

Internal Audit Report for Charsfield Parish Council

for the period ending 31 March 2025

Clerk	Viviane Ward
RFO (if different)	-
Chairperson	Councillor Simon Rixon
Precept	£ 7,270.00
Income	£10,551.47
Expenditure	£ 9,003.81
General reserves	£ 2,364.57
Earmarked reserves	£11,702.93
Audit type	Annual – exempt authority
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:

- 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 2024/25 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

Section 1 – proper bookkeeping		
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		Internal auditor commentary
Is the ledger maintained and up to date?	Yes	Excel spreadsheets were submitted for internal audit review and these have been used to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis.
Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure? (under Proper Practices, Councils are required to work on an Income & Expenditure basis when their gross income, or gross expenditure, exceeds £200,000 for 3 consecutive years)	Yes	Council's gross income and expenditure level is below the threshold of £200,000 and has been for three (3) continuous years. Council's operating under this limit may choose either to report on an income and expenditure basis or on a receipts and payments (R&P) basis. Council has elected to report its financial matters on a receipts and payments basis.
Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?	Yes	The cashbook is reconciled on a regular basis. Council follows proper practices in ensuring that its accounting procedure gives an accurate presentation of an authority's true financial position by focusing on the balance of economic benefits that it has under its control, rather than just its bank balance and the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) has ensured that there are clear financial management reports submitted to the council on a regular basis.
Is the arithmetic correct?	Yes	A number of spot checks were conducted, and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order.
Comment: the RFO show good practise by referencing in the cashbook the powers used to incur expenditure. Statutory powers are granted by Parliament and give local councils the choice or opportunity to take action and are therefore discretionary Local Councils must exercise their powers subject to the provisions of the general law.		

Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders		
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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	<p>The Standing Orders were reviewed at the meeting of 30th September 2024 and are based on the latest model published by the National Association of Local Councils (2022). The Standing Orders are compliant with legislation and have been adapted (where they are not statutory requirements) to ensure that they are relevant to the Parish Council.</p> <p><i>Comment: at the next annual review, Council might wish to note that NALC have updated Model Standing Order (England) section 18 to comply with new procurement legislation and ensure consistency with the Model Financial Regulations. The changes are to 18.a.v, 18.c, 18.d, and 18.f. NALC have also updated Model Standing Order (England) section 14 to better reflect Code of Conduct requirements. 14.a, 14.b, and 14.c have been removed. NALC have also changed the language in the document to gender-neutral terms to align with their policy and the Civility and Respect Project.</i></p>
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	<p>Financial Regulations, as seen on the Council's website were reviewed at the meeting of 29th July 2024 and are based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations 2024.</p> <p><i>Comment: revisions to the model Financial Regulations were published by NALC in March 2025 and council should seek to incorporate these in the next annual review.</i></p>
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Council's 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), council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority.
Additional comments:		

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

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.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	A selection of random payments were cross checked minutes, cash book, bank statement and invoices and all were found to be recorded / authorised in accordance with Proper Practices. All were found to be in order. A financial statement is submitted at each relevant meeting detailing the payments to be made, with reference made within the body of the minutes as to the payments being authorised.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	Internet banking is operated in accordance with the Council's own Financial Regulations and is used for the settlement of the Council's expenditure. The council's risk assessment documentation for electronic payments details the procedure to be followed for the making of such payments in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is identified in the cash book with the year-end balance standing at £528.13. The claim for the period 1 st April 2024 to 28 th February 2025 covering all of the VAT recoverable for the year submitted in the sum of £394.64 and settled in March 2025. The reclaimed amount was reduced due to the accounting error in 2023-24 in which an overclaim was made. In accordance with the regulations in place the claim for the period after the error was found contained correcting entries to account for the error.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	N/A	The council has not confirmed that it is eligible to exercise the GPOC.

² Localism Act

Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	Payments made under this power for the year under review totalled £180.00 and were within regulatory limits and deemed to be of benefit to all or some of the council's electorate.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	Council has no such loans.
Additional comments:		

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 £10.81 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

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 as reviewed provides details of the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks. The Risk Register for the year under review was considered and adopted by the council at its meeting of 23 rd September 2024.
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	Yes	Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money. There is evidence 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. <i>Comment: council has in place monitoring documents which identify the risks involved with and the potential for improvements to its arrangements to protect public money. It provides the opportunity for reviews of operational as well as financial and governance reviews by members to ensure that it has mitigation measures in place to address the risks associated with the council's day to day operations.</i>
<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>	Yes	Council has insurance in place under a Village Hall Policy (for the Village Hall) and a Select for Local Councils Policy for the Parish Council. The former shows core cover for the following: Public Liability £10million; Employer Liability £10million; Trustees Liability £100thousand. The latter has core cover shown as: Public & Products Liability: £12million; Employer's Liability: £10million and Fidelity Guarantee of £250thousand. <i>Comment: Council has followed recommended guidance by ensuring that its Fidelity Cover is equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April/May and/or during the year upon receipt of grants.</i>

		<p>During the year under review, council is able to demonstrate, as evidenced from a review of the minutes, that it is 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 and that annual reviews of the Council's insurance were undertaken prior to renewal.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has ensured 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 reviewed⁴</i>	Yes	<p>Council adopted an Internal Control Statement for the year ending 31st March 2025 at the meeting of 7th May 2024. Following a review via control tests as carried out at the end of the financial year, the internal control statement was reviewed and readopted in May 2025. As such, it is evidenced from the document seen, that the 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. Council has also demonstrated good practice by appointing a councillor to conduct an internal control review via a series of control tests. This was conducted on 12th March 2025 and reported as having been completed to a satisfactory level at the meeting of 20th March 2025.</p>
<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 appointment⁵</i>	Yes	<p>The council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements within the adopted internal control statement.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulation 2015, the parish council must review the terms of reference and effectiveness of internal audit and demonstrate that it has understood that the role of internal audit is to evaluate and report on the adequacy of the system of internal control.</i></p>
Additional comments:		

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

⁵ Practitioners Guide

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		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed	Yes	<p>The budget for the year 2024 - 2025 was approved at the Council meeting of 22nd January 2024 and was set at £7,270 to be funded by the precept.</p> <p>The budget for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the council meeting of 20th January 2025 with evidence produced that this would be set at £8,435 to be funded by the precept.</p> <p><i>Comment: council has evidenced within the minutes the actual budget being set alongside the reasoning for such a budget thereby ensuring transparency in the budgetary process followed by the council.</i></p>
Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	Yes	<p>The minutes of 22nd January 2024 confirmed that the precept to be levied for the year 2024 – 2025 would be set at £7,270.</p> <p><i>Comment: council has latterly confirmed that this would equate to an increase of £0.31 or 0.72% over that set for the previous year.</i></p> <p>The precept for the year 2025 – 2026 was discussed and approved at the meeting of 20th January 2025 and set at £8,435. The minutes demonstrate that this would result in a rise of £4.32 or 11% over that set for the previous year.</p> <p><i>Comment: as advised previously, and in accordance with best practice, council has recorded in the minutes the impact the precept being set would have on a Band D Dwelling in percentage terms.</i></p>
Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget	Yes	<p>Whilst council received regular reports detailing bank balances and approval of bank reconciliations, reviews covering the budget for the current year were only conducted during the months at which the budgeting process was reviewed for the coming year.</p> <p><i>Comment: whilst council is monitoring the budget, it might be preferable that standing order 17c is amended to follow the intervals at which council receives regular statements showing evidence of comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure so that council is acting in accordance in accordance with its own Standing Orders.</i></p>

<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i>	Yes	<p>The Council, as at year-end, had General Reserves totalling £2,364.57 and Earmarked Reserves of £11,702.93 (which includes the restricted CIL Reserve).</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has followed 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></p>
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

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

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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?</i>	Yes	Income is recorded in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. The RFO has ensured that the accounting records contain all day-to-day entries of all sums of money received.
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	Income received is reported to full Council within the financial reports submitted to full Council in accordance with council's financial regulations.
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	Council received precept in the sum of £7,270 from East Suffolk Council for the period under review as reported to full Council within its Financial Reports at its meetings in April 2024. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved to being served on the Charging Authority to remittance advice showing the Precept to be paid and receipt of same in the council's bank account.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i>	Yes	CIL reporting schedules are maintained in accordance with the Regulations.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	Council received a CIL receipt of £2,424.67 during the year under review.
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	The CIL workings for 2024-2025 shows that there is a retained balance of £7,131.37 which has been transferred into in an Earmarked Reserve specifically allocated, in accordance with the Regulations.
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	The annual CIL statement has been produced detailing the relevant figures and carry forward balance.
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	The annual CIL statement, as approved and signed by the council has been uploaded to the website.
Additional comments:		

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Section 7 – petty cash		
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>N/A</i>	Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	<i>N/A</i>	
Additional comments:		

Section 8 – Payroll controls		
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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	Council had 1 employee on its payroll at the period end of 31 st March 2025. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit but the Clerk to the Council has confirmed that all staff have a contract of employment in place.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	All salary payments are presented to full Council for approval and payment is made via internet banking in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. <i>Comment: Council ensures that there are 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.</i>
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	No	No employee is paid the minimum wage.
<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 are 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.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines and outsourced. Cross-checks were completed on a sample of payments covering salary and all were found to be in order. Payments due to be paid to HM Revenue and Customs were made within the appropriate timescales.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁸</i>	N/A	Council is aware of its pension responsibilities, but no member of staff was enrolled into a pension provider by the council.

⁸ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes	From information provided, the council's re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator was completed on 22 nd January 2025.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	There is a satisfactory expense system in place and all expenses claimed are approved by full council with supporting paperwork in place and reimbursed in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations.
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?⁹</i>	Yes	The Asset Register, as submitted for internal audit review, 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 (31.03.2025) is £5,906 which reflects nil movement during the year under review. For comparison, the declared value on the asset register as at 31.03.24 was £5,906.
<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 2024 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>	Yes	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was conducted via remote means.
<i>Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?</i>	N/A	Council does not have any assets located on third party property.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The values seen on the Asset Register of £5,906 (rounded) match those on the Draft Accounting Statements.
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has appropriate insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under the headings on the insurance schedule. A spot check of assets under insurance versus the asset register was carried out and all were confirmed to be under appropriate insurance.

⁹ Practitioners Guide

Additional comments:

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
<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 detailed financial reports submitted to full council.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances as of 31 st March 2025 agree with the year-end bank statements and at year end stood at £14,067.50 across the accounts held in the parish council's name.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Balances across the Council's accounts are reported at each meeting of full Council. Council's internal control statement confirms that reconciled accounts including bank reconciliation are presented to the council at council meetings, thereby demonstrating that an internal review and verification of the bank reconciliation versus the bank statements has been undertaken. This is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives.

Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	Yes	Accounts are produced on a receipts and payments basis, and all found to be in order.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	Yes	The end of year accounts were presented for the internal auditor review and confirmation is given that there is a clear financial trail from records to presented accounts.
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR ¹⁰ documents been completed?	Yes	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and/or expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 2 The Accounting Statements were submitted in completed for the internal audit review on the AGAR Form 2 having been approved and signed off by the council at its meeting of 19 th May 2025.
Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	Yes	As the council did not have gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 during 2023-2024 it was able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31 st March 2024. The minutes of 7 th May 2024 demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 and the Certificate of Exemption were reviewed, exemption claimed, and permission was given for the Chair and Clerk to sign the documents. <i>Comment: Council has ensured that there is formal evidence of the legal decision taken to claim exemption under section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulation 2015.</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?	Yes	Council has demonstrated that during the year under review, it ensured that the period for the exercise of elector's rights during Summer 2024 was in accordance with the period specified within the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The dates set were 4 th June to 15 th July 2024 with the Notice being dated 3 rd June 2024 as seen on the council's website. <i>Comment: within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council</i>

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

		<i>correctly provided for the exercise and published a copy of the required “Public Notice” by ensuring that it clearly identified the statutory 30 working day period when the Authority’s records are available for public inspection. This is evidenced by the notice on the website which contains the period for the exercise of public right; details of the manner in which the documents can be inspected; the name and address of the external auditor and the provisions as contained under section 25 and section 27 of the Act.</i>
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i>	Yes	The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 for the year ending 31 st March 2024 and published the following on a public website: Certificate of Exemption 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 Analysis of variances Bank reconciliation – year-end
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i>	Yes	The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31 st March 2024 was formally considered by and approved for adoption at the meeting of full Council of 29 th July 2024.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	<p>Council has taken action to address further the matter that was raised within the internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2023.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with guidance, an action plan should be produced setting out the areas of improvement or development as identified within the narrative internal audit report. Any proposed remedial actions should be identified within the plan along with the members or officers responsible for delivering improvement and the deadlines for the completion of the action. Council has understood the requirement to ensure that, having received a narrative internal audit report, it should minute its review of the work conducted and agree actions planned from the outcomes identified.</i></p> <p>The following recommendations have been actioned by the Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the amounts claimed under the previous VAT reclaim 2. Review effectiveness of internal audit 3. Adoption of a Publication Scheme
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	<p>The appointment of the person to act as the parish council's independent internal auditor for the year 2024 - 2025 was approved at the council meeting of 17th March 2025.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has understood the requirement to ensure that there is an appointed person to provide assurance that the financial and management systems of the council are sound and adequate and internal control arrangements are efficient and effective.</i></p>
<i>Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?</i>	Yes	<p>The letter of engagement was approved at the same meeting.</p> <p><i>Comment: by approving the letter of engagement, Council will be following Proper Practices by ensuring it has clarity on the provision of internal audit</i></p>

		<i>including the roles and responsibilities, audit planning and timing of visits, reporting requirements, rights to access to information, members and officers, period of engagement and remuneration.</i>
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?¹²</i>	<i>N/A</i>	The council was able to claim exemption from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31 st March 2024.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i>	<i>N/A</i>	
Additional comments:		

¹² 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.*

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
Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation? ¹³	Yes	Council held its Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at which the Chair was elected on 7 th May 2024 in accordance with legislation in place at that time.
Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? ¹⁴	Yes	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. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes. Comment:
Is there a list of members' interests held?	Yes	A copy of the members' interests for all serving councillors was seen on the district council's website. There is a direct from the parish council's own website to that of the district.
Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?	N/A	Council has no declared trustee responsibility.
Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?	Yes	Council is aware that councils with gross income and expenditure under £25,000 are required to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 for smaller authorities and has complied with the publication requirements of the code.
Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)? ¹⁵	Yes	The Council is correctly registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation. Council's adopted Publication Scheme (as required by The Freedom of Information Act) provides details of the information held by the council as defined under the scheme, the manner in which it can be accessed and

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

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

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

		appropriate charges to be incurred. It is up to date and is available to view on the council's website.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	<i>Work required</i>	Council is actively taking steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and has a clear privacy statement on its website which covers the framework that the public can expect for dealing with 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. Recommendation: council should ensure that its adopted GDPR policies that provide clear responsibilities and obligations of the Council in respect of the collecting, using and protecting of personal information in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR are uploaded to its new style website.
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁶</i>	Yes	Council has published a website accessibility statement on the council operated website detailing the technical information of the website along with the methods used for testing the website; the 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.
<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?¹⁷</i>	Yes	During the year, council agreed that they would consider setting up a .gov.uk domain name alongside email addresses for the council's officers and councillors thereby complying with GDPR. <i>Comment: council has noted Proper Practice guidance which states that every authority should have an email account that belongs to the council and to which the council has access.</i>
<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>	Yes	Council does not operate a committee system.
Additional comments:		

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁷ Practitioners Guide

Signed: Victoria S Waples

Date of Internal Audit Review: 29/05/2025 & 31/05/2025

Date of Internal Audit Report: 31/05/2025

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils