

# **HUTTON HENRY PARISH COUNCIL**

## **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

### **2020/2021 Annual Return**

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1. Following the abolition of the Audit Commission a new organisation has been established which is responsible for issuing proper practices in relation to the accounts of smaller authorities. It is called the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Board (SAPPB), and is made up of members of the SLCC, NALC, CIPFA, the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the National Audit Office and a representative of the external audit firms appointed to smaller authorities
- 1.2. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 must complete Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) at the end of each financial year. The AGAR is made of 3 sections along with an annual internal audit report, which is to be completed by the Parish Council's independent internal auditor, who is to give an opinion of the Parish Council's internal controls
- 1.3. CDALC have provided Councils with a checklist to be used, this annual audit uses this list as the minimum of the tests to be carried out.

#### **2. Objectives of the Audit**

- 2.1. To examine the system of internal controls to ensure that the Parish Council may obtain an adequate level of assurance for its activities.

#### **3. Scope of the Work and the areas of Audit Work examined.**

- 3.1. The Scope of Work covers the ten key control tests identified in the Internal Audit part of AGAR, only nine of these are examined, as Hutton Henry Parish Council does not have any petty cash.
- 3.2. To properly complete the audit the following areas of activity have been examined and tested by Internal Auditor:
- Payroll
  - Creditors
  - Risk Management
  - Income collection and Banking arrangements
  - Assets
  - Debtors
  - Budgetary Control (including year end procedures)
  - Exercise of public rights
- 3.3. The audit findings of this report have been discussed with the Clerk of the Council and any audit recommendations have been agreed with her.

#### **4. Findings**

##### **4.1. Payroll**

- 4.1.1. The Parish Council has 2 employees who work fixed hours. Any increases in the rates of pay is determined by the National Pay award for local government workers and has been approved by the Council Members.
- 4.1.2. HMRC have a SLA with Durham County Council (DCC) to provide a payroll service for them. DCC hold all standard payroll information for the Council and are notified by the Clerk of any changes to the payroll information when required. DCC pay the employees and any deductions and all payroll expenditure is automatically taken by direct debit (BACS) by DCC out of the Councils bank account. All payments were confirmed for the year.

#### **4.2. Creditors (Accounts Payable)**

- 4.2.1. There is no separation of duties at Hutton Henry Parish Council as the Clerk is the only Officer responsible for Finance and Administration. Compensating controls are in place as all Councilors' attend the Council meeting and the Chair confirms the invoices before payment is made. Two Councilors' and the Clerks signatures are required on all cheques. Most payments are made by cheque although some payments to DCC are made by BACS.
- 4.2.2. Standing Orders of the Council state that cheques for payment should be prepared by the Responsible Finance Officer (Clerk) and together with the relevant invoices shall be presented to the Council each month. The cheques should be checked to the invoices and signed by the Clerk and 2 Councilors' who are authorized to sign the cheques. The cheque counterfoil is then initialed by a Member who signs the cheques, to confirm that proper payment has been made. All payments are recorded in the minutes, which are signed by the Chair.
- 4.2.3. Examination of all payments between April 2020 to March 2021 found all to be properly paid and recorded and were in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders. A query sheet showing minor discrepancies was given to the Clerk but these were not considered significant.
- 4.2.4. All donations paid had been agreed by the Council prior to payment being made and properly recorded as Section 137 payments in the minutes.
- 4.2.5. As from July the new Grounds man was authorized a petty cash float instead of claiming expenses. Records were kept of the top up and expenditure and were examined, The Clerk completes monthly expenses form with receipts attached which is signed by the Chair. The forms had all been properly completed and receipts attached.

#### **4.3. Risk Management**

- 4.3.1. A risk assessment review was carried out and approved by the Parish Council Members on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. There also appears to be adequate insurance cover for all assets of the Council. The risks to the Parish Council are also improved with the appointment of the independent Internal Auditor who gives assurance on the Council's activities.
- 4.3.2. The Parish Council has a small budget with only 2 employees, and therefore its risks are considered to be low.
- 4.3.3. The Council takes steps each year to reduce its risks by reviewing various policies and Standing Orders and Financial Regulations when required to ensure they are fit for purpose. Financial Regulations were reviewed and approved at the previous AGM for continued relevance, and I understand that no change was required and they still apply for 2020/21. Standing Orders were reviewed and approved at the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 Council meeting.
- 4.3.4. The announcement of the public rights for 2019/20 was dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 2020 with the inspection of the accounts available between 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and was placed on the Council's website

#### **4.4. Income collection and Banking arrangements**

- 4.4.1. All Income received is banked through a paying in book and recorded on a Receipts spreadsheet.
- 4.4.2. Internal Auditor examined all the relevant records mainly allotments, cottage rent along with cemetery Burials etc. (cemetery receipts no 425 to 448 checked) and a vat refund for the year and confirmed that all income had been promptly collected and banked.
- 4.4.3. Fees and charges were reviewed at the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020 Council meeting as part of the budget setting process.

- 4.4.4. There are 2 bank accounts held by the Council:
- i. Business Base Rate Tracker account  
This account is used to hold monies belonging to the Parish Council to obtain a high interest rate, and also to transfer amounts to and from the current account.
  - ii. Current account  
Used for paying all expenditure and paying in income.
- 4.4.5 Bank statements are viewed by the Chair at every monthly meeting and the Internal Auditor confirmed the reconciliation of the bank statements at the end of the year to the Income and Expenditure records and the end of year fund balance.
- 4.4.6. It was observed that the Business Base Rate Tracker held monies in its account which is more than the limit for the Financial Services Protection Scheme therefore not all of these monies are protected. Although I understand that the Council has plans to spend some of this money.
- 4.4.7. Vat repayment for 2019/2020 had been received by the Council on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

#### **Accounting Records**

- 4.5.1. All income and expenditure are recorded on a spreadsheet and the Clerk carries out monthly bank reconciliations, with the bank balances reported to Members with bank statements being seen by the Chair.

#### **4.6. Security/Assets**

- 4.6.1. There is an Inventory held of all assets, which is agreed with the statement of accounts.

#### **4.7. Debtors**

- 4.7.1. There are no accounts raised for debts as Debtors either pay by cash or a cheque is received for the work/service carried out.

#### **4.8. Budgetary Control**

- 4.8.1. The Precept and budget preparation and the Capital Expenditure for the coming year were agreed at 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Council meeting.
- 4.8.2. The annual budget was prepared to support the precept.
- 4.8.3. Budgetary control is carried out using the income and expenditure spreadsheet and notifying the Council of the bank balances.

#### **5. Conclusions/Recommendations**

- 5.1. The Internal Controls within the Parish Council are satisfactory for the size of the Council, with no recommendations made.



**Gordon Fletcher (C.M.I.I.A.),  
Internal Auditor,  
Date: 4<sup>th</sup> April 2021**