

Internal Audit Report for Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council

for the period ending 31 March 2023

Clerk	Marie Backhouse
RFO (if different)	
Chairperson	Alan Revell
Precept	£22,324
Income	£75,444
Expenditure	£40,801
General reserves	£15,764
Earmarked reserves	£78,833
Audit type	Annual
Auditor name	Sandra Brown

Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC 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

Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- conduct 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 2022/23 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 conducted as planned



Section 1 – proper bookkeeping

The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council's accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is the ledger maintained and up to date?	Yes	The council uses Scribe to form the basis of their accounting system. It provides data for analysis allowing the RFO to produce clear financial management reports.
Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?	Yes	This provides good evidence to support the Council's underlying statements.
Is the arithmetic correct?	Yes	Accounting records were spot checked – they are very well maintained and clearly identify expenditure and income at any given point.
Additional comments:	·	



Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders

The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC'S latest model which include legislative changes.

		Internal auditor commentary
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	At the meeting of 22 February 2023 the Council carried out an annual review of its Standing Orders. Use of the Model Standing Orders (produced by NALC in 2018) Comment: At the next review Council may wish to increase the procurement values (item 18 Financial Controls & Procurement) updated on 1 January 2022 & see comment below.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	At the meeting of 22 February 2023 the Council carried out an annual review of its Financial Regulations. Use of the Model Financial Regulations (produced by NALC in 2019) Comment: At the next review Council may wish to review the Procurement amendments (SI 2022/1390) of the Public Contracts (Amendment) Regulations 2022 which came into force on 21 December 2022 and make the changes to the contract value limits from £25,000 to £30,000 & see comment above
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? ¹	Yes	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d)(financial administration), the Clerk is the Responsible Financial Officer as per the Council's own Financial Regulations which state the Clerk is the RFO.
Additional comments:		

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)



Section 3 – Payment controls

The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	A selection of expenditure items were made and cross-checked against the cash book, invoices and bank statements. A financial report is presented to Council with a list of payments presented to ensure formal approval of expenditure. Full quarterly financial reports are presented and published on the public website of the Council. Demonstrating good practice in that there are measures in place that help safeguard public money supported by a straight forward and clear audit trail for each payment.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	There is clear evidence of good practice – a schedule of both due and retrospective regular payments are submitted to the Council for approval at each meeting. Payments are checked by two councillors and online authorisation is then completed demonstrating the council is working in line with its own Financial Risk Assessment. Evidence was provided of payments being raised by the RFO awaiting approval from an authorised council member.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	Identified in the cash book with four claims made and received during the year under review totalling £2,375.90
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	Yes	The General Power of Competence has been adopted by Council at its meeting of 26 February 2020.

² Localism Act



Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	N/A	As Council has adopted the GPOC
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	The Council does not operate a Public Works loan in the year under review.
Additional comments:		

Section 4 – Risk management

The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?	Yes	This was considered for the period under review at the meeting of the Council on 27 April 2022 and covers in general terms the matters which could prevent a smaller relevant body from functioning.
Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?	Yes	The General Risk Assessment document show clear consideration of financial and property risks to the Council and the actions and decisions Council needs to put in place during the year. It is noted the Council is responsible for play equipment and an annual inspection to be carried out on all play equipment. The internal auditor noted in the cash book 12.9.22 a payment had been made for the annual play inspection however there was no evidence of a minute reference of its review.

³ Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £8.82 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.



Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?	Yes	Comment: A minute reference is made confirming the annual play inspection of equipment has been carried out. General Insurance from Parish Protect (RSA) for the period under review shows core cover: Public Liability £10 million Employment Liability £10 million Fidelity Guarantee £50,000 which given the current balances held by the council is lower than the recommended guidelines of year end balances plus 1 st instalment of precept received. The Council's insurance cover was renewed at their meeting on 25 May 2022 and there is a minute to show the cover was reviewed and considered appropriate. Comment: At the next review of insurance Council may wish to increase their Fidelity Guarantee cover.
Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed ⁴	Yes	At a meeting of Council on 29 March 2023 it was evidenced that the Council has a comprehensive financial risk assessment that demonstrates public finances are adequately protected and managed and evidence that any necessary steps have been taken to mitigate any risks identified. Documentation to support control procedures adopted by the Council for payments helps protect the RFO and fulfils an internal control objective. In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the Council has understood the requirements to have in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money.
Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including	Yes	The effectiveness of internal audit was reviewed within Councils internal control statement at their meeting on 29 March 2023.

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations



consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment⁵

Additional comments: The Council has identified a number of risks to Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council and taken steps to control these. These are clearly identified and approved by Council. In accordance with proper practices the Council has demonstrated it has taken steps to manage key risks in a way it can justify to a level which is tolerable by transferring the risks and taking out insurance. By reviewing the terms of reference for internal audit the Council has followed guidance and demonstrates it recognises that the internal audit function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily.

