

Internal Audit Report for Wenhaston with Mells Parish Council for the period ending 31 March 2026

Clerk	Richard Day
RFO (if different)	Elaine Day
Chairperson	Arthur Musk
Precept	£26,897
Income	£36,236
Expenditure	£37,644
General reserves	£11,637
Earmarked reserves	£31,750
Audit type	Annual - non-exempt authority
Auditor name	Debbie Frost

Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, and corruption

- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts, and data

Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- conduct a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws, and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being conducted as planned

Section 1 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders		
The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC’S latest model which include legislative changes.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Council’s Standing Orders, are based on the latest model published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), April 2025 and are fully tailored to the council. Council approved its Standing Orders at a meeting of council held 21 May 2025.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Financial Regulations, as seen on the Council’s website, are based on the latest model published by NALC, Model Financial Regulations March 2025 with provisions included as outlined under NALC Advice Note – Procurement, 3 February 2026 link to view the advice note Council approved its Financial Regulations at a meeting of council held 21 May 2025.
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Council's Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? ¹	Yes	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (financial administration), the Council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. This was approved by full Council at its meeting on 21 May 2025.

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972

Additional comments:

Section 2 – Budgetary controls		
The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The budget for the year 2025-26 in the sum of £28,900 was formally approved by full Council at a meeting on 18 December 2024.
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The precept was set at £26,897 for 2025-26, as confirmed at the above meeting, with the paperwork demonstrating that this was a 0% increase over that set the previous year.
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	<p>The minutes evidence that Council carried out its regular review covering the budget for the current year with a review of income and expenditure against budget along with forecasts for the remainder of the year in August and October 2025 and April 2026</p> <p><i>COMMENT: Council is advised to consider either implementing, in accordance with its own standing order 17c a statement as soon as practicable after 30 June, 30 September and 31 December in each year showing evidence of comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure to form the basis of approval for virements in accordance with Council's own Standing Orders or amend Standing Order 17c to reflect the frequency with which budget monitoring exercises are carried out.</i></p>

<p><i>Reserves held – general and earmarked²</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council, as at year-end, had Earmarked Reserves totalling £31,750 with the balance being General Reserves of £11,637 with overall reserves standing at £43,387</p> <p><i>COMMENT: council is advised to note guidance as issued by Proper Practices which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure. There is no upper limit for earmarked reserves, but they should be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level subject to regular review and justification (at least annually).</i></p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: council should seek to adopt a General Reserve Policy which would provide clarity on the reasoning behind the holding of and intended level of general reserves to be maintained to ensure that the council achieves the recommended levels.</p>
<p>Additional comments: <i>in the main, Council has followed the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process for the year: decided the form and level of detail of the budget; reviewed the current year budget and spending; determined the cost of spending plans; assessed levels of income; brought together spending and income plans; provided for contingencies and considered the need for reserves; approved the budget; confirmed the precept; and reviewed progress against the budget regularly throughout the year.</i></p>		

² In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

Section 3 – Proper bookkeeping		
The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council’s accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council uses an excel spreadsheet to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis and ensures that the financial transactions of the parish council are as accurate as reasonably practicable. All transactions are well referenced and provide an effective tool for the basis of the council’s internal controls. It provides data for analysis allowing the RFO to produce clear financial management reports.
<i>Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure?</i> (under Proper Practices, Councils are required to work on an Income & Expenditure basis when their gross income, or gross expenditure, exceeds £200,000 for 3 consecutive years)	Yes	Council’s gross income and expenditure level is below the threshold of £200,000 and has been for three continuous years. Council’s operating under this limit may choose either to report on an income and expenditure basis or on a receipts and payments basis. Council has elected to report its financial matters on a receipts and payments basis.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	Council follows Proper Practices in ensuring that its accounting procedure gives an accurate presentation of the financial position and provides good evidence to support the council’s underlying statements which are verified by council.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	A number of spot checks were carried out and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order. <i>COMMENT: The RFO has shown best practise by ensuring, for further transparency and scrutiny, that all payments and receipts are referenced with a description as to the expenditure and income being incurred to ensure the integrity of data being input and processed.</i>

Additional comments: council might wish to ensure that the cashbook and/or minutes make reference to the powers used to incur expenditure. Statutory powers are granted by Parliament and give local councils the choice or opportunity to take action and are therefore discretionary. Like all powers given to public bodies the powers of local councils are defined in detail in legislation and these details may include a requirement to obtain the consent of another body. Local Councils must exercise their powers subject to the provisions of the general law.

Section 4 – Payment controls	
<p>The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.</p>	
Evidence	<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<p>Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>A selection of expenditure items were made and cross-checked against the cash book, invoices and bank statements. At each full council meeting a list of payments is presented to ensure formal approval of expenditure and this is correctly minuted. This demonstrates good practice in that there are measures in place that help safeguard public money supported by a straightforward and clear audit trail for each payment.</p> <p><i>COMMENT: Council is advised to implement ‘power to pay’ noting that it is the responsibility of Councillors to satisfy themselves that they have the appropriate legal power to incur expense and ensure that they refer to the exact power being used to ensure that all financial decisions or payments being made are in accordance with statute and the Council is not undertaking any decisions or payments that are ultra vires.</i></p>
<p>Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>The Council does not use internet banking, instead uses cheques. In future if internet banking is operated, it should be in accordance with the Council’s</p>

		<p>own Financial Regulations. The Internal Control Statement details the procedure to be followed for such payments.</p> <p><i>COMMENT: There is clear evidence of good practice - payments are checked by two councillors against invoices and the cheque is made in accordance with a resolution of the Council.</i></p>
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is identified in the cash book with the reclaim for the period covering the year 2024-2025 in the sum of £1,198.50 being verified in the cashbook and bank statements. The year-end balance stands at £1,851.86 claimed in April 2026.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ³	N/A	Council has not adopted the General Power of Competence.
Are payments under s.137 ⁴ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	Council clearly identifies s137 payments within its cashbook. Payments are reported to full council and are of clear benefit to the electorate. Payments for the year under review total £327.50 and are in accordance with statutory limits.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	Council has no such loan.
Additional comments:		

³ Localism Act

⁴ Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the 1972 Act”) enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £11.10 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

Section 5 – Income controls		
The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?</i>	Yes	Income is recorded in accordance with Council’s Financial Regulations. A number of items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statement and found to be in order and recorded in accordance with Proper Practices. In accordance with proper practices, the RFO has ensured that the accounting records contain all day-to-day entries of all sums of money received.
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	Income received is reported to full Council within the financial reports submitted to full Council in accordance with council’s financial regulations <i>COMMENT: Fees and charges were reviewed at the meeting of 19 November 2025.</i>
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority’s notification?</i>	Yes	Council received precept in the sum of £26,897 from East Suffolk District Council for the period under review as reported to full Council within its Financial Reports at its meetings in May and October. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved to being served on the Charging Authority to remittance advice showing the Precept to be paid and receipt of same in the Council’s Bank Account.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁵</i>	N/A	During the year under review, Council received no CIL receipts. No CIL balances are currently held by Council.

⁵ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	N/A	No income or expenditure was evidenced during the period under review.
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	N/A	The draft CIL annual report for 2025-26 shows that there is no retained balance. CIL receipts when received should be transferred into an Earmarked Reserve specifically allocated, in accordance with the Regulations.
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	The Annual CIL Statement is still to be presented to full Council for approval although a copy was submitted for internal audit review.
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	The annual report for the year ending 2026 shows no income received and no retained balances was verified by the internal auditor and has been uploaded onto the Council's website.
Additional comments:		

Section 6 – Petty cash		
The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures, and verification processes and that these are up to date.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	N/A	Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	N/A	
Additional comments:		

Section 7 – Bank reconciliation		
The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	A number of samples were tested. There is evidence of good financial practice, and the Council has implemented a system whereby bank reconciliation is correctly verified by the Council. This not only safeguards the Responsible Financial Officer but also fulfils an internal control objective.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end (31 March 2026) the balance across the council's accounts taking into account unrepresented cheques stood at £43,387.80 as recorded in the Draft Statement of Accounts and on the Year-end Bank Reconciliation.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Balances across the Council's accounts are reported at each meeting of full Council. The minutes of Full Council meetings, demonstrate that a review of the bank reconciliation versus the bank statements has been undertaken. This is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives. The bank reconciliation is a key tool for management as it assists with the regular monitoring of cash flows and therefore aids decision-making.

Section 8 – Payroll controls		
The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	No	<p>Council had two employees on its payroll at the period end of March 2026. The Clerk to the Council has confirmed that all staff do not have a Contract of Employment in place.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: To ensure full alignment with UK employment law, Council should issue all staff with a formal contract of employment or a written statement of particulars.</p>
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	<p>All salary payments are presented to the Council for approval and payments made in accordance with Council’s own Financial Regulations.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has noted the requirement to ensure that it formally approves amendments to any employee’s pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment.</i></p>
<i>Are all employees paid at least the minimum wage?</i>	Yes	Employee is paid at least the national minimum wage.
<i>Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?</i>	Yes	There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines and outsourced to Suffolk Association of Local Councils. Cross-checks were completed on three payments covering salary and PAYE were found to be in order. Deductions paid to

		HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made in accordance with timescales as set out in the regulations.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁶</i>	Yes	It is noted that Council is aware of its pension responsibilities and that no pension provision was required by the current members of staff.
<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes	From paperwork seen, the council completed its re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator in September 2025. <i>Comment: if the Council last carried out its re-enrolment duties in 2025, it will be aware that every three years further re-enrolment duties will apply. Council should ensure that it comply with any deadlines for 2028 as stated in communications from the Pension Regulator.</i>
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	There is a satisfactory expense system in place and all expenses claimed are approved by full council with supporting paperwork in place and reimbursed in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations.
Additional comments:		

Section 9 – Year End procedures		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounts are produced on a receipts and payments basis and all found to be in order.

⁶ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

<i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i>	Yes	The end of year accounts and supporting documentation were well presented for the internal auditor review. There is a full audit trail from records to presented accounts.
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR⁷ documents been completed?</i>	Yes	The Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000, it has completed the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 3.
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria for 2024-2025 and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	N/A	As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was not able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review.
<i>During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?</i>	Yes	During the review of the publication requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it is noted that, for the year 2024 - 2025, the Council correctly provided for the exercise of elector's rights during Summer 2025. The RFO had set the dates for the inspection of the Council's accounts and associated documents as Tuesday 3 June 2025 to Monday 14 July 2025 with the date of the notice being 6 April 2025.
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?⁸</i>	Yes	In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, as a smaller authority with either income or expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million, it is confirmed that the Council did comply with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for the year ending 31 March 2024 as it published the following on its website: Annual Internal Audit Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement Section 2 - Accounting Statements Section 3 - The External Auditor Report and Certificate

⁷ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

⁸ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		<p>Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15(2) Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council might wish to note that there is a requirement to ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 are published and remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.</i></p>
<p>Additional comments:</p>		

<p>Section 10 – Risk management</p>		
<p>The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.</p>		
<p>Evidence</p>		<p>Internal auditor commentary</p>
<p><i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The risk assessment documentation as reviewed provides details of the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks. The Risk Register for the year under review was considered and adopted by full Council at its meeting of 18 February 2026.</p>
<p><i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets, and particularly its money. There is evidence that overall, the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences.</p>
<p><i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council has insurance in place under a specialist policy for local councils with Ansvar Insurance which shows core cover for the following: Employer</p>

<p><i>and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i></p>		<p>liability: £10million; Public/Products Liability: £10million and Fidelity Guarantee of £100,000.</p> <p><i>COMMENT: Council has followed recommended guidance by ensuring that its Fidelity Cover is equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April.</i></p> <p>The Council's insurance cover was renewed at their meeting on 17 September 2025 and there is a minute to show the cover was reviewed and considered appropriate. This is highlighted as good practice, as risks have been identified and steps taken to manage those risks, a record that the RFO has undertaken a review helps manage the potential consequence of a risk occurring.</p> <p><i>COMMENT: Council has ensured that it is able to demonstrate that it has reviewed the risks facing the Council in transacting its business and has taken out appropriate insurance to manage and reduce the risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things).</i></p>
<p><i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁹</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>At the meeting of 19 November 2025, Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, confirmed that the financial and management systems of the council were sound and adequate and internal control arrangements were efficient and effective to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.</p>
<p><i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment¹⁰</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Parish Council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements, evidence of which is contained within its Internal Control Policy as adopted on 19 November 2025</p>

⁹ Accounts and Audit Regulations

¹⁰ Practitioners Guide

Additional comments: *the Council has identified a number of risks to Wenhaston with Mells Hamlet Parish Council and taken steps to control these. These are clearly identified and approved by the Council. In accordance with proper practices the council has demonstrated it has taken steps to manage key risks in a way it can justify to a level which is tolerable by transferring the risks and taking out insurance, and that the review of insurance cover has been reported back to full Council and duly minuted. By reviewing the terms of reference for internal audit the council has followed guidance and demonstrates it recognises that the internal audit function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily.*

Section 11 – Asset control		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?¹¹</i>	Yes	The Asset Register, was viewed on the Council's website. It was reviewed, and checked at the meeting of 17 September 2025 and reflects those items listed under insurance and within the Parish Council's remit for maintenance and ownership.
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	<p>It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2026) is £797,753.60 which reflects overall movement in the asset register covering acquisitions and disposals.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2025 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied.</i></p>

¹¹ Practitioners Guide

<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/A	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.
<i>Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?</i>	N/A	
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The asset register was approved by the Council at its meeting on 17 September 2025 as part of reviewing the insurance policy. <i>COMMENT: A separate minute to confirm the review and approval of the asset register would provide clarification of when it was last reviewed.</i>
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under generic headings on the insurance schedule.
<i>Additional comments:</i> Councils should be mindful of the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities for England (March 2025) regarding valuation of assets and ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied and if/where amended it will need to publish and provide explanations in changes in value to any previously recorded assets		

Section 12 – Assertion 10		
The internal auditor will be checking that the council complies to the new assertion 10 introduced in the Practitioners’ Guide 2025.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO)?¹²</i>	Yes	The Council is correctly registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation.

¹² Data Protection Act 2018

<p><i>Is there an adopted council publication scheme and is it reviewed regularly?</i></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>As defined under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, council has not adopted and published a Publication Scheme.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: council should seek to ensure that it adopts such a scheme which should be fully tailored to the council to accurately reflect council’s activities undertaken and the manner in which information will be made available.</p>
<p><i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?¹³</i></p> <p><i>Councils must:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Comply with their legal & statutory obligations under UK GDPR & The Data Protection Act 2018</i> • <i>Process personal data lawfully, fairly and in line with the prescribed data protection principles</i> • <i>Recognise their role as both data controller and data processor</i> 	<p>Partially</p>	<p>Council has taken active steps towards compliancy with the GDPR requirements, evidenced below and has adopted a Data Protection & Information Management Policy that provides clear responsibilities and obligations of the Council in respect of the collecting, using and protecting of personal information in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR.</p> <p>The following are in place as part of the Data Protection and Information Management Policy and Subject Access Requests Policy :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Procedures for dealing with subject access</i> • <i>Procedures for dealing with data breaches</i> <p><i>COMMENT: The Data Protection and Information Policy includes mention of the following but no detail :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data retention policies but no mention of disposal</i> • <i>Data audit being carried out</i> <p><i>COMMENT: To achieve best practice, councils are recommended to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Carry out data protection audits, mapping personal data being processed and carrying out data risk assessments.</i> • <i>Provide regular data protection compliance training for council staff and councillors.</i> • <i>Have appropriate information compliance policies and ways of working in place that reflect how the council operates to protect personal data from breaches</i>

¹³ UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

<p><i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Whilst the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 applies to local authorities, including parish councils with annual income or expenditure (whichever is the higher) over £200,000, Smaller Authorities with total turnover or expenditure greater than £25,000 but under £200,000, should as best practice comply with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015; the government believes that in principle all data held and managed by local authorities should be made available to the public unless there are specific sensitivities to doing so, as per the Practitioners' Guide 5.127.</p> <p><i>COMMENT: Council might wish to review its provisions and consider whether it might be able to work towards ensuring compliancy with the requirements of publishing the following data on its website in accordance with the required timescales:</i></p> <p><i>Publish quarterly: Individual items of expenditure that exceed £500 (currently published on an annual basis); Government Procurement Card transactions; Invitations to tender for contracts over £5,000; Details of contracts that exceed £5,000.</i></p> <p><i>Publish annually: Details of all land and building assets; Grants to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations; Organisational Chart.</i></p>
<p><i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁴</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council has accessibility tools on its website thereby allowing for the increased functionality of the council's website, along with a website accessibility statement on the Council operated website detailing the technical information of the website along with the methods used for testing the website; the steps being taken to improve accessibility and how the site is being improved to ensure that content meets the WCAG 2.2 Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.</p>

¹⁴ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

<p><i>Has website accessibility been tested, at least annually?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council have taken necessary steps to review website accessibility through a third party that has carried out a website accessibility audit on 22 April 2026.</p>
<p><i>Does the council have, as a minimum, a single generic email address on an authority owned domain, for correspondence?¹⁵ For example clerk@abccouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abccouncil.org.uk</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council operates with a .gov.uk email address for the Clerk.</p> <p><i>COMMENT: this ensures that sensitive information is handled in a controlled environment with appropriate security measures. This aligns with GDPR principles such as data minimisation, integrity and confidentiality. Authority-owned email accounts provide a clear record of communications, which is essential for transparency and accountability. This helps in maintaining an audit trail and ensures all council-related communications are accessible for review if needed and makes Data Subject Access and Freedom of Information Requests easier to manage.</i></p> <p>Best practice is for all council (clerk, councillors, other staff) to have matching email: e.g. Cllr.bobsmith@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk or cllr.bobsmith@abcparishcouncil.org.uk</p> <p>If not, free email services are permitted currently, such as, cllrbobsmith@gmail.com but NOT personal email addresses e.g. bobsmith1968@yahoo.co.uk</p> <p><i>COMMENT: Authority-owned email accounts ensures that sensitive information is handled in a controlled environment with appropriate security measures. This aligns with GDPR principles such as data minimisation, integrity and confidentiality.</i></p>
<p><i>Does the council have an IT policy that is tailored to the council?¹⁶</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The council has adopted an IT policy that has been personalised for the specific use of the council. This policy was approved at the meeting of 21 January 2026.</p>

¹⁵ Practitioners Guide

¹⁶ Practitioners Guide

Additional comments:

Section 13 – Internal audit		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i>	Yes	The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31 March 2025 was formally considered by and approved for adoption at the meeting of full Council of 26 June 2026. The RFO was authorised to conduct necessary actions in accordance with the recommendations and comments raised within the report which was monitored as the year progressed.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	<p>The one formal recommendation raised within the internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2025 was as follows and was carried out:</p> <p>The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2) states the Annual Parish Meeting, when not in an election year, must be held in the month of May.</p> <p><i>Comment: in order to warrant a positive response to Assertion 7 of the Annual Governance Statement, council should seek to address the matters brought to its attention by internal (and external) audit.</i></p> <p>Council is also taking action to address further comments that were raised within the internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2025, none of which have a significant impact on the financial management of the council.</p> <p><i>COMMENT: Council has understood the requirement to ensure that, having received a narrative internal audit report, it should minute its review of the work carried out and agree actions planned from the outcomes identified.</i></p>

<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?¹⁷</i> <i>Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?¹⁸</i>	Yes	SALC were appointed as the Council's internal auditors for the year ending 31 March 2026 at the meeting of 21 May 2025. The letter of engagement was approved by full Council on 18 February 2026.
Additional comments:		

Section 14 – External audit for the period under review		
The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?¹⁹</i>	Yes	At the meeting of full Council of 20 August 2025, Council considered the report from the External Auditor for the year ending 31 March 2025. The Notice of Conclusion was seen on the Council's website.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i>	Yes	There were no matters which come to the attention of the external auditor which have cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.
Additional comments:		

¹⁷ Practitioners' Guide

¹⁸ Practitioners' Guide

¹⁹ Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e., All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.*

Section 15 – Additional information		
The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> ²⁰	Yes	The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council was held on ***** 20** and the first item on the agenda was the election of Chairperson.
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> ²¹	Yes	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	Evidence was seen on the CMIS Register of Interests website for all current Parish Councillors with a direct link from the Council's own website.
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	N/A	Council does not have any Trustee Responsibilities.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Councils Risk Assessment stated files are backed up.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Yes	Council does not operate with a committee system.
Additional comments:		

Signed: Mrs D L Frost

Date of Internal Audit review: 12/05/2026
 On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils

Date of Internal Audit Report: 12/05/2026

²⁰ The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

²¹ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011