

Report to Creeting St Mary Parish Council

The Internal Audit of the Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019

1. Summary

1.1 During the 2018/19 year the Parish Council maintained effective governance arrangements including a robust framework of financial administration and internal control. This Internal Audit review has confirmed the overall adequacy of the financial arrangements currently in place within the Council.

1.2 By examination of the 2018/19 accounts and supporting documentation it was confirmed that the Clerk, in the role as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), is satisfactorily undertaking the administration of the Council's financial affairs and produced satisfactory financial management information to enable the Council to make well-informed decisions.

1.3 The Accounts for the year confirm the following:

Total Receipts for the year: £16,273.92

Total Payments in the year: £9,569.63

Total Reserves at year-end: £30,310.43

1.4 The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) was examined and the following figures agreed with the Clerk for inclusion in Section 2 Accounting Statements 2018/19 (rounded for purposes of the Return):

<i>Balances at beginning of year (1 April 2018):</i>	<i>Box 1: £23,606</i>
<i>Annual Precept 2018/19:</i>	<i>Box 2: £9,500</i>
<i>Total Other Receipts:</i>	<i>Box 3: £6,774</i>
<i>Staff Costs:</i>	<i>Box 4: £3,154</i>
<i>Loan interest:</i>	<i>Box 5: nil</i>
<i>All Other payments:</i>	<i>Box 6: £6,416</i>
<i>Balances carried forward (31 March 2019):</i>	<i>Box 7: £30,310</i>
<i>Total cash/short-term investments:</i>	<i>Box 8: £30,310</i>
<i>Total fixed assets:</i>	<i>Box 9: £33,265</i>
<i>Total borrowings:</i>	<i>Box 10: nil</i>

1.5 Sections One and Two of the AGAR are due to be approved and signed at a forthcoming meeting of the Council. The Internal Auditor has completed the Annual Internal Audit Report 2018/19 within the AGAR.

1.6 All documents were very well presented for the Internal Audit review.

1.7 The following Internal Audit work was carried out on the adequacy of systems of internal control. Comments and any recommendations arising from the review are made below.

2. Proper book-keeping (examination of entries in the Cashbook, regular reconciliation of books and bank statements and supporting vouchers, invoices and receipts)

2.1 The Cashbook Spreadsheet was found to be in good order and well presented. The payment made under the Local Government Act 1972 (Section 137) has been separately recorded as required. VAT payments are tracked and separately identified within the Cashbook to assist future re-claims to HMRC.

2.2 The Cashbook Spreadsheet is well referenced and provides a good audit trail to the Bank Statements and Cheque Book counterfoils and the financial information prepared by the Clerk. These documents provided good evidence in support of the receipts and payments in the year. A sample of transactions was closely examined and was found to be in order with supporting invoices/vouchers in place.

3. Governance, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (examination of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Tenders where relevant, appropriate payment controls including acting within the legal framework with reference to Council Minutes. Identifying VAT payments and re-claims. Cheque books, paying-in books and other relevant documents)

3.1 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are in place. The Council reviewed, approved and adopted the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations at its meeting on 25 March 2019 (Minute CSM188/18/19b refers).

3.2 The Council's Minutes are well presented and provide clear evidence of the decisions taken by the Council.

3.3 A re-claim for £845.16 VAT payments made during the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 was submitted to HMRC on 12 April 2018 and received at bank on 25 May 2018. The re-claim for £557.83 VAT paid in the year 2018/19 was submitted to HMRC on 9 April 2019.

3.4 The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Fee Payer/Data Controller for the provision of council services (Registration ZA057299, expiring 30 July 2019 refers).

3.5 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Report for the year 2018/19 confirmed that CIL income of £4,162.14 had been received in the year of account and a CIL balance of £7,128.85 was being retained as at 31 March 2019. The Clerk/RFO confirmed that a copy of the Report has been sent to the District Council Infrastructure Team, as required.

3.6 At its meeting on 6 July 2015 the Council re-affirmed the adoption of the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct for the purposes of discharging its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within its area.

4. Internal Control and the Management of Risk (*Review by Council of the effectiveness of internal controls, including risk assessment, and Minuted accordingly*)

4.1 The Council's Internal Audit Control and Risk Management arrangements were reviewed and approved by the Council at its meeting on 25 March 2019 (Draft Minute CSM188/18/19a refers). The Risk Assessment and Management (financial) document was also reviewed at the meeting. The documents provide detailed analysis of the financial risks faced by the Council and the control measures in place to mitigate the risks identified.

4.2 The Council accordingly complied with Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires a review by the full Council at least once a year of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control, including the arrangements for management of risk, with the review suitably Minuted.

4.3 The Council receives regular reports of inspections taking place at the Blacksmiths Field including a checklist of current condition of equipment and any action proposed/taken. Independent inspections of play areas were undertaken by Ipswich Borough Council during the year at a cost of £213.78.

4.4 Insurance was in place for the year of account. The Council approved the insurance renewal for the forthcoming year at the meeting held on 22 October 2018 (Minute CSM100/18/19c refers). Public Liability cover stands at £10m.

4.5 The Employee Dishonesty insurance cover stands at £25,000, which is lower than the current recommended guidelines which provide that the cover should be at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants (approx. £35,200 as at 31 March 2019). The previous Internal Audit Report (dated 24 April 2018) recommended that the Employee Dishonesty cover is examined as part of the Council's risk management reviews undertaken during the year. At its meeting on 25 March 2019 the Council reviewed the level of Fidelity Guarantee insurance and resolved that it should remain unchanged for the next financial year, 2019/20 (Draft Minute CSM187/18/19 refers).

5. Budgetary controls (*Verification of the budgetary process with reference to Council Minutes and supporting documents*)

Precept 2018/19: £9,500.00

Precept 2019/20: £9,800.00

5.1 The Budget for 2018/19 was agreed in full Council on 9 January 2018 and the precept decision and amount has been clearly Minuted (CSM136/17/18 iv and v refer).

5.2 Similarly, the Budget for 2019/20 was agreed in full Council and the precept decision and amount has been clearly Minuted (Council meeting on 14 January 2019, Minutes CSM147/18/19 d and e refer).

5.3 The Clerk/RFO ensures the Council is aware of its responsibilities, commitments, forward planning and the need for adequate reserves. The Council has sound budgetary procedures in place. Examination of the accounts and supporting documentation for the year under review confirmed that the Council prepared detailed estimates of the annual budget and of receipts and payments. The estimates for 2019/20 can be used effectively for financial control and budgetary control purposes.

5.4 The Clerk/RFO presents Budget Monitoring Reports to the Council which compares the budget for the year against actual income and expenditure.

5.5 At the meeting held on 25 March 2019 the Clerk/RFO reported to Council the current financial position including the earmarked reserves as follows:

CIL Receipts:	£7,128.85
History Days:	£182.15
Blacksmith Field:	£6,006.46

5.6 The overall Reserves at the year-end totalled £30,310.43 (of which £13,317.46 is earmarked as above). The General Reserves of £16,992.97 are significantly higher than the generally accepted best practice position of non-earmarked revenue reserves (which is being equal to three to six months of contractual expenditure). As at the 31 March 2019 the Council maintained sufficient reserves and contingency sums to meet, within reason, any unforeseen items of expense and may wish to consider earmarking further General Reserves during 2019/20 for specific future projects.

6. Income controls *(Regarding Precept and other income, including credit control mechanisms)*

6.1 Receipts recorded in the Cashbook were cross referenced with the Council's Bank Statements on a sample basis and were found to be in order.

7. Petty Cash *(Associated books and established system in place)*

7.1 A Petty Cash system is not in use; an expenses system is in place.

8. Transparency Code (Compliance for smaller councils with income/ expenditure under £25,000)

8.1 Under the provisions of the Transparency Code, Creeting St Mary Parish Council can be designated as a 'Smaller Council'.

8.2 The Council's website is: <http://www.creating-st-mary.suffolk.gov.uk/parish-council/>

Smaller Councils should publish on their website:

- a) *All items of expenditure above £100. Yes, payments published.*
- b) *Annual Governance Statement: 2017/18 AGAR Annual Return Section One. Yes, published on website.*
- c) *End-of-Year accounts: 2017/18 AGAR Annual Return, Section Two. Yes, published on website.*
- d) *Annual Internal Audit report: within 2017/18 AGAR Annual Return. Yes, published on website.*
- e) *List of councillor or member responsibilities. Yes, published on website.*
- f) *The details of public land and building assets (Asset Register). Yes, published on website.*
- g) *Minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings. Yes, published on website.*

8.3 The Council is complying with the requirements of the Transparency Code.

9. Payroll controls *(PAYE and NIC in place; compliance with HMRC procedures; records relating to contracts of employment)*

9.1 The Council is registered with HMRC and the Payroll is being operated in-house in accordance with HMRC requirements.

9.2 At its meeting on 25 March 2019 the Council considered the grading of the Clerk/RFO's post with reference to the national pay scales. The Council noted that the Clerk/RFO had passed the Certificate in Local Council Administration and it was agreed that the post be confirmed at SCP 22 (Draft Minute CSM200/18/19 refers).

9.3 With regard to the workplace pensions legislation, the Council wrote to the Clerk/RFO on 2 July 2017 outlining the scheme and the criteria and confirmed that Mrs Blackburn did not become a member of the scheme automatically but had the option to join the scheme. Mrs Blackburn decided not to join the scheme.

10. Asset control and valuation *(Inspection of asset register and checks on existence of assets; recording of fixed asset valuations; cross checking on insurance cover)*

10.1 An Asset Register is in place. The total value of £33,264.59 as at 31 March 2019 is an increase of £300.00 over the value as at the end of the previous year and reflects the acquisition of a grit bins in the year of account.

10.2 The Register complies with the current requirements which provide that each asset should be displayed at a consistent value, year-on-year. The assets are

recorded at purchase cost (where known) or a community value of £1 in appropriate cases. The value has been correctly entered into Box 9 of Section 2 of the AGAR.

11. Bank Reconciliation (*Regularly completed and cashbooks reconcile with bank statements*)

11.1 The bank statements for the TSB Business Current Account and the two TSB Savings Accounts reconciled with the End-of-Year accounts and agreed with the overall Bank Reconciliation.

12. Year End procedures (*Regarding accounting procedures used and can be followed through from working papers to final documents. Verifying sample payments and income. Checking creditors and debtors where appropriate*)

12.1 End-of-Year accounts are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis and were in good order. Sample audit trails were undertaken and were found to be in order.

13. Internal Audit Procedures (*That the Council has satisfactory internal financial controls in place and any previous recommendations implemented*)

13.1 The Council has satisfactory internal financial controls in place. The Clerk/RFO provides financial reports to Council meetings and Councillors are provided with information to enable them to make informed decisions. The Council receives at each meeting details of the financial position of the Council, including details of funds held and movements since the last meeting.

13.2 Cheque Book counterfoils and invoices/vouchers for payment are initialled by cheque signatories in compliance with Financial Regulation item 6.5. Receipts and payments are listed in the Council's Minutes as part of the overall financial control framework.

13.3 The Internal Audit Report for the previous year, 2017/18 was reported to the Council at its meeting on 22 May 2018 (Minute CSM19/18/19 iii refers). The Council noted the report and its recommendations, which were as follows:

- a) The risk assessment documents should be expanded to include non-financial risks (for example the risks at the Play Areas) in order that all risks can be formally considered by the Council during the year. This has been addressed.
- b) The Fidelity Guarantee insurance cover should be examined as part of the Council's risk management reviews undertaken during the year. At its meeting on 25 March 2019 the Council reviewed the level of Fidelity Guarantee insurance and resolved that it should remain unchanged for the next financial year, 2019/20.

13.4 The Internal Auditor for the 2018/19 year was appointed by the Council at the meeting held on 25 March 2019 (Draft Minute CSM187/18/19d refers).

14. External Audit (*Recommendations put forward/comments made following the annual review*)

14.1 An External Audit was not required in the year 2017/18. At its meeting on 22 May 2018 the Council completed the Certificate of Exemption from a Limited Assurance Review for that year.

14.2 At its meeting on 25 March 2019 the Council noted that the same arrangements would apply to the external audit for 2018/19 viz. that the Council is able to claim exemption from a Limited Assurance Review.

15. Additional Comments

15.1 The Annual Parish Council meeting was held on 22 May 2018, within the required timescale. The first item of business was the Election of Chairman, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

15.2 I would like to record my appreciation to the Clerk to the Council for her assistance during the course of the audit work.

Trevor Brown

Trevor Brown, CPFA

Internal Auditor

2 May 2019