

Ginetta Best
Parish Clerk
Mollington Parish Council
Southview, Church Lane
Mollington
OX17 1AZ

13th May 2024

Elaine Anstee
16 Foxwood
Aston
Oxfordshire
OX18 2DZ

Dear Ginetta,

Internal Audit – 2023/2024 For the Attention of the Parish Council

I have carried out an internal audit review, acting independently, proportionally and basing this review on the requirements of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023-24 and JPAG Governance, Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England 2023, and Transparency Act 2015. I have looked at the assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls that should have been in operation during the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

I use the guidance noted above to ensure that all internal audits are conducted with due professional care, integrity, and independence. Conclusions arrived at as part of the audit are based upon objectivity and evidence. The internal audit is not a detailed inspection of all records and transactions of the Council to detect error or fraud. It is the periodic independent review of a Council's internal controls designed to support the development of effective and efficient procedures under the Council's control. The management of the Council's internal controls is the responsibility of the staff and Councillors and internal audit. (Reference: Governance and Accountability for Smaller Councils - A Practitioners' Guide 2021 – Section 4).

This audit has been carried out using the council's website and the summary document attached which was completed by the Clerk prior to the audit. The use of the website for the internal audit is to enable the internal auditor to have the Transparency Guidance integral to the process. The form and 3 months of financial transactions were checked. The Clerk, RFO and I met via Zoom on 24th April 2024.

Internal Control Objectives 23-24

I have had to mark the internal control objectives (ICO) M and N as 'No' for the following reasons:

ICO M – This fails for the following reasons. It was published but needs to be for 30 workings days (including 1 to 10 July) so should have been from 19th June to 28th July, not 15th July as published. It is also best practice, auditors are asked to check, that these dates have been resolved in the minutes following the resolutions for the sections of the Agar.

ICO N – This fails because ICO M has not been met.

Other Recommendations and Notes

1. The website links for the Financial Regulations and Risk Assessment 2023 do not work.
2. The budget and Precept, even if they are the same amount, should be minuted separately.
3. As the Council does not hold the General Power of Competence, the statutory power being used for each expenditure should be recorded.
4. Parish Council Minutes must be held in perpetuity and old minutes could be given to the safe keeping of the Oxford History Centre (OCC Archives) where they will be kept in climate control and fire safe conditions. They remain the property of the Parish Council.
5. The recommendation is that even an experienced clerk should have an annual review even if it is just to identify training and allow for other matters to be raised. Training on employment matters is available via OALC. The council is an employer.
6. The different elements of the AGAR should be resolve under separate minute numbers and the effectiveness of the internal audit procedure included as part on the Internal Financial Controls Policy. It would be good practice to publish this.
7. The minimum quorum is 3 as set down in statute and in the Standing Orders on page 10.
8. This is my 3rd year of internal audit for Mollington Parish Council, and my recommendation/best practice is that a new internal auditor be tendered process be done for the 24-25 fiscal year.

In summary

The Council has effective arrangements in place to satisfy itself that its systems of internal financial control are transparent and effective. There are approval and authorisation controls to minimise risk. The audit and management trail for financial transactions is effective.

Yours sincerely

By email Elaine

Anstee BA Hons: Community Governance

Attachments:

Page 4 of the AGAR for 2023-24 – signed by post/unsigned by email.

Summary for 2023-24

Invoice Number 2023/2024/0007