

WICKHAM ST PAUL PARISH COUNCIL INTERNAL AUDIT 2022/23

A Proper Bookkeeping

- Is the cash book maintained and up to date?
Yes. Excel spreadsheet with several worksheets is maintained and updated each month. The separate worksheets for payments and receipts have columns to analyse the transactions by type. Totals are used to create the actual v budget comparison (Average Spend Worksheet) through the year. Worksheets entitled SOFA, Year End Rec and Annual Return use formulae to take figures from the Payments and Receipts tabs to create the year end accounts. The VAT reclaim tab is a control on payments column AA and is used to formulate the annual VAT claim.
- Is the cash book arithmetic correct?
Formulae are in place to control the cross-cast totals
- Is the cash book regularly balanced?
The formulae ensure that the cash book balances.

B Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Payment Controls

- Has the council formally adopted standing orders and financial regulations?
Yes. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were adopted at the meeting 31 May 2022 (minute 22/055).
- Are other policies in place?
Yes. The suite of policy documents were adopted at the meeting on 31 May 2022 (minute 22/055). Policies are on the Wickham St Paul PC website. [Policies & Procedures – Wickham St. Pauls Parish Council \(wickhamstpaulsparishcouncil.org\)](http://www.wickhamstpaulsparishcouncil.org)
- Has a Responsible Financial Officer been appointed with specified duties?
Yes. The clerk is also the RFO: this is specified in the job title and description of responsibilities. The council confirmed the clerk as its RFO at the meeting 31 May 2022 (minute 22/053).
- Have items or services above a de minimis amount been competitively purchased?
Financial Regulations (4.1) enables clerk, in conjunction with chairman, to approve items up to £500 and (4.5) enables clerk to approve spend up to £500 in cases of extreme risk to the council. Financial Regulation 11.1h specifies 3 estimates are needed for amounts £100 to £3000 and 3 quotes for amounts £3000 to £25,000. The implication is that tenders are required for contracts over £25,000 which agrees with section 18 of SO. During the year, the minutes refer to estimates or quotes being obtained for tree replacement (22/078), bench base (minute 22/080), water drain work (minute 22/081), fruit trees (minute 22/107), post and rail repairs (minute 22/085), annual tree survey (23/013), skip hire (minute 23/043), payroll provider (minute 23/052). An extraordinary meeting was held on 18 August 2022 to discuss quotes for dredging the village pond as the estimates were high and outside of budget. Other than pond dredging, which was £3040 (ex VAT), all other payments in the year are for less than £3000 which is the limit for estimates in FR 11.1h.
- Are payments in the cash book supported by invoices, authorised and minuted?
Financial Matters item in each month's minutes includes list of payments for approval and a monthly budget statement which is received and noted. The list

shows the payee, reference of Cheque/DD/SO and amount (including VAT). Invoices are validated on receipt by the clerk and entered into the payments worksheet. The amount is added to the list of payments on the agenda, a cheque written and the cheque number marked on the source document. The clerk takes the cheque book, source documents, payments list and actual v budget (Ave Spend worksheet) summary to the meeting. Two signatories place their initials on the payments list, the cheque stub and the source document as authorisation.

- Has VAT on payments been identified, recorded and reclaimed?
Yes. The unclaimed VAT of £1535.74 for 2021/22 was received on 10 May 2022. VAT is recorded in a separate column in the 'payments worksheet'. Items are cut and pasted into the VAT reclaim worksheet where Suppliers VAT number is added. Total VAT on payments in 2022/23 (per payments column AA) is £1474.04 which was reclaimed in April 2023.
- Is s137 expenditure separately recorded and within statutory limits?
It was noted at the meeting on 31 May 2022 (minute 22/050) that the council no longer has the General Power of Competence (minute 21/052). There were no payments under s137 in 2022/23. At the meeting on 29 November 2022 the council agreed a grant of £2000 for 2023/24 to VPMC (minute 22/121).

C Risk Management

- Does a scan of the minutes identify any unusual activity?
Vacancy and co-option (minutes 22/075, 23/048); Coronation Event (minute 23/014)
- Do the minutes record the council carrying out a risk assessment?
Yes. Strategic Risk Assessment together with risk assessments for fireworks, Litter picking and COVID risk assessments, approved at Meeting 31 May 2022 (minute 22/055).
- Is insurance cover appropriate and adequate?
Yes. Second year of a new 3-year policy with BHB renewal 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023. Cover for Property Damage, Money, Business interruption, employers' liability, public and products liability, fidelity guarantee, libel and slander, official's indemnity, personal accident and legal expenses. Property damage cover includes assets not owned by the council (Gates and fences, war memorial, sports equipment).
- Are internal financial controls documented and regularly reviewed?
The council receives monthly budget statements to compare actual against budget. Cheque book stubs and source documents are initialled: the vice chair also ticks the payments list against source documents. Payments list ties back to the cash book. Assets are inspected and insurance cover is reviewed annually. No cash is handled. The engagement of payroll services provides a level of control over salary payments. Councillor authority is needed to amend the monthly pay Standing Order. Bank reconciliations have not been signed off this year but will be done in 2023/24
- Are all risks identified and actions undertaken to mitigate risks?
The strategic risk register has columns for risk level, description of the identified risk, and management of risk and actions taken. The assessment is comprehensive in scope and in conversation with the clerk I am assured that the actions in the management column are undertaken. Some thought could be given to how some of the actions are evidenced e.g., number 4 'council does an

annual inspection of its property' and number 14 'seats and shelters inspected regularly'. The minutes include confirmation of actions being undertaken e.g., confirmation of bank signatories (minute 22/048, 23/008); checking the defibrillator and reporting to Webnos (Community Heartbeat Trust) (minute 23/009), reviewing the findings of the tree survey (minute 23/047). The handyman undertakes a weekly inspection of the play area and other council assets on the checklist, making notes of anything that needs repairing.

D Budgetary Controls

- Has the council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept?
Yes. At the meeting on 29 November 2022 the council agreed a budget of £18021, and an increase in precept of 11% (minute 22/123). The form submitted to BDC is for a precept of £14110.
- Is actual expenditure against the budget reported to the council?
The cash book includes an 'Average Spend' worksheet that takes figures from the Payments and Receipts worksheets, compares those actuals against the budget and calculates the actual as a percentage of the budget. Councillors see this worksheet each month as a standing agenda item and note its contents.
- Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?
Yes. Budgeted spend £17001, actual spend (ex VAT) £22822. Within the total there are significant under and over spends. The budget included £1000 election and grants £1100 for which spend is zero. Contingency (decisions not included in the budget) is overspent by £5757, which includes the pond dredging of £3040. Reserves are healthy at almost twice the precept so can accommodate such overspends.

E Income Controls

- Does the council have sources of income other than precept and VAT refunds?
BDC street scene, Gigaclear easement, donations and interest.
- Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?
3 cheques and 1 cash donation (£80 in total) received for trees and mugs and banked as soon as practicable through the post office. All other receipts by direct credit
- Does the precept recorded in the cash book agree to the district council's notification?
Yes. Precept total £12784 received as 2 x £6392 received from BDC in April & Sep 2022.
- Are security controls over cash adequate and effective
No cash is handled.

F Petty Cash Procedures No Petty cash is held. (Financial Reg 6.21)

G Payroll Controls

- Do salaries paid agree with those approved by the council?
Yes. The clerk was employed for 10 hours a week on band 17 and a handyman for 2 hours a week on band 9. At the personnel committee meeting 28 February 2023, spinal point increases were approved for both the clerk (to band 18) and the handyman (to band 9) from 1st April 2023 (minute 23/051). The national pay awards were also noted, which had been applied in September, backdated to

01/04/22 The clerk is paid by SO each month with a cheque to adjust to the correct salary. Changes to the SO are approved by council (minute 22/068.3, 22/124.3)

- Are other payments to the clerk reasonable and approved by the council?
Yes. The clerk receives a monthly expenses cheque which is reimbursement for items such as ink, paper, stamps, envelopes etc. The clerk also receives a monthly home office allowance of £22.50 which is part of the taxable salary.
- Has PAYE / NIC and pensions been properly operated by the council as an employer?

Payroll services are provided by Richard Edwards Group. The clerk receives the payslip and a P32 showing amount payable to HMRC. A wages tab is also kept on the cash book for both the clerk and the handyman salary. The clerk has opted out of auto enrolment for pension (minute 23/051). The handyman is not eligible for automatic enrolment and has not opted in. The 3 year declaration to the Pensions Regulator was completed in June 2022.

- What controls exist over management of staff time and duties?
Clerk and handyman appraisals were undertaken by the Personnel committee on 28 February 2023 (minute 23/051). Clerk keeps a time sheet which the councillors initial each month alongside the expenses claim. Peaks and troughs in workload are managed within the weekly hours. The handyman keeps a timesheet and reports to the chairman. The Handyman is paid the same amount each month but builds up hours in the summer and does less in the winter.

H Asset Control

- Does the council keep an asset register of all material assets owned?
Yes. The asset register is unchanged and was last approved at the meeting on 29 March 2022 (22/035).
- Is the register regularly updated?
Register is updated annually for year-end return. The AGAR figure brought forward from 31/03/21 is £42158. There are no purchases over £300 to add to the register and no disposals so the closing AGAR at 31 March 2022 is £42158.
- Do asset insurance valuations agree with those in the asset register?
The policy schedule for the 2023 renewal has just been received and shows property damage declared values for Office contents £7500, Street furniture £32345, Gates and fences £7500, Play equipment £131771, War memorials £20000, Mowers and Machinery £5000, Sports Equipment £5000. This includes classes of assets that are not owned by the council but are standard cover with BHIB. For assets owned by the council, the insured values are greater than the 'replacement values' in the asset register.

I Bank Reconciliation

- Is there a bank rec for each account?
Yes. A combined reconciliation for the 4 bank accounts at the year-end: 2 Nat West current accounts and 2 Nat West deposit accounts.
- Is the bank rec carried out regularly on receipt of statements?
Yes. The Payments worksheet has a 'cleared' column to enable easy reconciliation.
- Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?
There are 7 uncleared cheques on the current account, all relating to March 2023.

J Year End Procedures

- Are year end accounts prepared on the correct accounting basis (R & P / I & E)?
Yes. R & P basis
- Do accounts agree with the cash book and working papers?
Yes. Formulae on the SOFA worksheet extract figures from the Payments and Receipts worksheets. These are used to create the annual return worksheet figures.
- Is there an audit trail from underlying financial records to the accounts?
- *Yes, excellent. Source documents are marked with the cheque number, minute reference where appropriate, and initials of the signatories, and filed in date order*
- Where appropriate, have debtors and creditors been properly recorded?
Not needed in R&P accounts.

K Council Exempting itself from a limited assurance review

- Did the council meet the criteria?
Yes. Gross income and gross expenditure in 2021/22 were less than £25000.
- Was the exemption certified at a meeting?
Yes (minute 22/064.4)
- Was the appropriate notice displayed?
Yes. Certificate of Exemption completed and displayed.

L Web page Publication

The authority publishes information on a website/webpage, up to date at the time of the internal audit, in accordance with the Transparency code for smaller authorities. [Finance – Transparency Code for Small Authorities – Wickham St. Pauls Parish Council \(wickhamstpaulsparishcouncil.org\)](https://www.wickhamstpaulsparishcouncil.org/finance-transparency-code-for-small-authorities)

M Public Rights in Summer 2022

The council agreed the dates for the period for the Exercise of Public Rights commencing 13 June 2022 and ending 22 July 2022 and displayed the notice https://wickhamstpaulsparishcouncil.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/public-rights-notice.pdf?force_download=true

N Publication of Annual Return 2021/22

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes). https://wickhamstpaulsparishcouncil.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/agar.pdf?force_download=true

O Trustees

- If the council is a trustee, has it met its responsibilities?
Not applicable

Jan Stobart, FCCA
20th April 2023