

HEELIS&LODGE

Local Council Services • Internal Audit

Internal Audit Report for Ardleigh Parish Council – 2023/2024

The following Internal Audit was carried out on the adequacy of systems of control in accordance with the requirements of the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015 and the guidance and instruction in the Practitioners Guide 2023. The following recommendations/comments have been made:

Income: £107,981.94 Expenditure: £114,694.23 Reserves: £128,910.78

AGAR Completion:

Section One: **No**

Section Two: **No – draft figures**

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/2024: **Yes**

Certificate of Exemption: **No**

Proper book-keeping Cash Book, regular reconciliation of books and bank statements. Supporting vouchers, invoices and receipts

All were found to be in order. LGAs137 and VAT payments are tracked and identified within the year end accounts. The cashbook is referenced providing a clear audit trail. Supporting paperwork is in place and well referenced.

Financial regulations Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
Tenders
Appropriate payment controls including acting within the legal framework with reference to council minutes
Identifying VAT payments and reclamation
Cheque books, paying in books and other relevant documents

Standing Orders in place: **Yes**

Reviewed: **15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.79.4) and 11/3/2024 (Ref: 24.044)**

Financial Regulations in place: **Yes**

Reviewed: **15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.79.4) and 13/2/2024 (Ref: 23.030.3)**

VAT reclaimed during the year: **Yes** Registered: **No**

General Power of Competence: **No**

There were no tenders during the year that exceeded the £30,000 Public Contract Regulations threshold.

The following documents were reviewed during the year of audit:

11/3/2024 (Ref: 24.044):

- *Data Protection Policy*
- *Freedom of Information Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*

13/2/2024 (Ref: 23.030)

- *Civility and Respect Pledge*
- *Officer and Member Relations Policy*

Risk Assessment

Appropriate procedures in place for the activities of the council
Compliance with Data Protection regulations

Risk Assessment document in place: Yes
Data Protection registration: Yes (Ref: Z2821463)

Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulations have changed and the new Regulations came into force on 25 May 2018. It is likely that this will affect the way in which the Council handles its data. Due to the financial risk associated with the General Data Protection Regulations, the Council have included this in their Risk Assessment.

Privacy Policy published: *Yes*

Insurance was in place for the year of audit. The Risk Register was reviewed at meetings held on 15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.79.1) and 11/3/2024 (Ref: 24.044). The Risk Assessment was reviewed on 15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.79.1) and Internal Controls were reviewed on 15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.79.3) and 13/2/2024 (Ref: 23.030.3).

The Council have effective internal financial controls in place. The Clerk provides financial reports to council meetings. Councillors are provided with information to enable them to make informed decisions.

The Council reviewed and confirmed bank signatories at a meeting held on 11/9/2023 (Ref: 23.129.3).

Fidelity Cover: £250,000

The level of Fidelity cover is within the recommended guidelines of year end balances plus 50% of the precept.

Transparency

Under the **Transparency code for smaller authorities**, smaller councils with income/expenditure under £25,000 should publish on their website from 1 April 2015:

Smaller Council: **No**

Website: <https://ardleigh.website/>

The Council is not subject to the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller Councils. The Transparency Code for Councils with a turnover exceeding £200,000 is not covered as part of the Internal Audit.

Under **The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 15** councils must publish on their website:

External audit report

2023 Annual Return, Section One Published – Yes

2023 Annual Return, Section Two Published – Yes

2023 Annual Return, Section Three Published – Yes

Under **The Accounts & Audit Regulations** councils must publish on their website:

Notice of period for the exercise of public rights

Published – Yes – as recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.80.4).

Period of Exercise of Public Rights

Start Date: **5/6/2023**

End Date: **14/7/2023**

Under the requirements of the **Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 13(2b)** council are required to display AGARs for the five years 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 on their website.

The Council have met the publication requirements.

Budgetary controls supporting documents

Verifying the budgetary process with reference to council minutes and

Precept: £73,170 (2023-2024)

Date: 23/1/2023 (Ref: 23.021)

Precept: £81,077 (2024-2025)

Date: 15/1/2024 (Ref: 24.011.4)

Effective budgetary procedures are in place. The precept was agreed in full council and the precept decision and amount has been clearly minuted. The Clerk ensures the council are aware of responsibilities, commitments, forward planning and the need for adequate reserves. Budget papers are prepared to ensure councillors have sufficient information to make informed decisions. Budgets are monitored during the year.

Income controls	<p>Precept and other income, including credit control mechanisms</p> <p><i>All were found to be in order. Income controls were checked and a sample of income received and banked cross referenced with the Cash Book and bank statements.</i></p>									
Petty Cash	<p>Associated books and established system in place</p> <p><i>A satisfactory expenses system is in place with supporting paperwork. No Petty Cash held.</i></p>									
Payroll controls	<p>PAYE and NIC in place where necessary. Compliance with Inland Revenue procedures Records relating to contracts of employment</p> <p>PAYE System in place: Yes Employer’s Reference: 245/KA781 P60s issued: Yes</p> <p><i>The Council continue to operate RTI in accordance with HMRC regulations. Payroll is outsourced. Supporting paperwork is in place and P60s have been produced as part of the year end process. Eligible employees have joined the nominated pension scheme.</i></p> <p><i>It is noted that the Council undertook a review of salaries at a meeting held on 9/10/2023 (Ref: 23.144.3).</i></p>									
Asset control	<p>Inspection of asset register and checks on existence of assets Cross checking on insurance cover</p> <p><i>A separate asset register is in place with a review being undertaken at a meeting held on 11/3/2024 (Ref: 24.044). Values are recorded at cost value/insurance value. The total value of assets are recorded at £191,064. The figure in the asset register corresponds with the figure in Section 2, Box 9 of the AGAR.</i></p>									
Bank Reconciliation	<p>Regularly completed and cash books reconcile with bank statements</p> <p><i>All were in order. Bank Reconciliations are carried out regularly. The bank statements reconciled with the end of year accounts and bank reconciliations for all accounts.</i></p> <p><i>Bank Balances at 31 March were confirmed as:</i></p> <table><tr><td><i>Barclays Current</i></td><td><i>xxxx3423</i></td><td><i>£2,142.18</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Barclays BS</i></td><td><i>xxxx3474</i></td><td><i>£54,871.98</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Barclays GR</i></td><td><i>xxxx7650</i></td><td><i>£71,896.62</i></td></tr></table>	<i>Barclays Current</i>	<i>xxxx3423</i>	<i>£2,142.18</i>	<i>Barclays BS</i>	<i>xxxx3474</i>	<i>£54,871.98</i>	<i>Barclays GR</i>	<i>xxxx7650</i>	<i>£71,896.62</i>
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Reserves

General Reserves are reasonable for the activities of the Council
Earmarked Reserves are identified

The Council have adequate general reserves of £50,310.78 and have identified earmarked reserves of £78,600 in their year end accounts.

Year-end procedures

Appropriate accounting procedures are used and can be followed through from working papers to final documents
Verifying sample payments and income
Checking creditors and debtors where appropriate.

End of year accounts are prepared on a Receipts & Payments basis.

Sole Trustee

The Council has met its responsibilities as a trustee

The Council is a Trustee of the Ardleigh Village Hall Charity (Reg: 301234). The last annual submission of the accounts was 26/1/2024 for the 2022-2023 accounts. Income £27,216 and Expenditure £31,218.

The Council is also a Trustee of the Ardleigh Recreation Ground Charity (Reg: 801290). The last annual submission of the accounts was 26/3/2024 for the 2022-2023 accounts. Income £1,899 and Expenditure £2,000.

Internal Audit Procedures

The 2023 Internal Audit report was considered by the Council at a meeting held on 15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.80.1).

Heelis & Lodge were appointed as Internal Auditor at a meeting held on 15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.80.5).

External Audit

The Council formally approved the 2023 AGAR at a meeting of the full Council held on 15/5/2023 (Ref: 23.080).

The External Auditor's report was considered at a meeting held on 11/9/2023 (Ref: 23.129.4).

The following matters were brought to the attention of the Council:

Section 1, Assertion 5 has been incorrectly completed, it has been noted that a risk assessment review took place in May 2023 however the authority failed to complete this in the 2022/23 financial year thus the response should have been 'No'. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor's response to Internal Control Objective C.

No further action required.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

- The Annual Parish Council meeting was held on 15/5/2023. The first item of business was the Election of Chairman, in accordance with Standing Orders.
- There are no additional comments/recommendations to make in relation to this audit.
- I would like to record my appreciation to the Clerk to the Council for their assistance during the course of the audit work and quality of documentation provided for the audit.



Heather Heelis
Heelis & Lodge
25 May 2024