

## Internal Audit Report for Chelmondiston Parish Council for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Clerk	Jill Davis
RFO (if different)	
Chairperson	David Cordle
Precept	£26,829.00
Income	£61,380.87
Expenditure	£56,664.67
General reserves	£32,855.02
Earmarked reserves	£42,474.02
Audit type	<b>Annual</b>
Auditor name	Vicky 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:

- carry out 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 2020/21 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 carried out as planned

<b>Section 1 – proper bookkeeping</b>		
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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council uses an excel spreadsheet to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis and ensures that the financial transactions of the parish council are recorded and are as accurate as reasonably practicable.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	The 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. The cashbook is reconciled on a monthly basis.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	The accounting records were spot checked and found to be in order.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders</b>		
The internal auditor will check the date the Council carried out 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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council reviewed its Standing Orders at its meeting of 2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2021 a copy of which can be found on the Council's website, and which are in the main based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018 which take into account changes in legislation since those produced in 2013.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council’s Financial Regulations were also reviewed at the meeting of full Council of 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2021 and contain provisions for securing competition and regulating the manner in which tenders are invited.

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)? <sup>1</sup>	Yes	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), the Council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority.

**Additional comments:**

<p><b>Section 3 – Payment controls</b>                  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>		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	At each full Council Meeting a list of all payments is presented to the meeting with formal approval of such expenditure being shown in the minutes and evidence of the authorisation of payments in the sampling records files submitted for internal audit. The RFO ensures that all payments made away from the meeting are brought back to full Council as retrospective payments and approved at the next meeting. <i>Comment: as has been mentioned within previous audit reports, it is the responsibility of Councillors to satisfy themselves that they have the appropriate legal power to incur expense and that the Council is not undertaking any decisions or payments that are ultra vires. Recording the 'power to pay' either in the cashbook or the minutes meets this requirement and is a good internal control.</i>

<sup>1</sup> Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	<i>Not applicable</i>	Internet banking is not operated by the Council.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is clearly identified in the ledger book and claimed in accordance with the guidelines for local authorities and similar bodies. The VAT records for the period 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021 were verified in the cashbook. The claim for the period ending 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2021 in the sum of £5,378.99 was reviewed and settled during the year under review.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC)? <sup>2</sup>	<i>Not applicable</i>	The Council has not adopted the General Power of Competence.
Are payments under s.137 <sup>3</sup> separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	Payments under this power totalled £440 and were within statutory limits and noted under a separate column in the cash-sheet.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	<i>Not applicable</i>	The Council has no such loans.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 4 – Risk management</b>		
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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<b>Internal auditor commentary</b>
<i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i>	Yes	The risk assessment documentation submitted for Internal Audit provides details of the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks. The Risk Assessment for the year under review was adopted by full Council at its meeting of 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Localism Act

<sup>3</sup> 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 £8.12 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

<p><i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money. There is evidence that overall the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences.</p>
<p><i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee <b>and</b> has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council has insurance in place under a Parish Protect Policy which shows core cover for the following: Public liability: £12m; Public/Products Liability: £10m and Fidelity Guarantee of £100k.  <i>Comment: as recommended guidelines states that the level of Fidelity Guarantee should be at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grant being received in April of the following year, Council is working within these limits.</i>                  At the meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the minutes evidence that Council approved the premium for the annual insurance for the coming year. It is unclear from the minutes whether an annual review of Council's insurance was carried out prior to renewal.  <i>Comment: Council should note that it is the responsibility of the whole Council to satisfy itself that insurances are adequate and that having identified, assessed and recorded the risks, appropriate measures, such as the appropriate use of insurance cover, have been taken to mitigate and manage the risk. It might be appropriate for this to be evidenced by a minute reference.</i></p>
<p><i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed<sup>4</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council has adopted an Internal Control Statement which formally reviews the effectiveness of its system of internal control to ensure that it has mitigation measures on place to address the risks associated with the management of public finances. The Internal Control Statement for 2020-2021 was presented to full Council and adopted at its meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021.</p>
<p><i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit has been carried out during the year<sup>5</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The effectiveness of internal audit was carried out within the review mentioned above.  <i>Comment: by reviewing the terms of reference and effectiveness for internal audit the council has followed guidance and demonstrated that it recognises</i></p>

<sup>4</sup> Accounts and Audit Regulations

<sup>5</sup> Governance and Accountability Guide

		<i>that the function of internal audit is to test and report to the authority on whether its system of internal control is adequate.</i>
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 5 – Budgetary controls</b>		
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		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The budget for the year 2020–2021 in the sum of revenue income of £76,782.69 and revenue expenditure of £58,593.69, was set at the Council meeting of 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2020 following a review by the Finance Advisory Committee tasked to carry out such a review.
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The precept was set at £26,829 for 2020/2021, as confirmed at the meeting of 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2020, with the minutes demonstrating that this equated to a 3% increase per Band D property.
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	In accordance with Council’s own standing orders and terms of reference, reports summarizing the Council’s receipts and payments and aggregate receipts and payments for the year to date with balances held is submitted and considered by the Council. The reports once accepted by Council are signed off by the Chair of the meeting. In accordance with its terms of reference the Finance Advisory Committee consider the budget for the current year and review income and expenditure against budget along with forecasts for the remainder of the year.
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked<sup>6</sup></i>	Yes	Council’s final accounts show general reserves in the sum of £32,855.02 with earmarked reserves in the sum of £42,474.02. <i>Comment: Council is advised of the guidance as issued by Proper Practices which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council’s general (non-</i>

<sup>6</sup> 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



	<p><i>earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure and should ensure that the level of general reserves adopted is in accordance with its 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><b>Additional comments:</b>  <i>Budget: Council shows good practice by following the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process to be followed for the year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>decide the form and level of detail of the budget;</i></li> <li>• <i>review the current year budget and spending;</i></li> <li>• <i>determine the cost of spending plans;</i></li> <li>• <i>assess levels of income;</i></li> <li>• <i>bring together spending and income plans;</i></li> <li>• <i>provide for contingencies and consider the need for reserves;</i></li> <li>• <i>approve the budget;</i></li> <li>• <i>confirm the precept or rates and special levies; and</i></li> <li>• <i>review progress against the budget regularly throughout the year.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation: Reserves: Council should note guidance as issued under the Practitioners Guide which states that an authority needs to have regards to the need to put in place a General Reserve Policy with explanations as to the high level of general reserves being held and to have evidenced that it has reviewed the level and purpose of all Earmarked Reserves.</b></p>	

<p><b>Section 6 – income controls</b>                  The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.</p>		
<p><b>Evidence</b></p>		<p>Internal auditor commentary</p>
<p><i>Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Income is recorded in accordance with Council’s Financial Regulations. A number of items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statement and found to be in order and recorded in accordance with Proper Practices. The RFO has continued to ensure that the accounting records contain all day-to-day entries of all sums of money received.</p>



<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	Income received is reported within the monthly financial reports submitted to Council and in the budgetary review reports summarizing the Council's receipts and payments for the year to date as submitted. RFO ensures that monies received are promptly banked.
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	The council received precept of £26,829.00 during the year under review in April and September 2020. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved at the meeting of 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2020, served on the Charging Authority to receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?<sup>7</sup></i>	Yes	For the year under review Council received CIL Receipts in the sum of £13,160.29 in April and October 2020.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	In accordance with current practices, the RFO ensures that CIL income received forms part of the financial reporting schedule submitted to the Council.
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	In accordance with the 2010 Regulations, the Council having a retained balance of CIL funds has ensured that retained balances are transferred into the Earmarked Reserves specifically allocated.
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	Council has completed an annual report for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021 showing retained balance of £13,160.29 and is aware that the Annual CIL Statement should be submitted to Babergh Mid Suffolk District Councils by the due date of 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2021.
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	The report for the year 20/21 has been uploaded onto the Council's website.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 7 – petty cash</b>	
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.	
<b>Evidence</b>	Internal auditor commentary

<sup>7</sup> Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	Yes	A small cash float is retained for Skips days. Currently the sum retained is £14.00.
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<b>Section 8 – Payroll controls</b>		
<p>The Internal Auditor will check salaries are approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. If the Clerk was recruited after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, evidence will be required to show compliance with the new requirements for the statement of employment, Induction, probation periods and training requirements. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.</p>		
<b>Evidence</b>		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 <sup>st</sup> March 2021. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit. All salary payments are authorised by full council.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	
<i>Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?</i>	Yes	There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines and outsourced. Cross-checks were completed on payments covering salary and PAYE were found to be in order. Deductions paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made in accordance with timescales as set out in the regulations.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?<sup>8</sup></i>	Yes	Council is a member of the Nest Pension Scheme with the Clerk being the only member. Following the comment raised in the internal audit report for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020, Council is in the process of amending the current procedure in which contributions are paid over for both employee and employer pension contributions.

<sup>8</sup> 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>	Partly met	Council should note the changes in the Practitioners Guide for 2020 on the treatment of what can be included as employment expenses within the Annual Governance and Accountability Guide 2020 - section 2.16 refers - and submitted within Box 4 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Guide (AGAR). Whilst all expenses / payments made are against itemised invoices and are approved accordance with Council's FRs, the treatment of the working from home allowance has been incorrectly included within Box 4 on the AGAR.
<p><b>Additional comments:</b>  <b>Recommendation: Council is advised to rework Box 4 and Box 6 of the Accounting Statements - Section 1 of the AGAR - ensuring that only those payments that are regarded as employment expenses are included within Box 4 as per Proper Practices. Payments for working from home allowances should be included within Box 6. If the working from home allowance has been claimed in the year 2019/20, in accordance with Proper Practices, Council will need to rework the previous year's accounts and right the word RESTATED at the top of the form.</b></p>		

<p><b>Section 9 – Asset control</b>                  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>		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?<sup>9</sup></i>	Yes	The Asset Register 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.
<i>Are the value of the assets included? (note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2021) was £24,141.07 which shows nil movement for the year under review.

<sup>9</sup> Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – March 2019

<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	No	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	Confirmation is given that the value of the assets declared on the Accounting Statements of the AGAR reflect the Council's Asset Register value as £24,141 which was signed off at the meeting of 29 <sup>th</sup> June 2021.
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has insurance under a Parish Protect Policy for assets as specified on its insurance schedule.
<b>Additional comments:</b> <i>Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2020 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that having set the value of the asset register, that method of valuation has been consistently applied. Movement in the register will result in the acquisition of and disposal of new and existing assets..</i>		

<b>Section 10 – bank reconciliation</b>		
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.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted at each meeting.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end (31 <sup>st</sup> March), the balance across the councils accounts stood at £75,329.04 as recorded in the Statement of Accounts and on the Year-end Bank Reconciliation.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Balances across the Council's accounts are reported at each meeting of full Council. The minutes reflect that all members have had sight of the bank statements by email with such being recorded in the minutes for evidence.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 11 – year end procedures</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounts are produced on a receipts and expenditure basis, and all were found to be in order.
<i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i>	Yes	The end of year accounts and supporting documentation were well presented for the internal auditor to review.
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR<sup>10</sup> documents been completed?</i>	Yes	<p>As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete Part 3 of the AGAR. Section 1 and Section 2 - Accounting Statements of the AGAR were completed and signed having been approved by Council at a meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021.</p> <p><b>Recommendation: Prior to submission to the external auditors, Council is advised to revisit the Accounting Statements and ensure that the form is completed in its entirety. Box 8 for both years is currently showing a value of “0”. Box * should reflect the total value of cash and short-term investments held as at 31<sup>st</sup> March and should match the figures in Box 7. For 2019/20 Box 8 should read 70,613 and for 2020/21 should read 75,329.</b></p> <p><b>Council will also need to amend Box 4 and Box 6 – see comment under Payroll above.</b></p>
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was not able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review.
<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>	Yes	The Internal Auditor is able to confirm that the parish council set the dates for the exercise of public rights as required by the 2015 Regulations for the year 2019 – 2020 as 1 <sup>st</sup> July to 11 <sup>th</sup> August 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?<sup>11</sup></i>	Yes	The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million for the year ending 31 March 2020 and published the following on a public website: Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR Section 3 – External Audit Report and Certificate. Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights Notice of the conclusion of audit
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 12 – internal audit</b> 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.		
<b>Evidence</b>	<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>	
<i>Has the previous internal audit report been considered by the Council?</i>	Yes	Full Council considered the Internal Audit Report at its meeting of 5 <sup>th</sup> August 2020.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	As per Proper Practices, Council considered the internal audit report and produce an audit plan to take appropriate action of the weaknesses identified within the report: 1. Review of arrangements for pension deductions and payment thereof 2. Rounding of Accounting Statements
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	The appointment of SALC as the Council's internal auditor was confirmed at the meeting of 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2021 although it is noted that this is for the year 2021–2022 as opposed to 2020-2021.
<b>Section 13 – external audit for the period under review</b> The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be taken into account.		

<sup>11</sup> Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015



Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Has the previous external audit report been considered by the Council? <sup>12</sup>	Yes	Council considered the report from the External Auditor for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020 at the meeting of 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2020.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	Not applicable	The External Auditor makes reference to the following matter which was for noting by the authority only: 1. The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. The AGAR has to be sent back for amendments.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

Section 14 – additional information		
The internal auditor will look for some additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation? <sup>13</sup> (note to auditor- emergency Regulations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic) <sup>f14</sup>	Yes	Council did not hold an Annual Meeting of the Parish Council during the year under review. Comment: In recognition of this being unprecedented times and following the Government's guidelines for staying at home and working remotely, the Government included within s.78 in the Coronavirus Act 2020 (made 4 <sup>th</sup> April 2020) the ability for the Secretary of State to have the power to make Regulations to cover the provisions for the holding of meetings. The 2020 Regulations set out those provisions. This also repealed for the year under review, the requirement to hold an Annual Council Meeting Council has

<sup>12</sup> 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.

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

<sup>14</sup> The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020



		<i>followed these regulations and held its meetings via the Zoom Videoconferencing platform.</i>
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> <sup>15</sup>	Yes	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	Evidence was seen on the District Authority's website of the Register of Interests for all current Parish Councillors. <i>Comment: Council is reminded that whilst the monitoring officer of the District Council must arrange for the parish council's register of members' interests to be available for inspection in the district and must be published on the district council's website, where the parish council has its own website, its register of members' interests must also be published on that website. (Openness and transparency on personal interests - A guide for councillors – August 2012).</i>
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	Yes	The Parish Council does not act as a sole trustee.
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Partly met	Councils with income over £25,000 but under £200,00 will be expected (but are not legally required to do so) to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000). Council is working towards ensuring compliance with the requirements under the Transparency Code 2015.
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?</i> <sup>16</sup>	Yes	The council is correctly registered with the IO as a Data Controller in accordance with legislation. Reference: ZA152470.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	The Council has taken steps to ensure compliancy and has shown good practice by ensuring that an impact assessment audit has been carried out. A comprehensive range of documents were able to be viewed on the website detailing 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, whether it will be given to any third

<sup>15</sup> Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972 and the Localism Act 2011

<sup>16</sup> Data Protection Act 2018

		party and the manner in which subject access requests along with data breaches will be handled.
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?<sup>17</sup></i>	Yes	There is a website accessibility statement on the Council operated website detailing the technical information of the website along with the methods used for testing the website; the steps being taken to improve accessibility and how the site is being improved to ensure that content meets the WCAG 2.1 Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Yes	
<p><b>Additional comments:</b>                  Transparency Code 2015 - To ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000), the following information should be published in accordance with the required timescales:                  quarterly:                  Individual items of expenditure that exceed £500 (currently published on an annual basis);                  Government Procurement Card transactions;                  Invitations to tender for contracts over £5,000;                  Details of contracts that exceed £5,000;                  annually:                  Details of all land and building assets;                  Grants to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations.</p>		

Signed: *Victoria S Waples*

Date of Internal Audit Work: 08.08.201, 12.08.21 & 15.08.21

Date of Internal Audit Report: 26 August 2021

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils

<sup>17</sup> Website Accessibility Regulations 2018