

Internal Audit Report
Year ending: 31st March 2020

Name of Council:	LITTLE BRAXTED PARISH COUNCIL
Income:	£4,768.84
Expenditure:	£29,828.36
Precept Figure:	£3,600.00
General Reserve:	£1,245.37
Earmarked Reserves:	£1,332.00

Internal Audit Objectives and Responsibilities

The primary objective of Internal Audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council, and to achieve this will 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

Accordingly, in the conduct of planned audits Internal Audit 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 2019/20 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

Subject	Requirements	Comments/Recommendations
1. Proper Book-keeping	Type of cash book or ledger used	Computerised cash sheets are used. 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.
	Cash book kept up to date and regularly verified against bank statement	The Cashbook is kept up to date and referenced which provides evidence to support the Council's underlying accounting statements.
	Correct arithmetic and balancing	Spot checks were made and were found to be correct. The Responsible Financial Officer ensures that the cash book is the focus for day-to-day accounting and balancing off and reconciliation to the bank statement and remains the most important control over the accounting system.
2. Financial Regulations & Standing Orders	Evidence that standing orders have been adopted and reviewed regularly	At the meeting of 14 th May 2019, Council carried out an annual review of its own Standing Orders which are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018 which take into account changes in legislation since those produced in 2013.
	Evidence that Financial Regulations have been adopted and reviewed regularly	The Council's Financial Regulations, reviewed at a meeting of 29 th August 2019 are based on the Model Financial Regulations produced by NALC and have been adapted to reflect recent changes in legislation concerning Procurement.
	Evidence that a Responsible Financial Officer has been appointed with specific duties	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), the Council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority.
	Evidence that Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Council	Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council.
3. Payment controls	Supporting paperwork for payments, and appropriate authorisation	At each full Council Meeting a list of all payments is presented to the meeting with formal approval of such expenditure being shown in the minutes and evidence of such paperwork in the files submitted for internal audit.

		<i>Comment: Council continues to show good practice of ensuring, in accordance with its own FR 5.6, that a schedule of due and retrospective payments which arise on a regular basis of a continuing contract, is submitted to full Council for approval at each meeting.</i>
	Internet Banking transactions properly recorded/approved	Internet banking is not used by the Council.
	VAT correctly identified and reclaimed within time limits	VAT is identified in the cash book. The claim for the period 1 st April 2018 to 31 st March 2019 in the sum of £164.10 was settled on 23 rd April 2019. The year-end period shows VAT due of £252.83 which matches that shown in the cashbook.
	Has Council adopted the General Power of Competence and is it being correctly applied?	The Parish Council does not exercise the General Power of Competence.
	S137 separately recorded, minuted and within statutory limits	There were no payments made under this power for the year under review.
	Payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans, are paid in accordance with agreements	The Council has no Public Works Loan and as such incurred no interest payments for the period under review.
4. Risk Management	Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?	<p>The Risk Assessment Document for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 was considered at a meeting of the Parish Council on 14th January 2020 and covers in general terms the matters which could possibly prevent a smaller relevant body from functioning.</p> <p><i>Comment: Overall within its Risk Management Document 2019, Council has identified a number of risks to property; finances and personnel and has taken steps to control the risk - all of which are clearly identified within the document as approved by Full Council.</i></p>
	Evidence that risks are being identified and managed.	Council has a comprehensive Financial Risk Assessment which was reviewed and adopted by the Parish Council on 9th March 2020. Council's documents identify the risks associated with ensuring that public finances are adequately protected and managed and has taken steps to mitigate such risks. The documentation of the specific control procedures that have been adopted by the council for payments not only protects the RFO but also fulfils an internal control objective.

	<p>Appropriate Insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee.</p>	<p>General Insurance from Zurich for the period from 1st June 2019 to 31st May 2020 shows core cover: Business Interruption; Public Liability £10; Employer's Liability; Public Liability; Office Contents; Libel & Slander; Officials Indemnity; Personal Accident and Legal Expenses. Fidelity Guarantee Cover is £250,000 and is within recommended guidelines.</p> <p>Property Damage and Money are covered as per the schedule with contents items (other property) being generic under the All Risks Category.</p>
	<p>Evidence that insurance is adequate and has been reviewed on an annual basis</p>	<p>Council reviewed its current insurance cover at the meeting of 14th May 2019.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with Proper Practices, Council has identified its key risks and taken steps to manage them in a way which it can justify to a level which is tolerable by transferring the risk and buying in services from specialist external bodies and taking out insurance. The RFO, in accordance with Proper Practices has ensured that there is evidence that a review of the insurance cover was completed, and appropriate insurance is in place to help manage the potential consequences of a risk occurring.</i></p>
	<p>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed</p>	<p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control at its meeting of 11th June 2019.</p> <p><i>Comment: with reference to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council has understood the requirement to have in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money. Within the Internal Control Statement for the Financial Year 2018-2019, as reviewed and adopted by Full Council in March 2019, Council has reviewed its arrangements to protect public money.</i></p>
	<p>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit has been carried out during the year</p>	<p>The effectiveness of internal audit was discussed by full Council within the Internal Control Statement submitted and approved at a meeting of 11th June 2019.</p>

