

Internal Audit Report for Poslingford Parish Council for the period ending 31 March 2025

Clerk	Chris Turner
RFO (if different)	As above
Chairperson	Councillor Martin England
Precept	£4,400.00
Income	£4,865.37
Expenditure	£6,080.20
General reserves	£4,585.98
Earmarked reserves	£3,000.00
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.		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Evidence		
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council uses a manual spreadsheet ledger. 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.
<i>Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure?</i>	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.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	The cashbook is reconciled on a regular basis.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	A number of spot checks were conducted, and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order.
Additional comments: <i>to demonstrate good practice, council should consider 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.</i>		

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?	No	Council's Standing Orders as seen on the website are those that were adopted in 2018 and contain out of date provisions concerning procurement. Recommendation: council should seek to adopt the updated Model Standing Order (England) 2025 which contain amendments to section 18 to comply with new procurement legislation and ensure consistency with the revised 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.	
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Council's Financial Regulations as seen on the website were reviewed at the meeting of 19 th March 2025 and are based on those produced by NALC in 2024. <i>Comment: as advised by SALC in March 2025, council should seek to adopt the 2025 Model Financial Regulations, tailored to the council, which replace the 2024 version.</i>	
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), the Council has appointed a person (the Clerk) to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. Council's Financial Regulation 1.5 confirms that the Clerk is so appointed.	

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

<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>		
<p>Evidence</p>		<p><i>Internal auditor commentary</i></p>
<p>Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A selection of random payments were cross checked against cash book, bank statement and invoices and all were found to be recorded/authorised in accordance with Proper Practices. Council follows the authorisation procedures for payments as set up under its adopted financial regulations that have been put in place to safeguard public finances.</p>
<p>Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Internet banking is operated in accordance with the Council's own Financial Regulations and Bank Mandate and Financial Controls Policy and is used for the settlement of the council's expenditure. The council's internal control statement details the procedure to be followed for the making of electronic payments in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. Council operates with a complex mandate which follows a dual authorization process.</p>
<p>Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>VAT is readily identified in the cash book. The VAT recoverable position for the year under review was £324.80. A VAT reclaim in the sum of £465.37 was received into the council's accounts on 23rd January 2025 and confirmed as covering the period 1st February 2023 to 31st December 2024.</p>

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.
Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	There was one payment identified as being made under this power for the year under review. <i>Comment: council is aware that s137 is a capped power and payments should be within statutory limits and deemed to be of benefit to those living in the area.</i>
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements? Additional comments:	N/A	The council has no such loans.

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 £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 council's risk assessment documentation for the year under review, as adopted at the meeting of 19 th March 2025 details in general terms the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks.
<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 from the minutes 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>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 its main insurance under a Select for Local Councils Policy with Zurich Insurers. Core cover for the council's insurance policy is 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> Whilst the minutes of 4 th December 2024 demonstrate that the council approved the costs of renewal of the councils insurance, there is no minute to demonstrate that, prior to renewal, it undertook a review of its insurance to ascertain whether they were adequate and that all steps had been taken to mitigate and manage identified risks with appropriate insurance. <i>Comment: Council should note that it must be 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></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Internal Control Statement adopted in March 2025 covers online banking arrangements and focuses on the risk associated with the management of public finances. The adoption of an Internal Control Statement including the annual review of controls in place provides the basis for council to demonstrate that, under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it has in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money which are annually reviewed and assessed for their effectiveness.</p>
<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></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements within the adoption of the internal control statement. <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>

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		Internal auditor commentary
Evidence		
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The budget for the year 2024 - 2025 was approved at the Council meeting of 10 th January 2024. From evidence seen on the website the revenue expenditure budget was set at £4,400 to be funded by the precept. The revenue budget for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the council meeting of 4 th December 2024 and set at £4,580. <i>Comment: council has latterly included within the body of 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>
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The minutes of 10 th January 2024 state that the precept to be set would be £4,4000 which would result in an increase of £2.36 or 5.33% per year for a Band D over that set for the previous year. The minutes of 4 th December 2024 state that the precept to be set would demonstrate a 3% increase over that set for the previous year. <i>Comment: in accordance with best practice, council should record in the minutes the impact the precept being set would have on a Band D Dwelling in monetary as well as percentage terms.</i>
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	The minutes evidence that council conducted reviews covering the budget for the current year. <i>Comment: Council in accordance with its own standing order 17c produces regular statements showing evidence of comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure to form the basis of approval for virements in accordance with Council's own Standing Orders.</i>

<p><i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council, as at year-end, had overall reserves totalling £7,585.98 with general reserves standing at £4,585.98 earmarked reserves at £3,000.00. <i>Comment: Council is aware of 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>
<p><i>Additional comments:</i></p>		

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 £4,400 from West Suffolk Council for the period under review as reported to full Council within its Financial Reports. 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?*</i>	N/A	CIL is not operated within the district in which the council is located.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	N/A	
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	N/A	
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	N/A	
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	N/A	
Additional comments:		

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

<p>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.</p>	
Evidence	Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	N/A Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	N/A
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 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?</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/NI? Is PAYE/NI 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 is outsourced. Cross-checks were completed on a sample of payments covering salary and all were found to be in order. Deductions due to be paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made within the requisite time periods.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁸</i>	Yes Council is aware of its pension responsibilities, but no member of staff wished to be enrolled with the council's pension provider. This was recorded as the position at the meeting of 19 th March 2025.
<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes At the meeting of 19 th March 2025, the Clerk confirmed that the council had completed its re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator.

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

<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.
Additional comments:		

<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?⁹</i>	Yes	The Asset Register, as viewed on the Council's website, and as approved at the meeting of 19 th March 2025, 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 (31.03.2025) is £6,229 which reflects no movement in the asset register since 31 st March 2024.
<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 2023 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>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 submitted on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for Internal Audit show an asset value of £6,229 which matches that approved by the council at its meeting in March 2025.
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under generic headings on the insurance schedule.
Additional comments:		

⁹ Practitioners Guide

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 were completed on a regular basis and reconciled with the cash sheets. <i>Comment: council has understood that 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 as of 31 st March 2025 agree with the year-end bank statements and at year end stood at £7,585.98 in the account held in the parish council's name. <i>Comment: the internal auditor is able to verify the year-end bank reconciliation detail and can ensure that the combined cash and bank balances as identified are included within the AGAR, section 2, line 8.</i>
<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 the council. <i>Comment: in accordance with council' financial regulation 2.6, at least once a quarter, a member other than the Chair (or a cheque signatory) should be appointed to verify the bank statements versus the reconciliation and this should be reported to the council once undertaken.</i>
<i>Additional comments:</i>	

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 expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 2. The Accounting Statements were completed and had been approved and signed off at the meeting of 2 nd July 2025 which is outside of the period specified in legislation (Section 1 and 2 must be approved before 1 July 2025). <i>Comment: council has recognised that it has failed to comply with Proper Practices in the completion of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR and the Exemption Certificate and has not published the information required by 1st July 2025 nor has it approved the AGAR by 1st July 2025 and has accordingly answered in the negative to Assertion 1 of the Annual Governance Statement.</i>
Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	Yes The Parish Council did not have gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 during 2023 - 2024 and was able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31 st March 2024. The minutes of 12 th June 2024 demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 and the Certificate of Exemption were reviewed, and permission was given for the Chair and Clerk to sign the documents . <i>Comment: within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council correctly provided for the exercise and published a copy of the required “Public Notice” by ensuring that it clearly identified the statutory 30 working</i>

