

## **Babraham Parish Council**

*Internal Audit Report 2023-24*

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*Sally King*

*For and on behalf of  
Auditing Solutions Ltd*

## **Background**

Statute requires all town and parish councils to arrange for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and systems of internal control, and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2023-24 financial year, which was concluded at our office on 6th May 2024. We have again undertaken our review for the year remotely: we wish to thank the Clerk for assisting in the process, providing all necessary documentation in electronic format to facilitate completion of our review for the year and sign off the Internal Audit Certificate in the year's AGAR.

## **Internal Audit Approach**

In undertaking our review, we have again had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts / AGAR. Our programme of cover is designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council's financial systems are robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework.

## **Overall Conclusion**

We have concluded that, based on the programme of work undertaken during our audit this year, the Council maintains more than adequate and effective internal control arrangements. We are pleased to acknowledge the quality of records maintained by the Clerk and thank her for her assistance, which has ensured the smooth progress of our review process.

We have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the year's AGAR, having concluded that, in all significant respects, the control objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

# Detailed Report

## Maintenance of Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations

Our objective in this area has been to ensure that accounting records are being maintained accurately and on a timely basis, and that no anomalous entries appear in the cashbook.

The Council uses Scribe accounting package to manage its accounting records. The Council operates both a current and a deposit bank account with Unity Bank and a savings account with The Cambridge Building Society.

To ensure the appropriateness and accuracy of the recording of transactions, we have:

- Confirmed the accurate carry-forward of prior year closing balances to 2023-24.
- Ensured that an appropriate coding structure is in place within the Scribe software.
- Checked and agreed the cashbook detail for the full year to supporting bank statements on both accounts.
- Verified the combined bank reconciliation detail as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 within Scribe.
- Ensured the accurate disclosure of the combined balances in the year-end Accounts.

### *Conclusion*

*We are pleased to report that there are no issues in this area of our review process warranting formal comment or recommendation. We have verified the accurate disclosure of year-end balances in the AGAR.*

## Review of Corporate Governance

Our objective is to ensure that the Council has a robust regulatory framework in place; that Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders (SOs) and that, as far as we are reasonably able to ascertain as we do not attend meetings, no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation.

We have reviewed minutes of Council meetings held during 2023-24, the principal aim being to consider whether any issues exist that may have an adverse effect on the Council's financial stability in the short, medium or longer term, also that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain, no indication exists that the Council may either be considering or have taken decisions that might result in ultra vires expenditure being incurred.

We are pleased to note that both the Standing Orders (SOs) and Financial Regulations (FRs) have been subject to further review both being re-adopted at the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (minute ref. 2303/13).

We have reviewed the Council's website and are pleased to acknowledge compliance with the disclosure requirements of the Transparency Code. We also note that the external auditor's report, issued since our last visit, had no matters regarding the Councils accounts and governance.

### *Conclusions*

*We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this review area requiring formal comment or recommendation.*

## **Review of Payments**

We have reviewed the procedures in place for receiving invoices, checking their authenticity, accurate detail recording, processing by the Clerk and formal approval for payment by Members. Our objective is to ensure that:

- Payments have been made in accordance with the Council's approved procedures and budget for the financial year.
- Payments are supported by a trade invoice or acknowledgement of receipt.
- VAT has been calculated correctly and is recovered at appropriate intervals.
- The Council has formally approved each payment.
- Payments have been correctly analysed in the cashbook and year-end Statement of Accounts prepared for members; and

We have examined the procedures regarding payment of invoices with reference to the above criteria noting the process applied for their review and sign-off by members which we consider sound. The Council receives a full list of receipts and payments at each meeting which are recorded in the minutes.

### *Conclusions*

*We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this review area requiring formal comment or recommendation.*

## **Assessment and Management of Risk**

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and operational / health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition. We are pleased to note that:

- An appropriate Risk Register is in place, which was reviewed and re-adopted at the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (minute ref. 2403/13).
- The Council's insurance cover is provided by Hiscox: we have examined the current policy schedule and consider that it meets the present needs of the Council with both Public and Employer's Liability at £10 million and Fidelity Guarantee cover of £500,000.

### *Conclusions*

*We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this review area requiring formal comment or recommendation.*

## Budgetary Control and Reserves

We aim here to ensure that the Council has appropriate procedures in place to determine its future financial requirements leading to the adoption of an approved budget and formal determination of the amount to be precepted on the parent Council; that effective arrangements are in place to monitor budgetary performance throughout the financial year and that the Council has identified and retains appropriate reserve funds to meet its ongoing spending plans.

We are pleased to note that the Council has, after due deliberation, approved the budget and precept for 2024-25 at its meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 adopting the latter at £14,000 (minute ref. 2311/13).

We note that members continue to receive regular financial updates at each Council meeting, including detail of current bank balances, any income received and payments either made or due for approval. The Council also receive budget performance reports compiled using the Scribe software.

At the year end, total reserves stood at £230,726 arising primarily from the S.106 funding received. We noted in previous reports that the Council has earmarked reserves, including agreements for use on community related projects.

### *Conclusions*

*We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this review area requiring formal comment or recommendation.*

## Review of Income

The Council receives income by way of the annual precept, S106 grants and a small amount of bank interest once annually and recoverable VAT. We have checked and agreed in full the cashbook transactions to bank statements and other underlying supporting documentation for the financial year.

### *Conclusion*

*No matters arise in this review area.*

## Petty Cash

The Council no longer operates a petty cash account.

## Review of Staff Salaries

In examining the Council's payroll function, our objective is to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the Employee Rights Act

1998 and the requirements of HMRC legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and any National Insurance Contributions (NIC) due.

Processing of the Council's payroll is contracted out to Yorkshire Tax Bureau (YTB), who are responsible for preparing and submitting the necessary returns to HMRC using the online RTI software and providing details to the Council regarding the payments to be made to the Clerk.

### ***Conclusions***

***We are pleased to record that no matters have arisen from this area of our review requiring formal comment or recommendation.***

## **Fixed Asset Registers**

The Governance and Accountability Manual requires all councils to develop and maintain a register of assets identifying detail of all land, buildings, vehicles, furniture, and equipment owned by the Council.

We are pleased to note that the Council has prepared a detailed asset register using the Scribe software which has been updated for the 2023-24 financial year.

### ***Conclusions***

***We are pleased to report that there are no significant issues arising in this area of our review process warranting formal comment or recommendation. We have ensured the appropriate recording of these assets in the AGAR.***

## **Investments and Loans**

The Council has no loans repayable either to or by it, nor are any funds held in long-term investments.

## **Statement of Accounts and AGAR**

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996 (as amended periodically) required councils to prepare a formal Statement of Accounts and supplementary Supporting Notes. With effect from March 2011, the AGAR now forms the only statutory Accounts of the Council that are subject to external audit review and certification.

We have checked and agreed entries in the Statement of Accounts generated to the accounting software reports and other documentation provided. Similarly, we have checked and agreed the financial data reported to the AGAR.

### ***Conclusions***

***No issues have been identified in relation to the verification of detail in the Statement of Accounts and AGAR this year.***

*Based on our detailed work during the year on the Council's systems of financial control and content of the detailed Statement of Accounts and that summarised detail set out in the AGAR, we have signed off the Internal Audit Report of the AGAR assigning positive assurances, in each relevant area.*