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Our Ref: MARK/TON001

Mrs J Smith
Tongham Parish Council
Tongham Parish Council
Community Centre
Poyle Road
Tongham
Surrey

GU10 1DU

6th June 2023

Dear Jill

Re: Tongham Parish Council
Internal Audit Year Ended 31 March 2023 – Year-End Audit report

Executive summary

Following completion of our year-end internal audit on 6th June 2023 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 Tongham 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 Mark Mulberry of Mulberry & Co, who has over 30 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 20 years specialising 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 2022/23 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. As part of the inherent risk assessment, we have concluded that:

- There have been no reported instances of breaches of regulations in the past
- The client uses an industry approved financial reporting package
- The client regularly carries out reconciliations and documents these
- There is regular reporting to council
- The management team are experienced and informed
- Records are neatly maintained and referenced
- The client is aware of current regulations and practices
- There has been no instance of high staff turnover

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 year-end 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 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.

The council continues to Excel for recording the day-to-day financial transactions of the council. The limited number of transactions lends itself to this style of reporting, with advice from the auditor a correction was made to the summary sheet to include the VAT reclaimable this enabled the year end summaries to reconcile with the bank. It also provide a method of verifying the VAT on expenses corresponded with the VAT reclaimed.

The system is used regularly to record transactions and produce management information reports for review at council meetings and I make no recommendation to change.

B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

This authority complied with its Financial 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 for 2021/22 was not qualified and has been published on the council website along with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit; however, this has not been reported to council in the minutes for the past two years. **I remind council that it MUST minute the receipt of the concluded AGAR and note any actions that must be taken.**

Under 'other matters' the External Auditor commented that boxes 2 & 3 were incorrectly stated because the local tax support grant had been included in box 2 in error.

In addition to this, the external auditor noted the proper provision for the exercise of public rights had not been given. As a result assertion 4 of the annual governance statement must be answer "No", and also the variance analysis was not correctly completed.

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms.

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms. The council website provides details of councillors and includes their individual Register of Members' Interests Forms.

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. **I recommend reviewing the way the information is published on the website of West Chiltington Parish Council as a best practice example via this link www.wcpc.org.uk/transparency**

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.

Full council meets monthly and also has an annual meeting.

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

Per the Local Government Act 1972 Sch.12 P2 para 10 (2) I was able to confirm that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. The agenda is signed and the members are properly "Summoned".

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.

I remind council that where agendas are issued by electronic means the councillors will need to sign acceptance to receive information by electronic means. I have provided some sample wording below for council consideration.

"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."

I remind council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office (page 3 of this link) ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas.pdf

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

Draft minutes are uploaded to the council website, ordinarily within 10 days of the meeting taking place. It is recommended to state on the website page that all minutes are draft until adopted at the subsequent 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 at the meeting held in July 2022 (minute ref 7ciii).

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

Financial Regulations are based on an older NALC model and were last reviewed and adopted by council at the meeting held in July 2022 (minute ref 7ciii). The regulations contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, etc, however **there is a newer NALC 2019 version of the regulation council may want to consider updating to.**

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

3.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget.

3.2 No expenditure may be incurred that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure. 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.

3.3 The RFO shall regularly provide the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget. These statements are to be prepared at least at the end of each financial quarter.

3.4 The Clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to carry out any repair replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £200.00. The Clerk shall report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

10.1 An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained.

10.2 Order books shall be controlled by the RFO.

10.3 All members and Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any de minimis provisions in Regulation 11 (I) below.

10.4 The RFO shall verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order, and in the case of new or infrequent purchases or payments, the RFO shall ensure that the statutory authority shall be reported to the meeting at which the order is approved so that the Minutes can record the power being used.

I tested a sample of invoices and noted that the day to day practice does not always follow the financial regulations; however, I can confirm the goods and services are approved for purchase, invoices are approved for payment and payments are authorised. The bank system is a single access system whereby the originator of a transaction can authorise the same transaction. **I strongly recommend the financial regulations are updated to reflect better the day to day practices of that of the council and a dual authorisation bank payment system is introduced.**

I would also recommend the minute wording is updated to show beyond reasonable doubt the amount of payments the council is approving.

The council has Financial Regulations in place regarding the award of contracts, and this includes:

FR 11.1 (i) When it is to enter into a contract less than £50,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £1,000 and above £100 the Clerk shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10 (3) above shall apply.

I tested a sample of contracts/tenders awarded during the year and again strongly recommend council review and update its regulations as quotes were not retained.

Confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £8.82 per elector. The council does not have the General Power of Competence (GPC) and the section 137 thresholds are within threshold.

Check receipt of VAT refund matches last submitted VAT return.

The council submits its VAT return on a quarterly basis. I reviewed the submission for the period ending 31 March 2023 which showed a refund amount due of £1,488.32. I was able to confirm receipt of this amount to the council's bank account on 19th April 2023. The council is up to date with its VAT submissions.

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 management policy which was most recently reviewed and approved by council at the meeting held in March 2023 (minute ref 7D). I reviewed the policy and the risk assessment record, which details the types of risk identified, who might be harmed and how, assigns a perceived risk level, records action taken and how the risk is managed. This type of approach is suitable for a council of this size and demonstrates that the council takes its risk management responsibilities seriously.

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Zurich which expires on 31st May 2024. The policy includes Public Liability and Employers Liability cover of £10,000,000 each and a Fidelity Guarantee of £100,000 which is sufficient for a council of this size. The listed asset cover appears appropriate based on the items recorded on the council's asset register.

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 £33,793 for 2022/23. With a tax base of 931.1, this equates to a band D equivalent of £36.29 (compared to the average in England of £74.81).

The Clerk confirmed that the 2023/24 budget setting process and precept setting was completed; however, there is no minute evidence to show the council resolved to apply for a precept in either the 2021/22 or 2022/23 minutes. **I remind council it MUST resolve to approve the precept application, and this must be clear beyond reasonable doubt.**

The Clerk does not currently present the budget performance information at every council meeting for review, budgetary control is an important and vital part of council financial reporting. **I recommend the council introduce this control as soon as possible.**

The accounting records show that the council ended the year with income reported as 68 % of budget and expenditure reported as 93% of budget. The reduction in income appears to be due to less grants than anticipated.

The council does not have any specific earmarked reserves. The council holds £28,336 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. I estimate net revenue expenditure to be circa £36,000

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 62% of the council's budgeted income, with other budgeted amounts received from allotments income, grants.

Unbudgeted amounts received during the year came from grants, bank interest and VAT refunds. 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.

FR 9.3 The Council will review all fees and charges annually, following a report of the Clerk

I remind council to ensure its annual fees are reviewed and minuted as such, even if there is no change.

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 have any petty cash 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. I reviewed the payslips for March and the payroll deductions appear correct. 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 confirmed that this includes only salary payments, HMRC payments and pension contributions.

The clerk has opted out of pension.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS**Internal audit requirement**

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

Audit findings

The council has a simple fixed asset register in place which would benefit from the inclusion of asset location, date of acquisition, condition, estimated useful life, insurance and replacement values. This will make the document a working document and will enable the council to plan for future capital replacements.

Assets are correctly listed at cost/proxy cost, or where gifted/donated, given a nominal £1 value for the purpose of the asset register.

I recommend the fixed asset register is substantially updated to make this into a working document.

I confirmed the asset register total matches that included in box 9 (total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets) on the AGAR and was able to trace the changes to the previous year's total against the asset register.

I remind council that it must explain to the external auditor why the 2022 balance has been restated and MUST put the word "restated" in the AGAR box.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

Bank reconciliations are completed monthly and presented to council at every meeting for review. I reviewed the March 2023 bank reconciliation and was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and found no errors.

Balances held are within the £85,000 protection limit offered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

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>	NO – the requirements and timescales for 2021/22 year-end were not followed. The dates for 2022/23 are correct.
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	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the</i>	YES – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.

	the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<i>year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	
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		2021/22	2022/23	Internal Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	32,108	31,232	Agrees to 2021/22 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	45,185 40,784	33,793	Figure confirmed to central records
3	Total other receipts	23,989 28,390	13,997	Agrees to underlying records
4	Staff costs	13,649	15,781	Agrees to underlying records
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Verified against PWLB records
6	All other payments	56,401	34,855	Agrees to underlying records
7	Balances carried forward	31,232	28,386	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet

8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	31,232	28,386	Agrees to bank reconciliation
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	Restated 600,875	603,335	Matches asset register – restated 2022
10	Total borrowings	0	0	Verified against PWLB records

For Local Councils Only		Yes	No	N/A	
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)		✓		<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)			✓	<i>The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

Audit findings

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on a receipts and payments basis with no requirement for the box 7 and 8 reconciliation.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2021/22.

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 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick “not covered”)

Audit findings

The council did not certify itself exempt in 2021/22 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

This internal control objective has changed since last year. Where previously it related to the relevant Transparency Codes, a council with annual turnover exceeding £25,000 was recommended to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, but it was not a statutory requirement.

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 the last five years.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2022 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Proposed
Date AGAR signed by council	11 th July	19 th June
Date inspection notice issued	12 th July	20 th June
Inspection period begins	12 th July	21 st June
Inspection period ends	23 rd August	1 August
Correct length (30 working days)	NO	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	NO	Yes

I am not satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2021/22, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement must be signed NO. Please note this date requirement was specifically mentioned in our report of the 23rd June last year.

I was able to confirm that the proposed dates for 2022/23 meet the statutory requirements.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Internal audit requirement

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Before 1 July 2022 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 2021/22, approved and signed, page 4*
- *Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2021/22, approved and signed, page 5*

Not later than 30 September 2022 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 Certificate and the publication requirements for 2021/22 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 – this test does not apply

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 Financial 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			✓
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 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 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 (2021-22) 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 2021/22 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

Mark Mulberry
For Mulberry & Co

Year-End Audit - Points Carried Forward

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
Governance	I remind council that it MUST minute the receipt of the concluded AGAR and note any actions that must be taken.	
Transparency	I recommend reviewing the way the information is published on the website of West Chiltonton Parish Council as a best practice example via this link www.wcpc.org.uk/transparency	
Agendas	I remind council that where agendas are issued by electronic means the councillors will need to sign acceptance to receive information by electronic means. I have provided some sample wording below for council consideration. <i>“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.”</i> I remind council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner’s Office (page 3 of this link) ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas.pdf	
Financial Regulations	I strongly recommend the financial regulations are updated to reflect better the day to day practices of that of the council and a dual authorisation bank payment system is introduced. I would also recommend the minute wording is updated to show beyond reasonable doubt the amount of payments the council is approving.	
Budget & Precept	I remind council it MUST resolve to approve the precept application, and this must be clear beyond reasonable doubt. The Clerk does not currently present the budget performance information at every council meeting for review, budgetary control is an important and vital part of council financial reporting. I recommend the council introduce this control as soon as possible.	
Fees and charges	<i>FR 9.3 The Council will review all fees and charges annually, following a report of the Clerk</i> I remind council to ensure its annual fees are reviewed and minuted as such, even if there is no change.	
Fixed asset register	I recommend the fixed asset register is substantially updated to make this into a working document. I remind council that it must explain to the external auditor why the 2022 balance has been restated and MUST put the word “restated” in the AGAR box.	
Governance Return	I am not satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2021/22, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement must be signed NO.	