

Internal Audit Report for Woodbridge Town Council for Financial Year 2022-23

Clerk	Greg Diaper	
RFO (if different)		
Chairperson	Cllr Patrick Gillard	
	Annual Budget	Actual To Date 31/10/22
Precept	£ 385,542	£ 385,542
Income	£ 210,723	£ 481,922
Expenditure	£ 596,264	£ 265,002
General reserves	£ 294,335 at 31/10/2022	
Earmarked reserves	£ 412,922 at 31/10/2022	
Audit type	Interim Q2	
Auditor name	Colin Poole	

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

Section 1 – proper bookkeeping		
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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council uses the Omega accounting package which produces reports on an Income and Expenditure basis. Council follows Proper Practices in ensuring that its accounting procedure gives a more accurate presentation of an authority’s true financial position by focusing on the balance of economic benefits that it has under its control, rather than just its bank balance.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	Cash books are reconciled on a monthly basis and the Town Council is registered for VAT, both sales and purchase ledgers are implemented via the Omega Accounting system. Reports including bank reconciliation goes to council meetings.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	A number of transactions were tested and found to be correct.
Additional comments:		

Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders		
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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	At the meeting of 17/05/2022, Council reviewed its existing Standing Orders adopting the document recommended by the Standing Orders Working Party (min 15). A copy was found on the council’s website. https://www.woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk/about-us/standing-orders/
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Financial Regulations (FR), were reviewed by the Town Council at the same meeting, a copy of which can be found on the Council’s website
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? ¹	Yes	Minute 388 of the meeting of the Full Council held 5/10/2021 appointed the Clerk, Mr G Diaper as RFO.
Additional comments:		

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

Section 3 – Payment controls		
<p>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.</p>		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	A random sample of recent transactions was selected at this audit and at previous interim audits, following the paper trail from the minutes, purchase order through invoice, bank payment and cash book. There is a very well-evidenced support trail for all payments.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	Accounts for Payment list including the HSBC.net are checked by an authorised member of the Finance and Staffing Committee prior to being submitted for approval at each Town Council Meeting. The process of tracking payments made via HSBC.net provides a very clear audit trail. The two-step payment authorisation system provides a proportionate segregation of duties. These procedures for approval of electronic payments were reviewed at the full council meeting held 22/11/22 (minute 492).
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded and claimed within time limits?	Yes	Council's VAT Registration Number is 268 4119 85. VAT return for Q1 was submitted 12/07/22 for £7,160.74. The refund was received in the Council's bank 18/07/22 VAT return for Q2 was submitted 25/10/22 for £12,068.46.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	Yes	Minute 21 of the Annual Meeting held 14-05-2019 shows the Council resolving to adopt the GPoC.

² Localism Act

Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	N/A	
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	
Additional comments:		

Section 4 – Risk management		
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 Council maintains a comprehensive file of risk assessments and has a process for regular checking that material risks are being assessed and mitigated.
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	Yes	At the meeting held 17/05/22 the council reviewed the management of risks (31) in accordance with good practice.
<i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i>	Yes	The Council's Insurance document was seen, insurances expiring 31-10-2023. Public liability cover is £15million Hirer's Liability cover is £2million Employer's liability cover is £10million Fidelity Guarantee cover is £1million Buildings insurances are in place for 12 premises as noted on the documents seen. The Council noted its insurance arrangements at the meeting held 17/05/2022.

³ 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 renewal of the insurances were noted by the Full Council on 18/10/22 (minute 412)
<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i>	Yes	Woodbridge Town Council reviewed internal controls at their meeting held 22/11/22 (minute 492), including setting rules for approval of electronic payments.
<i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit has been carried out during the year⁵</i>	Yes	This was carried out on 17/05/22 (minute 33)
Additional comments:		

Section 5 – Budgetary controls		
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		
Evidence	Internal auditor commentary	
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The 2022/23 budget was approved by Full Council on 18 th January 2022 (minute 671)
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The 2022/23 precept was approved by Full Council on 18 th January 2022 (minute 671) and demonstrated best practice in that the minute included the figure approved, £385,542, the percentage increase (8%) the implications for Band D, an increase of 17p a week. This is a good model to follow in future years.
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	Within the financial reporting structure
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i>	Yes	At 31st March 2022 Council had General Reserves of £150,442 and Earmarked Reserves of £339,894.48.
Additional comments:		

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

⁵ Governance and Accountability Guide

⁶ 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

Section 6 – income controls		
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	Using the information provided, a sample of income receipts were cross checked against cash book, bank statement and invoices. No inconsistencies were found.
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	Within the financial statements.
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	The council served a demand on East Suffolk Council dated 19/01/2022 for the sum of £385,542. The council received the 1 st instalment of its precept in the sum of £192,771.00 on 29/04/2022 as reported at the meeting of 17/05/2022 (min 11). The Council received the 2 nd instalment on 30/9/22, as reported at the meeting held 18/10/22 (min 405)
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i>	Yes	Yes – a clear record is maintained and regularly reported to Council, ahead of submitting a report to ESDC.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	CIL Reserves as at 31-10-2022 = £110,284.28
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	2018/19 = £0
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	2019/20 = £26,650.64
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	2020/21 = £35,632.51
		2021/22 = £0
		2022/23 = £48,001.13
Additional comments:		

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Section 7 – petty cash		
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>	Yes	A balance of £129.28 as at 31/10/2022 was advised by the Financial Assistant on the council website. https://www.woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Town-Council/Agendas--Minutes/Meeting-Documentation/Town-Council/2022-2023/22.11.22/Accounts-for-Town-Council-Meeting-22.11.2022-Agenda-Item-9-Finance-Documents.pdf
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	<i>Not Tested</i>	
Additional comments: It has not been possible to verify the petty cash held in the offices matches Cash Book 4 as the audit is carried out remotely in accordance with the council's instructions.		

Section 8 – Payroll controls		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	As at 31/10/2022, 6 members of staff are on the payroll. The council agreed recommendations on staff pay at the meeting held 19/04/2022 (min 940)
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	Yes	
<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 Council has a staffing committee to review rates of pay. Full Council noted the JNC agreed the pay award for 2021/22 at the meeting held 19/04/22 (min 924).
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	'Moneysoft' payroll software is used which ensures that the Council operates within the RTI system and submits full payment monthly submissions. In accordance with Proper Practices, PAYE taxes and employee and employer National Insurance contributions (NIC) are calculated and recorded for every employee. Deductions are paid to HM Revenue and Customs and Suffolk County Council on or before the dates prescribed.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁸</i>	Yes	The council noted the pension contribution rates for 2022/23 at their meeting held 19/04/22 (min 924)
<i>Are there any other payments (eg: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	
Additional comments: A sample of payroll was matched to the accounts and found to be in order		

⁸ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

Section 9 – Asset control		
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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?⁹</i>	Yes	The asset register value at 31/03/22 is £470,402 https://www.woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk/assets/Town-Council/Finance/Asset-Register/Asset-Register-for-310322.pdf
<i>Are the value of the assets included? (note: value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	Not Tested	
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	
Additional comments:		

⁹ Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – March 2019

Section 10 – bank reconciliation	
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.	
Evidence	Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Reported to every regular full council meeting
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Bank balances stated in the cash book as at 31/10/2022 agree with the bank statements seen on the council website: HSBC Current Account 3658: £22,362.05 = Cash Book 1 HSBC Money Manager 8725: £250,053.15 = Cash Book 2 Suffolk Building Society as at 01/11/2022: £457,842.78 = Cash Book 3 Petty Cash reported: £129.28 = Cash Book 4 Total = £730,387.26
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Very full reports are provided to each regular full council meeting and on the website.

Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounts are produced on an income and expenditure basis.
<i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i>	Yes	
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR¹⁰ documents been completed?</i>	Yes	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5million it has completed Part 3 and Section 1 Accounting Statements of the AGAR. The Full council discussed and approved the AGAR at the meeting held 17/05/22 (minutes 35-36)
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	Not applicable	As the Town Council has gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it will not be 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 was able to find the arrangements for the exercise of public rights for the year ending 31st March 2022 on the council website and can confirm that the dates set for the year ending 31st March 2022 were from 13th June until 22 July 2022.
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i>	Yes	The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 and published the following on a public website: Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the AGAR Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
Additional comments:		

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Section 12 – internal audit		
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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the previous internal audit report been considered by the Council?</i>	Yes	The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31 st March 2022 was considered and accepted by full Council at its meeting held 17/05/2022 (min 32).
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	Yes (min 32)
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	The re-appointment of SALC as the Council's internal auditor for the year 2022-2023 was confirmed at the meeting of 17/05/2022 (min 34)
Additional comments: <i>The council agreed to reduce the number of internal audit visits from three to two per year at the meeting held 28/06/2022 (min 125). This revised regime is appropriate and proportionate as the council has been demonstrating good governance procedures and transparency.</i>		

Section 13 – external audit for the period under review		
The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be taken into account.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the previous external audit report been considered by the Council?¹²</i>	Yes	The council noted the receipt of the external audit report at the meeting held 28/09/22 (min 335)
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i>	Yes	An explanatory note in regard to the management of charitable funds was drawn up, to the satisfaction of the External Auditor.
Additional comments:		

¹² Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (ie. 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.*

Section 14 – additional information		
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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹³	Yes	Council held its Annual Meeting of the Parish Council during the year under review on 17/05/22. The first item on the agenda was the election of the Town Mayor.
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹⁴	Yes	The minutes are very organised and accessible on the website.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	There is a link on the website to the register held on the District website. The registers follow the format and classification of interests according to the Suffolk Code of Conduct, which has been replaced in most councils by the Local Government Association Model.
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	Yes	The Council is trustee of Elmhurst Park and Kingston Field, charity number 271063 and 304841. It manages any charitable funds within the council's accounts.
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Yes	The Council publishes reports on expenditure, this being up to 30 th September 2022 at the time of the audit, now found within the financial documents sent to Full Council.
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?</i> ¹⁵	Yes	Registration No. Z5069580 to 15/10/23, certificate provided.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?</i> ¹⁶	Yes	Link to the Suffolk Cloud statement

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

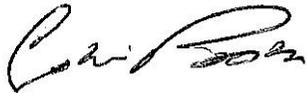
¹⁴ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972 and the Localism Act 2011

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Daily back up to a cloud-based service
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Yes	The Annual meeting reviews membership, terms of reference and the necessity for new committees etc
Additional comments: Many thanks to the Clerk and Financial Assistant for their usual helpfulness		

Signed:



Date of Internal Audit Visit: 01/12/2022 Date of Internal Audit Report: 05/12/22

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils