

Report to Bacton Parish Council

The Internal Audit of the Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025

1. Introduction and Summary.

1.1 The Internal Audit for the year 2024/25 confirmed that the Council maintains efficient governance arrangements including a robust and effective framework of internal control and risk management. The Internal Audit review, undertaken on the documentation provided to the Internal Auditor and on the information published on the Council’s website, has confirmed that the Council maintains an effective framework of financial administration.

1.2 The Internal Auditor visited the Clerk on 23 April 2025 to complete the audit. By examination of the 2024/25 accounts and supporting documentation it was confirmed that the current Clerk, in the role of the Council’s Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), satisfactorily undertook the administration of the Council’s financial affairs to a high standard and produced all necessary financial management information to enable the Council to make well-informed decisions.

1.3 The Council’s documentation and information were very well presented by the Clerk/RFO for the internal audit.

1.4 The Accounts for the year display the following:

Total Receipts for the year: £150,646.49
Total Payments in the year: £111,734.39
*Total Reserves at year-end: £270,067.67 (of which £252,794.38 is earmarked/
restricted)*

1.5 The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) was examined and the following figures agreed with the Clerk/RFO for inclusion in Section 2 (rounded for purposes of the Return):

<i>Balances at beginning of year (1 April 2024):</i>	<i>Box 1: £231,155</i>
<i>Annual Precept 2024/25:</i>	<i>Box 2: £40,255</i>
<i>Total Other Receipts:</i>	<i>Box 3: £110,391</i>
<i>Staff Costs:</i>	<i>Box 4: £24,935</i>
<i>Loan interest/Capital repayment:</i>	<i>Box 5: £0</i>
<i>All Other payments:</i>	<i>Box 6: £86,799</i>
<i>Balances carried forward (31 March 2025):</i>	<i>Box 7: £270,067</i>
<i>Total cash/short-term investments:</i>	<i>Box 8: £270,067</i>
<i>Total fixed assets:</i>	<i>Box 9: £99,615</i>
<i>Total borrowings:</i>	<i>Box 10: £0</i>

1.6 Sections One and Two of the AGAR are due to be approved at a forthcoming meeting of the Council. The Internal Auditor has completed the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 within the AGAR.

1.7 The following Internal Audit work was carried out on the adequacy of systems of internal control in accordance with the Council's Engagement Letter dated 9 December 2024 and the agreed schedule of work. Comments and any recommendations arising from the review are made below.

2. Governance, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other Regulatory matters (*examination of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Formal Policies and Procedures, Tenders where relevant. Acting within the legal framework, including Data Protection legislation*).

2.1 The **Annual Parish Council meeting** took place on 20 May 2024. The first item of Parish Council business was the Election of a Chair, as required by the Local Government Act 1972. As part of its overall governance arrangements, at its meeting on 20 May 2024 the Council also reviewed and approved the formation of a Finance Committee and a Staffing Committee and agreed their membership for 2024/25.

2.2 **Standing Orders** are in place. At the meeting on 20 May 2024 the Council reviewed and adopted Standing Orders which are based on the model documents published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). A copy has been published on the Council's website. Revisions to the model Standing Orders were published by NALC on 31 March 2025. These were included and approved at the meeting of the Council on 14 April 2025 and are evidenced in the Minutes.

2.3 **Financial Regulations** are in place, having been reviewed and adopted by the Council at the meeting on 13 January 2025 and are based on the Model Financial Regulations published by NALC. A copy has been published on the Council's website. Revisions to the model Financial Regulations were published by NALC on 13 March 2025. These were included and approved at the meeting of the Council on 14 April 2025 and are evidenced in the Minutes.

2.4 A **Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)** is in place. At the beginning of the financial year Suzanne Lupin was in post as the Clerk/RFO. At the meeting on 12 August 2024 the Council was advised of her resignation and Tina Newall was appointed as the Meeting Clerk. At the meeting on 19 August 2024 the Council resolved to formally appoint Tina Newall to the role of Clerk/RFO with effect from 23 September 2024 but she would, until that time, support the Council as required.

2.5 The Council's **Minutes** are well presented and provide clear evidence of the decisions taken by the Council in the year. The Council demonstrates good practice by publishing draft Minutes (prior to formal approval by the Council) to keep residents advised of Parish Council business. The Clerk/RFO confirmed that each page of the Minutes is signed/initialled by the person acting as Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes are approved.

2.6 At the meeting on 10 February 2025 the Council agreed to the sequential numbering of the Minute pages as from the meeting of 13 January 2025. The Council Minutes are printed as loose-leaf documents and, whilst this is acceptable in law, pages should be numbered consecutively and initialled by the person signing the Minutes as a true record to show that any Minutes in a loose-leaf binder are the originally signed Minutes and have not been replaced. Signed, hard-copy Minutes are the only authentic and legal record of a Council meeting and can be used as evidence in a court of law if necessary. The minutes are prepared by numerical number which acts as further security.

2.7 The Council is registered with the **Information Commissioner's Office** (ICO) as a Fee Payer/Data Controller for the provision of council services under Data Protection legislation (Registration ZA168550 refers, expiring 21 February 2026).

2.8 The Council maintains a number of **Policies, Procedures and Protocols** to demonstrate compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) including:

Data Protection Policy

Data Breach Policy

Lawful basis for Processing Data

General Contact Privacy Notice

Consent Form

Subject Access Request (SAR) Policy and Procedure

2.9 The Council demonstrates good practice by maintaining and reviewing a wide range of other formal Policies and Procedures. At the Council's meeting on 14 October 2024 the Clerk/RFO confirmed that a comprehensive review of the policies and procedures had been undertaken and updated documents were available on the Website.

2.10 The Council has adopted and published on its website the following Policies and Procedures:

Accessibility Statement

Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy

Bad Debt Policy

Biodiversity Policy

Complaints Procedure

Conflict of Interest Policy

Co-option Policy and Procedure

Credit Card Policy

Disciplinary Policy

Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy

Employment Policy

Environmental Policy

Equality Policy

Expenses Policy

Filming, Videoing, Photography and Audio Recording Policy

Grant Policy

Health and Safety Policy
Internet Banking Policy and Procedure
Lone Worker Policy
Noticeboard Policy
Reserves Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Village Green Policy

2.11 Policies are reviewed to ensure they remain up-to-date and fit for purpose. At the meeting on 8 July 2024 the Council reviewed and approved a new Staff Appraisal and Performance Development Policy.

2.12 The Council has a Freedom of Information Policy and a Publication Scheme to assist compliance with the **Freedom of Information** legislation and these have been published on the Council's website. To accompany the Publication Scheme, the Council has a Guide to Information which specifies the particular information it publishes, how it will be published and what charge, if any, is to be made.

2.13 The Council is making progress in the construction of a **Neighbourhood Plan**. At the meeting on 13 January 2025 the Council noted that regular meetings were taking place with designers and the planning consultancy and the plan was moving forward. A public consultation was held in March 2025 and work is progressing to analyse the results.

2.14 The Council adopted the latest Local Government Association (LGA) Model **Councillor Code of Conduct**, as approved by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), which details the requirements and responsibilities placed upon each individual Councillor.

2.15 In accordance with Best Practice the Council has registered under an official .gov.uk domain name with Clerk/RFO and councillor email addresses linked to that domain name.

2.16 The Council demonstrates good practice by publishing a **Website Accessibility Statement** in accordance with the website accessibility regulations. The Statement includes technical information about the website's accessibility.

3. Accounting Procedures and Proper Book-keeping (*examination of entries in the Cashbook, regular reconciliations, supporting vouchers, invoices and receipts and VAT accounting*).

3.1 The **Cashbook Spreadsheet** is very well referenced and facilitates an audit trail to the Bank Statements and the financial information prepared by the Clerk/RFO.

3.2 Supporting invoices/vouchers to the 2024/25 transactions are maintained by the Clerk/RFO. VAT payments are tracked and identified within the Accounts to assist with reclaims to HMRC.

3.3 **VAT Re-claims** are being submitted to HMRC for the amounts of VAT paid. The re-claims to HMRC for VAT paid were made as follows:

- a) A re-claim to HMRC for £2,193.94 for the VAT paid in Quarter 4 2023/24 (1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024) and the VAT paid in Quarter 1 2024/25 (1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024) was received at bank on 6 August 2024 and reported to Council on 23 September 2024.

3.4 As the Council has no eligibility to apply the **General Power of Competence**, the Accounts display a heading to be separately identify payments made under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 137. The Council has separately identified in the accounts the donation in respect of the D-Day Wreath as a payment made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act.

3.5 An **Explanation of Variances** (explaining significant differences in receipts and payments between the years 2023/24 and 2024/25) has been prepared by the Clerk/RFO (using all available information and data) for submission to the External Auditors and publication on the Council's website. The External Auditors normally require an explanation where the balance at the end of the year is more than double the amount of the Precept and the Clerk/RFO can address this matter within the Explanation of Variances form.

3.6 The Clerk/RFO presents reports to the Council on **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** issues as a matter of routine. The CIL Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2025 has been prepared by the Clerk/RFO. The Report displays the balance of £185,870.03 brought forward from previous years, £76,067.43 CIL Receipts in the year and spending of £50,178.08 on projects in the year, as follows:

Garden of Reflection:	£25,804.78
Pedestrian Safety:	£9,373.30
Footbridge (opposite Village Hall):	£15,000.00

3.7 A balance of £211,759.38 (of which £139,726.70 has been allocated to specific projects) is accordingly recorded as retained at the end of the year in the CIL Account as a Restricted Reserve. The Annual Report 2024/25 has to be submitted to the District Council and published on the Council's website no later than 31 December 2025.

4. Bank Reconciliation (*Regularly completed and cash books reconcile with bank statements*).

4.1 The Council receives up-to-date completed Bank Reconciliations as a matter of routine and a non-bank signatory Councillor confirms the Bank Reconciliations as presented agrees with the bank statements.

4.2 On 11 November 2024 the Council discussed the transfer of sums from Barclays Bank to Unity Trust Bank. At the meeting on 9 December 2024 the Council resolved to transfer £78,123.59 to the Unity Trust Account and to use this as the daily transactional account leaving £232,274.08 in the Barclays Premium account as the

account to hold the CIL money. The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) guarantees up to £85,000 per bank or building society (or groups of banks and building societies) and the Council agreed to consider opening two more accounts one each with two other banks/building societies.

4.3 At the meeting on 13 January 2025 the Council resolved that the Clerk/RFO and a nominated Councillor should consider all options for investing the Parish Council's funds, if possible, without tying any of it up, to receive the best rate of return; it was agreed all investments must be with banks who are offered protection under the FSCS.

4.4 The Clerk/RFO confirmed that an Investment Policy was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 14 April 2025.

4.5 The following bank statements totalling £270,067.67 were verified as at 31 March 2025:

Barclays Community (Current) Account (£9,263.80)
Barclays Business Premium (Savings) Account (£31,039.34)
Unity Trust Bank (Current Account): £29,608.68
Unity Trust Instant Access Savings Account (£0)
Flagstone Holding Account (£30,000)
HSBC (via Flagstone) £85,097.85)
GB Bank vis Flagstone (£85,058)

4.6 As at 31 March 2025 the Council's banking arrangements provided adequate security under the FSCS.

5. 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*).

5.1 End-of-Year accounts are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis and were well presented by the Clerk/RFO. Sample audit trails were undertaken and were found to be in order.

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

6.1 At the meeting on 20 May 2024 the Council reviewed and approved the Financial Risk Management Assessment (Minute 9 refers). The document specifies identified risks in terms of Likelihood/Severity as follows: 1= Low 2 = Medium 3 = High. The likelihood score is multiplied by the severity score to give an overall score. The higher this is, the greater the need to implement measures to reduce the score.

6.2 In addition to the Financial Risk Assessment, the Council has adopted a number of risk assessments. At the meeting on 10 March 2025 the Council agreed to adopt

the current risk assessments for the following, noting these were working documents and under constant review:

Cemetery
Cow Green
Financial
Parish Warden
Shop Green
Tailors Green
Speed Indicator Devices

6.3 The Risk Assessments are comprehensive and list the risks/hazards identified, an assessment of the probability and severity and the control measures in place to eliminate/mitigate the risks involved. A further column in the risk assessments details the monitoring action and any further action required.

6.4 The Council appointed a Councillor Internal Control Auditor/Reviewer at its meeting on 20 May 2024.

6.5 At the meeting on 10 March 2025 the Council received a Statement and Review of the Parish Council's internal controls. The Council noted that the annual review of controls was taking place at the meeting and all other controls tested affirmative. The Council agreed that a sound system of Internal Control was in place (Minute 100325/68 refers).

6.6 The Council accordingly complied with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which require 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 the management of risk, with the review suitably Minuted.

6.7 An important area of risk management within local councils concerns the adequate maintenance and inspection of play equipment. The Council receives monthly reports from the Parish Warden including confirmation of play area inspections.

6.8 The Parish Council arranged for the Play Inspection Company to carry out an annual RoSPA Inspection of the play equipment at the Play Area at St Mary's Close, Bacton on 4 February 2025.

6.9 Insurance was in place for the year of audit. At the meeting on 23 September 2024 the Council resolved for the Clerk/RFO to renew the insurance cover for 2024/25.

6.10 On 14 October 2024 the Council noted that the insurance has been renewed with Ansvar, via Community Action Suffolk (CAS) at a renewal premium of £799.69; this included Fidelity Guarantee cover of £250,000, assets of £129,744 (index linked) with a wage roll of £23,500.

6.11 Employer's Liability cover and Public Liability cover each stand at £10m. The Councillor/Employee Fraud (Fidelity Guarantee) cover stands at £500,000 (with

effect from 19 March 2025 having been increased by the Clerk/RFO to reflect the overall balances being held by the Council. This meets 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 (as at 31 March 2025 the End of Year balance was £270,067 plus 50% of the 2025/26 Precept (£23,266) amounts to £293,333).

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

Precept 2024/25: £40,255.00 (17 January 2024, Minute Jan17/5 refers).

Precept 2023/24: £46,733.06. (13 January 2025, Minute 130125/50 refers)

7.1 The Clerk/RFO presented a Draft **Budget for the year 2024/25** at the meeting of the Council on 13 November 2023. At the meeting on 8 January 2024 the Council approved the Budget for 2024/25. However, at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 17 January 2024 the Council resolved to agree the Final Budget for 2024/25 and increase the precept to £40,255 (having resolved to approve a special motion under Standing Order, point 7 to reverse the resolution made on the 8 January 2024 under item 9iv). The Precept for 2024/25 was agreed in Full Council, the precept decision and amount have been clearly Minuted.

7.2 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 Precept for 2024/25 was agreed in Full Council, the precept decision and amount have been clearly Minuted.

7.3 At its meeting on 10 June 2024 the Council received the first Quarterly update of Budgeted expenditure. Similarly, on 23 September 2024 the Council received a Budget to Actual Report and considered virements and the reserves available. Further reports of actual spending against the budget were received by the Council on 11 November 2024, 9 December 2024 13 January 2025 and 10 March 2025.

7.4 On 11 November 2024 the Council received a first draft **Budget for 2025/26** and agreed for the Clerk/RFO to calculate the budget with an increase in precept of 2%; this would be reviewed by the working party and forthcoming Council meetings. At its meeting on 13 January 2025 the Council set a Budget for 2025/26 of £47,483.06 for the year with a Precept of £46,733.06. The Precept was agreed in Full Council and the precept decision and amount clearly Minuted.

7.5 A **Reserves Policy** is in place which sets out how the Council will determine and review the level of reserves. The Policy does not prescribe a specific level of General Reserves but notes that the generally accepted position is that non-earmarked revenue reserves should usually be between three and twelve months of Net Revenue Expenditure (the JPAG Proper Practices Guide, item 5.34 refers).

7.6 The **Overall Reserves** held as at 31 March 2025 were £270,057.67 of which £252,794.38 have been earmarked for specific projects or held as CIL Restricted Reserves;

Listed Projects:	£41,035.00
CIL Funds (Restricted):	£211,759.38

7.7 The **General Reserve** (Overall Reserves less Earmarked Reserves) of £17,263 stood at 37% or 4.4 months of the of the 2025/26 Precept (which is in line with the JPAG Best Practice guidelines of 3 to 12 months equivalent of net revenue expenditure).

8. Income Controls (*regarding sums received from Precept, Grants, Loans and other income*).

8.1 Receipts recorded in the Cashbook Spreadsheet totalled £150,646.49 and consisted of:

Precept (£40,255)
Cemetery Fees (£547.00)
CIL (£76,067.43)
Bacton Green Stewardship (£9,294.89)
Bacton Green (Bacton Green): (£2,400)
Grant re Parish Warden (£5,504.20)
Neighbourhood Plan Grant (£8,231.00)
Grant re Garden of Remembrance (£1,588.25)
Allotments Rents (£10)
VAT Reclaimed from HMRC (£2,193.94)
Interest (£3,483.76)
Insurance settlement: (£815.82).
Miscellaneous: (£255.20)

8.2 At its meeting on 10 February 2025 the Council reviewed and resolved to accept a new schedule of cemetery fees with effect from April 2025. Details of the current Cemetery Fees have been published on the Council's website.

8.3 At the meeting on 10 March 2025 the Council reviewed and adopted the Cemeteries Terms and Conditions.

9. Petty Cash and use of Debit/Credit Cards (*Associated books and established system in place*).

9.1 No Petty Cash is held; an expenses system is in place with on-line payments being made for expenses incurred in the year.

9.2 At the meeting on 23 September 2024 the Council agreed to cancel the Barclaycard with immediate effect and agreed that any future urgent payments must be in line with the approved Financial Regulations.

10. Payroll Controls (*PAYE and NIC in place; compliant with HMRC procedures; records relating to contracts of employment*).

10.1 The Council agreed at its meeting on 13 November 2023 that Payroll Services would be undertaken by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

10.2 At the beginning of the financial year 2024/25 Suzanne Lupin was in post as the Council's Clerk/RFO. The Council noted her resignation at the meeting on 12 August 2024.

10.3 At the meeting on 19 August 2024 the Council resolved to appoint Tina Newell to the position, working 20 hours a week (to include work on the Neighbourhood Plan - funds for which would come from the neighbourhood CIL) on salary scale point 24 plus a working from home allowance with effect from 23 September 2024 but supporting the Council until that time as required.

10.4 A Contract of Employment dated 23 September 2024 is in place for the Clerk/RFO and confirms that the salary is payable at SCP 24-28 in the LC2 range.

10.5 The Council noted the resignation of the Parish Warden at its meeting on 10 June 2024. The Council resolved on 12 August 2024 for the Staffing Committee to advertise the vacancy on Parish noticeboards, social media and in the local magazine with a closing date for applications of 20 September 2024 and for the Committee to carry out interviews before bringing a recommendation for appointment to a full Parish Council meeting

10.6 At its meeting on 23 September the Council resolved to appoint Andrew May to the position of Parish Warden from 1 October 2024 on salary scale point 7 for five hours per week.

10.7 The Council has a wide range of Employment Policies and Procedures in place, including the Employment Policy, Expenses Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Equality Policy, Volunteer Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Sickness Policy, Home Working Policy and Staff Development Policy and Lone Worker/Working Policies.

10.8 With regard to the legislation relating to workplace pensions, the Clerk/RFO confirmed to the Council on 11 March 2024 that a re-declaration of compliance under the Pensions Act 2008 had been submitted to the Pensions Regulator (The re-declaration of compliance confirms to the Pensions Regulator that the Council complies with its duties as an employer and has to be completed every three years).

11. Assets Controls (*Inspection of asset register and checks on existence of assets; recording of fixed asset valuations; cross checking on insurance cover*).

11.1 An Asset Register is in place. The Register was reviewed and approved by the Council at its meeting on 20 May 2024.

11.2 At the meeting on 23 September 2024 the Council noted that the Register was available online with the addition of the MacBook and software purchased that month. It was agreed to review the Register in detail before the next meeting.

11.3 As at 31 March 2025 the Asset Register displayed a total value of £99,614.75, a net increase of £3,528.54 over the value of £96,086.21 at the end of the previous year, 31 March 2024. The Clerk/RFO has prepared a reconciliation between the two years to identify the value of £13,995.04 additions in the year and the value of £10,466.50 disposals in the year.

11.4 The Register records the original purchase cost, where known. The Register complies with the current requirements which provide that each asset should be recorded at a consistent value, year-on-year.

11.5 The Council displays good practice by ensuring the Register also maintains a column to record the insurance value of assets and acts as a check to the Council that all assets are appropriately insured.

11.6 The value of the Assets has been correctly placed in Box 9 of Section 2 of the 2024/25 AGAR.

12. Internal Financial Controls, Payments Controls and Audit Procedures (*Confirmation that the Council has satisfactory internal financial controls in place for making payments with adequate documentation to support/evidence payments made. Identifying VAT payments and re-claims. Any previous audit recommendations implemented*).

12.1 Since her appointment the current Clerk/RFO has worked with commitment to ensure that the Council maintains satisfactory internal financial controls. The Clerk/RFO provides each Council meeting with monthly Finance Reports which are considered and approved by the Council. The Clerk/RFO continues to ensure that Bank Balances and completed Bank Reconciliations are routinely and formally presented to Council, and the action Minuted, and to ensure that Councillors are provided with details of payments compared to budgeted amounts.

12.2 Internet Banking is in place. The Internet Banking Policy was approved on 11 March 2024. The Policy provides (inter alia) that:

1. 'All orders for payment will be verified for accuracy by the Parish Clerk and included on a payment schedule.'

2. *The schedule of all payments shall be prepared by the Parish Clerk and presented to each meeting of the Council together with any supporting invoices or other documentation for approval. The approved schedule will be initialled by the Chairman of the meeting.*
3. *The Parish Clerk will initiate payment (as 1st Authoriser).*
4. *One of the authorised Councillors will confirm the payments online (from the list of authorised Councillors held by Barclays Bank). Councillors are expected to authorise payments requests within two days of the payment being initiated by the clerk'.*

12.3 The Council receives a schedule of receipts and payments to enable Councillors to approve the listed payments. The List of Receipts and Payments presented and approved by the Council at each meeting is currently being published on the Council's website to ensure all necessary transparency in the administration of the Council's financial affairs.

12.4 The Clerk/RFO advised the Internal Auditor that an internet banking transaction document (confirming the amount, the payee and time of the transaction) is not being retained and accordingly is not attached to the invoice.

Recommendation 1: In order to meet the requirements of Financial Regulation 7.7 it is recommended that the Clerk/RFO prints the transaction details from the on-line bank information and attaches to the paid invoices/vouchers to secure an audit trail.

12.5 Two cheques were prepared in the year 2024/25 relating to the D-Day wreath and the Bacton Fayre. The cheques' counterfoils were initialled by Signatories in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulation 6.5.

12.6 The Annual Internal Audit report for the previous year (2023/24) was dated 11 April 2024 and put forward the recommendations listed at Appendix A. The Report was received and approved by the Council at its meeting on 20 May 2024.

12.7 At its meeting on 9 December 2024 the Council accepted the Audit Plan and appointed the Internal Auditor for the 2024/25 year.

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

13.1 The Report and Certificate for 2023/24 from the External Auditors PKF Littlejohn LLP was dated 28 August 2024 and confirmed that no matters had arisen giving cause for concern but advised that *'the AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. Please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR'*.

13.3 The Council received the External Audit Report 2023/24 at its meeting on 23 September 2024.

14. Publication Requirements.

14.1 Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 authorities must publish each year the following information on a publicly accessible website:

AGAR - Sections 1 and 2.

Notice of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights

14.2 The Internal Auditor was able to confirm that the documents were readily accessible on the Council's webpage:

<http://bacton-pc.gov.uk/finanace/annual-finance/202323/>

14.3 To be published following completion of the External Audit (no later than 30 September):

Notice of Conclusion of Audit

AGAR - Section 3

AGAR - Sections 1 and 2 (including any amendments as a result of the Limited Assurance Review).

14.4 The Clerk/RFO reported to Council on 23 September 2024 that the documents had been published as required. The Internal Auditor was able to confirm that the documents relating to the year 2023/24 were readily accessible on the Council's webpage: *<http://bacton-pc.gov.uk/finanace/annual-finance/202323/>*

15. Additional Comments.

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



Trevor Brown, CPFA

Internal Auditor

26 April 2025

APPENDIX A

Progress in meeting the recommendations put forward in the previous Internal Audit Report dated 14 April 2024.

Recommendation 1: The Council should consider adopting the more recent, up to date, Code which is approved by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and details the requirements and responsibilities placed upon each individual Councillor.

Update as at 23 April 2025: The Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct is in place.

Recommendation 2: In the year 2024/25 the Council should ensure that all payments made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (such as some grant payments and donations to the British Legion Poppy Appeal) are separately identified in the Accounts.

Update as at 23 April 2025: This is being addressed and Section 137 payments are now being separately identified in the Accounts.

Recommendation 3: A refund of an overpayment in the Clerk/RFO's salary should be accounted for as a deduction from the Payments side of the Accounts. As refunds are not income per se (they are aimed to correct recorded overpayments), accounting practice provides that they are deducted from Total Payments and any refunds should be accounted for in this way in future years.

Update as at 23 April 2025: This was noted by the Council on receipt of the Internal Audit Report 2023/24 at the meeting on 20 May 2024.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the Clerk/RFO prints the transaction details from the on-line bank information and attach to the paid invoices/vouchers to secure an audit trail.

Update as at 23 April 2025: This recommendation remains outstanding.

Recommendation 5: The cheque counterfoil of each cheque prepared by the Council should be signed/initialled by Signatories to confirm agreement of the details shown on the cheque, in compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations 6.5.

Update as at 23 April 2025: This is being addressed and the counterfoils of the cheques prepared in 2024/25 were initialled by Signatories.

Recommendation 6: The Report and Certificate from the External Auditors should always be formally presented to the Council and recorded in the Minutes of the meeting in order that the Council is aware of any issues of concern raised and can take action to address those issues.

Update as at 23 April 2025: This has been addressed; the Council received the External Audit Report 2023/24 at its meeting on 23 September 2024.