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

		<p>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.</p>
<p><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></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The internal auditor is able to confirm that the notice of the public rights seen on the website had the dates of 1st July to 9th August 2024 with the form dated 30th June 2024. <i>Comment: Within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council 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.</i></p> <p>Council should note that the notice of the public rights for 2025 has not been correctly completed. The start date for the period of exercise of public rights is dated as 7th July which is outside the date specified under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it does not include the first ten (10) working days of July 2025. <i>Comment: council should note that the public rights notice states that the date of placing of the notice must be not less than 1 day before the date upon which the period begin and the inspection period between must be 30 working days inclusive and must include the first 10 working days of July. Council is advised to answer in the negative to Assertion 4 in the negative for the year ending 31st March 2026.</i></p>
<p><i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i></p>	<p>Partially met</p>	<p>The Council has not fully 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 31st March 2024 as not all of the following were published on the council's website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Exemption • Annual Internal Audit Report • Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR • Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights • Analysis of variances • Bank reconciliation • 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:		

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
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	<p><i>Work required</i></p> <p>The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31st March 2024 was formally considered by and approved for adoption at the meeting of full Council of 4th December 2024 with agreement forthcoming that an action plan be prepared to address the findings contained within the report.</p> <p>The meeting of 19th March 2025, confirms that the internal audit report action plan was reviewed, and its conclusions were unanimously accepted and approved. Council is still to take steps during the year under review to address some of the weaknesses advised. The formal recommendations raised within the internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2024 were as follows: those in bold are outstanding</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the level of general reserves 2. Publication in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations – outstanding audit point from 2023-24 and 2022-23 3. Adoption of and publication of a website accessibility statement 4. Minutes to be consecutively numbered month on month, year on year <p><i>Comment: in order to warrant a positive response to Assertion 7 of the Annual Governance Statement, council should seek to address the matters brought to its attention by internal (and external) audit.</i></p>
<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 19th 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> <p>The letter of engagement was approved at the meeting of 19th March 2025.</p>

<p><i>Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?</i></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 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></p>
<p>Additional comments:</p>		

<p>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.</p>		
<p>Evidence</p>		
<p><i>Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?¹²</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p><i>Internal auditor commentary</i></p> <p>The Parish Council did not have gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 and was able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year 2023 – 2024.</p>
<p><i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>	
<p>Additional comments:</p>		

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.		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Evidence		
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹³	No	Council held its Annual Meeting of the Parish Council On 12 th June 2024. The election of Chair was not the first item in accordance with legislation in place at that time. Recommendation: council should seek to ensure that it complies with legislation in place and hold its Annual Meeting of the Council in the month of May.
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹⁴	Yes	Council is aware 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. As mentioned in the previous internal audit report, minutes are still not held in accordance with legislation in that looseleaf minutes are only lawful if they are consecutively numbered. Recommendation: council should ensure that it addresses this outstanding audit point.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	A copy of the members' interests for the seven serving councillors was seen on the district council's website. There is a no direct link from that of the parish council's.
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	N/A	Council has no declared trustee responsibility.
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Work required	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 publishes certain datasets on its website in accordance with the required timescales.

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

		Recommendation: council should seek to demonstrate compliance during the coming year and publish the datasets in accordance with the code for smaller authorities.
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁵</i>	Yes	The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation. As defined under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, council has adopted and published a Publication Scheme which is available to view on the website. <i>Comment: council should seek to ensure that the scheme is fully tailored to the council to accurately reflect council's activities undertaken and the manner in which information will be made available.</i>
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	Council has shown compliance with the regulations and adopted appropriate policies that cover 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.
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁶</i>	No	As previously stated, whilst council has accessibility tools on its website thereby allowing for the increased functionality of the council's website, it has still to publish 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. Recommendation: council should seek to address this outstanding audit point.
<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?¹⁷</i>	Yes	Council has a dedicated domain name which supports a secure and digitally managed email system.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Council's day to day records are subject to regular back-ups to a cloud-based secure system.

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁷ Practitioners Guide

SALC Internal Audit Report template (v.9)
Last reviewed: 26th January 2025

Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?	N/A	Council does not operate a committee system.
Additional comments:		

Signed: Victoria S Waples

Date of Internal Audit Review: 18.07.25 & 20.07.25 & 25.07.25

Date of Internal Audit Report: 25.07.25

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils