

Internal Audit Report

(to be read in conjunction with the Annual Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return)

Name of council:	Ravensthorpe Parish Council		
Name of Internal Auditor:	Helen Hoier	Date of report:	29/04/2024
Year ending:	31 March 2024	Date audit carried out:	29/04/2024

Internal audit is the periodic independent review of a council's internal controls resulting in an assurance report designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities and operating procedures under the council's control. Managing the council's internal controls should be a day-to-day function of the council through its staff and management and not left for internal audit. It would be incorrect to view internal audit as the detailed inspection of all records and transactions of a council in order to detect error or fraud. This report is based on the evidence made available to me and consequently the report is limited to those matters set out below.

The council is required to take appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit and to respond to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit. Failure to take appropriate action may lead to a qualified audit opinion.

To the Chairman of the Council:

I met with Carol Holifield (Clerk/RFO) on 29 April 2024 via Zoom to carry out the year-end audit of the Council. Upon examination of bookkeeping, due process, risk management, budget, payroll, asset control, bank reconciliations and year-end procedures; it is clear that every effort is made to ensure that the Council acts lawfully, transparently and in accordance with proper practices.

The Council has a turnover of over £25,000 and therefore is not obliged to comply with the Transparency Code, however all governance and financial documents are easily accessible to interested parties via the Council's website. The Council is not currently eligible to use the General Power of Competence and as such understands that it must ensure it spends within its legal powers (particularly Section 137 under which there were no items of expenditure in 2023/24).

Issues raised in 2022/23:

- Ensuring that the Council's internal controls and financial procedures with regards to accountability, governance and transparency are as effective as possible for which suggestions included:
 - Examining governing documents regularly to ensure they are properly tailored to the Council.
 - Reviewing previous internal audit reports to ensure recommended actions continue to be implemented:
 - Including each legal power under which the Council spends with the relevant budget heading when completing the budgeting process.
 - Recording the VAT element if any in the minutes as well as the cash book.

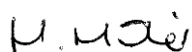
- Establishing a rota whereby a different member completes a checklist prior to a meeting throughout the year in order to test specific internal controls and report findings to the Council.
- Acknowledging the Council's official local government status:
 - Replacing the use of private e-mail addresses for Council business with a corporate address in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation as prescribed in the 2023 edition of The Practitioners' Guide (paragraph 5.205 refers).

Issues raised in 2023/24:

- It is evident from governing documents and when speaking with the Clerk/RFO that the Council is fully aware of its responsibilities regarding public finances, especially with regards to accountability, governance and transparency. However, this could be even more effective by ensuring the following:
 - Adopting new policies and procedures as well as updating existing governing documents in accordance with changes in legislation and/or recommended good practice.
 - Including values when minuting the annual budgeting process.
 - Replacing the Council's e-mail address with a .gov.uk domain as advised in the 2023 and 2024 editions of The Practitioners' Guide.
 - Providing a hyperlink from the Council's home page to members' interests held on West Northamptonshire Council's website.

Other than the above matters, the Council appears to be performing well, with its business affairs managed properly by a very competent Clerk/RFO and committed Council members.

Yours sincerely



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The figures submitted in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return are:

	Year ending 31 March 2023	Year ending 31 March 2024
1. Balances brought forward	22,077	27,118
2. Annual precept	16,000	16,000
3. Total other receipts	8,230	7,778
4. Staff costs	6,004	6,271
5. Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0
6. Total other payments	13,185	20,189
7. Balances carried forward	27,118	24,436
8. Total cash and investments	27,118	24,436
9. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	33,990	36,899
10. Total borrowings	0	0

The proper practices referred to in Accounts and Audit Regulations are set out in *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (2023)*. It is a guide to the accounting practices to be followed by local councils and it sets out the appropriate standard of financial reporting to be followed. A copy of the guide is available for free download from:

<https://www.northantscalc.com/practitioners-guide-2023>.