



Ref: TJE/ASH001

Lee English
Ashington Parish Council
10 Rectory Close
Ashington
RH20 3LP

10th May 2024

Dear Lee

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

Executive summary

Following completion of our year-end internal audit on 10th May 2024 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

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

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

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

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

Regulation

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

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

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

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Tracey Euesden of Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd, who has over 30 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 15 years in local government.

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

Engagement Letter

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

Planning and inherent risk assessment

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

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

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A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The audit was conducted on site with the Clerk, who also acts as the council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Clerk had prepared the information advised in advance of the visit, and overall, I have the impression that accounting records are neatly maintained and easily accessible. Other information was reviewed through discussion with the Clerk and a review of the council website ashingtonpc.org.uk

The council continues to use Excel as a day-to-day accounting package. The system is used regularly to report on and record the financial transactions of the council and whilst it is suitable for a council with a limited number of transactions, I note that the Council will be using Rialtas for the 2024 2025 financial year. The council is not VAT registered and reclaims vat annually via a 216-claim form. The council is up to date with its VAT.

I conducted a simple walk-through test on two supplier invoices drawn at random and a receipt drawn at random and can confirm the underlying documentation was easy to locate and agreed to the cashbook details. I note the

I tested the opening balances as at 1/4/23 by reviewing the balance brought forward on the receipts page on the excel cashbook and confirmed it could be agreed back to the bank reconciliation for the audited accounts for 2022/23 with both documents showing £373,251.

I reviewed the nominal ledger entries for the period 1 April to 31 March to ensure items were posted to the correct heading and that there were no instances of netting off and the expenditure was correctly posted to the headings to which the line item related. This has confirmed that the accounting package is being properly used.

B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

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

The External Auditor's Report was not qualified and has been published on the council website along with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and was reported to the council meeting held on 5 October 2023 (minute ref 301/23).

I note the council received and considered the internal auditor's report at the council meeting held in May 2023 (minute ref 169/23).

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms together with a formal acceptance to receive information by electronic means in the form **"As per Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, I consent to the receipt of all council meeting papers by electronic methods. I understand I may withdraw this consent at any time"**

Councillors' Register of Interest Forms are published on the Parish Council website.

Confirm that the council is compliant with the relevant transparency code

As the council's income and expenditure exceeds £25,000, it is not a statutory requirement to follow the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code, although it is recommended best practice to do so. A review of the council website shows that comprehensive information is published and that the council fully complies with the code.

Confirm that the council is compliant with GDPR

The council is fully aware of GDPR and has undergone training. It was noted the council has established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

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

The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK

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

The council has a Privacy Notice and Accessibility Statement on the home page of its website, and it is clear the council has made every effort to comply with the website requirements.

Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year

In addition to full council, the council has committees for Finance and Planning and Planning.

Terms of reference for each committee are reviewed annually and I note that these are to be published on the website following their review at the very recent annual meeting of the council.

A diary of future meeting dates is also published on the council website, along with historic agendas and minutes for council and committee meetings.

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

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

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

Draft minutes are uploaded to the council website but are not clearly annotated as draft. **I recommend adding a sentence to the page advising that the minutes are published in draft form until ratified at the following meeting.**

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

The Standing Orders are based on the current NALC model and were most recently reviewed and adopted by council in May 2023 (minute ref 140/23).

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

Financial Regulations are based on the current NALC model and were last reviewed and adopted by council in May 2023 (minute ref 142/23). The regulations contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council. I note the council also has an adopted Scheme of Delegation to support the Financial Regulations.

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

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

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

- *the council;*
- *the duly delegated Finance Committee, subject to a £10,000 limit;*
- *In the event that a parish council meeting is cancelled, the Finance Committee to approve expenditure (up to limit) by at least 3 committee councillors emailing authority to the Clerk;*
- *The Clerk may also make day to day purchases without need for prior council approval (subject to approved budget expenditure), up to a £250 limit per calendar month. Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman.*

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

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

FR 4.5. In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, the Clerk/RFO may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the Clerk/RFO's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £250.00 The Clerk/RFO shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to Full Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

Based on the level of financial activity of the council, and through discussion with the Clerk, these authorisation thresholds appear appropriate.

A review of council minutes shows that council authorises payments in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations, and the council has in place a system to segregate duties in terms of the setting up and subsequent release of payments made via online banking with electronic authorisation by two councillors.

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

The council has no section 137 payments.

Check receipt of VAT refund matches last submitted VAT return

The council submits its VAT return on an annual basis. I reviewed the submission for the period ending 31st March 2024 which showed a refund amount due of £1,862.68 and was fully supported by the required details. This refund has yet to be received but I was able to confirm receipt of the previous year's claim of £1,663.01 on the bank statement on 20th April 2023.

Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor

The system noted above details internal review takes place and I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The council has a risk assessment process in place, which was last reviewed and approved by council in May 2023 (minute ref 142/23). I reviewed the risk assessment record, which includes details of possible risks and the measures put in place to mitigate them. This is a suitable approach for a council of this size and I am satisfied that the council takes its risk management responsibilities seriously.

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Aviva via Clear Councils which covers a three year long term agreement with year 2 commencing January 2024. The policy includes Public Liability and Employers Liability cover of £10 million each and a Fraud & Dishonesty (Fidelity Guarantee) level of £500,000 which is sufficient for a council of this size, although the council is advised to keep this figure under review to ensure it covers the maximum balance held.

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

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

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

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The council set a precept of £102,984 for 2023/24. With a tax base of 1,159.3, this equates to a band D equivalent of £88.83 (compared to the average in England of £79.35).

The Clerk confirmed that the 2023/24 budget setting process and precept setting was completed at the meeting held in January 2023 (minute ref 028/23). The Clerk presents the budget performance monthly for review. The accounting records show that the council ended the year with income reported as 100.78 % of budget and expenditure reported as 101.05 % of budget. The council holds £201,145 in earmarked reserves (EMR), spread across a range of clearly identifiable projects. I checked the purpose of these EMRs with the Clerk and am satisfied they are all for legitimate future planned projects of the council. The council also holds £82,635 in the general reserve.

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

The general reserve balance is within the recommended range.

E. INCOME

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The precept accounts for 90% of the council’s budgeted income, with other budgeted amounts received from grants, sponsorship and VAT refunds.

The council does not have any fees or charges to review.

From a review of the accounting records, income appears to be recorded with sufficient narrative detail to identify the source and allocated to the most appropriate nominal code.

F. PETTY CASH

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The council does not operate petty cash so this test does not apply.

G. PAYROLL

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The Clerk is the only employee and has a signed contract of employment, based on the NALC template.

I was able to verify that the salary is aligned to the NJC scale point range.

The council uses a third party for processing payroll, who calculates the PAYE and pension deductions. The salary payments are authorised and paid by the council in the same way as other payments.

I reviewed the total figure being included within box 4 (staff costs) on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and was able to confirm from the accounting software that this includes only salary payments, HMRC payments and pension contributions.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The council has a fixed asset register in place, maintained in an Excel format, which includes details of asset location, date of acquisition, original purchase price, replacement value and insurance value. Assets are correctly listed at cost/proxy cost, or where gifted/donated, given a nominal £1 value for the purpose of the asset register. The changes to the figures from last year's box 9 to that of 2023 / 2024 is due to a long term investment made during the period.

There is a small discrepancy of £1 between the figure stated on box 9 for 2022 / 2023 due to rounding up / down of values and I recommend that the figure for that year is RESTATED for clarity.

The council has a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan, and I was able to verify the yearly repayments and year-end outstanding balance to the PWLB records.

The council made a long-term investment of £67,000 with Hampshire Trust Bank in January 2023.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

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

Bank reconciliations are completed monthly and presented to the Finance & HR committee for review. I reviewed the March 2023 bank reconciliation for all accounts and was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and found no errors, and that the total balances match the figure included in box 8 of the AGAR.

I was also provided with signed copied of bank reconciliations and bank statements confirming the council is following the requirements of FR 2.2.

The council holds two accounts with Lloyds and a notice account and a one year bond with Redwood as at the date of the audit.

A Statement is also held from Singer and Friedlander showing £14,040.63 prior to the bank entering into administration in 2008 and I note the council has requested advice about the possibility of writing off this interest figure as the original capital has since been recovered.

The balances held with Lloyds exceed the £85,000 protection limit offered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) and I note that the council is actively seeking a new account in order to fully protect its funds.

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

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

	Annual Governance Statement	'Yes', means that this authority	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	YES – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	YES – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.

3	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	YES – the Clerk advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
4	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	YES – the requirements and timescales for 2022/23 year-end were followed.
5	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	YES – the council has a risk management scheme and appropriate external insurance.
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	YES – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor.
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	YES – matters raised in internal and external audit reports have been addressed.
8	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	YES – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<i>has met all its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>	N/A – the council has no trusts

Section 2 – Accounting Statements

AGAR box number		2022/23	2023/24	Internal Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	387,026	373,251	Agrees to 2022/23 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	102,984	102,984	Figure confirmed to central precept record
3	Total other receipts	9,084	13,682	Agrees to underlying accounting records
4	Staff costs	25,858	24,565	Agrees to underlying accounting records. Includes only expenditure allowed as staff costs (see section G)
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	1,595 / 4,624	1,371 / 4,849	Confirmed to PWLB documents
6	All other payments	93,766	175,351	Agrees to underlying accounting records
7	Balances carried forward	373,251	283,781	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet

8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	373,251	283,781	Agrees to bank reconciliation for all accounts
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	RESTATED 370,157	370,157	Matches asset register total and changes from previous year have been traced
10	Total borrowings	29,757	24,908	Confirmed to PWLB documents
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	NO	NO	No – the council is not a sole trustee
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	N/A	N/A	N/A – the council is not a sole trustee

Audit findings

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis with the box 7 and 8 reconciliation not required.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2022/23 and published on the council website.

The variance analysis has been completed to explain the variances exceeding 15% where required, and in my opinion, contains sufficient narrative and quantitative information for the External Auditor.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

The council did not certify itself exempt in 2022/23 due to exceeding the income and expenditure limits and this test does not apply.

L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

For councils with a turnover over £25,000, it is recommended best practice to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, but not a statutory requirement and therefore not subject to verification during the internal audit.

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

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

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

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

- (a) keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and

- (b) ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

I was able to confirm that pages 4 (Annual Governance Statement), 5 (Accounting Statements) and 6 (External Auditor's Report and Certificate) of the AGAR are available for review on the council website for financial years 2018/19 to 2022/23 inclusive.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Proposed
Date AGAR signed by council	01/06/2023	13/06/2024
Date inspection notice issued	04/06/2023	14/06/2024
Inspection period begins	05/06/2023	17/06/2024
Inspection period ends	14/07/2023	26/07/2024
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes	Yes

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

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

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Internal audit requirement

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

Before 1 July 2023 authorities must publish:

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

Not later than 30 September 2023 authorities must publish:

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

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

Audit findings

I was able to confirm that the Notice of Public Rights is published on the council website along with the Notice of Conclusion of audit and External Auditor Report and I was able to confirm that the publication requirements for 2022/23 have been met.

O. TRUSTEESHIP**Internal audit requirement**

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

Audit findings

The council has no trusts.

Achievement of control assertions at year-end audit date

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

	INTERNAL CONTROL OBJECTIVE	YES	NO	NOT COVERED
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year	✓		
B	This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for			✓NONE HELD
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L	The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation	✓		
M	The authority, during the previous year (2022/23) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).</i>	✓		
N	The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

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

Yours sincerely

TJ Euesden

Tracey Euesden

Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd

Year-End Audit - Points Carried Forward

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	Councillors to As per Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, "I consent to the receipt of all council meeting papers by electronic methods. I understand I may withdraw this consent at any time"	
B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	Draft Minutes: I recommend adding a sentence to the website page advising that the minutes are published in draft form until ratified at the following meeting.	
I. BANK AND CASH	<p>A Statement is also held from Singer and Friedlander showing £14,040.63 prior to the bank entering into administration in 2008 and I note the council has requested advice about the possibility of writing off this interest figure as the original capital has since been recovered.</p> <p>The balances held with Lloyds exceed the £85,000 protection limit offered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) and I note that the council is actively seeking a new account in order to fully protect its funds.</p>	