



INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024

INTRODUCTION

This internal audit report is based upon the JPAG (Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance) Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England 2023 publication.

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation's operations. It helps a council accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

It is not the detailed inspection of all records and transactions of the Council in order to detect or prevent error or fraud. The objective of the internal audit is to determine whether the accounting arrangements, procedural controls, records, and documentary evidence are adequate to ensure the accurate and timely recording of financial transactions, so as to comply with all relevant legislation and best practice.

The scope of the audit covers, as a minimum, the areas included in the Internal Audit Report contained in the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the Transparency Code.

This report covers the activities of the Parish Council during the financial year 2023/24.

Selective testing was conducted, and the relevant policies, procedures and controls were reviewed. Inspection of digital documents, paper records and scrutiny of the parish council website were used to reference findings.

The matters raised in this report are only those which came to my attention during my internal audit work and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required.

FINDINGS

Observations	Recommended Action
Accounting Records	
The Council uses a spreadsheet to record financial transactions. Payments and receipts have been accurately recorded and well maintained throughout the year. The sample of financial transactions checked was satisfactory.	No further recommendations.
Financial Regulations and Expenditure	
The Council has complied with its Financial Regulations, and the banking arrangements are	No further recommendations.

satisfactory. It was noted that the council's VAT reclaim was delayed, but this has now been submitted.	
Risk Management	
The council has undertaken an appropriate review of risk in both May 2023 and Jan 2024 and has an adequate level of insurance. The internal controls are satisfactory, with financial reports being regularly reviewed by the council.	Written reports of regular play area inspections should be submitted to the council.
Budgetary Controls (Precept Requirement)	
The annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process.	No further recommendations
Budgetary Controls (Budget monitoring)	
Progress against the budget was monitored and minuted regularly. The level of general reserves is satisfactory.	No further recommendations.
Income Controls	
Expected income was fully received and properly recorded.	No further recommendations.
Petty Cash Controls	
Petty cash is not operated by the Council.	No further recommendations.
Payroll Controls	
Salaries to employees were paid in accordance with Council approvals, with appropriate deductions applied.	No further recommendations.
Asset Register	
The council's assets have been correctly recorded and an appropriate valuation basis has been applied.	Title numbers to be included in the asset register.
Bank Reconciliations	
Periodic and year-end reconciliations were carried out.	Bank reconciliations to be signed and dated as evidence of independent review.

Accounting Statements	
The Accounting Statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis and were supported by an adequate audit trail.	No further recommendations
Limited Assurance Review Exemption	
The authority does not meet the exemption criteria.	No further recommendations.
Information Published on the Website	
The authority has a free to access website with much of the necessary information, however it is best practice to include details of public land and buildings.	Publish land and buildings on website.
Period for the Exercise of Public Rights	
The Council correctly provided for the exercise of public rights in 2022/23, however the dates recorded in the minutes differed from that on the notice.	Ensure consistency between the public notice and the minutes.
AGAR Publication Requirements	
The Council complied with the publication requirements for the 2022/23 AGAR.	No further recommendations.
Trust Funds (if applicable)	
The Council does not operate as a trustee.	No further recommendations.

TRANSPARENCY COMPLIANCE

Review of Internal Audit	
The Internal Audit had been reviewed the previous year and the council has made significant steps to address the issues raised.	No further recommendations.
Review of External Audit	
The External Audit had been reviewed and the conclusion of audit report for 2022/23 had been published on the website.	No further recommendations.
Accounting Statements agreed and reconciled to the Annual Return	
Section 2 of the Annual Return is complete and accurate and reconciles to the statement of accounts.	No further recommendations.

TRANSPARENCY CODE REQUIREMENTS

While the Parish Council does not fall in to the criteria for Councils below the £25k threshold, it is good practise for Parish Councils above the threshold to comply.

1) Expenditure over £100 is recorded on the Council website and with all information requirements	
Details of expenditure for 2022/23 are available in the minutes.	No further recommendations.
2) Annual Return published on the website	
Available on the website.	No further recommendations.
3) Explanation of Significant Variances	
Available on the website for 2022/23.	No further recommendations.
4) Explanation of difference between Box 7 & 8. if applicable	
Not applicable	No further recommendations.
5) Annual Governance Statement recorded	
Available on website for 2022/23	No further recommendations.
6) Internal Audit Report Published	
Available on website for 2022/23.	No further recommendations.
7) List of Councillors' Responsibilities	
Available on website	No further recommendations.
8) Details of Public Land and Building Assets	
Land ownership details and map are not on the website	Include asset register on website.
9) Minutes and Agenda	
Available on website	Include supporting papers with agendas, where applicable.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Training

The Clerk should be congratulated on achieving her CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) qualification. I recommend that councillors and clerk continue to attend relevant training to increase their knowledge and understanding of the sector. As part of the Clerk's continuing professional development, the Council may also support the Clerk in attending SLCC conferences and other relevant courses.

Registers of Interest

It has been observed that certain Register of Interest forms for Appleton-with-Eaton Parish Councillors are incomplete on the Vale of White Horse District Council website. Since the parish council is required to make the register available on its website¹, it has done so by providing a link to the district council website. However, it is important for the council to ensure that all the details of the councillors are complete and accessible to the public.

CONCLUSION

The accounting arrangements, procedural controls, records and documentary evidence are considered to be satisfactory, and accurately represent the Council's financial position.

I recommend that the Council includes title numbers in the asset register; signs and dates bank reconciliations as evidence of independent review; and includes this information on its website. Additionally, I would like to encourage the clerk and councillors to undertake relevant training and to ensure their registers of interest are up to date and available to the public.

I would like to thank the Clerk for her time and co-operation with this internal audit.

I hope that this report is of help to the Council. If you would like any further assistance or clarification, please do contact me.



Rachel Brown

Internal Auditor

¹ Localism Act 2011 s.29 (7)