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Jane Olds
13 Oak Close
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX26 3XD
01869 247171
janeolds.parishclerk@gmail.com

Internal Audit Report for Leaffield Parish Council

From Jane Olds – Internal Auditor

I reviewed the documents provided and met with the Clerk, Anne Ogilvie, on 3 May via Zoom and finalised the information on 10 May.

BASIS OF REPORT

This internal audit report is based upon the JPAG (Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance) Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England 2021 publication.

The scope of this internal audit is focused on assessing the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls and was outlined in the original Letter of Engagement. Where any such controls are found to be deficient, the internal audit will help lead to improvement in those processes.

By applying the principles of internal auditing, outlined in the current Accounts and Audit Regulations and applying the approach to internal audit testing outlined above, every effort is made to ensure that all internal audits are conducted with due professional care, integrity and independence. All conclusions derived from the audit are based upon objective and traceable evidence.

Please note: it would be incorrect to view internal audit as the detailed inspection of all records and transactions of the Council in order to detect error or fraud. It is the periodic independent review of a Council's internal controls resulting in an assurance report designed to improve 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 staff and Councillors and not left for internal audit. (Source: Governance and Accountability for Smaller Councils - A Practitioners' Guide 2021 – Section 4).

Annual Return Section	Process	Findings	Recommendations and actions
A	Bookkeeping Arrangements	Appropriate books of account have been kept properly throughout the year and are well maintained with sound audit trails.	No further recommendations.

Annual Return Section	Process	Findings	Recommendations and actions
B	Council's Financial Regulations have been met with regard to expenditure	The Council's Financial Regulations have been met in that appropriate authorisations have been given for each level of expenditure. Payments were supported by invoices, and expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	No further recommendations.
C	Review of Internal Controls	I have noted that Council has assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives using their Risk Assessment and have seen the document.	No further recommendations.
D	Budgetary Controls (Precept requirement)	The annual Precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process.	No further recommendations.
D	Budgetary Controls (Budget monitoring)	Progress against the budget was monitored and minuted regularly.	No further recommendations.
D	The final Outturn is in line with expectations.	The final outturn was materially in line with expectations.	No further recommendations.
E	Income controls	Expected income was fully received and properly recorded.	No further recommendations.
F	Petty cash controls	Petty cash is not operated by the Council.	No further recommendations.
G	Payroll controls	Salaries to employees were paid in accordance with Council approvals.	No further recommendations.
H	Asset Controls - the register has correctly recorded all material assets?	The current asset register has correctly recorded all material Assets. The correct basis of valuation has been applied.	No further recommendations.
H	Asset Controls - all additions correctly recorded?	Additions in the year have been correctly recorded within the Cash Book and Register.	No further recommendations.

Annual Return Section	Process	Findings	Recommendations and actions
H	Asset Controls - all Deeds and Titles established and shown on register?	All appropriate Deeds and Titles have been established and are shown on the Register.	Add reference numbers if possible.
I	Bank Reconciliations	Periodic and year-end reconciliations were properly carried out.	No further recommendations.
J	Accounting Statements	The Accounting Statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis and were supported by an adequate audit trail.	No further recommendations.
K	Limited Assurance Review Exemption	The Council does not meet the exemption criteria.	No further recommendations.
L	Information published on website	The information is fully available.	No further recommendations.
M	Exercise of Public Rights	The Parish Council published the exercise of public rights on the website and noticeboard.	Note that the earliest date for 21/22 is 1 June due to the Jubilee bank holiday.
N	AGAR Publication Requirements	The Parish Council complied with the publication requirements for the 2020/21 AGAR.	No further recommendations.
O	Trust Funds (If applicable)	The Parish Council operates as a Custodian Trustee for one external body. Returns are not necessary.	No further recommendations.

Transparency Compliance

Process	Criteria	Findings	Recommendations and actions
Review of Internal audit action plan has been considered and actioned?	Good Practice	The Internal Audit had been reviewed the previous year.	No further recommendations.

Process	Criteria	Findings	Recommendations and actions
External Audit recommendations have been considered and actioned.	Good Practice	The Conclusion of Audit report had been received for 20/21 and had been published on the website. Findings: Box 2 had not been completed correctly initially, but this had been corrected prior to final submission.	No further recommendations.
Accounting Statements agreed and reconciled to the Annual Return	Section 2 of the Annual Return is complete and accurate and reconciles to the statement of accounts.	The accounting statements in this annual return present fairly the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	While the Parish Council does not fall in to the criteria for Councils below the £25k threshold, it is good practise for Parish Councils above the threshold to comply.		
Compliance with the Transparency Act	1) Expenditure over £100 is recorded on the Council Web-Site and with all information requirements	Not recorded separately, but all expenditure is recorded in the Minutes.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	2) Annual Return published on the Web-Site	Available on the website.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	3) Explanation of significant variances	Available on the website.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	4) Explanation of difference between Box 7 & 8 if applicable	Not applicable.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	5) Annual Governance Statement recorded	Available on the website.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	6) Internal Audit Report Published	Available on the website.	No further recommendations.

Process	Criteria	Findings	Recommendations and actions
Compliance with the Transparency Act	7) A List of Councillors' responsibilities	Available on the website.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	8) Details of Public Land and Building Assets	Available on the website.	No further recommendations.
Compliance with the Transparency Act	9) Minutes & Agenda	Available on the website.	No further recommendations.

Further Recommendations:

Following the completion of the Internal Audit, the Council should undertake a review of effectiveness as per Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. A blank form can be supplied.

Training

The Council should be commended on the number of training courses attended – both the Clerk and Councillors. I recommend including a regular agenda item for training.

Banking

Consideration should be given to bank accounts which hold more than £85,000 due to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme thresholds. Holding all the funds in one bank account is not prudent. Additionally, there may be more appropriate ways of investing the funds for a more satisfactory return.

Archives

In our discussions I noted that many of the Parish Council Minute books and other records are currently stored in the village hall. As the Minute books are the only record of the meetings and should be kept in perpetuity, I strongly recommend that just the last five years or so are kept in the village, with the rest being deposited with the County Archive for safety. A review of other documents should also be undertaken as there is no need to keep items held by others - such as most planning applications.

Previous Internal Audit

I noted that the observations from the previous internal audit have all been actioned.

Conclusion

Leafield Parish Council has an electorate in the region of 734 and the Precept for the year 21/22 was set at £61,945.

In general, I believe that the Council has competent 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 good.

This report should be noted and taken to the next meeting of the Council for minuting to inform them of the Internal Audit work carried out.

I hope that this report is of help to the Council. If you would like any further assistance or clarification, please do contact me.

Jane Olds

Jane Olds
Internal Auditor