		<p><i>Comment: by reviewing the terms of reference for internal audit, Council has followed guidance with the Governance and Accountability Guide and recognises that the internal audit's function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily.</i></p>
5. Budgetary controls	Verifying that the budget has been properly prepared, and agreed	<p>The budget for the year 2019/20 in the sum of £3,600 was approved by full Council at a meeting of 29th January 2019.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council shows good practice by following the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process to be followed for the year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>decide the form and level of detail of the budget;</i> • <i>review the current year budget and spending;</i> • <i>determine the cost of spending plans;</i> • <i>assess levels of income;</i> • <i>bring together spending and income plans;</i> • <i>provide for contingencies and consider the need for reserves;</i> • <i>approve the budget;</i> • <i>confirm the precept or rates and special levies; and</i> • <i>review progress against the budget regularly throughout the year.</i>
	Verifying that the Precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	<p>The precept was set at £3,600 and formally approved at a meeting of 29th January 2019 with Council evidencing that this would equate to a parish council tax of £42.45 for a Band D Property.</p>
	Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget	<p>Comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure is included within the documentation circulated to Councillors with the agenda at each meeting. The minutes reflect that they have been received and noted.</p>
	<p>Reserves held</p> <p>General and Earmarked.</p>	<p>Council's final accounts show general reserves in the sum of £1,245.37 with earmarked reserves in the sum of £1,332.00.</p> <p><i>Comment: It is regarded as acceptable for a council's general</i></p>

		<i>(non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 6 six months of contractual expenditure and at £1,245.37, council's general reserves are considered to be within this level.</i>
6. Income controls	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	A number of items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statement and found to be in order. In accordance with Proper Practices, the Responsible Financial Officer ensures that the accounting records contain entries from day to day of all sums of money received.
	Is income reported to full Council?	All income received by the parish council is reported as part of the Financial Reports submitted by the RFO. The RFO ensures that monies received are promptly banked.
	Does the Precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?	The council received precept of £3,600 during the year under review in May 2019. <i>Comment: Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved at the meeting of 29th January 2019, served on the Charging Authority to receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account.</i>
	If appropriate, are CIL Reporting Schedules in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010?	There were no CIL funds received in the year under review.
7. Petty Cash	Is a petty cash in operation?	A petty cash system is not operated by the parish council although it is noted that there is a rolling balance of £0.58.
	If so, is there an adequate control system in place.	All expenses claimed are approved by full council with supporting paperwork in place.
8. Payroll controls	Do all employees have contracts of employment?	Council had 2 employees on its payroll at the period end of 31 st March 2020. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit but all salary payments are authorised by full council. <i>Comment: in accordance with Proper Practices, Council has ensured that the remuneration payable to all employees has been approved in advance by the Council.</i>
	Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments by the Council?	Cross-checks were completed on two payments covering salary and PAYE were found to be in order. There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and

	Verifying the process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied.	legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the Council has complied with its duties under employment legislation.
	Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?	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 on or before the dates prescribed.
	Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?	It is noted that the internal audit report for the previous year confirmed that a declaration of compliance with regards to automatic enrolment duties had been completed on 31st May 2017 with no staff being automatically enrolled.
9. Asset control	Verifying the Council maintains an Asset Register in accordance with proper practises	The Asset Register was reviewed during the Internal Audit Visit for year-end and accurately reflects those items listed under insurance and within the Parish Council's remit for maintenance and ownership. It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2020) was £4,804.00. All assets have been stated as at the acquisition value and where assets have been gifted or where there is no known value have been given the proxy value of £1. <i>Comment: Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2019 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied and if/where amended, it will need to publish and provide explanations in changes in value to any previously recorded assets.</i>
	Verifying that the Asset Register is reviewed annually	The Asset Register value has been stated on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and it is expected that this will be formally approved at the meeting to approve the AGAR.
	Cross checking of Insurance cover	A number of items as listed under the Asset Register were reviewed against items under insurance and cover was deemed to be appropriate. Content Items (other property) are generic

		under the All Risks Category and have been given insurance value in accordance with the policy operated by the insurance company under its Local Council Policy.
10. Bank reconciliation	Regularly completed and reconciled with cash book	Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. <i>Comment: The RFO, as evidence of good financial practice, provides evidence of the bank reconciliations at each meeting to be verified by the Parish Council. This not only safeguards the Responsible Financial Officer but also fulfils an internal control objective.</i>
	Confirm bank balances agree with bank statements	Bank balances agree with period end statements and as at 31 st March 2020 stand at: £2,577.37 Broken down as follows: Community Account: £3,478.74 Unpresented cheques: £901.95 Petty Cash: £0.58
	Regular reporting of bank balances at council meetings	Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the financial reports submitted on a quarterly basis to the parish council. <i>Comment: Council is aware that, in accordance with Proper Practices, the bank reconciliation is a key tool for management as it assists with the regular monitoring of cash flows which aids decision-making, particularly when there are competing priorities.</i>
11. Year-end procedures	Appropriate accounting procedures used	Accounts are produced on a receipts and expenditure basis. All were found to be in order.
	Financial trail from records to presented accounts	There is an underlying financial trail from financial records to the accounts produced. The end-of-year accounts and supporting documentation were extremely well presented for the internal audit review.
	Has the appropriate end of year AGAR documents been completed?	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it has completed Part 3 of the AGAR.

		<p>The smaller authority has completed Section 2 Accounting Statements of the AGAR which is unsigned at the time of Internal Audit.</p> <p>Recommendation: it is suggested that the Accounting Statements are revisited prior to submission to the external auditors as currently it does not cast by £1.</p>
	Where an authority certified itself exempt in 2018/19, did it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was not able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review.
	During the Summer 2019 did the smaller authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations?	The Internal Auditor was able to confirm that the details of the arrangements for the exercise of public rights for the period ending 31 st March 2019 were on the public website used by the Council.
	Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Audit & Accounts Regulations of 2015	<p>The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million for the year ending 31st March 2018 and published the following on a public website:</p> <p>Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR Section 3 – External Audit Report and Certificate. Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights The Annual Internal Audit Report</p>
12. Internal audit for the year ending 31 March 2019	Verifying that the previous internal audit reports have been considered by the Council	The Internal Auditor's Report for the year ending 31 st March 2019 was considered and accepted Meeting of the Parish Council on 11 th June 2019.
	Verifying that appropriate action has been taken regarding recommendations raised in reports from Internal Audit	<p>The following recommendations raised in the report from the internal audit were considered and approved by the parish council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review effectiveness of internal audit 2. Implement policies to ensure compliance with GDPR
	Confirmation of appointment of Internal Auditor	SALC was appointed to act as the Parish Council's Internal Auditors at a meeting of full Council of 11 th June 2019 for the year ending 31 st March 2020.

13.External audit for the year ending 31 March 2019	Verifying that the external audit report has been considered by the Council	Council considered and accepted the External Audit Report and Certificate at its meeting of 14 th November 2019 following the limited assurance review undertaken by the External Auditors.
	Verifying that appropriate action has been taken regarding recommendations raised in reports from External Audit	There were no matters which necessitated the issuing of a separate report. In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, as a smaller authority with either income or expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million, Council has published on a public website Sections 1, 2 and 3 from the 2018/19 AGAR as well as the Notice of the Conclusion of the Audit.
14. Additional Comments	Annual meeting - held in accordance with legislation	The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council was held on 9 th May 2019 with the first item on the agenda being the election of the Chairman in accordance with the Local Government Act of 1972 15(1).
	Correct identification of trustee responsibilities	The council does not act as the sole trustee for any trusts.
	Verification that the applicable Transparency Code has been correctly applied and information is published in accordance with current legislation	To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller authorities (turnover not exceeding £25,000), Council is aware that the following should be published on a public website for the year 2019/20 not later than 1 July: Internal Audit Report List of Councillors and Responsibilities Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT End of Year Accounts Annual Governance Statement Asset Register and that Agendas of Meetings; Associated Papers and Minutes should be published in accordance with the prescribed timescales as set out in the Transparency code for smaller authorities – December 2014.
	Verifying that the council is registered with the ICO	The Council is correctly registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation. Registration No.

		Z3614041 refers.
	Verifying that the Council is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements	<p>Council has taken positive steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and is monitoring matters to ensure the process is managed at all times. The following documents were seen on the parish council's website:</p> <p>Are the following in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy Notices • Procedures for dealing with Subject Access Requests • Procedure for dealing with Data Breaches • Data Retention & Disposal Policies

Signed: *Victoria J Waples*

Date of Internal Audit Visit - 07.05.2020

Date of Internal Audit Report - 07.05.2020

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils