

Stoke Mandeville Parish Council
Financial Year 2022-23



Audit date: 22 March 2023

Year End Internal Audit Observations

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

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Have Minutes been signed in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 12-paragraph 41 (2) the Local Government Act 1972 (this requires each page to be initialled and the final page signed)	No	<i>It was noted that a number of Minutes had not been signed in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972. The Minutes have been signed, but have not been initialled on each page as required by legislation.</i>	The Council to ensure that Minutes of meetings are signed in accordance with the legislative requirements. In particular Minutes of meetings should be initialled on each page and signed and dated on the final page.	High	In future all pages of the minutes will be initialled.

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

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	If the Council is a tenant under leases, are the lease agreements current?	No	<i>The Council occupies office space at the Community Centre. There is no formal agreement in place for this.</i>	The Council should consider whether it should put in place a formal agreement in respect of its office space at the Community Centre.	Medium	This will be raised at the next Finance and Governance meeting for consideration.

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

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	A copy of the Financial Risk Register was provided to the auditor	Yes	<i>It was noted that the Risk Management Policy on the Council's website is dated July 2016.</i>	Council to review this document and, if appropriate, update the version on the website.	Medium	The Council's website has been updated to show the review date of October 2022.
2	Council has formally documented Internal Controls	No	<i>Council has not formally documented Internal Controls</i>	Council should formally document its Internal Controls.	Medium	An Internal Control document will be prepared for consideration at the next Finance and Governance Committee.

3	The Council, meeting as a whole, has reviewed the effectiveness of its internal control system as required by Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015	No	<i>The Council has not reviewed the effectiveness of its internal control system as required by Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.</i>	Council to note the requirement for it to regularly review its internal control system.	High	It will be documented that the Internal Control document will be reviewed each March prior to the internal audit.
4	Assets included in the assets register are covered under the Councils insurance policy	Yes	<i>The Community Building is currently valued for insurance purposes at £1.3 million. The Council has not undertaken a recent revaluation of the building for insurance purposes.</i>	The Council should consider undertaking an updated valuation of the Community Building for insurance purposes.	Medium	An insurance valuation of the Community Centre building will be arranged in 2023.
5	The value of the Councils Fidelity Insurance covers the value of the Councils cash & bank holdings	No	<i>The value of the Councils Fidelity Insurance does not cover the value of the Councils cash & bank holdings. The value stated in the Insurance schedule is £200,000 compared to the Councils bank balances as at 31st March 2023 which stood at £322,962.</i>	The Council to review the level of its Fidelity insurance and consider whether it is adequate to cover the value of cash and bank balances held.	Medium	The Council's fidelity insurance value will be reviewed and updated to reflect the future levels of bank holdings.

D

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

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Does the budget recorded in the Councils accounting system agree to the budget set by Council?	Yes	<i>It was noted that the total expenditure budget and income budget had both increased by £50,000 from the original budget approved in January 2022. This was due to the increased in the cost of the playground (which was originally budgeted at £100,000) and increased S106 funding received to fund the project.</i>	Council to note.	Low	Noted.

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

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Has the Investment Strategy been published on the Councils website?	No	<i>The Council has not published its Investment Strategy on the Councils website as required by the Statutory Guidance on Local Council Investments.</i>	Council to ensure that its Investment Strategy is published on its website in accordance with statutory guidance.	Medium	The Investment Strategy has now been published on the website.
2	Is income due on investments subject to regular check and verification? (Is investment performance regularly reported to Council?)	No	<i>The Council currently holds its funds in a deposit account on which it is earning a relatively low rate of interest (the December 2022 statement states 0.6%). Interest rates have increased significantly in the last 12 month (for example the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, used by many local Councils, is currently paying a rate of 3.9%)</i>	The Council to review the rate of interest it is earning on its deposits, subject to the requirements of Investment Policy.	High	The Finance and Governance committee in December 2022 agreed that other options other than the basic deposit account should be explored. This will be considered at future meetings.

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

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The Council has published the details of Members Allowances paid in accordance with Regulation 15 (3) of Members Allowances Regulations 2003.	No	<i>The Council has not published the details of Members Allowances paid in accordance with Regulation 15 of Members Allowances Regulations 2003.</i>	The Council to note the publication requirements in respect of Members Allowances and to ensure that details of allowances paid are published in accordance with the Regulations.	High	The schedule of Members Allowances paid / not claimed for 2022/23 has been published on the Councils website.

H *Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.*

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The asset register has been subject to review by Council	No	<i>The asset register has not been subject to review by Council.</i>	The Council should formally review the asset register each year prior to the approval of the Accounting Statements	Medium	The asset register will be presented to Council at the May 2023 meeting.

2	Continuing existence and condition of assets is checked on a regular basis (when was last check?)	No	<i>Continuing existence and condition of assets is not checked on a regular basis.</i>	The Council should put in place a process for the regular review and verification of its assets. Assets of a high value or which may be particularly vulnerable should be subject to verification at more frequent intervals.	Medium	Informal review takes place everytime myself and my assistant are out and about. But I will suggest that the ward councillors undertake a physical check.
---	---	----	--	---	--------	---

M *The authority, during the previous year (2021/22) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The period for the Exercise of Public Rights commenced the day after the Council published the Accounting Statements, the Annual Governance Statement and the Notice as set out in Regulation 15.3 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.	No	<i>The period for the Exercise of Public Rights did not commence the day after the Council published the Accounting Statements, the Annual Governance Statement and the Notice as set out in Regulation 15.3 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Announcement Date was 1st June but the Commencement Date was not until 13th June.</i>	The Council MUST comply with Regulation 15.3 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in respect of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights.	High	The Commencement date will take place the day after the Announcement date.



Parish Council Office, Community Centre, Eskdale Road, Stoke Mandeville, Bucks. HP22
5UJ Phone: 01296 631888 Email: clerk@stokemandeville-pc.gov.uk

Stoke Mandeville Parish Council Statement of Internal Control

Adopted 13th June 2023

Review Date September 2023; January 2024

1. Purpose of the policy

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts.

The purpose of the annual governance statement is for an authority to report publicly on its arrangements for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law, regulations and proper practices and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

The Council must assert that it has maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness. An effective internal control process needs to be in place and monitored in order to achieve this.

2. Responsibilities

- The Council as a corporate body is responsible for setting the precept and approving the annual governance and accountability statement. These responsibilities cannot be delegated.
- The Finance and Governance Committee has delegated responsibilities for management of the Council's finances, policies and procedures and reports back to Council following each committee meeting.
- In accordance with section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council employs a Clerk who is also the Responsible Finance Officer and is responsible for the financial administration of the Council.
- The Council appoints a suitably qualified internal auditor who will carry out an independent audit of the Council's finance records and control systems. Any issues raised by the internal auditor are noted and addressed.
- The scope and plan of the internal audit will be assessed by the Council to ensure that it properly considers and minimises risk to the Council.
- An external auditor is appointed in line with the statutory audit and accounting framework. All notices in respect of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return will be posted by the Clerk on the Council's website and noticeboard.

3. Controls

3.1. Standing Orders

- The Council will adopt and annually review standing orders to govern how it operates. The policy will be based on the latest NALC recommended template documents.
- The Chair of the Council and the Clerk will be responsible for ensuring that the Standing Orders are followed.

3.2. Financial Regulations.

- The Parish Council has adopted Finance Regulations based on the latest model version recommended by NALC / SLCC.
- The Regulations are reviewed annually for continued relevance and amended where necessary by the Responsible Finance Officer with any proposed amendments subject to approval by the Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee and the Full Council.

3.3. Scheme of Delegation

- The Council will delegate to its committees and officers' responsibility for day-to-day management of its assets and routine expenditure.
- Terms of reference for each committee including delegated responsibilities will be prepared and reviewed annually at the Annual Parish Council meeting, where committee members will also be appointed.
- The decisions of each Committee will be recorded in the minutes of its meetings, and these will be noted at the next meeting of the Council.

3.4. Banking Arrangements

- All accounts held will be set up with a minimum of 3 account signatories who will include the Chair and two other Councillors of the Council.
- The RFO will be a signatory on the accounts for administrative purposes only and cannot authorise payments.
- Each transaction (cheque or faster payment) will be authorised by two signatories. They cannot set up bank payments, only authorise them.
- The Parish Council has an online banking system in place. There is a stringent login procedure to follow.
- The RFO is authorised to set up bank payments online.
- The RFO is authorised to transfer funds between the accounts. Transfers must be reported at the next available Parish Council meeting.
- Invoices paid online, can be identified and cross checked to bank statements.
- The account signatories will be reviewed and confirmed annually.
- The RFO will hold a debit card linked to the Parish Council's imprest account that can be used for purchases in shops or online. The maximum limit of expenditure on the card will be £300.

3.5. Investments

- The Council will adopt and annually review an investment policy which will be based on the priorities in order of Security - Liquidity – Yield.

3.6. Expenditure and Income

- All invoices will be checked by the RFO, to confirm the supply has been received, that the supply has not previously been paid, and that the invoice calculations are correct.
- Details of invoices will be emailed to the account signatories for checking before authorisation and payment. For expenditure on the charge card invoices will be certified by the Clerk and will be presented to Council each month.
- The Parish Council subscribes to Rialtas Business solutions (RBS) for a specialist Omega finance software. The RFO is responsible for maintaining an accurate and up to date set of accounts.
- A list of payments will be prepared for each Parish Council and will be recorded in the minutes.
- Original invoices are available to the Councillors authorising payments.
- Payments made under contract by direct debit will be monitored for frequency and accuracy and a schedule prepared for review by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.
- A list of all receipts, including the Precept payments, will be included.
- The RFO will ensure that amount of the Precept received is in accordance with the request sent to Buckinghamshire Council.
- Receipts are to be issued for cash received and a copy kept.

3.7. Financial Reporting

- The Clerk will prepare monthly finance reports to monitor income and expenditure against budgets. These will be reviewed in detail by the Finance and Governance Committee and reported to Full Council.
- The budgeting process will be carried out by the Finance & Governance Committee once the tax base is available.
- The budget and Precept will be resolved at the Full Council meeting in January.
- The RFO will ensure that the Precept is set by the deadline set by Buckinghamshire Council.
- Quarterly bank reconciliations will be checked against bank statements and signed by a member of the Finance and Governance committee and confirmed at the meeting.

3.8. VAT

- The Council is not registered for VAT but will recover VAT under the VAT126 arrangements at appropriate intervals or annually in April.
- The RFO will ensure that all invoices are addressed to the Parish Council.
- The RFO will ensure that proper VAT invoices are received where VAT is payable.
- THE RFO maintains a VAT account to show that the correct amount of VAT is reclaimed each year.

3.10. Reserves

- The Council will adopt and annually review a reserves policy.

3.11. Risk

- The Council will carry out an over-arching risk assessment of its activities which will be reviewed annually. Individual risk assessments will be carried out where required, to ensure health and safety guidelines are implemented.

3.12. Loans and Long-Term Liabilities

- The Council does not currently have any outstanding loans.

3.13. Fixed Assets and Equipment

- The Council's assets need to be secured, properly maintained, and efficiently managed by use of an Asset Register which is reviewed annually.
- Appropriate procedures need to be followed for any asset disposal and for the use of any resulting capital receipt.
- The existence and condition of assets is checked annually by a member of the Parish Council.
- The adequacy of insurance of the Parish Council's assets is considered annually in advance of the insurance renewal.

4. Staff and salaries

- The Council has delegated responsibility for staffing matters to its Personnel Committee.
- All staff will be employed on NALC template contracts, on a specified scale point of the NALC and SLCC salary scales.
- Staff appraisals will be carried out annually in March with an interim appraisal in October.
- Salaries will be reviewed in line with NALC recommendations annually as part of the budgetary process.
- A payroll specialist is employed to prepare the monthly payslips and amount due to HMRC and pensions.
- The Council will enrol all eligible employees in The People's Pension Scheme of which it is a member.
- A budget for staffing will be recommended to the Council by the Personnel Committee each year when setting the precept.

Internal Control Monitoring Financial Year 2023-24

Annual Checks	Due Date	Done
Review of Standing Orders	May 2023	
Review of Finance Regulations	May 2023	
Review of Committee Terms of Reference	May 2023	
Appointments to Committees	May 2023	
Confirmation of bank account signatories	May 2023	
Review of Direct Debits	May 2023	
Review of Asset Register	June 2023	
Review of Risk assessment	June 2023	
Review of Investment Strategy	June 2023	
Review of Reserves Policy	June 2023	
Review of scheme of delegation	May 2023	
Staff annual appraisals	October 2023	
Salary review / NALC pay rises	April 2024	
Year End Internal Audit (prior year)	May 2023	
Annual Governance Statement (prior year)	May 2023	
Annual Accounting statement (prior year)	May 2023	
Review of effectiveness of the Internal Audit (prior year)	June 2023	
Agree a budget for the next financial year	January 2024	
Approve the precept for the next financial year	January 2024	
Quarterly Checks		
Quarterly Finance Reports to Finance & Governance	Q1	
	Q2	
	Q3	
	Q4	
Bank Reconciliations Checked and Signed	Q1	
	Q2	
	Q3	
	Q4	
Monthly Checks		
List of Payments Noted and Signed	Monthly PC	