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Internal Audit Report for Wickham Bishops Parish Council

4th June 2022

I am pleased to report to Members of the Parish Council that I have completed my internal audit of Wickham Bishops Parish Council's records for 2021 – 2022 and I have been able to complete the Internal Audit report of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2022 as required under the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Members should be aware that my work cannot be relied on to identify the occasional omission or insignificant error, nor to disclose breaches of trust or statute, neglect or fraud which may have taken place and which it is the responsibility of the Members of the Council to guard against.

Neighbourhood plan went to referendum on 6th May with a 91.5% approval.

The Council programme of meetings continued throughout lockdown via Teams, Zoom and YouTube. The Clerk was given delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the Council at minute 20/072. The delegated decisions were reported at council meetings and the scheme of delegation was reviewed at each meeting into the current year. The annual meeting held on 4th May before the end of Covid restrictions.

Certificate of exemption, governance statement and finance statement approved at minutes 21/097 /098 and /099. Internal Audit report noted at 21/116. Auditor appointed at 21F/004.

The Council has approved purchase of Scribe accounting software for adoption in next audit year.

Matters raised at previous audit and resolved.

Minute 21/045 refers to amendments to financial regulations, but website still shows version adopted in 2019. Standing orders and financial regulation are now the current versions.

There is no record of the council noting expenditure against budget, but I note that the spreadsheet keeps a running total of spend by budget code. The Council should receive budget performance at least quarterly. Regular annotated budget reports now being produced.

I note that there was no S137 expenditure in audit year.

Observations and recommendations.

Payments for Zoom subscription are made on the Clerk's personal debit card. Financial regulation 6.20 stated 'Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used under any circumstances.' When this cannot be avoided, the council should consider passing a resolution to suspend financial regulation 6.20 for this specific payment. This will make it clear that it was a conscious decision, not an oversight.

Internal Control	Testing		Comments
Proper bookkeeping	• Is the cashbook maintained and up to date?	Y	RFO uses spreadsheet to record and analyse payments into budget headings and extract VAT for reclaim.
	• Is the cashbook arithmetic correct?	Y	
	• Is the cashbook regularly balanced?	Y	Monthly reconciliations provided to Council.
a) standing orders and financial regulations adopted and applied; and b) payments controls	Has the council formally adopted standing orders and financial regulations?	Y	Revised financial regulations and standing orders adopted at minute 22/033. Both are based on current NALC model regulations.
	Has a Responsible financial officer been appointed with specific duties?	Y	RFO role is defined in the Clerk's contract of employment which is based on the NALC model current at the time of appointment.
	Have items or services above the de minimus amount been competitively purchased?	N/A	Sampled April - May 2021.
	Are payments in the cashbook supported by invoices, authorised and minuted?	Y	
	Has VAT on payments been identified, recorded and reclaimed?	Y	Refund of £1,343.56 claimed for full year.
	Is s137 expenditure separately recorded and within statutory limits?	N/A	No S137 expenditure reported in audit year.
Risk management arrangements	Does a review of the minutes identify any unusual financial activity?	N	Regular reports of expenditure and reserves are received by Full Council.
	Do minutes record the council carrying out an annual risk assessment?	Y	Reviewed and approved at minute 22/014

	Is insurance cover appropriate and adequate?	Y	Premium of £420.93 is reasonable for the assets of the parish and provides standard cover by Zurich.
	Are internal financial controls documented and regularly reviewed?	Y	Parish Council has a financial committee to consider precept and budget. Full Council receives monthly reports on budget, expenditure, and financial management.

Budgetary Controls	Has the council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept?	Y	Updated 22/23 budget considered at minute 21F/005 & 6. agreed at minute 21/186.
	Is actual expenditure against the budget regularly reported to the council?	Y	Spreadsheet summary annotated to highlight variances.
	Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?	N	

Income Controls	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Y	Council has limited sources of income, all of which are paid directly into the bank account.
	Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax authority's notification?	Y	2021-22 precept of £20,276 agrees with PKF published figure. 2022-23 precept £21,545, based on a tax base 1004.4 of and a band D equivalent of £21.45.
	Are security controls over cash and near-cash adequate and effective?	N/A	No cash held.
Petty cash procedures	Is all petty cash spent recorded and supported by VAT invoices/receipts?	N/A	No petty cash held.
	Is petty cash expenditure reported to each council meeting?	N/A	
	Is petty cash reimbursement carried out regularly?	N/A	

Payroll Controls	Do all employees have contracts of employment with clear terms and conditions?	Y	Contract based on NALC model current at the time of appointment. Signed 21 st May 2020.
	Do salaries paid agree with those approved by the council?	Y	External Payroll company employed. Salary follows current NALC/SLCC pay scales.
	Are other payments to employees reasonable and approved by the council?	Y	Reimbursement for travelling, phone and office reported monthly. Office expenses should not be reported as payroll.
	Have PAYE/NIC been properly operated by the council as an employer?	Y	Payroll managed by J&M Payroll Ltd.
Assets controls	Does the council maintain a register of all material assets owned or in its care?	Y	Asset register considered and updated at 21F/005.
	Are the assets and Investments registers up to date?	Y	Reviewed annually by finance committee.
	Do asset insurance valuations agree with those in the asset register?	Y	Same list.

Bank Reconciliation	Is there a bank reconciliation for each account?	Y	Two accounts held: Unity Trust current and deposit accounts.
	Is a bank reconciliation carried out regularly and in a timely fashion?	Y	Monthly
	Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?	N	
	Is the value of investments held summarised on the reconciliation?	Y	

Year-end procedures	Are year-end accounts prepared on the correct accounting basis (Receipts and Payments or Income and Expenditure)?	Y	Cash accounting
	Do accounts agree with the cashbook?	Y	Accounts are the cashbook.
	Is there an audit trail from underlying financial records to the accounts?	Y	All income and expenditure fully traceable
	Where appropriate, have debtors and creditors been properly recorded?	N/A	