



Mrs Rachael Turner  
Hever Parish Council



25<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Rachael

**Re: Hever Parish Council**  
**Internal Audit for Financial Year Ended 31 March 2025 – Final Audit report**

**Executive summary**

Following completion of our final internal audit on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of which is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not at this point in the year. **Recommendations for action are shown in bold text and are summarised in the table at the end of the report.**

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Hever Parish Council are well established and followed.

**Regulation**

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to “undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit’s function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all Members to support and inform them when they considering the authority’s approval of the annual governance statement.

### **Independence and competence**

Your audit was conducted by Jackie Scarff of Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd, who has over 13 years’ experience in the financial sector specialising in local government.

Your auditor is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

### **Engagement Letter and inherent risk assessment**

An engagement letter was previously issued to the council covering the 2024/25 internal audit assignment, which includes the scope and plan of works and fee structure. Copies of this document are available on request from [anna@mulberrylas.co.uk](mailto:anna@mulberrylas.co.uk)

In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR.

It is our opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be “walk through testing” on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

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### A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

#### **Internal audit requirement**

*Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.*

#### **Audit findings**

The audit was conducted on site with the Clerk, who also acts as the council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Clerk had prepared the information advised in advance of the visit, and overall, I have the impression that accounting records are neatly maintained and easily accessible. Other information was reviewed through discussion with the Clerk and a review of the council website [www.hever.org](http://www.hever.org)

The council uses Excel for recording the council's finances. The spreadsheet is updated regularly and used to produce management information reports for review at council meetings.

### B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

#### **Internal audit requirement**

*This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.*

#### **Audit findings**

*Check the publication and minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit*

The External Auditor's Report was not qualified and has been published on the council website along with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and was reported to the council meeting held on 12th September 2024 (minute ref 6d).

I note the councillors received the previous internal auditor report in the pack of documents for the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024 but it was not an agenda item and therefore no comments noted.

**I recommend that the internal audit is an agenda item for noting and discussion to decide what action to take for any recommendations made.**

**Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms**

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms together with a formal acceptance to receive information by electronic means in the form "As per Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, I consent to the receipt of all council meeting papers by electronic methods. I understand I may withdraw this consent at any time"

The council website includes a councillor page where the individual Register of Members' Interests forms are published.

**I note that one cllrs ROI is not available on Sevenoaks website and recommend this is followed up.**

**Confirm that the council is compliant with the relevant transparency code**

As the council's income and expenditure exceeds £25,000, it is not a statutory requirement to follow the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code, although it is recommended best practice to do so. A review of the councils website shows that some information is published.

**Confirm that the council is compliant with GDPR**

The council is fully aware of GDPR and has undergone training. It was noted the council has established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's Guide (March 2024) contains updated guidance on the matter as below:

*The importance of using .gov.uk domains for websites and emails*

- 5.210. *All Parish, Town and Community Councils are eligible to use, and are advised to use, a .gov.uk domain for their websites and email communications. Your community, suppliers and partners will now reasonably expect a local council to have a .gov.uk domain name. Note that Parish meetings are exempt from the requirement to have a website.*
- 5.211. *To assist with compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), it is advised that clerks provide official .gov.uk email accounts to their councillors, which must only be used for official council business.*
- 5.212. *When choosing a domain name all councils must follow the rules set out by the Cabinet Office to choose a .gov.uk domain name, for example, 'ourparishcouncil.gov.uk' with email addresses linked to that domain.*
- 5.213. *Using a .gov.uk domain for your council website and email accounts gives Parish Councils the following advantages:*
- 5.214. *Increased professionalism and trust from members of your community, partners and suppliers because your email address and website domains are a trusted government brand.*

- 5.215. *Separation of your personal life from your professional life, ensuring members of your community, partners and suppliers understand what capacity you are emailing them in - whether a Councillor or Clerk.*
- 5.216. *Increased control for the Responsible Officer over email accounts and documentation when managing new joiners, leavers, sudden absences or Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests.*

The council has a Privacy Notice and Accessibility Statement on the home page of its website, and it is clear the council has made every effort to comply with the website requirements. During discussion the clerk highlighted that she would be discussing switching to a .gov.uk domain name.

***Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year***

In addition to full council, the council has committees for Planning & Finance and Employment, as well as working groups.

Terms of reference for each committee are published on the council website, along with details of the main responsibilities of each of the working groups.

A diary of future meeting dates is also published on the council website, along with historic agendas and minutes for council and committee meetings.

***Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice***

I was able to confirm that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. Whilst we have not tested every single committee and council meeting there was no evidence of non-compliance in giving three clear days' notice of the meeting.

**I remind council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office (page 3 of this link) [ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas.pdf](https://ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas.pdf)**

***Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website***

Draft minutes are uploaded to the council website and clearly annotated as draft.

***Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months***

The Standing Orders are based on the current NALC model and were most recently reviewed and adopted by council in May 2023. The agenda for the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2025 shows that the Standing orders will be reviewed.

***Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations***

The council has Financial Regulations in place. These are not the NALC model version but include elements of the model with significant elements removed. They were last reviewed and adopted by council in March 2023.

**The agenda for the Annual meeting of the Parish Council shows that the council are planning to review the Financial Regulations later in the year. I encourage the council to do this as soon as possible to ensure that they have a robust system in place for the approval of payments, authorisation of transactions and for awarding contracts and tenders and to ensure consistency with their standing orders. This should include ensuring consistency with the councils standing orders.**

***Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed***

The council has thresholds in place at which authorisations to spend must be obtained as below:

*In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £500 on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.*

*Routine payments, previously agreed by the Council may be authorised by the Clerk and reported at the next meeting. There is a statutory obligation to pay invoices within 30 days.*

In Discussion with the clerk the payments are published as part of the meeting pack after the agenda. **It is recommended that this is brought in line with standing orders.**

A review of council minutes shows that council authorises payments in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations. **It is recommended that the payment sheet is signed by cllrs with a comment that invoices have been reviewed against the payment sheet.**

*Confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £10.81 per elector*

The council has section 137 expenditure within the allowable threshold.

*Check receipt of VAT refund matches last submitted VAT return*

The council submits its VAT return on an annual basis. I reviewed the submission for the period ending 31 March 2025 which showed a refund amount due of £2637.78 and was fully supported by the required details. I was able to confirm receipt of the previous claim amount of £1224.16 to the council's bank account on 22 April 2024. The council is up to date with its VAT submissions.

*Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor*

The system noted above details internal review takes place and I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure.

## **C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE**

### **Internal audit requirement**

*This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.*

### **Audit findings**

The council has a risk management policy in place, which was last reviewed and approved by council in March 2023. I reviewed the risk assessment record, which identifies risks by subject area, the specific risk, assign a risk rating and details management controls in place along with the review process.

This is a suitable approach and includes analysis of all risks typically associated with a council of this size with its range of services and facilities. The clerk is intending to review this and introduce a risk matrix.

**I recommend the introduction of a risk matrix to further enhance the process and provide clarity for the assigned risk ratings and reviewed in line with the councils standing orders.**

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Zurich Insurance which covers the year under review. The policy includes Public Liability cover of £12 million, Employers Liability cover of £10 million each and a Fidelity Guarantee level of £250,000 which is sufficient for a council of this size.

We discussed assertion 8 on the Annual Governance Statement and whether this had any impact on the council.

*“We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.”*

The Clerk confirmed that they were not aware of any event having a financial impact that was not included in the accounting statements.

## D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

### Internal audit requirement

*The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.*

### Audit findings

The council set a precept of £52,000 for 2024/25. With a tax base of 661.0, this equates to a band D equivalent of £78.67 (compared to the average in England of £85.89). I was able to confirm receipt of the precept amount, and this is correctly recorded in Box 2 of the AGAR.

The Clerk confirmed that the 2025/26 budget and precept were approved by the council at the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 (minute ref 6c).

The year-end budget report shows expenditure/payment of £49,911 reported as 92% of budget (the council has no regular income other than the precept) suggesting that the budget has been accurately set and carefully monitored throughout the year. There is evidence within the minutes of meetings that councillors regularly receive budget reports for review, providing them with sufficient financial information to make informed decisions.

At the end of the financial year, the council held circa £17,380 in earmarked reserves, spread across clearly identifiable projects, including amounts received from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which are identified separately. I checked the purpose of these earmarked reserves with the Clerk and am satisfied they are all for legitimate future planned projects of the council.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner’s guide provides updated guidance on the appropriate level of general reserves that councils should retain as below:

*5.33. The general reserve of an authority comprises its cash flow and contingency funds to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances.*

*5.34. The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority’s general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure.*

*5.35. The reason for the wide range is to cater for the large variation in activity level between individual authorities. The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards 3 months equivalent general reserve.*

5.36. *In all of this it is important that each authority adopt, as a general reserve policy, the level appropriate to their size, situation, risks and plan their budget so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained. Consideration of the minimum level of reserves requires not only consideration of level of income and expenditure but also the risks to that income.*

5.37. *Authorities with significant self-generated income (other than the precept or levy) should take into account situations that may lead to a loss in revenue as well as increased costs and adapt their general reserve accordingly.*

The general reserve balance at the end of the financial year is £43,876, which is within the recommended range.

## **E. INCOME**

### **Internal audit requirement**

*Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.*

### **Audit findings**

Apart from the precept, the council has no other regular source of income, with amounts received from CIL, grants bank interest and VAT refunds.

## **F. PETTY CASH**

### **Internal audit requirement**

*Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for.*

### **Audit findings**

The council has no petty cash and the testing for this internal control objective does not apply.

## **G. PAYROLL**

### **Internal audit requirement**

*Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.*

### **Audit findings**

The Clerk is the only employee and has a signed contract of employment, based on the NALC template. The council is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Payroll is outsourced to a third party who completes the payroll calculation on behalf of the council, although the council make the payments directly themselves monthly. I was able to confirm HMRC and pensions payments are up to date and that the council is correctly not claiming the employment allowance for national insurance contributions.

There are no councillor allowances, although the Clerk is aware if paid to eligible (elected) members, these must be processed through payroll and assessed for tax and national insurance.



I reviewed the total figure being included within box 4 (staff costs) on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and was able to confirm from the excel spreadsheet that this includes only salary payments, HMRC payments and pension contributions.

## H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

### **Internal audit requirement**

*Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.*

### **Audit findings**

The council has a fixed asset register in place, maintained in an Excel format, which includes details of asset location, date of acquisition, original purchase price and insurance value. Assets are correctly listed at cost/proxy cost, or where gifted/donated, given a nominal £1 value for the purpose of the asset register.

I confirmed the asset register total matches that included in box 9 (total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets) on the AGAR and was able to trace the changes to the previous year's total against the asset register. I confirmed by sample testing of the invoices that items added during the year has been accurately recorded as the original net purchase price.

The council has no borrowing nor long-term investments

## I. BANK AND CASH

### **Internal audit requirement**

*Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.*

### **Audit findings**

Financial Regulation 6(c) states '*Bank reconciliations are carried out bi-monthly by the Clerk.*'

The Clerk was able to provide evidence of this action being completed and that a member of the Finance committee had signed the bank reconciliation.

I reviewed the March 2025 bank reconciliation for all accounts and was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and found no errors, and that the total balances match the figure included in box 8 of the AGAR.

The council holds two accounts with Nat West. At the date of the audit, the balances held are within the £85,000 protection limit offered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

I was able to confirm that the bank reconciliations have been verified in accordance with Financial Regulations, and evidence of this activity taking place is recorded within the minutes of meetings.

As the council's annual budget is below the €500,000 threshold, it is protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

## J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

### Internal audit requirement

*Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.*

### Audit findings

The council, at its meeting to sign off the year-end accounts, must discuss Section 1 of the AGAR (Annual Governance Statement) and record this activity in the minutes of the meeting.

**COUNCIL IS REMINDED THAT THIS MUST BE A SEPARATE AGENDA ITEM PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF SECTION 2 OF THE AGAR (ACCOUNTING STATEMENT).**

### Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

Based on the internal audit findings, I recommend using the table below as the basis for that discussion.

	Annual Governance Statement	'Yes', means that this authority	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	<b>YES</b> – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	<b>YES</b> – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.
3	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	<b>YES</b> – the Clerk advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
4	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	<b>YES</b> – the requirements and timescales for 2023/24 year-end were followed.
5	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the	<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	<b>YES</b> – the council has a risk management scheme and

	introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.		appropriate external insurance.
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	<b>YES</b> – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor.
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	<b>YES</b> – matters raised in internal and external audit reports <b>are being</b> addressed.
8	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	<b>YES</b> – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<i>has met all its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>	<b>N/A</b> – the council has no trusts

**Section 2 – Accounting Statements**

AGAR box number		2023/24	2024/25	Internal Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	43,067	53,095	Agrees to 2023/24 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	50,000	52,000	Figure confirmed to central precept record
3	Total other receipts	6,552	8,152	Agrees to underlying accounting records
4	Staff costs	22,631	23,461	Agrees to underlying accounting records. Includes only expenditure allowed as staff costs (see section G)
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Council has no borrowing
6	All other payments	23,893	28,530	Agrees to underlying accounting records
7	Balances carried forward	53,095	61,256	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet
8	Total value of cash and short- term investments	53,095	61,256	Agrees to bank reconciliation for all accounts
9	Total fixed assets plus long- term investments and assets	129,179	133,478	Matches asset register total and changes from previous year have been traced
10	Total borrowings	0	0	Council has no borrowing
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	No	No	No – the council is not a sole trustee
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	N/A	NA	N/A – the council is not a sole trustee

**Audit findings**

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on a receipts and payments basis with no requirement to complete the box 7 and 8 reconciliation.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2023/24 and published on the council website.

