

Parish Council

Internal Audit Report

For Winterton On Sea Parish Council

Financial Year 2024/2025

Including Explanatory Notes for Annual Governance & Accountability
Return
(where a 'no' has been marked)

Prepared by Tina Newby
13th May 2025

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I have completed an internal audit of the accounts for Winterton On Sea Parish Council for the year ending 2024/2025

My findings are detailed below using the tests provided in the **Governance and Accountability (England) 2024. (Practitioners Guide)**

I would like to thank the Clerk/RFO for providing me with all the information required for the Internal Audit.

Total Receipts	£64,048.10
Total Payments	£54,561.14
Total Reserves	£52,368.00
Precept 2024/2025	£43,475.00

Internal Audit Report 2024-2025

<https://wintertononsea-pc.gov.uk>

A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the year. And Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.		
	<i>Test</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Notes</i>
	Ensure the correct roll forward of the prior year cashbook balances to the new financial year	Yes	Closing balance is this year's opening balance
	Check a sample of financial transactions in cashbooks to bank statements, etc, the sample size dependent on the size of the authority and nature of accounting records maintained	Yes	All appear to be correct
	Ensure that bank reconciliations are prepared routinely, are subject to independent scrutiny and sign-off by members	Yes	Bank reconciliations are compiled using Scribe and signed off by Councillor
	Verify the accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation detail and ensure accurate disclosure of the combined cash and bank balances in the AGAR, section 2, line 8.	Yes	All appear correct, using Scribe accounting software
	Where the authority has bank balances in excess of £100,000 it has an appropriate investment strategy.	n/a	

B	This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for.		
	Review the procedures in place for acquisition of formal tenders and quotes, ensuring they are in line with the SOs and FRs which should be based on the latest version	n/a	No tenders over £30,000 used
	Ensure that consistent values are in place for the acquisition of formal tenders between SOs and FRs (frequently different limits are recorded in two documents)	See notes	Still at £25.000
	Review the procedure for receipts of invoices, agreement of invoice detail and confirmation of goods/services delivery and approval for payment: ideally, a suitably designed certification stamp should be in place providing for evidencing of these checks and payment authorisation	Yes	No stamp needed.
Select a sample of payments made from the bank account(s), for example by choosing a bank statement for a particular month. The sample size selected should be sufficient to have a reasonable view of the council's practices. Where possible all transactions of an abnormally high value for the Council should also be subject to detailed review.			
	Check that there is effective segregation between the writing of cheques of the setting up of online payments, and physical release of payments.	Yes	Online Payments and cheques are clearing marked
	Check that VAT reclaims are prepared and submitted in a timely manner in line with the underlying records and in accordance with current HMRC requirements	Yes	Claimed regularly throughout the year
	Where a debit/credit cards are in use, establish the total monthly and individual transaction limits and ensure appropriate controls over physical security and usage of the cards are in place	n/a see notes	No debit card in use

Recommendation 1

Both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, procurement levels. There are new levels of procurement levels of £30,000. Both policies need to be the same.

Recommendation 2

I see there are Councillors and Clerk regularly being reimbursed for expenses. You may wish to move away from this and have a debit card for those type purchases.

C	This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.		
	Ensure that authorities have prepared, and formally adopted, at least one annually, an appropriate and comprehensive register of assessed risks, both regular and ad hoc.	Yes	Completed
	Ensure that appropriate levels of insurance cover are in place for land, buildings, public, employers' and hirers' (where applicable) liability, fidelity/employees (including Councillors) liability, business interruption and cyber security	Yes See notes	Public Liability is £12,000,000 Employers Liability £10,000,000 Fidelity Guarantee £250,000
	Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for monitoring play areas, open spaces and sports pitches: such reviews should be undertaken by appropriately qualified external inspectors or, if by officers or members, that they have received the appropriate training and accreditation	Yes	
	Ensure that appropriate levels of insurance cover are in place for land, buildings, public, employers' and hirers' (where applicable) liability, fidelity / employees (including councillors) liability, business interruption and cyber security	Yes	Buildings, and play equipment are featured in the insurance policy
	Review the effectiveness of internal control carried out by the authority	Yes	The Clerk noted that this was done in April 2025

Observation 1

The Practitioners guide 2024 this year states business interruption and cyber security insurance cover should be considered. This is up to you.

D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.		
	Ensure that the full Authority, not a committee, has considered, approved and adopted the annual precept for the coming year in accordance with the required parent Authority timetable	Yes	Full Council considered the budget and the precept
	Ensure that current year budget reports are prepared and submitted to Authority/Committees periodically during the year with appropriate commentary on any significant variances	Yes	The precept for £43,475.00 was approved in January 2024 and submitted to Great Yarmouth Borough Council
	Review the budget performance either during the year or at financial year-end seeking explanations for any significant or unanticipated variances	n/a	No unanticipated variances
	Ensure that the Authority has considered the establishment of specific earmarked reserves and, ideally, reviews them annually as part of the budget assessment process	Yes	
	Ensure that the precept received in accounts matches the prior year submission form to the relevant authority and the <u>public record of precepted amounts</u>	Yes	All correct

E	Expected income was fully received based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT appropriately accounted for.		
	Review 'aged debtor' listings to ensure appropriate follow up action is in place	Yes	
	Allotments: ensure that appropriate signed tenancy agreements exist, that an appropriate register of tenants is maintained identifying, that debtors are monitored.	Yes See notes	Allotment register has been evidenced
	Burials: ensure that a formal burial register is maintained that it is up to date and that a sample of interments and memorials are appropriately evidenced, that fees have been charged at the correct approved rate and been recovered within a reasonable time (Authorities should also acquire and retain copies of Burial/Cremation certificates)	n/a	No burials
	Hall hire: ensure that an effective diary system for bookings is in place identifying the hirer, hire times and ideally cross-referenced to invoices raised	Yes	Parish Council has hall hire
	Leases: ensure that leases are reviewed in a timely manner in accordance with the terms of the lease and rents similarly reviewed appropriately at the due time	n/a	No leases
	Other variable income streams: ensure that appropriate control procedures and documentation are in existence to provide a clear audit trail through to invoicing and recovery of all such income	Yes	All correct
	Where amounts are receivable on set dates during the year, ensure that an appropriate control record is maintained duly identifying the date(s) on which income is due and actually received/banked	Yes	Other income was allotments and hall hire

Recommendation 3

It is now a requirement under the Practitioners guide 2024 to see evidence of the allotment tenancy agreements.

F	Petty Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for		
	A number of authorities are now running down and closing their petty cash accounts and using debit/credit cards for ad hoc purchases. Consequently, a "Not covered" response is frequently required in this area	n/a	No petty cash
	Review the systems in place for controlling any petty cash and also cash floats (used for bar, catering, etc)	n/a	No cash kept
	Check a sample of transactions during the financial year to ensure appropriate supporting documentation is held	n/a	
	Ensure that VAT is identified wherever incurred and appropriate	n/a	
	Physically check the petty cash and other cash floats held	n/a	
	Where bar or catering facilities are in place, ensure that appropriate cashing-up procedures are in place reconciling the physical cash takings to the till "Z" total readings	n/a	

G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.		
	Ensure that, for all staff, a formal employment contract is in place together with a confirmatory letter setting out any changes to the contract	Yes	Two staff, Clerk and a caretaker
	Ensure that appropriate procedures are in place for the payment of members allowances and deductions of any tax liability	Yes	All completed
	Ensure that, for a sample of staff salaries, gross pay due is calculated in accordance with the approved spinal point on the <u>NJC</u> scales or hourly rate, if off-scale, and also with contracted hours	Yes	Evidenced for both staff
	Ensure that appropriate tax codes are being applied to each employee	Yes	Evidenced for both staff
	Where <u>free</u> or <u>paid for</u> software is used, ensure that it is up to date.	n/a	Appears to be using HMRC RTI Tools.
	For a test sample of employees, ensure that tax is calculated appropriately	Yes	All correct
	Check the correct treatment of Pension contributions	Yes	LGPS Norfolk Pension Fund
	For NI, ensure that the correct deduction and employer's contributions are applied. NB: The employer's allowance is not available to councils but may be used by other authorities	Yes	Where applicable No Employer's allowance being used
	Ensure that the correct employers' pension percentage contribution is being applied	Yes	All correct
	Ensure that for the test sample, the correct net pay is paid to the employee with tax, NI and pension contributions correctly paid to the respective agencies.	Yes	

H	Asset and investment registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained. This section/assurance should be extended to include loans to or by the authority		
	Tangible Fixed Assets: • Ensure that the Authority is maintaining a formal asset register and updating it routinely to record new assets at historic cost price, net of VAT and removing any disposed of / no longer serviceable assets • Physically verifying the existence and condition of high value, high risk assets may be appropriate • Ideally, the register should identify for each asset the purchase cost and, if practicable, the replacement/insured cost, the latter being updated annually and used to assist in the forward planning for asset replacement • Additions and disposals records should allow tracking from the prior year to the current • Ensure that the asset value to be reported in the AGAR at section 2, line 9 equates to the prior year reported value, adjusted for the nominal value of any new acquisitions and /or disposals • Compare the asset register with the insurance schedule to ensure that all assets are recorded appropriately insured or “self-insured” by the Authority.	Yes	Detailed asset register
	Fixed Assets Investments: • Ensure that all long-term investments (ie those for more than 12 month terms) are covered by the <u>Investment Strategy</u> and reported as assets in the <u>AGAR at section 2 line 9</u>	n/a	No investment
	Borrowing and Lending: • Ensure that the authority has sought and obtained appropriate <u>DMO approval</u> for all loans acquired • Ensured that the authority has accounted for the loan appropriately (ie recorded in full value of the loan. Any arrangement fee should be regarded as an admin expense) in the year of receipt • Ensure that the combined principal loan repayment and interest for the	n/a	No borrowing

	year is correctly recorded in the AGAR at section 2, line 5. • Ensure that the outstanding loan liability as at 31st March each year is correctly recorded in the AGAR at section 2, line 10 (value should be verified via the DMO website) • Where the Authority has issued loans to local bodies, they should ideally seek signed indemnities from the recipient body, or their members, agreeing to underwrite the loan debit		
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I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.		
	Verify that bank reconciliations are prepared regularly, for all Council bank accounts.	Yes	Compiled and approved on a regular basis
	Verify that bank reconciliations are subject to independent review by members and that they are signed and dated as evidence of this review.	Yes	Approved by a Councillor
	Verify that the bank statements are periodically independently verified to the balances stated in bank reconciliations.	Yes	
	Verify the accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation and agree it to supporting bank statements.	Yes	All appear to be correct
	Review and clarify the nature of any uncleared transactions.	n/a	No uncleared transactions
	Verify that the Council has in place robust procedures for the physical verification of any cash floats or deposits held and that any balances held as at the 31st March have been subject to independent review and confirmation.	Yes	Very good

J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cashbook, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.		
	<i>Note: this checklist is intended for use only by internal auditors of councils who prepare their accounts on a Receipts and Payments basis, consequently there is no guidance given here in respect of testing of debtors, creditors and accruals. Detailed guidance on the Accounting Statements can be found in Section 2 of The Practitioner's Guide and Internal Auditors should refer to that for specific guidance.</i>		
	Whilst IAs are not required to verify the accuracy of detail to be disclosed in the AGAR, this assertion, together with the expectation of most Authorities, effectively requires IAs to ensure that the financial detailed reported at <u>section 2 of the AGAR</u> reflects the detail in the accounting records maintained for the financial year. Consequently, IAs should • Ensure that, where annual turnover exceeds £200,000 appropriate records are maintained throughout the year in an Income and Expenditure basis to facilitate budget reporting in that vein • Ensure that appropriate accounting arrangements are in place to account for debtors and creditors during the year and at the financial year-end	n/a	Over £25,000

K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the prior year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.		
	IAs should ensure that, <u>all relevant criteria are met</u> (receipts and payments each totalled less than £25,000) • The correct exemption certificate was prepared and minuted in accordance with the statutory submission deadline • That it has been published, together with all required information on the authority's website and noticeboards.	n/a	Over £25,000

L	The authority publishes information on a free to access website / web page, up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant transparency code requirements		
The requirement here is for Councils with income or expenditure below £25,000 to publish information as set out in The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities			
	Verify that the Council has published, for the prior financial year, all the information as required by the Transparency Code as set out in Annex A of the code. All items of expenditure above £100 ○ End of year accounts ○ Annual governance statement ○ Internal audit report ○ List of councillor or member responsibilities ○ Location of public land and building assets ○ Minutes, agendas and papers of formal meetings	Yes	Using transparency code for under £25,000
The requirement here is for Councils with income or expenditure above £200,000 to publish information as set out in The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities			
	Verify that the Council has published, for the prior financial year, all the information as required by the Transparency Code as set out in Annex A of the code. All items of expenditure above £500 ○ End of year accounts ○ Annual governance statement ○ Internal audit report ○ List of councillor or member responsibilities ○ Location of public land and building assets ○ Minutes, agendas and papers of formal meetings	n/a	Over £25,000 so not applicable
The requirement here is for Councils with income or expenditure below £200,000, but £25,000 to publish information as set out in The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities			
	There is no requirement	Yes	Using under £25,000

M	The authority, during the previous year, correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.		
	Verify that the Council published, including on its website, the Notice for the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights	Yes	Uploaded to website
	Verify that the 'Announcement Date' was a date after the Council approved the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statement.	Yes	Announcement date is 21/6/24
	Verify that the 'Announcement Date' was the working day prior to the Commencement Date (they cannot be the same date)	Yes	Period of exercise is 24/6/24 – 2/8/24
	Verify that the period set was for exactly 30 working days.	Yes	confirmed
	Verify that the period set included the first 10 working days in July	Yes	Evidenced
	The Internal Auditor should also review whether the Council confirmed in Minutes the dates set (this is not a statutory requirement, but it is accepted as audit evidence that the Council complied with the publication requirements)	See notes	

Observation 2

Although it is not a requirement, it would be best when approving the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights, you record in the minutes the dates that were approved.

N	The authority complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.		
	Verify that the Council published the Annual Governance Statement on its website	Yes	Evidenced
	Verify that the Council published the Accounting Statements on its website	Yes	Evidenced
	Verify that the Council published the External Auditor report on its website	Yes	Evidenced
	Verify that the Council published the Notice of Conclusion of Audit on its website.	Yes	Evidenced

O	Trust funds (including charitable) - the Council met its responsibilities as a trustee		
	• Confirm that all charities of which the council is a Trustee are up to date with CC filing requirements • That the council is the sole trustee on the <u>Charity Commission register</u> • That the council is acting in accordance with the <u>Trust deed</u> • That the charity meetings and accounts are recorded separately from those of the council • Review the level and activity of the charity and where a risk based approach suggest such, review the <u>Independent Examiners</u> report	n/a	

Internal Control – additional	Test	Observations
Payment controls	Is s137 expenditure separately recorded and within statutory limits	No General Power of Competence
Risk management arrangements	Does a review of the minutes identify any unusual financial activity?	No unusual activity
	Does the minutes record the council carrying out an annual risk assessment or review of their risk management.	Reviewed June 2024
	ICO certificate and in date	Z2907764 to 27 th October 2025
Procedural	Is eligibility for the General Power of Competence properly evidenced?	No
	Have points raised on the last Internal Audit report been considered by council and actioned?	Yes
	Has last years minutes recorded the appointment of an Internal Auditor and agreed the costings	Yes 30/10/24
Transparency: For smaller councils with turnover under £25,000 and over £200,000	Minutes for whole year on website?	Yes
	Agendas for whole year on website?	Yes
	Electors' rights advertised on website?	Yes
	Councillors' responsibilities detailed on website?	Yes and linked to the Register of interests site from Great Yarmouth Borough Council
	Last financial year's Annual Return on website? Up to 5 years historic returns are needed	Yes
	Land and building assets details on website? (Description, location, owner/leaseholder, date and cost of acquisition and present use)	See notes
General Data Protection Regulation (compliance from 25/5/2018) and UK GDPR 2018	Has the Council adopted a Data Protection Policy?	Yes
	Has the Council put in place Privacy Notices?	Yes
	Is there evidence of the policies on the website	Yes
	Has Data Protection been built into the general procedures, processes and policies of the Council?	Yes

Emails	Has the Councils adopted the gov.uk emails	Yes
	Does the Clerk have an generic emails address .gov.uk	Yes

Recommendation 4

The Asset register will need to be uploaded – on an annual basis.

Recommendation 5

You may want to review your code of conduct to the LGA Code of Conduct.

Recommendation 6

Your Earmarked Reserves are sitting at £53,913.00, giving you a general fund/reserve of £40,382.76. The Practitioners guide 2024 guide states small parish councils should try and hold up to 100% of the Precept as their General Fund.

The accounts are very well presented and not many issues. A very **Well done to the Clerk.**

Thank you for choosing me as your internal auditor.

Signed: *Tina Newby*

Date: 13th May 2025