

Littlehampton Town Council

Internal Audit

Year Ended 31st March 2017



Prepared by: Mulberry & Co
Date of Interim Visit: 11th November 2016
Date of Final Visit: 25th 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 covered the entire year to date. Amongst others, the following areas were covered in my testing:-

- 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 RBS package.

It is my conclusion that the council has robust policies and procedures in place that are fit for purpose and it has provided evidence to show it is following its own financial regulations and standing orders. In addition to this, the council has risk management strategies in place and policies that enable it to achieve its principle objectives and where there is a financial risk this is appropriately insured for.

Councillors are informed individuals and are provided opportunities for training and every effort is made by the council to ensure new members are given training and support.

The council staff are trained and demonstrate a good working knowledge of the council and actively seek to make continuous improvements for the betterment of the council.

I conclude that at the interim stage there are no significant matters that require attention and whilst my report does recommend a couple of improvements these are only to improve upon an already well ordered system.

Final Visit

I completed the following work at the final audit.

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

The accounts have been correctly prepared on the income and expenditure basis using the RBS accounting package. The annual return contained the correct comparative figures and opening balances and cast correctly. The accounting entries were supported by underlying documentation and workings.

I am of the opinion that the annual accounts and annual return are ready to be signed off by council and the external auditor. Accordingly, I have signed off the annual return.

A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

The council continues to use RBS an industry specific accounting package. I have tested the brought forward balances against the prior year annual return and can confirm these have been brought forward correctly.

During the period since the last review the council has worked closely with RBS staff to ensure the accounts nominal codes have been correctly mapped within the system to enable it to be used to its full potential in terms of management reporting. I am especially pleased to see the reports from RBS now cast and cross cast and that the detailed workings for the annual return will ultimately agree to the summary report. This will save the council a

considerable amount of time at the year end when preparing the year end information for final internal and external audit.

We discussed the merits of producing full SORP accounts such as had been undertaken in prior years and whilst I am in no doubt such accounts are very informative regarding the financial position at the year end, this approach is not required by law for a council of this size and the rigid formal financial approach does not make for easy reading to the non-financially aware readers. Should council decide on an alternative reporting format this will not have any ramifications for internal or external audit. Council is reminded that the information required by the external auditors is very limited and they do not require or indeed request full SORP accounts.

The RBS system is used daily to report and record the financial transactions of the council, it is used to make bookings for hires, allotments, and fixed asset register recording. A review of the cashbook shows that all data fields are being entered, the hard copy reports are easy to read and logically filed. I therefore make no recommendation to change in this system.

The council also uses Sage 50 payroll, this is automatically updated for changes in legislation and the primary user has been given appropriate training.

The deputy clerk/RFO is responsible for ensuring staff are trained and this is reviewed via annual the appraisal system.

Final Audit

I checked the draft accounts against the audited 2015-16 accounts. I noted that the Council had made a £6K reallocation between staff costs and non-staff costs in comparative 2015-16 figures. I advised that the accounts should be adjusted back to ensure agreement with the signed accounts. I also checked that the accounts cast and that the financial statements could be agreed back to the Council's finance system. I have confirmed that the accounts are produced on an income and expenditure basis, using standard reporting within RBS. No errors were identified.

B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, STANDING ORDERS & POLICIES

The NALC model financial regulations were taken to council in March 2016, and duly approved, following minor changes to contract terms.

The NALC model Standing Orders were taken to council March 2016 and duly approved following a minor change.

The NALC model Members Code of Conduct was approved in October 2014. No amendments or changes have been made since that date; however, the governance committee will be reviewing in February 2017.

The council has an open-door policy and an ethos to providing training and support to members throughout their term as councillor's. The council has a training budget in place and all councillors are given a member's handbook that contains polices and regulations.

Council is given authority to spend via the annual budget process, payments are made so long as there is available budget. If insufficient funds are available an urgent action report is drawn up for council to approve the unbudgeted spending. I have note evidence of this process.

It is clear council has good robust systems, policies and regulations in place and takes seriously its responsibility in this regard.

Final audit

I confirmed that the Council reviewed financial regulations and standing orders at the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee in February 2017.

Non pay expenditure per the accounts in 2016-17 was £480,262 (2016: £984,442). There is a variance of £500K between the two years. It is understood that this is due to the accounting treatment for an investment with CCLA, which is shown within the Council's fixed assets balance.

The Council has a strong procedure in place to ensure that all expenditure is authorised in line with financial regulations. I selected a sample of transactions from the ledger and I was able to confirm that:

- Where appropriate, authorised order forms were in place
- Transaction could be agreed back to invoice
- Payment approval slip was on file, authorised by appropriate officers, with evidence of councillor sign off
- VAT accounted for appropriately

I have identified no errors in my testing of expenditure recorded in box 6 to the accounts. I have recommended that the Council prepares a detailed working paper for submission to the external auditors, to ensure that the accounting for the £500K CCLA investment in 2015-16 was correct, and can be explained to the external audit team.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT & INSURANCE

The council has a risk strategy in place and monitors and reviews risk on an ongoing basis. Council is aware of and has policies in place to mitigate financial risk, however these are not summarised into one document/matrix. I would suggest a financial risk assessment matrix be drawn up to show current council practices.

Council is considering a disaster recovery plan with a view to implementation.

Council has priorities (projects) it wants to complete in any given time frame. The minutes show that council is proactive in reporting and monitoring progress and uses the SMART acronym to measure achievement. Council has good procedures in place in this regard.

Council has worked closely with Zurich and is the last year of three-year deal. Asset and money cover appear adequate.

I confirmed that the Council considered its risk register and internal controls at the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee in February 2017, and that this review was minuted. I am satisfied that the Council has met this control objective.

D. BUDGET & PRECEPT

The council is in the process of preparing the budgets for 2017/18. It is anticipated this will be completed by end of December. Full council will review in January. It is anticipated that reserves will be increased by circa £20k with a 1% increase on the precept.

Council has circa £2.2m of earmarked reserves and £700k of general reserves. At a precept level of £1m and an average monthly spend of £125k the general reserves equates to roughly 6 months of monetary cover. This is adequate for a council of this size.

Council has very detailed working on earmarked reserves and use thereof.

Final Audit:

I confirmed that the 2017-18 budget and precept were approved at the meeting of the full council in January 2017. All statutory deadlines were met.

The Council demonstrated a comprehensive budget monitoring process in place by showing me reports for quarter 3. The budget report was reported to Council in January 2017. The report was fully comprehensive, all variances were reported.

Reserves at year end were £2.494m, which is an increase of £1.5m from last year, due to the sale of land north of Worthing Road north of Worthing Road. Earmarked reserves of £2.338m have been set aside. General fund reserve is £156K, which represents around 2 months' expenditure. There are specific reserves in place to cover revenue expenditure on areas such as vehicle and building maintenance. Levels of reserves therefore appear adequate.

The council uses cheques in order to make payments to suppliers. Consideration should be given to moving to electronic banking.

I am satisfied that controls over the precept budget and reserves are satisfactory.

E. INCOME

The precept for 2016-17 was £1,014,746 (2016 970,515). I was able to confirm this to third party information supplied by Arun DC. I was able to check that council tax support grant was correctly excluded from the precept figure in the accounts.

Non precept income recorded in box 2 to the accounts in the accounts in 2016-17 was £1,749,658 (£224,734). This increase is explained by the receipt of monies relating to the sale of a parcel of allotment land in North Littlehampton in 2016-17. I carried out the following testing on this capital receipt:

- I confirmed the income recorded in the accounting system to a corresponding credit in the Council's bank account
- Confirmed the receipt to land registry and solicitor records of the sale value in order to check the correct amount was received
- I confirmed that the sale was approved in line with financial regulations. The sale of the allotment land was approved at a Council meeting in June 2010. The Council was updated about the imminent completion of the land sale in January 2016.
- I was pleased to note that the capital receipt is being held in a capital receipts reserve, for future capital projects. This is the correct accounting policy.

I have carried out no testing of other income streams in 2016-17, given that the land sale was more than 92% of non-precept income on 2016-17. I have identified no errors in my testing of income recorded in box 3 of the accounts.

F. PETTY CASH

The Council holds £250 in petty cash. All expenditure is recorded on a spreadsheet, and is counted monthly. Cash count is reconciled to the spreadsheet at each count. Detailed receipts are kept to support transactions, and the finance team review records periodically to ensure that expenditure incurred using petty cash is reasonable.

Controls over petty cash are satisfactory.

G: PAYROLL

Staff costs recorded in box 4 to the accounts were £592,328 (2016 £571,665).

The Council processes the payroll in house using Sage 50 payroll. The RFO inputs all payroll changes and expense claims each month. The payroll is processed and a telepay document is produced and faxed to the bank –payments are made electronically to staff.

I tested the November 2016 payroll in detail. I was able to confirm the payroll posted to the general ledger back to the telepay document, that had been authorised by the clerk and by

the RFO. I then agreed pay for three officers back to payslips, and where appropriate, authorised timesheets. Rates of pay were checked.

The Council has satisfactory controls over payroll. I have one recommendation. The Council should consider moving to a more secure system that fax in order to send the monthly payroll information to the bank – an electronic BACS file process should be considered.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Fixed assets at 31.3.2017 stood at £3,077,526 (2016 £3,077,002)

The council has a fixed asset register in place, with assets shown at cost and or proxy cost. I was able to agree the accounts figure back to the Council's fixed asset register. There is evidence of additions and disposals in 2016-17 to reflect changes to Council assets in 2016-17.

We noted that the sale of part of the Worthing Road Allotment has a minimal effect on the asset register. This land had a de minimis value on the asset register, but was sold for more than £1.6 million due to its strategic importance to the purchaser.

I confirmed the asset register included an investment of £500K with CCLA Investment Management Limited. This is a long term investment in a property portfolio. I confirmed the value of this asset to the purchase price, and confirmed by reference to statements that this investment is still held.

I am satisfied that the fixed asset balance in the accounts can be agreed to a properly maintained asset register.

I. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Reconciliations for all accounts is carried out regularly and in accordance with regulations. The reconciliations and cashbook were verified in detail to ensure correct transfer of opening balances. There are no reconciling errors.

The September 2016 bank reconciliation was tested in detail to bank statements and the accounts – there were no errors. This was reported to council.

I would however, recommend the minute is improved to show beyond reasonable doubt the amounts being approved and who signed the reports.

Final Audit:

Cash held at 31.3.17 stood at £2,707,779 (2016: £1,195,802)

The year-end bank reconciliation was reperformed. I was able to confirm that

- Cashbook figure agreed to the financial statements
- Bank balances could be agreed to bank statements or deposit notes
- Unpresented cheques confirmed to a transaction listing. 2 large items were checked to confirm they cleared the bank account in early April 2017.

At the time of my audit, the year end bank reconciliation had not yet been signed off by councillors, bit this was simply due to the timing of meetings, so is not an audit issue.

I have one minor recommendation. The Council should obtain a listing of all monies held on deposit by the bank at the end of each financial year. I was able to confirm deposits to deal notes, but a 31 March statement should be obtained each year to assist external audit in their validation of cash balances.

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

The accounts have been correctly prepared on an income and expenditure basis. This is correct for this large council.

There is a difference of £212,426 between box 7 and 8 on the annual return. A reconciliation has been prepared to support this. The reconciliation was checked and found to be arithmetically correct, and could be agreed back to schedules of debtors and creditors,

K. TRUSTEESHIP

N/A confirmed with the RFO

Mark Mulberry
Internal Auditor
11th November 2016
4 June 2017

Points Forward – Action Plan

Point Forward / Action needed	Auditor notes	Council response
Other		
I have recommended that the Council prepares a detailed working paper for submission to the external auditors, to ensure that the accounting for the £500K CCLA investment in 2015-16 was correct, and can be explained to the external audit team.		
Consideration should be given to moving to electronic banking.		
. The Council should consider moving to a more secure system than fax in order to send the monthly payroll information to the bank – an electronic BACS file process should be considered.		
The Council should obtain a listing of all monies held on deposit by the bank at the end of each financial year.		

Overview of Council

	Work Task	Schedule Ref	Notes/Results
Terms of Engagement			
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
Planning Notes – Understanding the Town & Parish Council			
	Number of electors and size of precept		Electors 27,000 2015/16t Precept £970,515 Grant £98,110 2014/15: Precept £926,057 Grant £147,165
	Key personnel		Peter Herbert – Clerk Laura Chrysostomou - Deputy Clerk & RFO Rosie Parfitt – Asst Clerk
	Type of financial accounting in place i.e. Manual books, computerised system		RBS – Excel – LCRS System for Risk assessments - Sage Payroll RBS - allotments
	Does the council carry out an annual risk assessment, and is it documented.		These are updated as and when required although this tends to be regular – Based on NALC model but tailored
	Does the council have a good control environment (evidence of internal reviews and counter signing of cheques etc)		Yes council has very good control systems
	Any significant changes since prior year (staff or procedures)		None
	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**.

INDEPENDENCE	
Do you have any specific reliance on the fee to be earned from this assignment	No
Overdue fees	
Does the client/group of clients owe the firm any money which exceeds our normal credit terms?	No
Litigation	
Is there any actual or anticipated litigation between us and the client in relation to fees, audit work or other work?	No
Associated firms	
Are you or your staff associated with any other practice or organisation which has had any dealings with the client council?	No
Family or other personal relationships	
Do you or any of your staff have personal or family connections with the council or its officers?	No
Mutual business interest	
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
Financial involvement	
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
Goods and services: hospitality	
Have you or any of your staff accepted materials, goods or services on favourable terms or received undue hospitality from the council?	No
Ex-partners or senior staff	
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
Long association	
Have you been acting for more than 10 years? If yes, then consider rotation/engagement quality review. 3rd Year of auditing	No
Provision of other services	
Do we provide any of the following services to the client:-	
Accounting services, book-keeping or payroll services	No
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:-	
Competence	
Consider the following matters prior to deciding to accept appointment/re-appointment as auditors:	
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
Having regard to the safeguards identified, I am satisfied that we are independent and competent to perform this audit.	

Budget

		Hours
Planning & Systems Work	Interim Visit	3
File Review and reporting	Interim Visit	1
Financial Procedures	Final Visit	3
File review	Final Visit	1
Total Budget Hours		8
Hourly Rate		£50
Time Cost		£400
Other costs	Mileage	£90
Total Budgeted Cost		£490
Total Budgeted Fee		£500

Timetable

Autumn 2016	Planning and Interim Audit work
June 2017	Final Audit work
June 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 these 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

I discussed the system above with the RFO and reviewed an invoice picked at random, which contained all the details mentioned above.

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

Audit Area Section 4 Annual Return	Notes	Risk of error or misstatement	Tests	Ref
Appropriate books of account have been kept properly throughout the year.	RBS package in place, qualified RFO with accounts assistant.	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, up to date system based on NALC models	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	RBS package used augmented with excel	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.	Various streams of income	Low	Test to precept application and other documentation as appropriate	E
Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	Up to £250 float – transactions recorded on RBS and spreadsheet	Low	Test to petty cash tin and receipts where necessary	F
Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	Payroll processed using Sage system in house	Low	Test rates and hours are authorised Test net wages to payments due	G

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 RBS – signed off internally	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 and Expenditure with full accounts prepared for council. Depreciation charged in accounts but reversed out for annual return	Low	Test audit trail sufficient for electors rights and ensure AR reconciles with accounts and depreciation reversed out.	J
Trust funds (including charitable) The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	No charity			K

Audit Findings

(A) Proper Bookkeeping

Objective	To confirm that appropriate books of account have been properly kept throughout the year
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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 b/wd agrees to the 2015/16 c/wfd balances.
2	Review the nominal ledger/cashbook for large and unusual entries and agree to supporting documentation	Council uses the electronic RBS 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. No unusual amounts.
3	Verify arithmetic by casting a sample of the cash book, if this is maintained electronically check one month only	RBS is an electronic system; I have verified the arithmetic by testing the bank reconciliation at month 1. There were no errors
4	Is the cashbook maintained and up to date	The RFO 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 - printed and signed off at committee level
6	Is the data input by the RFO checked internally	Yes – The accountants work is checked by the RFO/Clerk and at committee level as appropriate.

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

Satisfactory – I am of the opinion that the RBS package is being used properly, and that it is fit for purpose for a council of this size. I was pleased to see that the books and records on RBS are regularly maintained and clerk/RFO has a positive attitude to keeping these up to date.

(B) Financial Regulations, Standing Orders & Payment Controls

Objective	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.
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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.**

Test		Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward
1	Has the council formally adopted standing orders and financial regulations?	Yes – these were on site and to hand they are both based on the NALC model. Standing orders were reviewed and approved by council Financial regulations updated and based on NALC model
2	Has a Responsible finance officer been appointed with specific duties?	Yes.
3	Have items or services above the de minimus amount been competitively purchased?	Yes – IA has seen evidence to show council has strived to get three quotes and discussion of the same. Council is seen to be following regulations in this regard in respect of getting best value for money.

4	Are payments in the cashbook supported by invoices, authorised and minuted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per FR 2.2. Bank reconciliations prepared, signed off and taken to council in accordance with regulations. • Per FR 3.2 reviewed by chairman of each committee – with a view to taking to committee for approval in December and full council in January. Council has taken into consideration additional costs in respect of auto enrollment. • Per 6.2 schedules of payment are produced and verified by councilors – this is in accordance with Financial Regulations, although the minutes of the finance committee will not show or document this approval. Approval being given by virtue of budget approval. • Per 6.6 Business charge card being used in accordance with regulation • No Tenders • IA has seen evidence to see council is following regulations in respect of quotations and reporting to council.
5	Has VAT on payments been identified, recorded and reclaimed?	Yes
6	Is s137 expenditure separately recorded and within statutory limits?	None. General Power of Competence used although amounts paid as general grants is well below threshold.
7	Note down if council is registered for VAT or if they use the annual reclaim method	Council is registered for VAT
8	Review VAT returns for supporting documentation and verify a sample of transactions to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoices • Other third party evidence • Correct rate of VAT • Correct treatment of VAT 	refund noted on bank statements.
9	Review bank account for payments or receipts of VAT	Receipts of refunds in evidence
10	Reconcile VAT returns to cash book	Reconciles
11	Ensure Returns are made on a prompt basis	Quarterly returns made – all returns on time.

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

Objective	To confirm the council assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.
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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.

Test		Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward
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 October to October. The assets are listed and the values are comparable to the FAR.
4	Are internal financial controls documented and regularly reviewed?	There are internal financial controls which are regularly followed. Council has an internal control sheet that covers a number of items such as checking petty cash and fixed assets. This is entirely adequate for a council of this size
5	Review financial & Other risk assessment and ensure up to date, note down any significant risks facing the council	Council reviews all risk assessments in a clear and logical manner. Reported to full council on an on-going basis The council has insured itself against the significant risks, including employee fraud etc. There are no operational issues that would cause the council to stop functioning – steps have been taken to ensure safety of electronic records etc.
6	Document retention & Data Back up	Digital information backed up daily off site

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

Objective	To confirm the annual precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.
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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.**

Test		Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward
1	Has the council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept?	Yes this was prepared in the proper time period last year.
2	Note how client prepares budget	Zero based approach – per department – uses RBS and excel system
3	Is actual expenditure against the budget regularly reported to the council?	Yes - At committee level and council at year end
4	Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?	There are no significant variances unexplainable at the year end – accounts detail where variances are and reasons for.
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	There are very detailed reserves workings showing nature and scope of reserves.

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

Objective	To confirm expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.
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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.

Test		Comments /Conclusions /Points Forward
1	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Precept and grant received by bacs properly recorded in cashbook and annual return. Credits paid in within a week of receipt – no cut off issues to report. Other income tested to documentary evidence and analytical review as applicable. Council is correctly receiving and recording income
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?	Yes
4	Is VAT correctly applied at the correct rates	Council registered for VAT – VAT is applied at 20% on Vatable sales.
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

Objective	To confirm Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.
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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.

Test		Comments/Conclusions
1	Is all petty cash spent recorded and supported by VAT invoices/receipts?	Yes
2	Is petty cash expenditure reported to each council meeting?	Yes – in same manner as normal expenditure
3	Is petty cash reimbursement carried out regularly?	When needed to top up float
4	Review petty cash records for unusual amounts	None in evidence
5	Test count the petty cash and agree to accounting records at today's date if not conducted at the year end.	Agreed
6	Select a sample of petty cash payments and receipts and agree to supporting documentation, verifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amounts • Authorisations • VAT analysis 	Agreed – these are for general petty cash items

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

Satisfactory – petty cash records are complete and reconciled – suggest these are reconciled more frequently.

(G) Payroll Controls

Objective	To confirm Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with council approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.
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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.

Test		Comments/Conclusions
1	Do all employees have contracts of employment with clear terms and conditions?	Yes
2	Do salaries paid agree with those approved by the council?	Council approves salary scale changes as and when required. Personnel files contain letters from council to employee detail pay scales. There are councillor allowances – paid via payroll.
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.
4	Have PAYE/NIC been properly operated by the council as an employer?	Yes this is calculated and paid on a monthly basis in house using Sage.
5	Check a sample of payroll deductions. Verifying calculation of PAYE & NIC	Payroll deductions tested on annual basis no errors. Deductions are correct.
6	Check employee existence by physical verification or by reference to documentation (e.g. personnel files, coding notices etc).	Employees are bonafide, RFO was able to explain who employees were on the list.

7	Check payroll is signed by a responsible official.	Payroll is prepared by RFO and counter signed by clerk - council approves via delegated authority to spend within a budget heading
8	Test check net wages & PAYE per the cash book to the payroll	Annual return reconciles to Month 12 year to date payroll report and to accounts.
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

Objective	To confirm asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.
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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.

Test		Comments/Conclusions
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. Only assets over £5k with a life greater than 1 year are capitalised. Depreciation is charged for internal purposes but this is reversed out at the year end for the annual return.
2	Are the assets and Investments registers up to date?	Yes No long term investments.
3	Do asset insurance valuations agree with those in the asset register?	Yes –
4	Obtain details of additions and select items to test to invoice or other supporting documentation, having regard for VAT element	Yes there were additions during the year – the largest being land.
5	Conduct physical verification of selected assets to make sure that they are in regular use and check to fixed asset register	Value per register is reasonable.
6	Transparency	Council reminded that fixed asset register lacks detail.

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

Satisfactory. Council maintains and records assets properly.

(I) Bank Reconciliation

Objective	To confirm Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.
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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.

Test		Comments/Conclusions
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 and this is signed off in accordance with financial regulations by the chair of policy and finance. IA has seen evidence of monthly signing.
3	Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?	No –Cheque numbers are current. No significant aged cheques.
4	Is the reconciliation signed off by a member	Yes –
5	Test check the year end reconciliation in detail	No errors – March 2017 reconciliation checked by IA in detail.
6	Prepare or obtain a schedule of investments showing all movements in the year and agree opening balances.	CCLA investment purchased £500k
7	Test check value of listed investments at year end for disclosure in financial statements.	agrees
8	Test purchases and sales with agreements, contract notes and minutes	agreed
9	Is the value of investments held summarised on the bank reconciliation?	agreed
10	Check income has been received on all income yielding investments on a consistent basis and ensure tax has been correctly accounted for.	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

Objective	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.
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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.**

Test		Comments/Conclusions
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. Reconciliation to accounts provided
2	Do accounts agree with the cashbook?	Yes – RBS package has full integrated audit trail –
3	Is there an audit trail from underlying financial records to the accounts?	Yes
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 June
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 has recorded in the minutes and a separate report work undertaken during the year in this regard.

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

Satisfactory – accounts properly prepared.

(K) Trust funds (including charitable)

Objective	To confirm the council has met its responsibilities as a trustee
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Test		Comments/Conclusions
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)

Not applicable.