The variance analysis has been completed and, in my opinion, provides sufficient financial and narrative information to explain the variances to the External Auditor.

**K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW****Internal audit requirement**

*IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")*

### Audit findings

The council did not certify itself exempt in 2023/24 due to exceeding the income and expenditure limits and this test does not apply.

## L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

### Internal audit requirement

*The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation*

### Audit findings

For councils with a turnover over £25,000, it is recommended best practice to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, but not a statutory requirement and therefore not subject to verification during the internal audit.

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

**13(1)** An authority must publish (which must include publication on that authority's website)

- (a) the Statement of Accounts together with any certificate or opinion entered by the local auditor in accordance with section 20(2) of the Act; and
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(3)

**13(2)** Where documents are published under paragraph (1), the authority must

- (a) keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and
- (b) ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

I was able to confirm that pages 4 (Annual Governance Statement), 5 (Accounting Statements) and 6 (External Auditor's Report and Certificate) of the AGAR are available for review on the council website for financial years 2019/20 to 2023/24 inclusive.

## M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS

### Internal audit requirement

*The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2024 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*

### Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Proposed
Date AGAR signed by council	1 May 2024	6 <sup>th</sup> May 2025
Date inspection notice issued	1 May 2024	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2025
Inspection period begins	3 June 2024	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2025
Inspection period ends	12 July 2024	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes	Yes



I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2023/24, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement can therefore be signed yes by the council. I was able to confirm that the proposed dates for 2024/25 meet the statutory requirements.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Internal audit requirement

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Before 1 July 2024 authorities must publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited
- Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24, approved and signed, page 4
- Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 authorities must publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
  - Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate
  - Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.
- It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

Audit findings

I was able to confirm that the Notice of the Period of Public Rights and Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement) and Section 2 (Accounting Statement) were published on the council’s website before 1 July 2024.

I was able to confirm that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and External Auditor Report and Certificate were published on the council’s website before 30 September 2024.

The council has therefore met the publication requirements for 2023/24 have been met.

O. TRUSTEESHIP

Internal audit requirement

Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

Audit findings

The council has no trusts, and testing for this internal control objective is not applicable.

Achievement of control assertions at final internal audit date

Based on the tests conducted during the interim and final audits, our conclusions on the achievement of the internal control objectives to date are summarised in the table below.

	INTERNAL CONTROL OBJECTIVE	YES	NO	NOT COVERED
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year	✓		

B	This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for			✓ There is no petty cash
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the previous year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review in the previous year tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L	The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation	✓		
M	The authority, during the previous year correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N	The authority has complied with the publication requirements for previous year's AGAR.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

Should you have any queries please contact me directly on [jackie@mulberrylas.co.uk](mailto:jackie@mulberrylas.co.uk) or 07515 861921

Yours sincerely

**Jackie Scarff**

**Auditor Mulberry LAS****Final Internal Audit - Points Carried Forward**

Audit Point	Interim Audit Findings	Council comments
<b>Internal Audit Requirements</b>	I recommend that the internal audit is an agenda item for noting and discussion to decide what action to take for any recommendations made.	
<b>Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms</b>	I note that one cllrs ROI is not available on Sevenoaks website and recommend this is followed up.	
<b>Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice</b>	I remind council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office (page 3 of this link) <a href="https://ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas.pdf">ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas.pdf</a>	
<b>Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations</b>	The agenda for the Annual meeting of the Parish Council shows that the council are planning to review the Financial Regulations later in the year. I encourage the council to do this as soon as possible to ensure that they have a robust system in place for the approval of payments, authorisation of transactions and for awarding contracts and tenders and to ensure consistency with their standing orders. This should include ensuring consistency with the councils standing orders.	
<b>Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed</b>	It is recommended that this is brought in line with standing orders which state payments will be shown at the end of the minutes..  It is recommended that the payment sheet is signed by cllrs with a comment that invoices have been reviewed against the payment sheet.	



<p><b>This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.</b></p>	<p><b>I recommend the introduction of a risk matrix to further enhance the process and provide clarity for the assigned risk ratings and reviewed in line with the councils standing orders.</b></p>	
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