

BALDERTON PARISH COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT INTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

This report is produced as part of the Parish Council's year end procedures to assist with the completion of the Annual Governance Statement as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024/25.

I have conducted my audit in relation to the books and records kept for the year 2024-25 by the Parish Clerk & RFO. This work has been carried out on a sample basis in order to provide an assessment of the Council's compliance with the relevant policy and controls that are expected to be in operation. My tests are in line with those outlined within the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide published in March 2024.

I give my thanks to the Clerk who has given me full co-operation and assistance with my work in providing access to information and answering my questions.

I am pleased to note that the Council has received my interim report positively and responded to the recommendations appropriately.

1.0 Responses to the Internal Control Objectives

A Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the year.

The Council operates the Rialtas accounts package which is a sector specific self-calculating and balancing system. Similarly it uses Sage for Payroll. All records are up to date and no issues are visible from the reports provided.

A sample of 72 transactions were reviewed to check that there were underlying records and matching authorisations in place. No issues were detected.

The Council's minute book is up to date and all official copies are signed.

B This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.

Evidence is visible in the minutes that quotes or tenders, as appropriate, have been sought for purchases in line with the adopted financial regulations and standing orders.

Standing orders and financial regulations have been kept under regular review and updated as necessary in line with national recommendations.

Invoices have been authorised for payment and dual authorisation is in place.

C This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

The Council reviewed the risk register in November 2024.

The insurance has been kept under review.

There are inspection records kept by the outdoor team and these will be retained in the office going forward to ensure that they are accessible in the event of an insurance claim.

D The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

The Council has engaged its committees in the preparation of the annual budget which followed the prescribed format and resulted in a fully considered precept figure being derived.

The Council considered its general and earmarked reserves as part of the process and during the year adopted a reserves policy to ensure effective management of these.

The Council receives regular budget monitoring reports from the Clerk & RFO.

The precept income has been checked against the national record and is confirmed as matching across all records.

E Expected income was fully received based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT appropriately accounted for.

The Council has a robust process in place to ensure income is received.

Effective booking systems are in place however the Council may wish to consider additional software support for these in future if they grow in number. This will aid in auditing records and lessen the likelihood of accidental loss.

F Petty Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for

The Council does not maintain a petty cash float. Cash receipts are logged and banked promptly.

G Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

Staff contracts are in place. Pay increases are appropriately logged in the Council's minutes following discussion and decision.

There are no members allowances paid.

Payroll is carried out using Sage software. A sample of the payslips were reviewed to check calculations were carried out correctly.

H Asset and investment registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

The asset register has been reviewed and updated. Council has signed off the revised version.

The Council has no long term investments. Loan balances were verified.

The Council has not provided any loans to other local bodies.

I Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.

Bank reconciliations are carried out monthly and there is evidence of these being checked and verified by Councillors.

J Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cashbook, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

The accounts are prepared on an income and expenditure basis and there is clear evidence of the proper practices being employed regarding creditors, debtors, accruals etc.

Supporting records are in place and there is a clear audit trail between them.

K If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the prior year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.

Not applicable - the Council turnover is in excess of £25,000.

L The authority publishes information on a free to access website / web page, up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation

The Council has a comprehensive Access to Information page following the 2015 Transparency Code and now has a publication scheme in place.

M The authority, during the previous year, correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Yes the notice had the correct dates and time period allowed.

N The authority complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.

Yes, all required documents were published on the Council's website within the appropriate timeframes.

O Trust funds (including charitable) - the Council met its responsibilities as a trustee

Not applicable - the Council is not a trustee.

2.0 Conclusion

2.1 The Parish Council has carried out a lot of work to improve its operations and internal controls over the past two years. The Clerk is steadfast and realistic about what can be achieved with the resources available to her. The Council's achievement of the Bronze Award from the NALC Local Council Award scheme is a great milestone confirming the Council's improvements.

2.2 I conclude that the Council has been operating effective governance and accounting arrangements for the 2024-25 financial year.

**Sabrina Doherty PSLCC
SD Audit and Consulting**