⁵ Practitioners Guide



Section 5 – Budgetary controls

The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed	Yes	The budget for the year 2022/23 was discussed by full Council at a meeting on 24 November 2021 and agreed at a full Council meeting on 8 December 2021.
Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	Yes	The precept for the year 2022/23 was set at a meeting of full Council on 8 December 2021 at the sum of £22,324 with a clear minute reference being made which is evidence of good practice.
Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget	Yes	The minutes examined evidence Council receives quarterly reports showing comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure and accords with the Council's own Standing Orders.
Reserves held – general and earmarked ⁶	Yes	The Council's final accounts show general reserves in the sum of £15,764 and earmarked reserves in the sum of £78,833 with overall reserves standing at £94,597 The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained between 3 and 12 months net revenue expenditure. It is noted Council's general reserves are considered to be within this level. Comment: Council should note guidance as issued under the Practitioners Guide which states that an authority needs to have regards to the need to put in place a General Reserves Policy and reviewed the level and purpose of Earmarked Reserves.

⁶ In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure



- review the current year budget and spending -
- assess levels of income -
- -
- bring together spending and income plans provide for contingencies and consider the needs of reserves -
- approve the budget -
- confirm the precept -
- review progress against the budget regularly throughout the year -



Section 6 – income controls

The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Yes	A number of items of income were cross-checked against the cash book and bank statements and found to be in order. In accordance with proper practices the Responsible Financial Officer ensures that accounting records contain day to day entries of all sums of money and that income received is properly accounted for.
Is income reported to full council?	Yes	Income is reported in the quarterly financial report, a copy of which is published on the Councils public website.
Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?	Yes	The Council received precept of £22,324 during the year under review in April and September 2022.
If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations? ⁷	Yes	CIL funds received for the year under review show two receipts of £20,844.83 in April and £20,161.66 in October totalling £41,066.49 as
Is CIL income reported to the council?	Yes	reported to full Council. In accordance with the Regulations the council
Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?	Yes	have received a proportion of CIL funds and ensured that retained balances are transferred to the earmarked reserves specifically allocated.
Has an annual report been produced?	Yes	The council has complied with its duty to produce an annual report that
Has it been published on the authority's website?	Yes	details the amount of CIL funds received and spent. The council has demonstrated it understands the requirements to comply with its duty to produce an annual report that details the amount of CIL funds received and spent. The annual report for the year ending 31 March 2023 showing income received and retained balances was verified by the internal auditor and the Council has complied with its duty to upload the annual report onto its website.

Additional comments:

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010



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Section 7 – petty cash

The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures, and verification processes and that these are up to date.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is petty cash in operation?	N/A	Petty cash not used by Council.
If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?	N/A	
Additional comments:		



Section 8 – Payroll controls

The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Do all employees have contracts of employment?	Yes	Council had one employee during the period under review. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit, but
Has the Council approved salary paid?	Yes	evidence confirms all salary payments are authorised by full Council. The
Minimum wage paid?	Yes	remuneration payable to the employee has been approved in advance by the Council.
Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?	Yes	The payroll function is carried out by SALC in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines. There were suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries 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?	Yes	In accordance with proper practices, PAYE taxes and employee and employer National Insurance contributions (NIC) were calculated and recorded for the employee.
Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation? ⁸	Yes	It is noted that the internal audit report for the previous year mentioned that Council is aware of its pension responsibilities with Council providing its member of staff with a pension as detailed on the payslip. Council is aware they must provide a re-declaration to the Pension Regulator every 3 years with the last re-declaration carried out 27 April 2020.
Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?	Yes	Any additional costs and expenses incurred are approved by Council.

⁸ The Pension Regulator – <u>website click here</u>



Section 9 – Asset control

The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location, and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices? ⁹	Yes	Declared value is £67,424 for the period under review. This showed an uplift of £277 for the year under review. The asset register lists items under insurance that fall within the Council's
Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)	Yes	remit for maintenance and ownership. The register states value as at the date of acquisition and where assets have been gifted or have an unknown value have been given an approximate value.
Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?	Not covered	value have been given an approximate value.
Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The asset register was reviewed by the Council at its meeting on 27 April 2022 and 29 March 2023 confirming it covers assets within the ownership or responsibility of the Council.
Cross checking of insurance cover	Yes	Insurance cover £150,00 is in accordance with the Policy held. Contents other (other property) are generic under heading within the 'All Risks Category' and have been given a value in accordance with the Policy held. It is noted the village hall is also insured at a value of £13,437.67
		rnance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities for England (Marc 2019) In value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of

⁹ Practitioners Guide



Section 10 – bank reconciliation

The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?	Yes	There is evidence of good financial practice and the Council has implemented a system whereby bank reconciliation is correctly verified by the Council. This not only safeguards the Responsible Financial Officer but also fulfils an internal control objective.
Do bank balances agree with bank statements?	Yes	Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end (31 March) for the period under review the balance across the Council's accounts stood at £94,596.54 Unity Trust Bank Account 1 £91,942.79 Unity Trust Bank Account 2 £2,653.75
Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?	Yes	Financial reports are submitted to the Council including a quarterly summary in accordance with the Council's own Standing Orders. The Council is aware that in accordance with proper practices, the bank reconciliation is a key took for management as it assists with the regular monitoring of cash flows and therefore aids decision-making.



Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	Yes	Accounts are produced on a receipts and payments basis and all found to be in order.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	Yes	The end of year accounts and supporting documentation were very well presented for the internal auditor review.
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR ¹⁰ documents been completed?	Yes	The Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000, it has completed Sections 1 and 2 of Form 3 of the AGAR and were signed at the time of internal audit.
Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	N/A	As the Council was a smaller authority with a gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 for the year 2021/22 it was unable to certify itself as an exempt authority.
During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?	Yes	The internal auditor was able to find details of the arrangements for the Exercise of Public Rights on the public website used by the Council for the period 20 June – 29 July 2022.
Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations? ¹¹	Partly Met	The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with an income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 and published the following on their public website before 1 July 2022: Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 - Accounting Statements of the AGAR Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 Not later than 30 September 2022 authorities must publish: Notice of conclusion of audit

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015



	Section 3 External Auditor Report and Certificate Sections 1 & 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. Comment: Council was unable to publish the External Auditor Report & Certificate before 30 September 2022 see section 13
Additional comments:	



Section 12 – internal audit

The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?	Yes	The Internal Auditor's Report for the year ending 31 March 2022 has been considered and reviewed by the Council at their meeting on 29 June 2022.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?	N/A	No recommendations had been made.
Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?	Yes	SALC were appointed to act as the Council's internal auditor at a meeting of the Council on 25 January 2023 for the period under review.
Additional comments:		



report? ¹² presented to Council at its meeting on 25 January 2023.Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?YesThe following matters had come to the external auditor's attention alther it is noted that there were no matters that had given cause for concern	Section 13 – external audit for the period under review The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that pr		veaknesses and recommendations can be considered.
report? ¹² presented to Council at its meeting on 25 January 2023.Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?YesThe following matters had come to the external auditor's attention alther it is noted that there were no matters that had given cause for concern	Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>comments raised?</i> it is noted that there were no matters that had given cause for concern		Yes	The Limited Assurance Review for the period ending 31 March 2022 was presented to Council at its meeting on 25 January 2023.
review. The AGAR had to be sent back for amendment.		Yes	The following matters had come to the external auditor's attention although it is noted that there were no matters that had given cause for concern: The AGAR was not fully and accurately completed before submission for review. The AGAR had to be sent back for amendment.

¹² Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e., All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.



Section 14 – additional information

The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation? ¹³	Yes	The Annual Meeting of the Council was held on 25 May 2022 and the first item on the agenda was the election of the Chair.
Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? ¹⁴	Yes	Minutes are available on the Council's website and clearly document the approval of the previous minutes and that they are duly signed.
Absence is approved?	Yes	Absence was approved (if appropriate)
Is there a list of members' interests held?	Yes	A list of members interests are available through a link clearly shown on the Councils website to East Suffolk District Council where they are available to view.
Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?	N/A	
Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?	Yes	Councils should be aware that Councils with income over £25,000 but under £200,000 will be expected (but are not legally required to do so) to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000). Comment: To ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000), the following information should be published in accordance with the required timescales: Quarterly: Individual items of expenditure that exceed £500; Government Procurement Card transactions; Invitations to tender for contracts over £5,000; Details of contracts that exceed £5,000 Annually: Details of all land and building assets; Grants to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations.

¹³ The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

¹⁴ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011



Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)? ¹⁵	Yes	The Council is correctly registered with the ICO as a data controller in accordance with legislation – ZA426312
Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?	Yes	The Council has taken steps to ensure compliancy – evidenced as follows: Data Protection Statement Freedom of Information Policy Subject Access Request Form Subject Access Request Policy Subject Access Request Procedure Procedures for dealing with data breaches Data retention policy Privacy notice GDPR Risk Assessment
Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations? ¹⁶	Yes	Council has published on its website a website accessibility statement – Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (websites and mobile applications) (No2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence? ¹⁷	Yes	Council has an official email address: clerkkelsalepc@gmail.com
Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?	Yes	All electronic copies of documents are held in a backup file which is synchronised with copies held on the local machine in real time. All backups can be accessed from the external hard drive as per Councils own Risk Assessment.
Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?	N/A	These were not viewed at the time of internal audit

Signed: S.J. Brown

- ¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018
- ¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018
- ¹⁷ Practitioners Guide



Date of Internal Audit Report: 22nd May 2023

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils