



HUDSON ACCOUNTING LTD.  
INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT:  
TO THE MEMBERS OF CHACEWATER PARISH  
COUNCIL  
YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023.

ISSUE DATE: 12/05/2023  
ISSUED TO: PARISH CLERK

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

### **Scope:**

The scope of the audit covers, as a minimum, the areas included in the Internal Audit Report contained in the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the Transparency Code.

### **Approach:**

Audit work is carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Internal Audit Standards and guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils.

Where applicable we have included reference to 'proper practice' and the associated guidance as laid out in 'Governance & Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England' which is applicable to financial years from 1st April 2022.

Selective testing was carried out and the relevant policies, procedures and controls were reviewed.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

We would like to thank the Clerk for their assistance and co-operation during the audit.

The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during our internal audit work and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required.

It should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that the internal audit service can provide is a reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in risk management, governance, and control processes. The audit does not guarantee that the accounting records are free from fraud or error.

***The review undertaken obtained a level of assurance which has allowed us to complete the Internal Audit Report element of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return with no qualifications, thus in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.***

We have provided a table of audit recommendations that allow for the Council's response which can be used as an ongoing monitoring tool. We would be grateful if, in due course, it was completed and returned to us.

Attached is a copy of the completed Internal Audit Report required as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

## AUDIT COMMENTARY:

Items in **bold text** within the body of the report represent our findings in respect of the application of controls, text in *italics* represent suggested actions that fall short of being a formal recommendation or do not necessarily pertain to the application of internal controls.

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

The accounts are maintained on SCRIBE accounting software; they were up to date, in balance and free from material errors.

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

#### *Financial Regulations*

Financial Regulations were last reviewed in May 2020.

#### *Payment*

Testing showed that payments are supported by invoices, are duly authorised and are included on payment schedules approved by Members.

#### *VAT*

Two VAT errors were found one where it had not been included on a Cartridge Centre invoice in February 2023 and one where 20% VAT was taken on an Ecotripty invoice rather than the 5% shown on the invoice.

*The utility invoices should be checked to see if there are any further errors and should be corrected as necessary.*

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

#### *Insurance*

Statutory insurances are in place and the Fidelity Guarantee is adequate at £150K.

#### *Risk Assessment & Internal Controls*

The Council has reviewed its risk assessment, which is comprehensive.

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

#### *Budget setting*

The 2023/24 budget and precept were properly approved by Council following the production of detailed estimates.

#### *Budget monitoring*

Quarterly monitoring reports have been provided to Members.

#### *Adequacy of Reserves*

After allowing for earmarked reserves of £37,099 the general reserve stands at £23,946; equating to 69% of gross expenditure which is within generally accepted parameters.

**There is no specific Community Infrastructure Levy earmarked reserve.**

*As there are limitations on what it can be spent on it would be sensible to establish one so that the flow of grants and associated expenditure can be monitored.*

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

#### *Precept*

The precept received was checked to the records of the Council and the principal authority

and found to be in accord.

*VAT claims*

A VAT claim for the 2022 calendar year has been submitted and duly paid by HMRC.

A FIT refund has been erroneously coded as VAT; this should be corrected as it will skew the VAT controls within the accounting system.

*Hall Hire*

Testing revealed no issues to report.

**F Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for.**

**NOT OPERATED.**

**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.**

Salaries are paid in accordance with contractual Terms and PAYE requirements have been met.

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

The asset register is up to date, valuation methods are appropriate and the total value of assets held is accurately reflected in the AGAR.

**I Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.**

Monthly reconciliations are reported to and approved by Members.

The year-end bank reconciliation was found to be accurate.

**J Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure) agreed to the cash book, supported by an appropriate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.**

The accounts were produced on a receipts and payments basis and were in accord with underlying records

An audit trail was provided and accompanying information required by the external auditor produced.

The accounting system AGAR is balanced to the penny so care will be needed to ensure that the 'rounded' figures on the AGAR to be submitted tally and that the figures for the comparative year are in agreement with those submitted last year.

**K IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.**

**NOT APPLICABLE.**

**L The authority published the required information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.**

Proper guidance on this will not be available until after the deadline for AGAR submission and my discussion with the external auditor suggests it is left to internal auditors to interpret. My view is that is intended to only apply to Exempt authorities who have additional publication requirements, which excludes this Council

However, as the Council has met the requirements of section N below and its website is up to date and provides information that would reasonably be expected to be there, I have ticked the 'yes' box rather than 'not covered' to ensure that time and potentially money is not

wasted replying to the external auditor should they query a 'not covered' response.

**M In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts & Audit Regulations**

The AGAR was properly approved by Council, the requisite Notice was published and the correct number of days for public inspection were allowed

**N The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR.**

All publication requirements were met.

**O Trust funds (including charitable). The council met its responsibilities as trustee.**

The Council recognises its interest as Trustee when discussing matters relating to the various charities but it does also approve Trust expenditure during the meeting.

*Separating the roles of Council and Trustee is complex but approving expenditure is clearly a role that would be undertaken by Trustees and therefore should not happen at Council meetings – a separate meeting should be held (before or after the Council meeting) to deal with Charity business.*

**The Council is not listed as a Trustee, rather it appears to be individual councillors.**

*The Charity documents should be scrutinised to establish whether it is the Council as a body or Councillors who are Trustees. In practical terms it will make little difference but it would require a different answer to the Trust question on the AGAR in future years.*

**Charity Commission Returns are up to date.**

INTERNAL AUDIT RESPONSE RECORD – CHACEWATER PARISH COUNCIL

No	Recommendation	Management Response	Timescale/ Responsibility	Follow up (Auditor Use)
<b>Financial Year 2019/20</b>				
1	The council establishes a minimum reserve level policy and then reviews its current reserves and 'frees up' sufficient resource to ensure that this level is achieved.			<b>Policy drafted for adoption at April 2022 meeting - closed</b>
3	A suitable pension scheme should be adopted.			<b>The Council must adopt a scheme by law (most use NEST) even if there in no desire to use it.</b>
<b>Financial Year 2018/19</b>				
3	The actual controls in place in respect of internet banking are embedded in Financial Regulations and the controls expanded to reflect the SLCC guidance.			Move to new bank under investigation – dual release of payments should be included. <b>Decision made to stay with HSBC – if dual payment controls not available then the lack of separation of duties should be recognised in the risk assessment and other controls reviewed in that light to establish if any further mitigating measures are needed.</b>

# Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

## CHACEWATER PARISH COUNCIL

www.chacewater.net/your-parish/council-finances/

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✓
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.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).</i>	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).</i>	✓		

NOT USED

O. (For local councils only)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	✓		

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

11/05/2023

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

S P HUDSON C.P.F.A.

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

S. P. Hudson

Date

12/05/2023

**\*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**

**\*\*Note:** If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).