

Anglesey Parish Council

Internal Audit Report 2023-24

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*For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd*

Background and Scope

The Accounts and Audit Arrangements introduced from 1st April 2001 require all Town and Parish Councils to implement an independent internal audit examination of their Accounts and accounting processes annually.

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2023-24 financial year. We have again undertaken our final review for the year remotely: we wish to thank the Clerk in assisting the process, providing all necessary documentation to facilitate completion of our review for the year and sign off of the Internal Audit Certificate in the year's AGAR. We have, examined the cashbooks and transactions against the bank statements and other areas detailed in our report and ensured that governance and financial controls remain effective.

Objectives

Our prime objective is to provide the Council and local electors with an appropriate level of assurance as to the soundness of the systems of internal financial control, as well as identifying areas where scope exists for improvements in those controls or working practices, which may also result in the more effective and efficient use of resources.

Internal Audit Approach

We have employed a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks on all relevant key areas in order to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls continue to be appropriate and fit for the purposes intended.

Our working papers file and report for the year will be available, on request, for review by the Council's external auditors, should they wish to obtain further assurances on the adequacy of the systems examined and detailed in this report.

Conclusions

The Clerk to the Council has created an effective accounting and reporting operation for the Council.

We are pleased to acknowledge that Council members and the Clerk operate effective internal controls and procedural documentation.

We have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the year's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, having concluded that, in all significant respects, the control objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

This report has been prepared for the sole use of Anglesey Parish Council. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no responsibility or liability is accepted by Auditing Solutions Ltd to any third party who purports to use or rely, for any reason whatsoever, on this report, its contents or conclusions.

Detailed Report

Maintenance of Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations

Our objective is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers.

A single receipts and payments cashbook is maintained, with individual transaction detail set out in spreadsheet format, combining both the current account held at the Unity Bank and CCLA. We consider this to be more than acceptable given the low volume of transactions: we have:

- Checked and agreed the opening balances for 2023-24 to the closing Financial Statements for 2022-23;
- Checked and agreed all cashbook entries to the relevant bank statements for the year;
- Ensured that an appropriate columnar analysis is in use to facilitate preparation of the Statement of Accounts and production of data for inclusion at Section 2 Annual Governance and Accountability Return; and
- Checked and agreed the closing bank reconciliation as at 31st March 2024, with no long standing, uncleared effects or any other abnormal entries arising.

Conclusions

No issues have been identified in this area of our review.

Review of Corporate Governance

Our objective is to ensure that the Council has a robust series of corporate governance documentation in place, that Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and that no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation. Consequently, we have: -

- Noted that the Standing Orders and Financial regulations were reviewed and approved in March 2024; and
- Examined the minutes of all Council meetings for the year to ensure that no issues affecting the Council's financial stability exist, also that the Council is not considering any decisions that may result in ultra vires expenditure being incurred.

Conclusions

We consider that the Council's corporate governance framework has been completed in a satisfactory manner.

Review of Expenditure

Our aim here is to ensure that: -

- Payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- All payments are approved by members and recorded in the minutes of the relevant Council meetings
- Relevant Standing Orders and Financial Regulations have been met in relation to formal tendering processes;
- The correct expenditure analysis has been applied to payments when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified for periodic recovery.

Conclusions

We have reviewed a sample of payments in the year and are pleased to report that no significant issues have been identified with these payments satisfactorily meeting the above criteria.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our aim here is to ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

We note that members have properly identified and recorded all the Financial Management Risks to which it considers the Council may be exposed, approving the Risk Assessment for 23-24 financial year.

We have examined the Council's current insurance policy, with Hiscox ensuring that appropriate cover is in place and noting that with both Employer's and Public Liability set at £10 million, which is considered appropriate for the Council.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no issues have been identified in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Budgetary Control & Reserves

We aim in this area of our work to ensure that the Council has appropriate procedures in place to determine its future financial requirements leading to the adoption of an approved budget and formal determination of the amount to be precepted on the District Council, that effective arrangements are in place to monitor budgetary performance throughout the financial year and that the Council has identified and retains appropriate reserve funds to meet future spending plans. To meet this objective, we:

- Note that the Full Council finalised its budget deliberations for 2024-25, estimates having been considered with approval and formal adoption of the Precept at the Council meeting held in January 2024 at £32,000.
- Note that the Clerk has reported the Council's financial position periodically during the year utilising the spreadsheet cashbooks now in use: we consider this is remains appropriate given the current level of activity; and
- Also noted the Council's current financial position with total reserves at 31st March 2024 at £100,567.

Conclusions

No issues arise to warrant formal comment or recommendation.

Review of Income

In considering the Council's income streams, we aim to ensure that robust systems are in place to ensure the identification of all income due to the Council from its various sources, to ensure that income is invoiced in a timely manner and that effective procedures are in place to pursue recovery of any outstanding monies due to the Council.

To meet this objective, given the low volume of transactions in this area, we have, as indicated previously, checked and agreed all receipts by reference to the cashbook and relevant bank statements. We have also checked the income arising from the allotments and the accounting records maintained, ensuring recovery of all sums due to the Council.

Conclusions

No issues arise in this area of our review work.

Petty Cash Account

The Council does not operate a petty cash account, all expenses incurred by the clerk and members being reimbursed through the normal invoicing process.

Salaries and Wages

In examining the Council's payroll function, we aim to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions.

To meet that objective we have examined the payroll procedures in place and the physical payments made to the Clerk in 2023-24 by reference to the cashbooks and relevant bank statements, together with the Clerk's supporting papers identifying the basis of the monthly payment calculations.

We are pleased to note that a formal PAYE scheme is in place in line with HMRC requirements, with regular payment of amounts deducted throughout the year.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified in this area.

Fixed Asset Registers

The Governance and Accountability Manual requires all councils to maintain a record of all assets owned. We have checked and agreed the principles used in the detail, as recorded in the Council's Asset Register, noting that it has been prepared using purchase cost values or where that value is unknown at the previous year's Return level or uplifted or decreased to reflect the acquisition or disposal of assets.

Conclusion

We note that the Council holds a number of assets including the allotments. The correct values have been recorded in the Asset Register and reported in the Annual Return.

Investments and Loans

The Council holds no specific investments, nor are any loans either repayable by, or to it in existence.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The 1996 Accounts and Audit Regulations required that all Councils prepare a detailed Statement of Accounts, together with supporting statements identifying other aspects of the Council's financial affairs.

We have examined the Council's procedures in relation to the preparation of the year-end detailed Annual Governance and Accountability Return data, also reviewing the arrangements for the identification of year-end debtors and creditors with no issues arising.

Conclusions

No issues have arisen in this review area and, on the basis of work undertaken during the year, we have duly signed off the Internal Audit Report of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, assigning positive assurances in each relevant area.