

Worplesdon Parish Council

Internal Audit

Year Ended 31st March 2017

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**Prepared by:** Mulberry & Co  
**Date of Interim Visit:** 21<sup>st</sup> October 2016  
**Date of Final Visit:** 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017

### Law and Regulation Regarding Internal audit

**Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 imposes a duty on local councils to ‘maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with the proper practices in relation to internal control.** Internal audit is a key component of the system of internal control.

The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the council whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit’s role is to assist the council in fulfilling its responsibility to have and maintain proper internal control arrangements and those for the prevention and detection of fraud, error or mistakes

All internal audit work must be reported to the council. Any report by internal audit is addressed to the council, may recommend actions to be taken by the council, and should be treated as a document open to view by local taxpayers.

Two pieces of legislation set out how local councils should behave when accounting for the public funds they manage and what rights local taxpayers have in relation to those accounts. These are the **Audit Commission Act 1998** and the **Accounts and Audit Regulations issued from time to time under the Act**. The requirement for local councils to prepare accounts annually and to subject them to external audit comes from the Audit Commission Act 1998 (the Act). The Act describes the rights of taxpayers and other interested parties in relation to those accounts.

**Under the regulations, all local councils must at least once a year conduct in accordance with proper practices a review of the effectiveness of their system of internal control and publicly report the outcome.** The Annual Governance Statement in Section 2 of the annual return provides the means for local councils to report to local taxpayers on their system of internal control.

**This report is prepared for the council and proper officers of the council named above, for use in fulfilling their obligations under the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations issued from time to time under the Act for preparing the Annual Return and reviewing the effectiveness of their system of internal controls. Mulberry and Co accept no responsibility for any action or inaction taken as a result of the findings of this report and accept no responsibility to any other party other than those named above.**

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## Summary Findings

I enclose my report for your kind attention and presentation to the council.

My audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was conducted in line with the inherent risks assessment. Whilst I have not tested all transactions, my sample has where appropriate has covered the entire year to date. Amongst others the following areas were covered in my testing: -

### Interim Visit

- Review of the Financial Regulations & Standing orders
- Review of the Risk Assessments
- Review of the Budgeting process
- Proper Bookkeeping – review of the use of the accounts package.

The systems and internal procedures at Worplesdon Parish Council are very well established, regulated and followed. The clerk is very experienced and ensures the council follows best practice regulations and has over time adapted and changed the internal procedures as regulations and technologies have changed to maintain compliance. It is clear the council takes policies and procedures very seriously and I am pleased to report that overall the systems and procedures you have in place are entirely fit for purpose. I would like to thank the clerk for her hard work during the year and am pleased to say her high standard of work continues; I therefore make no recommendation for change at this stage.

### Final Stage

At our final audit we covered the following areas, amongst others: -

- Review of annual accounts & annual return
- Review of bank reconciliation
- Review of income
- Review of salaries
- Review of information for external auditor

I am of the opinion that the annual accounts and annual return are ready to be signed off by council and the external auditor and that the annual return is a true and fair reflection of the financial transaction of that of the council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Accordingly, I have signed off the annual return.

### A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

The council uses the Scribe accounting system for the recording of its financial day to day transactions. Entries are entered onto Scribe on a regular basis and at the end of the month the clerk produces a monthly bank reconciliation by hand and reconciles this to the scribe entries. On conclusion of the month end the reconciliations and payments list are taken to council for approval and entering into the minutes.

The system is tried and tested and appropriate for a council of this size.

### Final Audit

We confirmed that accounting records had been kept up to date to the end of the financial year, and that Councillor review of financial records had continued after the date of our interim audit.

We checked the draft statement of accounts and confirmed that;

- the accounts cast accurately
- All figures in the accounts could be derived from the Council's accounting system
- Opening balances and 2015-16 comparative figures in the accounts were agreed to the audited 2015-16 financial statements

## **B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Financial Regulations and Standing Orders were reviewed in September 2016 and council agreed and minuted these properly, I have noted the NALC models have been adopted. These documents are current and I make no recommendation to change at this time. I have tested the following items and can confirm council is following regulations.

- FR 2.2 Bank reconciliations are produced and signed off monthly and reported as such to council.
- FR 5 and 6 – authorisation and payment. Payment procedure and invoice authorisation is a robust system and it is easy to follow the authorised payments per the minutes to the underlying documentation which is equally authorised and checked. Whilst on-line payments can be created and authorised by one individual which can be viewed as a control risk the compensating controls are in the form of monthly reporting of bank balances and sign off by councillors. The absence of such a control would be cause for concern.

### **Final Audit.**

Non staff expenditure disclosed in box 6 to the accounts was £143,482 (2016: £109,219). The increase is due to expenditure on the Jacobs Well Playground.

We selected a sample of 5 items of expenditure from the cashbook for the December 2016 to March 2017 period. For all transactions were sampled we were able to

- Agree figure in cashbook and VAT back to invoice
- Confirm invoice had been signed off by at least 2 councillors
- Confirm VAT had been reclaimed correctly
- Confirm that the expenditure had been approved in minute of a council meeting.

We have one minor recommendation – we note that there is some ambiguity in the way the payment authorisation process is described in the financial regulations. We recommend that the “approval of payments” section of the financial regulations is reviewed in the course of 2017-18.

We have identified no errors in our testing of non-pay expenditure

## **C. RISK MANAGEMENT & INSURANCE**

Council is insured via Aviva on a standard local authority package, money and asset cover appear adequate. This policy expires in September 2017. Council is aware that quotes will need to be obtained in accordance with financial regulations next year. Fixed assets are listed and in agreement with the fixed asset register.

The council has a list of risk assessments and these were taken to and discussed by the Health & Safety committee in the February 2016 meeting.

The council has a list of risk assessments and these were taken to and discussed at a meeting of the Council in February 2017.

Council has a number of policy documents these have all been reviewed and where applicable amended. Council has minuted this process in the October 2016 minutes. I have suggested that the investment policy be reworded to make it more of a policy rather than a statement of fact.

Council data is backed up offsite. We recommend that the Council tests it can recover data from the IT support company annually.

#### **D. BUDGET & PRECEPT**

Budgets are in the process of being drawn up for council approval. It is envisaged that there will be a surplus at the year end. Reserves will be increased in part to further fund new office. The precept will not be increased in 2017/18

I am of the opinion that budgets, precept calculation and reserves are drawn up calculated and monitored in accordance with current regulations.

#### **Final audit.**

The 2017-18 precept and budget have been finalised, and a detailed budget is in place. These were approved at the January 2017 meeting of the Council, and the financial value of the precept is properly disclosed.

Reserves balances as at 31.3.17 were £173K. At this date, earmarked reserves of £87K had been identified, leaving a general reserve of £86K. This is around 40% of the precept, which is not excessive for a council of this size.

#### **E. INCOME**

Precept per accounts was £197,256 (2016 151,218) . There was a significant increase in precept in 2016-17 in order to set aside reserves for a new office and for potential local plan expenditure

The value of the precept was agreed to third party confirmation. LTCSS grant was correctly excluded from the precept figure. Box 2 of the accounts is accurate.

Other income was £60,845 ( 2016 34,235) Increase mainly due to grant for a new playground.

We sampled 4 items of income amounting to £54K and agreed cashbook figures back to grant notifications / remittances and payments into the Council's bank account.

I have identified no errors in our testing of other income - box 3 to the accounts

#### **F. PETTY CASH**

No Petty cash – confirmed with the clerk.

#### **G. PAYROLL**

Staff costs per box 4 to the accounts was £54,035 in 2016-17 (£54,839 in 2016) . I confirmed that staff salaries are approved at a council meeting as part of the precept and budget setting process. Payroll is processed by an external bureau. I tested payroll entries for one month ( August 2016) from the cashbook, back to payslips. I was able to confirm accounting entries could agree back to payroll.

My testing of box 4 to the accounts (staff costs) has found no errors.

#### **H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS**

The council has £631,349 (2016: £631,349) of assets. Assets are shown at cost or proxy cost and not adjusted for insurance or replacement values. I saw evidence that the asset register has been updated to cover the removal and replacement of the playground at Jacobs Well. I am satisfied that the fixed asset register is complete and could be agreed into the accounts.

#### **I. BANK RECONCILIATIONS**

The Council held cash balances of £178,762 at 31 March 2017 (2016 £110,728) We were able to confirm that a bank reconciliation is completed monthly. We reperformed two bank reconciliations:

August 2016 – we agreed the running cashbook total to previous reconciliation adjusted for income and expenditure for the month. We also checked the bank statements. We confirmed that the reconciliation was signed off by chairman at the monthly meeting of the Council and that it was countersigned by a councillor at an inspection. We confirmed meeting minutes included the full bank reconciliation.

These checks were repeated for the reconciliation for 31 March, and found to be working well. The bank reconciliation was also agreed into the statement of accounts.

I am satisfied that the cash balance is box 8 to the accounts is accurate.

#### **J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS**

The Council has prepared its statement of accounts on the accruals basis. This is correct as council income is £250K for 2016-17. A reconciliation between box 7 and box 8 of the accounts has been prepared and was found to be accurate, and supported by schedules of debtors and creditors.

#### **K. TRUSTEESHIP**

No trusts.

**Mark Mulberry**

**Internal Auditor**

**21<sup>st</sup> October 2016 & 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017**

### Points Forward – Action Plan

Point Forward / Action needed	Auditor notes	Council response
<b>Other</b>		
Investment Policy re-wording	I have suggested that the investment policy be reworded to make it more of a policy rather than a statement of fact.	
We recommend that the Council tests it can recover data from the IT support company annually.		
We recommend that the process for approving payments sections of the financial regulations is reviewed in the course of 2017-18.		



## Overview of Council

	Work Task	Schedule Ref	Notes/Results
<b>Terms of Engagement</b>			
1	Review terms of engagement letter and confirm appropriate to this year		New engagement letter issued  Engagement letter is kept on the correspondence file.
2	Confirm that the professional independence and competence questionnaire has been completed and agreed with the client	1.2	Yes – confirmed and attached
3	Complete Budget	1.3	Completed & Agreed with Client
4	Complete Timetable	1.4	Completed & Agreed with Client
<b>Planning Notes – Understanding the Town &amp; Parish Council</b>			
	Number of electors and size of precept		Electors 6,500 (2015/16: 6,500) Precept £197K (2015/16: £151k)
	Key personnel		Gaynor White Clerk & RFO
	Type of financial accounting in place i.e. Manual books, computerised system		Scribe system
	Does the council carry out an annual risk assessment, and is it documented.		Yes
	Does the council have a good control environment (evidence of internal reviews and counter signing of cheques etc)		Quarterly internal reviews carried out and documented.
	Any significant changes since prior year (staff or procedures)		No changes from last year
	Any there any matters arising from last year's audit and/or management letter		None
	Matters arising from discussions with council, including whether there is any evidence of fraud or material misstatement.		None
	Key high risk or expected problem areas,		None

### Professional Independence and Competence Questionnaire

The internal audit function must be sufficiently independent from the management of financial controls and procedures of the council which are the subject of review. The person or persons carrying out internal audit must be competent to carry out the role in a way that meets the business needs of the council.

There are two key principles, which all local councils must follow in setting up their internal audit function, regardless of how procured: **independence and competence**.

<b>INDEPENDENCE</b>	
Do you have any specific reliance on the fee to be earned from this assignment	No
<b>Overdue fees</b>	
Does the client/group of clients owe the firm any money which exceeds our normal credit terms?	No
<b>Litigation</b>	
Is there any actual or anticipated litigation between us and the client in relation to fees, audit work or other work?	No
<b>Associated firms</b>	
Are you or your staff associated with any other practice or organisation which has had any dealings with the client council?	No
<b>Family or other personal relationships</b>	
Do you or any of your staff have personal or family connections with the council or its officers?	No
<b>Mutual business interest</b>	
Do you or any of your staff have any mutual business interests with the client or with an officer or employee of the client?	No
<b>Financial involvement</b>	
Do you or your staff, or anyone closely related to you or any of your staff, have any financial involvement in the client in respect of the following:	
Any beneficial interest in shares or other investments?	No
Any loans or guarantees?	No
<b>Goods and services: hospitality</b>	
Have you or any of your staff accepted materials, goods or services on favourable terms or received undue hospitality from the council?	No
<b>Ex-partners or senior staff</b>	
Has any senior officer of the council been a partner or senior employee of the practice?	No
Is the partner or any senior employee on the audit team in negotiations to join the client?	No
<b>Long association</b>	
Have you been acting for more than 10 years? If yes, then consider rotation/engagement quality review. 11th Year of auditing – with break at 6 years	No
<b>Provision of other services</b>	
Do we provide any of the following services to the client:-	
Accounting services, book-keeping or payroll services	Yes
Staff secondments	No

IT services where we are involved in the design, provision or implementation of systems	No
Specialist valuations which are included in the accounts	No
Tax compliance work or tax planning	No
Corporate finance activities	No
Any advocacy services e.g. Tax commissioner hearings	No
Any services relating to the management of the council	No
Any other services that may cause a threat to the firm's objectivity or independence	No
Where any of the above have been answered 'yes', then specify below what safeguards are proposed to maintain integrity and independence:-	
Mulberry and Co act as payroll agent and process the payroll based on the client provided information. There is segregation of duties between the individuals carrying out the payroll and the audit.	
<b>Competence</b>	
<b>Consider the following matters prior to deciding to accept appointment/re-appointment as auditors:</b>	
Are there any particular challenges and risks associated with this client?	No
Do we have sufficient expertise available to undertake this audit engagement?	Yes
Are there sufficient resources available to undertake this audit engagement?	Yes
<b>Having regard to the safeguards identified, I am satisfied that we are independent and competent to perform this audit.</b>	

## Budget

		Hours
Planning & Systems Work	Interim Visit	2
File Review and reporting	Interim Visit	1
Financial Procedures	Final Visit	2
File review	Final Visit	1
<b>Total Budget Hours</b>		<b>6</b>
Hourly Rate		£50
<b>Time Cost</b>		<b>£300</b>
Other costs	Mileage	£20
<b>Total Budgeted Cost</b>		<b>£320</b>
<b>Total Budgeted Fee</b>		<b>£350</b>

Timetable

Autumn 2016	Planning and Interim Audit work
May 2017	Final Audit work
May 2017	Issue Audit Report & Letter

### Inherent Risk Assessment

Based on the above findings and discussions with council it is my opinion that the inherent risk within the systems of the council is categorised as follows

Work Task	notes	
Are standing orders and financial regulations regularly reviewed	Yes these were on site and were current and reference to a minute	Low Risk
Is council following its written Financial regulations & standing orders	Yes	Low Risk
Does the council have risk assessments in place and are theses reviewed at least annually	Yes	Low Risk
Does the council have a committee or working party responsible for internal checking	Yes	Low Risk
Is there evidence of hierarchical review (counter signing bank rec, invoices etc)	Yes	Low Risk
Is there regular reporting against budget?	Yes	Low Risk
Are books and records maintained on a regular basis	Yes	Low Risk
Is the clerk under time pressure	No	Low Risk
Are there complicated transactions?	No complicated transactions	Low Risk
Any changes to key staff	No	Low Risk
Any changes in systems or procedures	No	Low Risk
Is all info on site and to hand?	All info on site and to hand	Low Risk
Any problems in the past	No problems in past	Low Risk
Are there any other factors to consider?	Records neat and tidy	Low Risk

### Conclusion & Opinion

The system in place is robust and entirely fit for purpose for a Parish Council of this size. There are good internal controls, policies and procedures in place which are reviewed on an annual basis.

I am of the opinion that the inherent risk in the system is low and would recommend a sample size of 10 when testing in detail and would also state that the internal controls can be relied upon.

### Specific Audit Plan

<b>Audit Area Section 4 Annual Return</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Risk of error or misstatement</b>	<b>Tests</b>	<b>Ref</b>
Appropriate books of account have been kept properly throughout the year.	SCRIBE package in place, limited and uncomplicated transactions	Low	Review transactions in cashbook make verbal enquiries. Test arithmetic.	A
The council's financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Good, simple system	Low	Review invoices and reconcile to cash book in detail. Review minutes and cheque books for authorisations	B
The council assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	Risk assessment policy written risk assessments carried out	Low	Review and comment	C
The annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate	Scribe package used	Low	Review minutes for evidence of council discussion of the same	D
Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Only income is precept	Low	Test to precept application	E
Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	No Petty cash	Low	Nothing to test	F
Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance	Payroll processed using HMRC system	Low	Test rates and hours are authorised Test net wages to payments due	G

with council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.				
Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	Fixed asset register in place	Low	Review insurance schedule and cashbook for missing items off the register	H
Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.	Regular reconciliations on SCRIBE	Low	Test reconciliation in detail	I
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, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	Income & Expenditure	Low	Test audit trail sufficient for electors rights	J
Trust funds (including charitable) The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	No trusts	Low	Nothing to test	K



## Audit Findings

### (A) Proper Bookkeeping

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm that appropriate books of account have been properly kept throughout the year</b>
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The basic record of receipts and payments is always the starting point of an accounting system; the majority of internal controls will work back to that original record. It is essential that the system requires that the **basic cash book is kept up to date** and **balances are regularly verified against a bank statement** or the actual cash in the petty cash tin. This record will also **agree with the supporting vouchers**, invoices or receipts. Even though the arithmetic may be automatic on a computer based system it is necessary to **check that the additions and balancing are correct**. The level of checking will depend on who does what and with what frequency. Where there is a **computer based system**, the reliability of information reported by the system depends on the quality and accuracy of data input, and how it is then processed, and **so tests of the integrity of data input and processing should be considered**. A councillor or member of staff may do the checking or verification; internal audit will test that the checking verification within the system has been undertaken.

Test		Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward
1	Using the previous year's annual return agree the current year's brought forward balances in the cash book.	The cash book balances bfwf agrees to the 2015/16 cwfwd balances.
2	Review the nominal ledger/cashbook for large and unusual entries and agree to supporting documentation	Council uses the electronic SCRIBE system, all entries laid out in clear and logical manner with references and cross references as appropriate to supporting documentation.  No data fields have been left blank and the reader can easily identify from the narrative the nature and scope of the transaction.
3	Verify arithmetic by casting a sample of the cash book, if this is maintained electronically check one month only	SCRIBE is an electronic system, I have verified the arithmetic on a bank reconciliation drawn at random there were no errors
4	Is the cashbook maintained and up to date	The RFO/Clerk maintains the system on a regular basis.
5	Is the cashbook regularly balanced	Evidence seen to show bank reconciliations are produced on a regular basis.
6	Is the data input by the RFO checked internally	Yes in detail.

#### OVERALL CONCLUSION (Subject to points carried forward in final notes)

Satisfactory – I am of the opinion that the SCRIBE package is being used properly, and that it is fit for purpose for a council of this size.

**(B) Financial Regulations, Standing Orders & Payment Controls**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm The council's financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.</b>
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The first step in establishing a financial system is to identify the general rules applicable at council or committee meetings and in carrying out the council's business. The Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other internal instructions do this. **Internal audit should have a copy of the current Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and any internal instructions.** Internal audit's report to the council will include any recommendations for improvement in these documents arising as a result of their work during the year. The level of checking will depend on the content of the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The amount of work may well vary, and more extensive testing of compliance may be needed from time to time, but as a minimum, having established whether the **council has within the year reviewed its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations** for continued relevance, internal audit will test.

In purchase order procedures:

- ☐ that the **correct number of estimates, quotes or full tenders** depending on estimated value of contract **have been obtained** (Standing Orders will state the value at which tenders are required; Financial Regulations or Standing Orders will show the value where estimates or quotes only are required);
- ☐ that **proper purchase authority by council, a committee or officers** (under clear delegated powers) **is in place**; and
- ☐ that a **proper legal power has been identified** for the expenditure.

In purchase payments:

- ☐ that the supporting paperwork confirms that there is a **fully approved invoice and authorisation for payment**; and
- ☐ that **VAT is identified** appropriately for reclaim.

In most councils these checks can be limited to a sample of transactions selected at random, plus those which are large or unusual, such as each payment for a value in excess of £1,000, or some other figure appropriate to the level of activity of the council. The aim is for **internal audit to check that the systems put in place by management are working and are appropriate.**

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations may well repeat the statutory requirement to maintain 'a separate account' of expenditure and income under Local Government Act 1972 section 137 and Local Government Act 1986 section 5. **Internal audit should check annually that such an analysis is kept** and that the **cash limit in section 137 is not exceeded.** Internal audit may scrutinise the resulting list of expenditure and should consider whether the power is being properly used but would not check through for the correct analysis of every item.

Internal audit should also check that **payments of interest and principal** in respect of loans (and investments if any are held) are **in accordance with an agreed schedule.**

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward</b>
1	Has the council formally adopted standing orders and financial regulations?	Copy given to IA on arrival. These was reviewed and commented upon.  New NALC models adopted
2	Has a Responsible finance officer been appointed with specific duties?	Yes the Clerk is the appointed RFO.

3	Have items or services above the de minimus amount been competitively purchased?	Not applicable
4	Are payments in the cashbook supported by invoices, authorised and minuted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FR 2.2 Bank reconciliations are produced and signed off monthly and reported as such to council.</li> <li>FR 3 Budget Process being followed in accordance with regulations.</li> <li>FR 5 and 6 – authorisation and payment. Payment procedure and invoice authorisation is a robust system,</li> <li>FR 7 Statutory obligations in respect of PAYE are met council is paying PAYE on time.</li> <li>FR 11.1.h Council has followed due process in obtaining quotes for insurance.</li> </ul> <p>VAT is properly accounted for by the scribe system</p>
5	Has VAT on payments been identified, recorded and reclaimed?	Yes
6	Is s137 expenditure separately recorded and within statutory limits?	Yes – however none in council year
7	Note down if council is registered for VAT or if they use the annual reclaim method	Council is not registered for VAT
8	Review VAT returns for supporting documentation and verify a sample of transactions to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invoices</li> <li>Other third party evidence</li> <li>Correct rate of VAT</li> <li>Correct treatment of VAT</li> </ul>	<p>Council used SCRIBE system to record VAT on inputs</p> <p>Vat returns [s.126] have been reviewed</p>
9	Review bank account for payments or receipts of VAT	Receipts of refunds in evidence
10	Reconcile VAT returns to cash book	As above
11	Ensure Returns are made on a prompt basis	AS above

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (Subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory – The nominal ledger balances are brought forward correctly and the postings to the nominal accounts are properly made

**(C) Risk Management**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm the council assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.</b>
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The greatest risk facing a local authority is not being able to deliver the activity or services expected of the council. The council is likely to be managing many of those risks when it **reviews its insurance** and its systems. **The minutes are an essential record of such reviews. Budget setting and insurance review are annual activities**; the review of systems may be less frequent.

It is suggested that **systems should be reviewed** in some detail, unless triggered by external or internal audit reports, or change in risk, at least **every four years or on the change of Clerk/RFO**. This might be more appropriate for larger councils on a cyclical basis.

**Minutes should be checked by internal audit for any suggestion of unusual activity and evidence that risks are being identified and managed.**

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward</b>
1	Does a review of the minutes identify any unusual financial activity?	No
2	Do minutes record the council carrying out an annual risk assessment?	Yes
3	Is insurance cover appropriate and adequate?	PC is insured by Aviva. Insurance is adequate
4	Are internal financial controls documented and regularly reviewed?	Yes
5	Review financial & Other risk assessment and ensure up to date, note down any significant risks facing the council	Council reviews all risk assessments annually and other critical systems as required on an ongoing basis – it considers that all risks are adequately insured or mitigates to such an extent as not to be a worry.
6	Document retention & Data Back up	Documents are kept at the council chamber and other locations.  Digital Media – back up offsite – daily. Council to test document recovery procedures.

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory – The council has a positive attitude to risk assessment and documents the assessments and reviews in a logical manner

**(D) Budgetary Controls**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm the annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.</b>
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**Internal audit will not check the budget but will verify that a budget has been properly prepared by the council and adopted in setting the precept.** The regular reporting of expenditure, and variances from budget, is an important part of the proper control of public money. **Internal audit will expect to see the regular reports to council and the variance analysis.** That variance analysis and the decisions of council or committee taken as a result may suggest areas for additional analysis by internal audit. Part of budgetary control is to ensure **adequate but not excessive reserves** or balances. **Progress against budgets should be regularly monitored.** It is particularly helpful when determining the likely precept that will be required for the following year. **Internal audit will be keen to establish that this has taken place.**

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward</b>
1	Has the council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept?	Budgets have been taken to council and agreed. Council is budgeting for earmarked reserves, whilst it does use description's such as contingency and professional fees it has a clear understanding of budgeting and reserves
2	Note how client prepares budget	Zero based approach – per department – uses SCRIBE system
3	Is actual expenditure against the budget regularly reported to the council?	Every finance and council meeting
4	Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?	Council is very aware of rules regarding budget reporting
5	Review council's reserves and reserves policies and make a note of how many months cover they have and whether this is sufficient for this particular council	Council has robust workings - Reserves working is sufficient to show scope and purpose.

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory – The council has budgets in place and evidence suggests performance against budget has been reviewed on at least one occasion. Reserves are reasonable and no evidence of capital and revenue reserves being mixed.

**(E) Income Controls**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.</b>
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**Internal audit will look for evidence that the precept and grant income is properly and promptly received.** In value this is usually the largest item of income. **Internal audit is more likely to focus on other income particularly where it is unusual or cash-based.** Cash income brings higher risks, in turn requiring greater control by ticket issues, receipt issues, segregation of duties of the cashier and the invoice-raising clerk. **The need for greater control implies a need for internal audit to verify the operation of all checks and balances.**

If the council has let property or holds investments, then the council should have established a system to ensure regular income collection; a diary of expected dates of income etc. **Internal audit will look for evidence of such activity and any necessary progress or invoice chasing.**

If the income is from quoted investments there is a clear risk to be addressed in terms of identifying the investment policy to be followed, controls over who can initiate a change of investment and an awareness of the investment risks being accepted.

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward</b>
1	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Precept and grant received by bacs properly recorded in cashbook and annual return.  Other income agreed to documentary evidence
2	Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax authority's notification?	Yes – agreed to application as seen by IA
3	Are security controls over cash and near-cash adequate and effective?	Minimal cash – banked that week
4	Is VAT correctly applied at the correct rates	Council not registered for VAT
5	Is there income from sale of investments or investment income	No

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory – The income process is carried correctly in accordance with documented procedures.

**(F) Petty Cash Procedure**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.</b>
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**Internal audit will be looking to see that there is an established system in place rather than ad hoc reimbursement.** If the clerk is reimbursed for all small cost expenses or there is a separate cash float, a regular payment must be made to keep up to date. **Internal audit would be looking to see that reimbursement is regular and evidence that on occasions an independent person has physically counted the cash balance and checked to be in agreement with the up-to-date record.** The council should have a system for the regular approval of petty cash expenditure.

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments/Conclusions</b>
1	Is all petty cash spent recorded and supported by VAT invoices/receipts?	
2	Is petty cash expenditure reported to each council meeting?	
3	Is petty cash reimbursement carried out regularly?	
4	Review petty cash records for unusual amounts	
5	Test count the petty cash and agree to accounting records at today's date if not conducted at the year end.	
6	Select a sample of petty cash payments and receipts and agree to supporting documentation, verifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amounts</li> <li>• Authorisations</li> <li>• VAT analysis</li> </ul>	

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Not applicable no petty cash

**(G) Payroll Controls**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.</b>
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**Internal audit will be seeking reassurance that the system is delivering the correct payments for wages and salaries and that PAYE/NIC is correctly deducted from the gross pay and paid to HM Revenue and Customs.** Historically, one of the greatest areas of risk for local councils has been the improper payment of wages and salaries, together with the lack of proper deduction of income tax and national insurance contributions.

There are some simple tests to establish whether a person is employed by a local authority or can be regarded as a contractor. **The clerk is always regarded as an employee – as an ‘office holder’.** **As an employer, the council must operate PAYE/NIC.** If correct deduction for tax or national insurance is not made by the employer, HM Revenue and Customs has the right to seek the lost tax and contributions from the employer as if the payments made were after deduction of the appropriate amounts (i.e. the amount sought is ‘grossed up’). There may also be a liability for interest and penalties that can increase the sum significantly. The clerk, even at the smallest of councils, will need to be able to produce evidence that the correct tax treatment of salary has been arranged with HM Revenue and Customs. HM Revenue and Customs often seek to avoid setting up a PAYE scheme for a single employee whenever possible, so will seek to ‘code out’ any parish council salary through other income, pension scheme or by direct assessment. The council should have an up to date letter from HM Revenue and Customs (addressed to the Council) confirming that arrangements to their satisfaction have been made for the particular employee. Internal audit may verify that evidence each year as part of the annual statement forming part of the annual return.

**Changes to contracts of employment (whether annual salary change, or other) require formal agreement by the council as well as being evidenced by a written statement to the employee.** The council should record evidence of approved changes in employment contracts in employee records. **Internal audit should check that this evidence is in place and agree sums paid to those sums shown as payable.** The purpose of specifically investigating the PAYE/NIC system recognises the risks inherent in these items, either through fraud or error, and the risk of significant management time and penalties in making corrections if errors arise.

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments/Conclusions</b>
1	Do all employees have contracts of employment with clear terms and conditions?	Yes – 2 members of staff.
2	Do salaries paid agree with those approved by the council?	Council approves salary scale annually and this is minuted.  There are no councillor allowances.
3	Are other payments to employees reasonable and approved by the council?	Yes – generally for mileage – forms part of the normal routine of payment authorisations. IA seen evidence of approved expense claim for clerk.
4	Have PAYE/NIC been properly operated by the council as an employer?	Yes this is calculated and paid on a monthly basis.
5	Check a sample of payroll deductions. Verifying calculation of PAYE & NIC	Payroll deductions tested on annual basis for all staff.  Deductions are correct.



6	Check employee existence by physical verification or by reference to documentation (e.g. personnel files, coding notices etc).	All employees are bonafide
7	Check payroll is signed by a responsible official.	Payroll processed by the clerk and approved by council
8	Test check net wages & PAYE per the cash book to the payroll	Nominal ledger shows where applicable 12 monthly payments of wages, pension and NI
9	Review cash book for unusual payments not put through the PAYE/NI system (e.g. casual labour, round sums, private bills etc).	No unusual amounts to report.

# **OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory – salaries and processing of salaries are correct. There are no errors.

**(H) Asset Control**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.</b>
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**The Council is required to maintain an asset and investment register.** In the smallest councils, this may only be a note produced for members and local electors. **Internal audit will be interested in seeing that there is evidence that the continuing existence of owned and managed assets is checked on a regular basis.** In a larger council the register may be hand written, typed or computer produced; the essence is the same in that the system should be verified on a regular basis. This verification **should include confirmation that insurance cover is adequate and sufficient.** If investments are held, the asset register will be a more active record; it should include details of cost, values, and expected income that can be checked against the actual income. Dates and references to minutes of the members' review of the investments against the investment policy might also be included.

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments/Conclusions</b>
1	Does the council maintain a register of all material assets owned or in its care?	Yes – detailed fixed asset register maintained in electronic format.
2	Are the assets and Investments registers up to date?	Yes – Council undertakes this on a rolling basis.  No investments.
3	Do asset insurance valuations agree with those in the asset register?	Yes – the register has an additional column to show insurance value next to the cost value.  Sample testing was able to relate this to the current insurance schedule.
4	Obtain details of additions and select items to test to invoice or other supporting documentation, having regard for VAT element	No change year on year
5	Conduct physical verification of selected assets to make sure that they are in regular use and check to fixed asset register	Reasonable
6	Check title for properties to documents of title and land registry and obtain details of any charges (NB: this may require confirmation from third parties)	Title deeds held in chambers

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory. Council maintains and records assets properly.

**(I) Bank Reconciliation**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.</b>
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In most councils, the bulk of the financial records will be concerned with a current account and a form of deposit account at a bank or building society. A regular feature of the financial system will be the reconciliation of the balances shown on the statements with those calculated in the council's financial records. **It is strongly recommended that on receipt of a bank statement, there should be a reconciliation of the appropriate cash book record. Internal audit will wish to see that this has been done,** but should not undertake the reconciliation unless it requires re-performance. **It may be appropriate for the year end balances and the reconciliation to be checked in detail.**

**The basic cash book record must not be written up from the bank statements. That approach does not provide any form of control.** The cash book record is written up from the council's records: cheque counterfoils and the paying-in books, together with the known direct payments and credits. It is the cash book record that is checked regularly against the bank statements to provide control.

**The bank reconciliation should include a note of the historic cost of current investments held by the council, if any,** so that this can also be monitored to ensure that these funds are performing in the way planned by the council and also so that the council can have, each time this is reviewed, as complete a picture as possible of its liquidity and available funds.

**As part of internal control, a member may be appointed to review the bank reconciliation in detail and to evidence that review by signing the reconciliation form and the bank statements.**

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments/Conclusions</b>
1	Is there a bank reconciliation for each account?	Yes
2	Is the bank reconciliation carried out regularly and in a timely fashion?	Yes – monthly
3	Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?	Cheque numbers are current. No significant aged cheques.
4	Is the reconciliation signed off by a member	Yes – signed off by F&A and full council
5	Test check the year end reconciliation in detail	No errors – March 2017 reconciliation checked by IA
6	Prepare or obtain a schedule of investments showing all movements in the year and agree opening balances.	N/A

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory – bank reconciliations are carried out and reviewed properly.

**(J) Year – End Procedures**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm 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, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.</b>
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It is the duty of the council and the RFO to produce the year-end accounting statements. **Internal audit will be looking to see that the appropriate accounting basis is used, that the figures can be followed through on working papers and adjustments, transfers, contra entries etc. are fully explained and justified.** Internal audit would not be expected to check all figures but will probably verify a small sample and the totals.

Councils accounting on an Income and Expenditure basis will have a system in place for identifying outstanding amounts (receivable and payable) and then for deciding on their materiality for inclusion in the accounting statements. **Internal audit will scrutinise the lists of creditors and other balances to ensure that the system is working adequately and that the RFO has correctly identified transactions in the one year that may in whole or part relate to another.**

<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments/Conclusions</b>
1	Are year-end accounts prepared on the correct accounting basis (Receipts and Payments or Income and Expenditure)?	AR completed correctly and casts correctly. Income and expenditure basis used.
2	Do accounts agree with the cashbook?	Yes – SCRIBE package has full integrated audit trail. NL verified to annual return summary.
3	Is there an audit trail from underlying financial records to the accounts?	Yes – as noted above SCRIBE very robust system in this regard.
4	Where appropriate, have debtors and creditors been properly recorded?	Yes – Boxes 7 – 8 reconciliation prepared and verified. Debtors and creditors appropriate with documentary evidence seen by IA.
5	Has the Annual governance statement been signed off	Yes – will be taken to council in May
6	Has the annual return been completed in full	Yes
7	Has the council got a system in place for reviewing the effectiveness of internal controls	Yes – council reminded to ensure minute referring to approval of section 1 of annual return is detailed enough to show work undertaken by council throughout the year.

**OVERALL CONCLUSION (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

Satisfactory – accounts properly prepared.

**(K) Trust funds (including charitable)**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>To confirm the council has met its responsibilities as a trustee</b>
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<b>Test</b>		<b>Comments/Conclusions</b>
1	Is the council a sole trustee and is it responsible for managing trust fund assets	
2	Note down names of trusts council is a trustee of	
3	As sole trustee has the council properly carried out its duties in respect of financial reporting and or audit.	
4	Carry out any other tasks deemed necessary	

**OVERALL CONCLUSION - (subject to points carried forward in final notes)**

No trusts