

Internal Audit Report for Snape Parish Council

for the year ending 31st March 2023

Clerk	Marie Backhouse
RFO (if different)	As above
Chairperson	Paul Richards
Precept	£11,303
Income	£13,948
Expenditure	£15,546
General reserves	£10,000
Earmarked reserves	£41,300
Audit type	Annual
Auditor name	Julie Lawes

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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	YES	The council uses an excel spreadsheet to form the basis of their accounting system. It provides data for analysis allowing the RFO to produce clear financial management reports detailing receipts and payments and ensures that the financial transactions of the parish council are accurately recorded.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	YES	The cash book provides good evidence to support the council's underlying statements. Regular reports are generated and circulated to councillors detailing receipts and payments.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	YES	The accounts were spot checked and were all found to be correct.
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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	YES	At a meeting on 27 th September 2022 the council carried out an annual review of its Standing Orders, these are available to view on the council's website and are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018 which take into account changes in legislation from those produced in 2013.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	YES	Financial Regulations were reviewed and agreed at a council meeting held 22 nd November 2022. These are available to view on the council's website and are based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations 2019
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	YES	The 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 Council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. Council's own Financial Regulations (1.8) state that 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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	YES	A selection of expenditure items was made, and cross checked against the cash book, invoices and bank statements. A list of payments is presented to councillors ensure formal approval of expenditure and this is correctly minuted. This demonstrates good practice in that there are measures in place that help safeguard public money.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	YES	The council records within its minutes a review and authorisation of payments and signing of the invoices by the signatories. The payments are set up on the Unity Trust Bank account, an email is generated to two of the approved signatories for authorisation.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	YES	Three payments were recorded within the cash book of being received from HMRC. £568.27 on 28 th June 2022 £272.19 on 28 th September 2022 £130.32 on 27 th January 2023 This was then evidenced as received in the Unity Trust bank accounting statements.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	N/A	The council has not adopted the General Power of Competence.

² Localism Act

Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	N/A	There were no s137 payments recorded during the period under review.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	The council has no loans.
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
<i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i>	YES	This was considered for the period under review at the meeting of the council on 27 th September 2022 and covers in general terms the matters which would prevent a smaller relevant body from functioning. This is published on the council website.
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	YES	The council has taken steps to identify, assess and record the risks associated with its actions and decisions that could have financial or reputational consequences.
<i>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?</i>	YES	Council has insurance in place under a BHIB Policy which shows core cover for the following: Public Liability £10m; Products Liability £10m; Employers Liability £10m; Business Interruption: £10k and Fidelity Guarantee of £100k. The level of Fidelity Guarantee meets the recommended guidelines which provides that the cover should be at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants.

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.

		This was discussed and reviewed by full council at a meeting held 27 th September 2022 at which a further quote was considered for comparison.
<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i>	YES	At a full council meeting on 27 th September 2022, it was evidenced that the council reviewed its Internal Control Check. This clearly demonstrates public finances are adequately protected and managed and evidence 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. These are published on the council's website.
<i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment⁵</i>	YES	The effectiveness of the internal audit was discussed by full Council at a meeting held 27 th September 2022 within the Internal Control Statement. By reviewing the terms of reference and effectiveness for internal audit the council has followed guidance and demonstrates that it recognises that the function of internal audit is to test and report to the authority on whether its system of internal control is adequate.
Additional comments:		

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

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
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	YES	Following consideration by the Finance Group, a budget was agreed and set at a meeting of full council 23 rd November 2021 at £11,303.
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	YES	The precept was set at £11,303 and formally approved at a meeting of full council on 23 rd November 2021. Evidence of the submission to East Suffolk Council was viewed by the Internal Auditor.
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	YES	Expenditure against Budget reporting is conducted on a quarterly basis and reported to full council. This was evidenced within the minutes at meetings held 26 th July 2022, 22 nd November 2022 and 24 th January 2023 with the budget reports published on the council website.
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i>	YES	The councils accounts show a general reserve of £10,000 and an earmarked reserve of £41,300 as detailed within the quarterly statement.
Additional comments:		

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

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	Income is recorded in accordance with Council’s Financial Regulations. A number of income items were cross checked against the cash book and bank statements and found to be in order.
Is income reported to full council?	YES	Income is reported to full council within the quarterly financial reports.
Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority’s notification?	YES	The bank statements and minutes evidence the receipt of the precept of £11,303 as per the Council Tax Authority notification received in two separate payments of £5,651.50.
If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations? ⁷	YES	A CIL report for the year ended 31 st March 2023 is provided on the council website. Opening Balance £9,204.46 Income £780.61 Expenditure £5,424.00 End Balance £4,561.07 Income is reported to council within the quarterly financial reports. RECOMMENDATION: That the CIL funds be separated from general council funds and clearly identified in the Earmarked Reserves. As council is aware CIL funds are to offset in the impact of development and should not be mixed in with day-to-day expenditure. Current earmarked reserves detail: Road Traffic Management Plan £30,000 Precept Equivalent £11,303
Is CIL income reported to the council?	YES	
Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?	NO	
Has an annual report been produced?	YES	
Has it been published on the authority’s website?	YES	
Additional comments:		

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

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
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	N/A	The council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	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. If the Clerk was recruited after 1 st April 201, evidence will be required to show compliance with the new requirements for the statement of employment, Induction, probation periods and training requirements. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	YES	The council had 1 employee on its payroll at the period end of 31st March 2023. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit but it was confirmed by the clerk that a contract was in place. Salary is approved by full council. The member of staff does not receive minimum wage.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	YES	
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	N/A	
<i>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?</i>	YES	The payroll function is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Custom guidelines.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	YES	The payroll function for the year under review was carried out by SALC and is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines. Payments to HM Revenue and Customs for the year under review were carried out quarterly.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁸</i>	YES	Council completed its re-declaration of compliance on 25 th July 2022.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	YES	Council approves all expenses as and when occurred.
Additional comments: There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.		

⁸ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

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
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?⁹</i>	YES	The declared value for all assets at year-end 31 st March 2023 was £104,338 which shows movement of £523 for a bench at Snape Common acquired 24 th May 2022. Records of deed, articles and land registry documents were not viewed at the time of the audit.
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	YES	
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/A	
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	YES	The Asset Register details annual reviews with full council agreeing at meeting held 28 th March 2023. The Asset Register is published on the council website.
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	YES	Insurance cover is in accordance with the Policy held. Council reviewed and agreed insurance to be taken with BHIB at their meeting held on 27 th September 2022.
Additional comments:		

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
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	YES	Bank Reconciliations are conducted on a regular basis, at each bi-monthly meeting with two councillors approving the accounts.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	YES	Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end 31st March 2022 the balance across the council's accounts stood at £56,121.55 as recorded in the Draft Statement of Accounts.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	YES	Account balances are recorded on a quarterly basis within the Finance Report at full council meetings, with the reports published on the council website.

Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	YES	The accounts are produced on receipts and payments basis.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	YES	There is a clear financial trail from budgeting, invoice, authorisation, payment and banking.
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR ¹⁰ documents been completed?	YES	As the Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it has completed Section 2 of Part 2 of the AGAR. COMMENT: As recorded in the previous Audit Review there appears to be a historic reconciliation error with Box 7 of year 2021/22 detailing £57,715 and Box 1 of 2022/2023 detailing £57,719. Section 2 of the Accounting Statements states ‘Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of the previous year.’ It is expected this is from rounding up / down when entering the figures over a period of years.
Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	N/A	For the period 2021/2022 council was a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was required to complete Part 3 of the AGAR which was agreed and approved at a meeting held 24 th May 2022. For the period of 2022/2023 council is able to declare itself exempt within income and expenditure under £25k.
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 exercise of public rights was set as Monday 20 th June to Friday 29 th July 2022 which included the mandatory first 10 working days of July. This was evidenced on the council website with the notice publicised.

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations? ¹¹</i>	YES	<p>For the period of 2021/2022 the Council complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million for the year ending 31 March 2022 and published the following on a public website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Report of the AGAR • Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR • Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR • Section 3 – External Audit Report and Certificate. • Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights • The Notice of the conclusion of audit
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i>	YES	The Internal Audit Report was considered by full council at a meeting held 26 th July 2022, this was then revisited at a meeting held 22 nd November 2022 where recommendations were discussed.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	YES	It is evidenced within the minutes and relevant documents uploaded onto the website that most of the items raised within the Audit Report have been actioned.
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	YES	The council confirmed the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the period under review at a meeting held 24 th January 2023.
Additional comments:		

Section 13 – external audit for the period under review		
The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Has the Council considered the previous external audit report? ¹²	YES	The external audit report was considered at a meeting held 22 nd November 2022.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	YES	Action was taken where appropriate.
Additional comments:		

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 Parish Council Meeting was held 24 th May 2022 with its first item on the agenda the election of the Chairman and signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as specified in the councils Standing Orders.
Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? ¹⁴	YES	Council approves the minutes of the previous meeting by resolution. COMMENT: Minutes on the website do not detail page numbers. Each month begins with agenda from number 1. To ensure records were correctly maintained, council may look to implement a rolling agenda or page numbering system to ensure pages or meeting minutes did not go astray.
Is there a list of members' interests held?	YES	A list of members interests is available on the website of the District Council. COMMENT: Council may wish to add a link on the Parish Council website to the Register of Members Interests on the District Council website.
Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?	N/A	The council does not have any Trustee Responsibilities.
Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?	YES	RECOMMENDATION: To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller authorities (turnover not exceeding £25,000), Council must ensure that the following should be published on a public website for the year 2022/2023 not later than 1 July: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Report • List of Councillors and Responsibilities • Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT • End of Year Accounts

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

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Governance Statement • Asset Register • and that Agendas of Meetings; Associated Papers and Minutes should be published in accordance with the prescribed timescales as set out in the Transparency code for smaller authorities – December 2014.
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁵</i>	YES	The Council is registered with the ICO as a data controller. Registration Certificate ZA313927 expiry date 4 th April 2023.
Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?	YES	The council has taken steps to ensure compliancy. Documents detailed on the council's website include: Data Protection; Data Protection Allotments; Data Protection Risk Assessment; Data Protection Statement; Privacy Notice; Subject Access Policy and Template Letters; Data Retention Policy; Data Breach Policy. Documents were reviewed and updated July and September 2022.
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁶</i>	YES	The council has published a Website Accessibility Statement.
<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?¹⁷</i>	YES	The clerk and councillors have email addresses directly linked to the council @snapevillageinfo with the clerk contactable on snapecp.clerk@gmail.com
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	YES	Council's Internal Control Statement evidences electronic records are backed up and maintained separately by the Clerk.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	N/A	The council does not currently have committees, however it is referenced in the minutes of the meeting held 28 th March 2023 a Finance Committee is to be established.
Additional comments:		

Signed: *J. Lawes*

Date of Internal Audit Visit: N/A

Date of Internal Audit Report: 06th June 2023

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁷ Practitioners Guide

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils