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Our Ref: MARK/BEX001

Mrs J Miller
Bexhill Town Council
Town Hall
London Road
Bexhill On Sea
East Sussex
TN39 3JX

7 June 2022

Dear Julie

Re: Bexhill Town Council
Internal Audit Year Ended 31 March 2022

Executive summary

Following completion of our internal audit on 7 June 2022 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date. **Testing requirements are shown in red** and where appropriate **recommendations for future action are shown in bold text**.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published AGAR. The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified, followed by recommended minimum testing requirements. Each section is then concluded with an opinion as to whether the assertion has been met or not.

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures very seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Bexhill Town Council are well established and followed.

Regulation

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to “undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

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. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit's function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all members to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement.

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Andy Beams of Mulberry & Co. We confirm we are independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and neither the internal auditor or the firm have any conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

Your auditor has over 30 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 12 years specialising in local government.

Engagement letter

An engagement letter was issued to the council covering the 2021/22 internal audit assignment. Copies of this document are available on request.

Planning and inherent risk assessment

The scope and plan of works including fee structure was issued to the council under separate cover. Copies of this document are available on request. In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR.

- There have been no instances of breaches of regulations in the past
- The client uses an industry approved financial reporting package
- The client regularly carries out reconciliations and documents these
- There is regular reporting to council
- The management team are experienced and informed
- Records are neatly maintained and referenced
- The client is aware of current regulations and practices
- There has been no instance of high staff turnover

It is my opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be "walk through testing" on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

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A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Internal audit requirement

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

Recommended minimum testing:

- Ensure the correct roll forward of the prior year cashbook balances to the new financial year
- Check a sample of financial transactions in cashbooks to bank statements, etc.: the sample size dependent on the size of the authority and nature of accounting records maintained

Audit findings

The council was newly established following a Community Governance Review, with councillors elected to the new authority in May 2021. The Clerk was recruited and commenced employment with the council in July 2021, and management of the financial affairs of the council has been gradually phased over from Rother District Council, who had retained the precept and made payments on behalf of the council until February 2022.

The council has purchased the Rialtas Business Solutions (RBS) software system, which is a bespoke accounting package designed for Parish Councils but has used an Excel spreadsheet to record transactions during the previous financial year. The Clerk is familiar with the RBS system from previous roles in the sector and intends to utilise it as the council's financial transactions increase, and staffing capacity allows.

The audit was conducted on site with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. The requested information was available for review and other testing was completed through discussion with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk and a review of information published on the council website.

The council is not VAT registered and will complete a VAT claim for the year on the VAT 126 claim form for the transactions processed directly by the council.

The initial set up of the council has clearly been complicated, and there remain some areas where the council needs to address policies and procedures, but overall, I have the impression that the accounting systems are well ordered and routinely maintained and as such I make no recommendation to change, although I would encourage the use of the RBS system as soon as practicable.

The Clerk confirmed that a review of existing and missing policies is planned, and this will ensure that the council has in place the correct governance framework to progress as other functions are handed over from the District Council. Where matters have been identified in the internal audit as incomplete or missing during the previous year, the Clerk has already identified these, and work is in progress to put these matters right.

We discussed the situation with the allotments, which appear to be in a state of limbo, with Rother District Council still charging for the management of some sites but appearing to not carry out the expected responsibilities. There appears to be no service level agreement to define which authority is responsible for various tasks, and the Clerk's concerns with taking on additional responsibilities without adequate staffing provision to properly manage the functions must be considered carefully by the council.

While the council is clearly keen to establish itself and evidence the benefits it brings, the council must be mindful to ensure that it operates within the legal and statutory framework for a local authority.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control assertion of "Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year" has been met.

B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

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

Recommended minimum testing:

- Review the procedures in place for acquisition of formal tenders and quotes, ensuring they are in line with the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which should be based on the latest version.
- Ensure that consistent values are in place for the acquisition of formal tenders between Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (frequently different limits are recorded in the two documents)
- Review the procedures for receipt of invoices, agreement of invoice detail and confirmation of goods /services delivery and approval for payment: ideally, a suitably designed certification stamp should be in place providing for evidencing of these checks and payment authorisation
- Check that there is effective segregation between the writing of cheques or the setting up of online payments, and physical release of payments
- Check that VAT reclaims are prepared and submitted in a timely manner in line with the underlying records and in accordance with current HMRC requirements
- Where debit / credit cards are in use, establish the total monthly and individual transaction limits and ensure appropriate controls over physical security and usage of the cards are in place

Audit findings

Check the publication and minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit.

As the council is a newly established authority, there are no records for the previous year to review or publish and this test does not apply.

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms.

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms. The Parish Council website contains a link to the Rother District Council website where the Declarations of Interest forms are held for each councillor.

Confirm that the council is compliant with GDPR.

The council is fully aware of GDPR and has undergone training. It was noted the council has established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

I was able to locate a Privacy Policy and Website Accessibility Statement on the council website.

Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year.

The council meets regularly during the year and a diary of future meetings is published on the council website, along with historic agendas and minutes.

Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice.

The Clerk was able to demonstrate that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. Whilst we have not tested every single committee and council meeting there was no evidence of non-compliance in giving three clear days' notice of the meeting. It was noted that supporting documentation for agendas is also published on the council website.

Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website.

Minutes are routinely uploaded to the council website.

Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months.

The Standing Orders are based on the current NALC model and were most recently reviewed and adopted by council in May 2022.

Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations.

Financial Regulations are based on the current NALC model version and were most recently reviewed and adopted by council in May 2022. The regulations contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council.

Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed.

The council has thresholds in place at which authorisations to spend must be obtained as below.

FR 4.1. *Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:*

- *the council for all items over £25,000*
- *a duly delegated committee of the council for items over £10,000 or*
- *the Clerk, in conjunction with Chair of Council or Chair of the appropriate committee, for any items below £1000.*

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chair.

Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

FR 4.5. *In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of council services, the clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the council which in the clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £1000. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter*

I reviewed these thresholds with the Clerk and identified a gap in the approval thresholds for items over £1,000 and below £10,000. The Clerk intends to amend the committee approval level to items over £1,000.

From a review of the payments made during the year, there is no evidence of these thresholds not being followed. There was a large payment made to Rother District Council to reimburse them for the payments made on behalf of the Town Council, but each individual invoice within this total had already been approved by the council in accordance with the adopted regulations.

Confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £8.41 per elector.

The council has the General Power of Competence (GPC) and the thresholds do not apply.

Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor.

The system noted above details internal review takes place and I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure. Three councillors are involved in the signing of the payments lists, which are presented to the Finance & General Purposes committee meetings for approval.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control assertion "This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for" has been met.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE

Internal audit requirement

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

Recommended minimum testing:

- Ensure that authorities have prepared, and formally adopted, at least once annually, an appropriate and comprehensive register of assessed risks, both regular and ad hoc
- Ensure that appropriate levels of insurance cover are in place for land, buildings, public, employers' and hirers' (where applicable) liability, fidelity / employees (including councillors) liability, business interruption and cyber security
- Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for monitoring play areas, open spaces and sports pitches: such reviews should be undertaken by appropriately qualified external inspectors or, if by officers or members, that they have received the appropriate training and accreditation

Audit findings

I was unable to trace a risk assessment on the council website for the financial year, although individual assessments for various events have been completed. It is a requirement for a council to have a comprehensive register of risks and to review this at least annually.

Through discussion with the Clerk, this has addressed this matter since the year-end and a policy is scheduled to be adopted at the meeting on 8 June 2022. This will be reviewed at the next audit.

I confirmed that the council had a valid insurance policy in place during the year under review with Zurich Insurance. The policy included Public Liability and Employers Liability cover of at least the £10 million minimum each. Council is reminded that the Fidelity Guarantee level should be for more than the maximum balance held at any point during the year.

I noted the policy has just been reviewed for the period commencing 1 April 2022.

We discussed assertion 8 of the AGAR and whether or not this had any impact on the council.

"We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements."

The Clerk confirmed that she was not aware of any such liability at the year end.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control objective of "This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these" has been **NOT** met due to the absence of a financial risk assessment process for the year under review.

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

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

Recommended minimum testing:

- Ensure that the full authority, not a committee, has considered, approved and adopted the annual precept in accordance with the required parent authority timetable
- Ensure that budget reports are prepared and submitted to authority / committees periodically during the year with appropriate commentary on any significant variances
- Review the budget performance either during the year or at the financial year-end seeking explanations for any significant or unanticipated variances

- Ensure that the authority has considered the establishment of specific earmarked reserves and, ideally, reviews them annually as part of the budget assessment process
- Ensure that the precept in the accounts matches the submission form to the relevant authority and the public record of precepted amounts

Audit findings

The council inherited a budget set by an advisory group of Rother District Council when the councillors were elected in May 2021. The Clerk has developed a budget monitoring report which is presented to the Finance Committee on a monthly basis, and then quarterly to the Council. There is evidence within the minutes of these reviews taking place.

The budget was set through work completed by the Clerk, a review by each committee in September and October, with review by Finance & General Purposes Committee in November. Returned to committees for further review prior to review by council in December 2021 and final adoption in January 2022.

At the year-end, the council held £75,000 in a general reserve with the aim to raise to £200,000 over a period of time. Remaining funds are held in earmarked reserves split between a range of projects. I tested the purpose of these with the Clerk and was able to confirm they are all for legitimate future planned projects.

Guidance for holding funds on a general reserve suggest an appropriate level to between three- and twelve-months' equivalent of precept.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control objective of "The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate" has been met.

E. INCOME

Internal audit requirement

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

Recommended minimum testing:

- Review "aged debtor" listings to ensure appropriate follow up action is in place
- Allotments: ensure that appropriate signed tenancy agreements exist, that an appropriate register of tenants is maintained identifying, that debtors are monitored.
- Burials: ensure that a formal burial register is maintained that it is up-to-date and that a sample of interments and memorials are appropriately evidenced, that fees have been charged at the correct approved rate and been recovered within a reasonable time: (Authorities should also acquire and retain copies of Burial / Cremation certificates)
- Hall hire: ensure that an effective diary system for bookings is in place identifying the hirer, hire times and ideally cross-referenced to invoices raised
- Leases: ensure that leases are reviewed in a timely manner in accordance with the terms of the lease and rents similarly reviewed appropriately at the due time
- Other variable income streams: ensure that appropriate control procedures and documentation are in existence to provide a clear audit trail through to invoicing and recovery of all such income
- Where amounts are receivable on set dates during the year, ensure that an appropriate control record is maintained duly identifying the date(s) on which income is due and actually received / banked

Audit findings

The precept is the only budgeted source of income. I was able to confirm the precept amount received to the centrally held record.

Other income received during the year was from the Charter Trustees transferred to the council as a closing balance of their accounts, and a small amount of interest.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control objective of "Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for" has been met.

F. PETTY CASH**Internal audit requirement**

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

Recommended minimum testing:

- A number of authorities are now running down and closing their petty cash accounts and using debit / credit cards for ad hoc purchases. Consequently, a "not applicable" response is frequently required in this area.
- Review the systems in place for controlling any petty cash and cash floats (used for bar, catering, etc.)
- Check a sample of transactions during the financial year to ensure appropriate supporting documentation is held
- Review the existence of evidenced periodic independent verification of the petty cash and any other cash floats held
- Ensure that VAT is identified wherever incurred and appropriate
- Physically check the petty cash and other cash floats held
- Where bar or catering facilities are in place, ensure that appropriate cashing-up procedures are in place reconciling the physical cash takings to the till "Z" total readings

Audit findings

The council has no petty cash. I discussed with the Clerk the process for incidental expenditure, and I recommend the council considers the use of a credit card for these items, to be managed within the rules as set out in the Financial Regulations.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion the control objective of "Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for" is not applicable as the council has no petty cash.

G. PAYROLL**Internal audit requirement**

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

Recommended minimum testing:

- Ensure that, for all staff, a formal employment contract is in place together with a confirmatory letter setting out any changes to the contract
- Ensure that appropriate procedures are in place for the payment of members allowances and deduction of any tax liability
- Ensure that, for a sample of staff salaries, gross pay due is calculated in accordance with the approved spinal point on the NJC scale or hourly rate, if off-scale, and with the contracted hours
- Ensure that appropriate tax codes are being applied to each employee
- Where free or paid for software is used, ensure that it is up to date.
- For the test sample of employees, ensure that tax is calculated appropriately
- Check the correct treatment of pension contributions to either the Local Government pension scheme (non - taxable, deducted from the gross salary or DC schemes like NEST which already allow for tax deductions)
- For NI, ensure that the correct deduction and employer's contributions are applied: NB. The employers' allowance is not available to councils but may be used by other authorities
- Ensure that the correct employers' pension percentage contribution is being applied
- Ensure that for the test sample, the correct net pay is paid to the employee with tax, NI and pension contributions correctly paid to the respective agencies

Audit findings

Payroll is outsourced to a third-party company who complete the PAYE and NI calculations. The staff salary payments, HMRC payments and pension contribution payments are then made by the council on a monthly basis.

There are two staff members, both of whom have a signed contract of employment based on the NALC template. I confirmed that the backdated NJC pay rise was paid to all eligible staff in their March 2022 salaries.

I tested a sample of the payroll records and was able to confirm that deduction amounts appear to be correct.

I was able to confirm that the amount entered into box 4 on the AGAR is consistent with the allowable staff costs recorded in the accounting system.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that salaries are correctly stated on the AGAR and that the control object of "Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied" has been met.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS**Internal audit requirement**

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

Recommended minimum testing:*Tangible fixed assets*

- Ensure that the authority is maintaining a formal asset register and updating it routinely to record new assets at historic cost price, net of VAT and removing any disposed of / no longer serviceable assets
- Physically verifying the existence and condition of high value, high risk assets may be appropriate
- Ideally, the register should identify for each asset the purchase cost and, if practicable, the replacement / insured cost, the latter being updated annually and used to assist in forward planning for asset replacement
- Additions and disposals records should allow tracking from the prior year to the current
- Ensure that the asset value to be reported in the AGAR at Section 2, Box 9 equates to the prior year reported value, adjusted for the nominal value of any new acquisitions and /or disposals
- Compare the asset register with the insurance schedule to ensure that all assets as recorded are appropriately insured or "self-insured" by the authority

Fixed asset investments

- Ensure that all long-term investments (i.e., those for more than 12-month terms) are covered by the "Investment Strategy" and reported as Assets in the AGAR at Section 2, Box 9.

Borrowing and lending

- Ensure that the authority has sought and obtained appropriate DMO approval for all loans acquired
- Ensured that the authority has accounted for the loan appropriately (i.e., recorded the full value of the loan. Any arrangement fee should be regarded as an admin expense) in the year of receipt
- Ensure that the combined principal loan repayment and interest for the year is correctly recorded in the AGAR at Section 2 Box 5
- Ensure that the outstanding loan liability as of 31st March each year is correctly recorded in the AGAR at Section 2, Box 10 (value should be verified via the DMO website)
- Where the authority has issued loans to local bodies, they should ideally seek signed indemnities from the recipient body, or their members, agreeing to underwrite the loan debt

Audit findings

The council has a fixed asset register in place. This is based on a review of assets handed over from the District Council and Town Forum, and assets purchased by the Town Council such as laptops. The handed over assets are correctly listed at a nominal £1 value, with purchase costs used for the laptops.

I was able to confirm the asset register total to that entered into box 9 on the AGAR.

I confirmed the council has no borrowing.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control objective of "Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained" has been met.

I. BANK AND CASH**Internal audit requirement**

Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.

Recommended minimum testing:

- Ensure that bank reconciliations are prepared routinely, are subject to independent scrutiny and sign-off by members
- Verify the accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation detail and ensure accurate disclosure of the combined cash and bank balances in the AGAR, Section 2, Box 8
- Where the authority has bank balances in excess of £100,000 it has an appropriate investment strategy

Audit findings

At the year end, the council had a reconciled position across its accounts. I was able to confirm the balances on all accounts to the bank statements dated 31 March 2022. Bank reconciliations are presented to the Finance Committee each month and signed off by the Chairman of the committee.

I was able to verify the reconciled balance to that entered into box 8 on the AGAR.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that bank and cash balances are properly shown on the AGAR and that the control objective of "Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out" has been met.

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS**Internal audit requirement**

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.

Recommended minimum testing:

- Ensure that, where annual turnover exceeds £200,000, appropriate records are maintained throughout the year on an Income and Expenditure basis to facilitate budget reporting in that vein
- Ensure that appropriate accounting arrangements are in place to account for debtors and creditors during the year and at the financial year-end

The council, at its meeting to sign off the year-end accounts, must discuss the Annual Governance Statement and record this activity in the minutes of the meeting. Based on the internal audit finding, I recommend using the table below as the basis for that discussion. **COUNCIL IS REMINDED THAT THIS MUST BE A SEPARATE AGENDA ITEM TO THE SIGNING OF THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS.**

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

	Annual Governance Statement	<i>'Yes', means that this authority</i>	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	YES – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	YES – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.
3	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	YES – the Clerk is experienced and advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
4	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	N/A – as a new authority, the requirements and timescales for 2020/21 year-end are not applicable
5	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	NO – the council has not put in place a risk management scheme
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	YES – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor.
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	YES – matters raised in internal and external audit reports have been addressed.
8	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	YES – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>	N/A – the council has no trusts

Section 2 – Accounting Statements

AGAR box number		2020/21	2021/22	Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	0	0	Agrees to 2020/21 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	0	371,765	Figure confirmed to central records
3	Total other receipts	0	8,778	Agrees to underlying records
4	Staff costs	0	66,942	Agrees to underlying records
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Council has no borrowing
6	All other payments	0	103,800	Agrees to underlying records
7	Balances carried forward	0	209,801	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet
8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	0	209,801	Agrees to bank reconciliation
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	0	1,227	Matches asset register
10	Total borrowings	0	0	Council has no borrowing
11	For Local Councils only - Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	YES	NO	N/A as the council has no trusts

Audit findings

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts. Figures have been verified against underlying accounting records where appropriate. This is the first AGAR completed by the Town Council and hence there are no comparisons for the previous year.

The Clerk has completed the variance analysis stating that the council is a new authority, as advised by the External Auditor.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control objective of "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" has been met.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW**Internal audit requirement**

IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2020/21, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 AGAR tick "not covered")

Recommended minimum testing:

- The correct exemption certificate was prepared and minuted in accordance with the statutory submission deadline
- That it has been published, together with all required information on the Authority's website and noticeboard

Audit findings

The council did not certify itself exempt in 2020/21 due to exceeding the income and expenditure limits and this test does not apply.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control assertion of "If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2020/21, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt" is not applicable as the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 AGAR.

L: TRANSPARENCY (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**Internal audit requirement**

If the authority has an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000, it publishes information on a website / webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Recommended minimum testing:

- This test applies only to those councils covered by the £25,000 External Audit exemption
- Internal auditors should review the authority's website ensuring that all required documentation is published in accordance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Audit findings

The council has an annual turnover exceeding £25,000, and this test does not apply.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control assertion of *"If the authority has an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000, it publishes information on a website/ webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the Transparency code for smaller authorities"* is not applicable as the council's turnover exceeds £25,000.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2021 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Recommended minimum testing:

- Internal auditors should acquire / examine a copy of the required "Public Notice" ensuring that it clearly identifies the statutory 30 working day period when the authority's records are available for public inspection.
- Internal auditors may also check whether councils have minuted the relevant dates at the same time as approving the AGAR

Audit findings

Inspection - Key date	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Proposed
Date Inspection Notice Issued	n/a	9 June 2022
Inspection period begins	n/a	13 June 2022
Inspection period ends	n/a	22 July 2022
Correct length	n/a	Yes
Common period included?	n/a	Yes

As a newly established authority, the council did not complete an AGAR or Notice of Public Rights for the previous year, and this test does not apply.

I confirmed that the proposed dates for 2021/22 are correct. The council plans to sign the AGAR at the meeting to be held on 8 June 2022.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion the control objective of *"The authority, during the previous year (2020-21) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)"* is not applicable as this is a new authority.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2020/21. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Recommended minimum testing:

- Internal auditors should acquire / examine a copy of the required "Public Notice" ensuring that it clearly identifies the statutory 30 working day period when the authority's records are available for public inspection.
- Internal auditors may also check whether councils have minuted the relevant dates at the same time as approving the AGAR

Before 1 July 2021 authorities must publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited
- Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2020/21, approved and signed, page 4
- Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2020/21, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2021 authorities must publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate
- Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

Audit findings

As a newly established authority, the council did not complete an AGAR or Notice of Public Rights for the previous year, and this test does not apply.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control assertion of "the authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2020/21 AGAR. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage" is not applicable as this is a new authority.

O. TRUSTEESHIP**Internal audit requirement**

Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

Recommended minimum testing:

- Confirm that all charities of which the council is a Trustee are up to date with Charity Commission filing requirements
- that the council is the sole trustee on the Charity Commission register
- that the council is acting in accordance with the Trust deed
- that the charity meetings and accounts are recorded separately from those of the council
- review the level and activity of the charity and where a risk-based approach suggests such, review the Independent Examiner's report

Audit findings

The council has no trusts as a corporate body.

Section conclusion

I am of the opinion that the control assertion of "Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee" is not applicable as the council has no trusts.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Andy Beams'.

Andy Beams

For Mulberry & Co