

Theberton and Eastbridge Parish Council - Internal Controls 2020/2021

The Accounts & Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015 aims to strengthen governance and accountability through requirements related to internal control and internal audit.

Whilst the Council has reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit (independence, competence, proportionate and scope) it has a requirement levied on it to ensure that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control:

'The regulations require active participation by members in providing positive assurance to the electors of their stewardship of public money. The framework of accountability is risk-based ie the level of control and management must be appropriate to the risk involved. The Council must determine the most appropriate method of internal control...care should be taken to ensure that internal control tests are proportionate and relevant and that they are not seen as, nor intended as, undue interference in the RFO's day to day management of financial affairs'.

As part of its internal controls, the Council conducts a review of the system of internal controls via the following tests on an annual basis with a written report of any findings submitted to the Council and minuted as received.

Control Test	Comments
Ensure the Asset Register is up to date.	Council reviewed and approved the Asset Register on 10/03/21. Clerk updates register following every purchase or disposal.
Regular maintenance arrangement for physical assets.	Play equipment safety inspection in Theberton playing field by an RII registered inspector conducted in October 2020. Report reviewed and noted by Council on 11/11/20. Play equipment safety inspection in Eastbridge playing field by an RII registered inspector conducted in November 2020. Report reviewed and noted by Council on 13/01/21.
Annual review of the Risk Assessment, including financial risk.	Council reviewed and approved the Risk Assessment on 14/10/20.
Annual review of adequacy of insurance.	Council reviewed the adequacy of the insurance cover, including the Fidelity Guarantee, in June 2020 by email (no meeting due to COVID-19).
Awareness of Standing Orders.	Council reviewed and approved Model Standing Orders on 10/02/21.
Awareness of Financial Regulations.	Council reviewed and approved Model Financial Regulations on 10/02/21.
Regular bank reconciliation, independently reviewed.	Council reviewed and approved bank reconciliations on: Year End 08/07/20 Quarter 1 12/08/20 Quarter 2 11/11/20 Quarter 3 12/02/21 Bank reconciliations are usually signed by a Councillor who is not a bank account signatory. This has not been possible this year due to the Council holding virtual meetings.

Regular scrutiny of Cash Book to ensure income and expenditure correctly recorded.	The Cash Book is scrutinised as part of the quarterly bank reconciliation process.
Ensure annual budget for the following financial year is approved.	Council reviewed and approved the budget for the financial year 2021/2022 on 13/01/21.
Ensure precept level for the following financial year is approved based on annual budget.	Council reviewed and approved the precept level based on annual budget on 13/01/21.
Proper arrangements are in place for the approval of expenditure.	Every item of expenditure is proposed and seconded by members, voted on and recorded in the minutes. Quotations are considered and approved if applicable.
Recording in minutes the precise powers under which expenditure is approved.	Every item of expenditure has the power recorded in the minutes.
Payments supported by invoices, authorised and minuted.	Every payment is supported by an invoice, authorised by the Council and minuted at every meeting. Invoices are paid by bank transfer which are approved by two authorised signatories – the Clerk and a Councillor.
Ensure the maximum amount of s137 expenditure is calculated annually and reported to Council.	Council noted the maximum amount of s137 expenditure for the financial year 2020/2021 on 10/03/21.
Ensure income, including precept, is correctly received, recorded and banked.	All income received is minuted at meetings. Income is received by cheques which are banked regularly and by direct bank transfer.
Ensure all staff have an Employment Contract.	The Clerk/RFO has an Employment Contract.
Records are updated to record changes in legislation.	Regular bulletins are received from SALC informing the Clerk of any changes in legislation. The Clerk regularly attends training sessions delivered by SALC and ESC. Records are updated as necessary.
PAYE/NIC/Pension properly operated by the Council as an employer.	Employer filing obligations are met by outsourcing payroll duties to SALC. Any PAYE/NIC due is notified to the Council by a SALC payslip at quarterly meetings and is paid by Council cheque. Council noted re-declaration of compliance with the Pensions legislation on 11/03/20.
VAT correctly accounted for and VAT payments identified, recorded and reclaimed.	All VAT is recorded in a separate column in the Cash Book and reclaimed annually. VAT paid from March 2020 to December 2020 was reclaimed in February 2021. VAT to be recovered from the remainder of the financial year is less than £200.
Regular financial reporting to Council.	The Council notes its financial position at every meeting.
Quarterly budget monitoring statements reported to Council.	Council reviewed and approved quarterly budget versus actual income and expenditure on: Quarter 4 not done due to COVID-19 Quarter 1 08/07/20 Quarter 2 09/09/20 Quarter 3 10/02/21
CIL reporting to Parish and District Councils in accordance with legislation.	No CIL payments received.
CIL expenditure in accordance with legislation.	No CIL payments received.

Compliance with Local Transparency Code.	Compliance is demonstrated by the following records published on the Parish Council page on the village website: Items of Expenditure Over £100 2019/2020 End of Year Accounts 2019/2020 End of Year Bank Reconciliation 2019/2020 Significant Variances 2019/2020 Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020 Internal Audit Report 2019/2020 List of Councillor Responsibilities Details of Land and Public Buildings Minutes and Agendas and Meeting Papers
Compliance with GDPR - Council registered as a Data Controller.	Council's registration renewed in May 2020.
Compliance with GDPR - progress made towards meeting the requirements.	Privacy Notice adopted 13/06/18. Subject Access Request Policy and Procedure adopted 09/10/19. Personal Data Audit noted on 13/11/19. Document Retention and Disposal Policy adopted 10/02/21. Personal Data Breach Policy adopted 10/02/21. Freedom of Information Act Policy adopted 10/02/21. The Council has not conducted any major projects during the financial year which involved the use of personal data, therefore no Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) were completed. All paper records reviewed and rationalised. Paper records are kept securely in a clear, identifiable filing system.
Minutes consecutively numbered, signed and stored adequately for safe-keeping.	Minutes approved and signed at every meeting. Minutes stored in a metal filing cabinet to which only the Clerk has access.
Procedures in place for recording and monitoring Members' Interests.	Every new Member completes a Register of Interests form which is submitted to the District Council. Members are asked to declare any interests at every meeting and these are recorded in the minutes.
Adoption of Local Code of Conduct.	Council adopted on 12/10/16 and reviews it annually. Councillors were reminded to review the Code on 10/03/21.
Completion of Declaration of Acceptance of Office for Chairman and Co-Opted Members.	All members, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, completed and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Annual Meeting was cancelled this financial year in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Reviewed and approved by Council at its meeting on 10th March 2021.