

## Internal Audit Report for Wenhaston with Mellis Hamlet Parish Council for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Clerk	Richard Day
RFO (if different)	
Chairperson	Peter Wildish
Precept	£23,000.00
Income	£34,854.29
Expenditure	£26,140.71
General reserves	£17,498.57
Earmarked reserves	£24,500.00
Audit type	<b>Annual</b>
Auditor name	Vicky Waples

### Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources

- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity and corruption
- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts and data

## Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- carry out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being carried out as planned

<b>Section 1 – proper bookkeeping</b>		
The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council’s accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council uses an excel spreadsheet which allows the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis and ensures that the financial transactions of the parish council are recorded and are as accurate as reasonably practicable.  The RFO has ensured that the cashbook is the focus for day-to-day accounting and is aware that the balancing off and reconciliation to the bank statement remains the most important control over the accounting system.  The accounting records were spot checked – they are well maintained, referenced the manner in which the payment was made and identified expenditure and income at any given point.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	
<b>Additional comments:</b> For further transparency and scrutiny, the RFO, in accordance with best practice, has referenced all payments and receipts with a description as to the expenditure and income being incurred along with the relevant powers to ensure the integrity of data being input and processed.		

<b>Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders</b>		
The internal auditor will check the date the Council carried out its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC’S latest model which include legislative changes.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council reviewed its Standing Orders at its meeting of 20 <sup>th</sup> August 2020, a copy of which can be found on the Council's website, which are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018 and which take into account changes in legislation since those produced in 2013.

Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council's Financial Regulations which were reviewed at the meeting of 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2020, a copy of which can be found on the Council's website and are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2019.
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Council's current Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? <sup>1</sup>	Yes	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), the Council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority.
<b>Additional comments:</b> <i>Council has shown good practice by ensuring that its arrangements with advisory groups including Scroll Custodians were adequate and required no changes to the existing persons carrying out those roles.</i>		

<b>Section 3 – Payment controls</b> The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	At each full Council Meeting a list of all payments is presented to the meeting with formal approval of such expenditure being shown in the minutes and evidence of such paperwork retained within the files submitted for internal audit. A summary of items approved for payment at the meeting is subsequently signed by the Chair of the meeting.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	Internet banking is not operated by the Parish Council.

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

Is VAT correctly identified, recorded and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is clearly identified in the cash book and claimed in accordance with the guidelines for local authorities and similar bodies. The year-end position of £1,165.81 is verified in the cashbook. The claim for the period ending 31 March 2020 in the sum of £2,370.13 was settled during the year under review.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? <sup>2</sup>	No	The Council is not using the General Power of Competence.
Are payments under s.137 <sup>3</sup> separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	The cashbook allows for the details of payments made under S137 to be clearly referenced in the cashbook and the RFO ensures that payments made are in accordance with the budget set with reference to the statutory limit for such expenditure. For the year under review donations in the sum of £4,708 were awarded of which £1,508 was correctly allocated as s137 payments.  <i>Comment: Council made a donation to the Village Hall for repairs and maintenance in the sum of £3,200. It should be noted that expenditure such as this should be allocated against LGA 19720 s133 – power to contribute towards the expenses of providing buildings fir public meetings and assemblies.</i>
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	Not applicable	The Council has no such loans.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

**Section 4 – Risk management**

<sup>2</sup> Localism Act

<sup>3</sup> Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the 1972 Act”) enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £8.12 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i>	Yes	The risk assessment documentation submitted for Internal Audit provides details of the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks.
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	Yes	Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money. There is evidence that the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences.
<i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee <b>and</b> has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i>	Yes	Council has insurance in place under a Parish Protect Policy which shows core cover for the following: Public liability: £10m; Public/Products Liability: £10m; Business Interruption: £10k, and Fidelity Guarantee of £50k. The level of Fidelity Guarantee meets the recommended guidelines which provides that the cover should be at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants. The Pavilion insurance is in place under a separate Village Hall Policy.  At the meeting of 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2020, the RFO, having carried out a review of the current insurance schedule, advised the Council that its arrangements for insurance in respect of all insurable risks was adequate and that no changes were recommended.
<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed<sup>4</sup></i>	Yes	In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council approved documentation that would allow it to review the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The circulated documentation was approved at the meeting of 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021 with agreement that a review of the control checks would be carried out by a member of the Council. The findings of this

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

		review were received and approved at the meeting of 17 <sup>th</sup> February 2021 and signed off by the Chair of the Meeting.
<i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit has been carried out during the year<sup>5</sup></i>	Yes	<p>The effectiveness of internal audit was discussed by full Council during the discussion of the matters relating to the internal audit report at the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020.</p> <p><i>Comment: by reviewing the terms of reference and effectiveness for internal audit the council has followed guidance and demonstrates that it recognises that the function of internal audit is to test and report to the authority on whether its system of internal control is adequate.</i></p>
<p><b>Additional comments:</b>                  Council has understood the requirement to have in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money and has appointed a Councillor to review and examine the control checks identified by the Council as being part of the measures undertaken to safeguard public finances and ensure the management of Council's finances and assets are in accordance with Proper Practices. For clarity, Council has ensured that such a review, along with its findings, are reported back to the Council and evidenced via a minute reference.</p>		

<p><b>Section 5 – Budgetary controls</b>                  The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed</p>		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The budget for the year 2020–2021 in the sum of £23,000 was set at a full Council Meeting on 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2019.
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The precept was set at £23,000 at the same meeting.
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	In accordance with Council's Standing Orders, quarterly reports are submitted to Council which contain variances against budget which, when considered by Council, provide evidence of comparisons between budgeted and actual

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

		income and expenditure and form the basis of approval for virements in accordance with Council's own Financial Regulations.
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked<sup>6</sup></i>	Yes	Council's final accounts show general reserves in the sum of £17,498.57 with earmarked reserves in the sum of £24500. Council should be aware of the guidance as issued by Proper Practices which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure and should ensure that the level of general reserves adopted is in accordance with its General Reserve Policy. There is no upper limit for Earmarked Reserves, but they should be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level subject to regular review and justification (at least annually).
<p><b>Additional comments:</b>  <i>Budget: Council shows good practice by following the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process to be followed for the year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>decide the form and level of detail of the budget;</i></li> <li>• <i>review the current year budget and spending;</i></li> <li>• <i>determine the cost of spending plans;</i></li> <li>• <i>assess levels of income;</i></li> <li>• <i>bring together spending and income plans;</i></li> <li>• <i>provide for contingencies and consider the need for reserves;</i></li> <li>• <i>approve the budget;</i></li> <li>• <i>confirm the precept or rates and special levies; and</i></li> <li>• <i>review progress against the budget regularly throughout the year.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation: Reserves: Council should note guidance as issued under the Practitioners Guide which states that an authority needs to have regards to the need to put in place a General Reserve Policy with explanations as to the high level of general reserves being held and to have evidenced that it has reviewed the level and purpose of all Earmarked Reserves.</b></p>		

**Section 6 – income controls**

<sup>6</sup> In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?</i>	Yes	Income is recorded in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. A number of items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statement and found to be in order.
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	Income received is reported to full Council within the monthly financial reports and itemised within the minutes. The RFO ensures that monies received are promptly banked.
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	The council received precept of £23,000 during the year under review in April and September 2019. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved at the meeting of 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2020, served on the Charging Authority to receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?<sup>7</sup></i>	Yes	For the year under review Council did received CIL Receipts in the sum of £3,817.16 in September 2020. In accordance with the 2010 Regulations, the Council having a retained balance of CIL funds has ensured that retained balances are transferred into the Earmarked Reserves specifically allocated. A copy of the annual report for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021 showing retained balance of £617.16 was enclosed with the files submitted for Internal Audit.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	No	
<p><b>Additional comments:</b>  <i>CIL Reporting: Council is aware of the requirement to ensure that it complies with its duty to produce an annual CIL report for each financial year and that such a report is uploaded onto its website by 31st December of that year.</i></p>		

## Section 7 – petty cash

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

The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures and verification processes and that these are up to date.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 8 – Payroll controls</b>		
The Internal Auditor will check salaries are approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. If the Clerk was recruited after 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2011, evidence will be required to show compliance with the new requirements for the statement of employment, Induction, probation periods and training requirements. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	Council had 2 employees on its payroll at the period end of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means. All salary payments are authorised by full council. The minimum wage is not applied to any employees.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	No	
<i>Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?</i>	Yes	The payroll function is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Custom guidelines. There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	The payroll function for the year under review was carried out by Suffolk Association of Local Councils and is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines. Cross-checks were completed on a

		sample of payments covering salary and PAYE and were found to be in order. Deductions paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made in accordance with timescales as set out in the regulations.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?<sup>8</sup></i>	Yes	Council's re-declaration of compliance with the Pension Regulator dated 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2019 was submitted within the files for internal audit.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>		Council has noted the changes in the Practitioners Guide for 2020 on the treatment of what can be included as employment expenses within the Annual Governance and Accountability Guide 2020 - section 2.16 refers - and submitted within Box 4 of the AGAR.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<p><b>Section 9 – Asset control</b>                  The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.</p>		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?<sup>9</sup></i>	Yes	The Asset Register was reviewed during the Internal Audit Visit for year-end and reflects those items listed under insurance and within the Parish Council's remit for maintenance and ownership. It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2021) was £788,825 which shows no movement in the register since the value declared for the year ending 31.03.2020.
<i>Are the value of the assets included? (note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	

<sup>8</sup> The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

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

<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	No	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The asset register is still to be signed off by the council although it is stated as £7888,825 on the AGAR to be presented to full Council.
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has insurance under a Parish Protect Policy for assets to the value of £150,000 which is a sufficient banding for assets recently added to the register.
<p><b>Additional comments:</b>                  Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2020 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied and if/where amended, it will need to publish and provide explanations in changes in value to any previously recorded assets.</p>		

<p><b>Section 10 – bank reconciliation</b>                  The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.</p>		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted at each meeting.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end (31 <sup>st</sup> March, the balance across the councils accounts stood at £29,575.20 as recorded in the Draft Statement of Accounts and on the Year-end Bank Reconciliation.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Financial reports are submitted to the Council at each meeting. The quarterly financial reports submitted include not only the current bank reconciliation but also a summary of receipts and payments for the year to date along with variances from budgets. The Council is aware that in accordance with proper practices, the bank reconciliation is a key tool for management as it assists with the regular monitoring of cash flows and therefore aids decision-making. In accordance with Proper Practises, Council has implemented a system whereby a Councillor carries out a review of the Council's banking internal

		control by formally signing off the bank reconciliation. This is not only good practice but also is a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives.
--	--	---

<b>Section 11 – year end procedures</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounts are produced on a receipts and expenditure basis and all found to be in order although corrections will need to be made to the AGAR.
<i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i>	Yes	The end of year accounts and supporting documentation were well presented for the internal auditor review.
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR<sup>10</sup> documents been completed?</i>	Yes	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it has completed Part 3 of the AGAR. Section 2 - Accounting Statements of the AGAR was completed and is unsigned at the time of Internal Audit.
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was not able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review.
<i>During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?</i>	Yes	The Internal Auditor is able to confirm that the parish council can demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the 2015 Regulations. Dates set were from 18 <sup>th</sup> June until 27 <sup>th</sup> July 2020.
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?<sup>11</sup></i>	Yes	The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million for the year ending 31 March 2020 and published the following on a public website: The Annual Internal Audit Report Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR

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

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

		Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR Section 3 – External Audit Report and Certificate. Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 12 – internal audit</b> The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the previous internal audit report been considered by the Council?</i>	Yes	The Internal Audit Report was considered by full Council at its meeting of 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2020, with agreement that suggestions for development will be considered at a later meeting. At the meeting of 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2020 the suggested actions following receipt of the internal audit report were approved for implementation.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	The implementation of matters to address the recommendations arising from the Internal Audit Report for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020 were as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adoption of Model Financial Regulations 2019 – completed</li> <li>2. Review of staging date and submission or re-declaration by the due date.</li> </ol>
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	The appointment of SALC as the Council's internal auditor was confirmed at the meeting of 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2020.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 13 – external audit for the period under review</b>		
The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be taken into account.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the previous external audit report been considered by the Council?</i> <sup>12</sup>	Yes	At the meeting of full Council of 21 <sup>st</sup> October 2020, Council considered the report from the External Auditor for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i>	Yes	There were no matters arising which had come to the attention of the external auditor.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 14 – additional information</b>		
The internal auditor will look for some additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> <sup>13</sup> <i>(note to auditor- emergency Regulations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic)</i> <sup>f14</sup>	No	Council held an Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in August 2020.  <i>Comment: In recognition of this being unprecedented times and following the Government’s guidelines for staying at home and working remotely, the Government included within s.78 in the Coronavirus Act 2020 (made 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020) the ability for the Secretary of State the power to make Regulations to make provisions for the holding of meetings. The 2020 Regulations set out</i>

<sup>12</sup> Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e.. All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.*

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

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

		<i>those provisions. This also repealed for the year under review, the requirement to hold an Annual Council Meeting and also allowed the delaying of annual meetings. Council has followed these regulations and also held its meetings via the Zoom Videoconferencing platform.</i>
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? <sup>15</sup></i>	Yes	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes. Minutes on the website demonstrate that the minutes have been so signed.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	Evidence was seen on the Parish Council's website of the link on the website of East Suffolk District Council for the Register of Interests for all current Parish Councillors.  Council is aware that whilst the monitoring officer of the District Council must arrange for the parish council's register of members' interests to be available for inspection in the district and must be published on the district council's website, where the parish council has its own website, its register of members' interests must also be published on that website or a link providing access to the District's website. (Openness and transparency on personal interests - A guide for councillors – August 2012)
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	Not applicable	
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Partly met	Councils with income over £25,000 but under £200,00 will be expected (but are not legally required to do so) to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000).

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

<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?<sup>16</sup></i>	Yes	The council is correctly registered with the IO as a Data Controller in accordance with legislation. Reference: ZA437200 Expires 01/07/2021. However, Council does not have a Model Publication Scheme detailing the type of information the Council holds and how it will make it available to the public.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	The Council has taken steps to ensure compliancy.  <i>Comment: Council has shown good practice by ensuring that an impact assessment audit will be carried out on the occasion of the adoption of a new policy which potential GDPR implications.</i>
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?<sup>17</sup></i>	Yes	Website accessibility statements are available to view for both the Parish Council and the Village pages. Details on the technical information for the website are given along with the methods used for testing the website; steps being taken to improve accessibility and how the site is being improved to ensure that content meets the WCAG 2.1 Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Yes	Arrangements with advisory groups and Scroll Custodians were reviewed at the meeting of 11 <sup>th</sup> May 2020 with no amendments deemed to be necessary to existing arrangements.
<p><b>Additional comments:</b>  <i>Transparency Code 2015 - To ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000), the following information should be published in accordance with the required timescales:</i>  <i>quarterly:</i>  <i>Individual items of expenditure that exceed £500 (currently published on an annual basis);</i>  <i>Government Procurement Card transactions;</i>  <i>Invitations to tender for contracts over £5,000;</i>  <i>Details of contracts that exceed £5,000;</i>  <i>annually:</i>  <i>Details of all land and building assets;</i></p>		

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

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

*Grants to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations.*

**Recommendation: Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, public authorities must provide access to information held which must be published proactively. The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme and to publish information covered by the scheme. Council should seek to review the information it holds and collate it into a publication scheme that is available on its website. Templates are available from the SALC website.**

Signed: *Victoria S Waples*

Date of Internal Audit Visit: 21.04.2021 Date of Internal Audit Report: 26 April 2021

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils