

Deopham & Hackford Parish Council

Internal Audit Report

Financial Year 2023-24

Prepared by Sandra Lain

30/05/2024

I have completed an internal audit of the accounts for Deopham & Hackford Council for the year ending 31 March 2024. My findings are detailed below using the tests provided in the Governance and Accountability (England) 2023..

I would like to thank the Clerk/RFO for providing me with all the information required for the Internal Audit.

Internal control	Test	Observations
Proper bookkeeping	Is the cashbook maintained and up to date?	Yes
	Is the cashbook arithmetically correct?	Yes - see recommendation
	Is the cashbook regularly balanced?	Yes
	If bank balances are in excess of £100,000 is there an appropriate investment strategy?	n/a
Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and payment controls	Has the Council formally adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations?	Yes
	Date Standing Orders last reviewed. Is this based on the latest version of Standing Orders?	02/03/2022
	Date Financial Regulations last reviewed. Is this based on the latest version of Financial Regulations?	04/05/2022
	Has a Responsible Financial Officer been appointed with specific duties?	Yes
	Have items or services above the de minimus amount been competitively purchased?	Yes
	Are payments in the cashbook supported by purchase orders, invoices, authorised and minuted?	Yes.
	Is there effective segregation between the writing of cheques or the setting up of online payments, and physical release of payments?	Yes ref: Internal control policy adopted 06/12/2023
	Has VAT on payments been identified, recorded and reclaimed?	Yes. Payment received 21/02/2024
If debit/credit cards are in use, what are the total monthly and individual transaction limits?	n/a	

Internal control	Test	Observations
	Are there appropriate controls over physical security and usage of the cards?	n/a
	Is s137 expenditure separately recorded and within statutory limits?	n/a
	Have s137 payments been approved and included in the minutes as such?	n/a
Risk management arrangements	Does a review of the minutes identify any unusual financial activity?	No
	Do minutes record the Council carrying out an annual risk assessment or review of their risk management scheme?	Yes 10/05/2023 10.1
	Are appropriate arrangements in place, for example, for monitoring play areas, open spaces and sports pitches?	Yes Policy adopted 01/03/2023
	Is insurance cover appropriate and adequate for land, buildings, public, employers' and hirers' liability, fidelity/employee/councillors' liability, business interruption and cyber security?	Yes.
	Are internal financial controls documented and regularly reviewed?	Yes
Budgetary controls	Has the Council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept and has this been minuted at a Full Council meeting as being approved?	Yes 06/12/2023
	Has the precept been calculated from the budget and been approved?	Yes
	Does the budget include an actual completed year?	Yes
	Is actual expenditure against budget regularly reported to the Council?	Yes
	Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?	No
	Has the Council considered the establishment of specific earmarked reserves and reviewed them?	Yes

Internal control	Test	Observations
Income controls	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Yes
	Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax authority's notification?	Yes
Petty cash procedures	Is all petty cash spent recorded and supported by VAT invoices/receipts?	n/a
	Is petty cash expenditure reported to each Council meeting?	n/a
	Is petty cash reimbursement carried out regularly?	n/a
Payroll controls	Do all employees have contracts of employment with clear terms and conditions?	Yes for clerk
	Do salaries paid agree with those approved by the Council?	Yes for clerk
	Are salaries above the National Living Wage/Minimum Wage?	Yes
	Are other payments to employees reasonable and approved by the Council?	Yes
	Have PAYE/NIC been properly operated by the Council as an employer?	Yes
Asset controls	Does the Council maintain a register of all material assets owned or in its care?	Yes
	Is the assets register up to date? When was this last reviewed? Are additions and disposals in-year clear?	Yes 03/04/2024
	Do asset insurance valuations agree with those in the asset register?	Yes
	Does the asset value to be reported in the AGAR (section 2, Box 9) equate to the prior year reported value, adjusted for the nominal value of any new acquisitions and/or disposals?	Yes
	Are all long-term investments (i.e. over 12 months) covered by an investment strategy?	n/a

Internal control	Test	Observations
Bank reconciliation	If a loan has been taken out, are repayments reported to the Council?	n/a
	If the Council issued a loan to a local body, are there signed indemnities from the recipient body, or their members, agreeing to underwrite the loan debt?	n/a
	Is there a bank reconciliation for each account and is this regularly reported to Council?	Yes
	Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?	No
Year-end procedures	Is the value of investments held summarised on the reconciliation?	n/a
	Are year-end accounts prepared using the correct accounting basis (Receipts and Payments or Income and Expenditure)?	Yes
	Do accounts agree with the cashbook?	Yes
	Has a year-end bank reconciliation been undertaken?	Yes
	Is there an audit trail from underlying financial records to the accounts?	Yes
Procedural	Where appropriate, have debtors and creditors been properly recorded?	Yes
	Is eligibility for the General Power of Competence properly evidenced?	Yes
	Have points raised on the last Internal Audit report been considered by Council and actioned?	n/a
Exemption from external audit: Only for smaller councils with	Has the Council demonstrated that during the previous financial year it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations? [Full publication requirements are detailed on page 1 of the AGAR.]	Yes
	If the Council certified itself as exempt in the prior year, did it meet the exemption criteria and declare itself exempt?	n/a

Internal control	Test	Observations
receipts and payments each totalling less than £25,000	<i>[Confirm that the certificate was prepared and minuted by the Council within the statutory submission deadline. Confirm that the required information was published on the Council's website.]</i>	
Adherence to the Transparency Code: Only for smaller councils with receipts and payments each totalling less than £25,000	Minutes for whole year on website?	Yes
	Agendas for whole year on website?	Yes
	Payments over £100 detailed on website?	Yes
	Electors' rights advertised on website?	Yes
	Councillors' responsibilities detailed on website?	Yes
	Last financial year's AGAR on website?	Yes
	Land and building assets details on website? (Description, location, owner/leaseholder, date and cost of acquisition and present use)	Yes
Burial Authorities only	Are fees levied in accordance with the Council's approved scale of fees and charges?	n/a
	Have fees for the cemetery been reviewed and agreed by Council?	n/a
	Were comparisons made with other cemeteries prior to setting the fees?	n/a
	Have burial books been kept up to date and are they safely stored?	n/a
Allotments only	Has a list of allotment holders with amounts paid to Council been submitted?	n/a
	Have fees for the allotments been reviewed and agreed by Council?	n/a

Internal control	Test	Observations
Hall/room hire only	Is there an effective diary system for bookings in place identifying the hirer, hire times, and ideally cross-referenced to invoices raised?	n/a
Leases and other income streams	Are leases reviewed in a timely manner in accordance with the terms of the lease and rents similarly reviewed appropriately at the due time? Is there an audit trail from invoicing to receipt of income/chasing of debtors?	n/a
Councils with charities only	Have Charities reported and accounted separately?	n/a
	Have the Charity accounts been independently audited?	n/a
	Have the Charity accounts and Annual Return been filed within the legal time limit?	n/a
General Data Protection Regulation (compliance from 25 May 2018)	Has the Council carried out an information audit?	Yes 03/04/2024
	Has the Council put in place a privacy notice and policy?	Yes
Website accessibility (relates to the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018)	It is a legal requirement for councils to publish a website accessibility statement on its website. Has the Council published this statement?	Yes
	Has the Council updated and reviewed its statement [must be reviewed annually]?	February 2023

Summary of my recommendations

1. The VAT showing on the list of all payments is incorrect for the charge for the dog bin emptying which was paid on 01/06/2023. The correct refund from the council has been received and the correct amount of VAT has been reclaimed from HMRC.
2. The 2024 edition of JPAG places stronger encouragement for local councils to use gov.uk domains for websites.

Sandra Lain
30/05/2024