reserve Policy in 2017, it is advised to review the adopted Policy on an annual basis which will incorporate a review of the level of general and earmarked reserves held and provide a justification for the level at which Council</b></p>

<sup>6</sup> 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



		<b>is currently operating. Council is reminded of the guidance as issued on the minimum level of reserves being set and the requirement to consider its level of income and expenditure as well as the risks to that income.</b>
<b>Additional comments:</b> Council has shown good practice by ensuring that in the main, the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process are followed for the year. Council needs to ensure that progress against the budget is reviewed regularly throughout the year.		

<b>Section 6 – income controls</b>		
The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<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 and recorded in accordance with Proper Practices.
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	Income received is reported within the six-monthly financial reports submitted to Council and in the budgetary review reports summarising the Council's receipts and payments to date. <b>Recommendation: see comment above under Section 5 with reference to the frequency intervals for the reporting of income received.</b>
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	The council received precept of £19,461.00 during the year under review in April and September 2022. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed, 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?<sup>7</sup></i>	Yes	During the year under review, Council did not receive any CIL receipts.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	There were no CIL receipt for the year under review to be reported to full Council.
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	Although Council did not receive any CIL receipts for the year under review, Council's retained CIL receipts form part of the earmarked reserves.

<sup>7</sup> Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	The Annual CIL Statement has been produced and shows a retained balance of £11,532.00
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	The Annual CIL Statement for the year 2022 - 2023 has been uploaded onto the Council's website.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 7 – petty cash</b>		
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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	N/A	The Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 8 – Payroll controls</b>		
The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	The council had 1 employee on its payroll at the period end of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023. It was confirmed that the Clerk has a Contract of Employment.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	All salary payments were authorised by the Council.
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	No	The minimum wage was not applied to the employee.
<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>	Yes	There were suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.

<p><i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC?                  Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The payroll function is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Custom guidelines. Cross-checks were completed on payments covering salary and found to be in order. Deductions paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made within the required timescales.</p>
<p><i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?<sup>8</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Evidence was seen to demonstrate that Council is aware of its pension responsibilities and Council continues to adhere to Pension Regulatory Requirements and the National Pay Scales for Clerks.  <i>Comment: Council is aware that every three years an employer must put certain staff back into a pension scheme. This is known as 're-enrolment'. This is an employer's legal duty and Councils must let the Pension Regulator know when they have completed the task by completing and submitting a re-declaration of compliance. Council is aware of the deadlines as stated in communications from the Pension Regulator.</i></p>
<p><i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>All expenses / payments made are against itemised invoices submitted to and approved by full Council.</p>
<p><b>Additional comments:</b></p>		
<p><b>Section 9 – Asset control</b>                  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>		
<p><b>Evidence</b></p>		<p>Internal auditor commentary</p>
<p><i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?<sup>9</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>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. It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end on the Statement of Accounts for 31<sup>st</sup> March</p>

<sup>8</sup> The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

<sup>9</sup> Practitioners Guide

		2023 is stated as £9,020 which accurately reflects the value as seen on the register.
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2022 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied.
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/A	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The figures on the Accounting Statements of the AGAR were approved at the meeting of 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 at which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return were approved and signed.
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has insurance under all risks cover for its assets as per the insurance schedules seen.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 10 – bank reconciliation</b>		
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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	Evidence was seen showing that bank reconciliations were completed during the year and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall there is reporting of bank balances within the financial reports submitted at each relevant meeting. <i>Comment: 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 which aids decision-making, particularly when there are competing priorities.</i>
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances agree with the period end statements and, as at year end (31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023), the balance across the councils accounts stood at £68,729.81.

<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	The minutes show that bank reconciliations, as produced by the RFO, are given within the Financial Reports which are received and accepted at each meeting.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 11 – year end procedures</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounts are produced on an income and expenditure basis, and found to be in order with debtors correctly identified.
<i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i>	Yes	The end of year accounts were presented for the internal auditor review and there is a clear financial trail from records to presented accounts.
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR<sup>10</sup> documents been completed?</i>	Yes	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it has completed the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Form 3. Sections 1 and 2 were completed and approved at the meeting of 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2023. <b>Recommendation: Council should note that Section 11a of the Accounting Statements has not yet been completed.</b>
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declare itself exempt?</i>	N/A	The Parish Council, having had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 was not able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year 21/22.
<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	During the review of the publication requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, for the year 2021-2022, the Internal Auditor can confirm that the Council correctly provide for the exercise of elector's rights during Summer 2022. Dates set were 13 <sup>th</sup> June to 22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2022 with the AGAR having been signed off at the meeting of 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

<p><i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?<sup>11</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and published the following on a public website:                  Annual Internal Audit Report                  Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR                  Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR                  Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights                  Notice of conclusion of Audit                  Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate</p>
<p><b>Additional comments:</b></p>		

<p><b>Section 12 – internal audit</b>                  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>		
<p><b>Evidence</b></p>		<p><i>Internal auditor commentary</i></p>
<p><i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 was formally considered and adopted at the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2022.</p>
<p><i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The following recommendations were raised in the internal audit report for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and have been actioned:                  1. Evidence of internal controls including review of their effectiveness                  2. Review of the effectiveness of internal audit</p>
<p><i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The appointment of Suffolk Association of Local Councils as the Council's internal auditor for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 was approved at the meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022.  <i>Comment: Council has understood the requirement to ensure that it has a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities for internal audit, audit planning and timing of visits, reporting requirements; access to information; period of engagement and remuneration.</i></p>

<sup>11</sup> Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

**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 considered.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Has the Council considered the previous external audit report? <sup>12</sup>	Yes	Council received and considered the report from the External Auditor for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022 at its meeting of 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2023. The interim certificate as produced by the external auditor due to its inability to complete its review work in time to enable the council to publish the required documentation in line with statutory requirements was seen on the parish council's website. The Internal Auditor is also able to verify that the external auditor report, certificate and conclusion of the external audit, once received, have also been published on the Council's website.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	Not applicable	There were no matters to be brought to the attention of the council.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

**Section 14 – additional information**

The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.

Evidence	Internal auditor commentary

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> <sup>13</sup>	Yes	Council held its Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at which the Chair was elected on 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 in accordance with legislation in place at that time.
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> <sup>14</sup>	Yes	<p>Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that, in accordance with legislation, loose leaf minutes should be numbered consecutively and signed by the Chair of the meeting on each page.</i></p> <p>At the meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022, the Council resolved to adopt the Code of Conduct 2020, as produced by the Local Government Association (LGA), for the purposes of discharging its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within its area.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has published the adopted Code on the Council's website in place of the code adopted in 2012.</i></p>
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	Evidence was seen on the website of the District Council for the Register of Interests for all current Parish Councillors. Access can be gained from the Council's website.
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	N/A	Council does not have any such responsibilities.
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	To be considered	<p>Whilst the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 applies to local authorities, including parish and town councils with annual income or expenditure (whichever is the higher) over £200,000, Council might wish to note the guidance which states that those relevant authorities with income over £25,000 but under £200,000 are expected (but are not legally required to do so) to follow its recommendations.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council might wish to review the provisions and take steps to work towards ensuring compliancy with the requirements by publishing a number of datasets on its website in accordance with the required timescales.</i></p>

<sup>13</sup> The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

<sup>14</sup> Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011



<p><i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?<sup>15</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The council is correctly registered with the ICO as a Data Controller in accordance with legislation.                  However, Council does not appear to have a Model Publication Scheme detailing the type of information the Council holds and how it will make it available to the public.  <b>Recommendation: Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, public authorities must provide access to information held which must be published proactively. The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme and to publish information covered by the scheme. Council should seek to review the information it holds and collate it into a publication scheme that will be available to view on its website.</b>                  Templates are available from the SALC website.</p>
<p><i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i></p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Council has taken steps to ensure compliancy with the regulations as written. Council's Privacy Statement was seen on the website and covers the use of the website upon which Council has a presence. The Council has expanded its documents detailing the framework that the public can expect for 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 to demonstrate that it is working within the guidelines of the regulations. Council also has in place a policy that provides the framework for responding to Subject Access Requests (SAR) and covers the internal procedures on the handling of SARs.</p>
<p><i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?<sup>16</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There is a website accessibility statement available to view on the parish council website which details the technical information for the website are given along with the methods used for testing the website; steps being taken to improve accessibility and how the site is being improved to ensure that content meets the WCAG 2.1 Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.</p>

<sup>15</sup> Data Protection Act 2018

<sup>16</sup> Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?<sup>17</sup></i>	Yes	Council has a .gov.uk email address and has noted guidance over the use of a secure e-mail system with a .gov.uk address which identifies that the Council has local government status and demonstrates authenticity when building trust and credibility with the public.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Council uses a system whereby a back-up of the council's data is taken and stored appropriately.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	N/A	Council does not operate a committee system.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

Signed: *V S Waples*

Date of Internal Audit Review: 20.07.23 & 25.07.23

Date of Internal Audit Report: 25.07.2023

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils

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<sup>17</sup> Practitioners Guide