



Internal Control Policy for the year ending 31 March 2023

1 Scope of Responsibility

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 state that a Council is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective, and that it has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Scarning Parish Council (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

At least once a year a review must be conducted of the effectiveness of its system of internal control by members of the Council and, following the review, the Council must approve an annual governance statement prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to internal control.

2. The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

Internal Control is designed to reduce financial risk to the Council. The system of Internal Control is designed to ensure that the Council's activities are carried out properly and as intended. Internal controls are set up by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), but it falls on the Council members to ensure that they have a degree of control and understanding of those controls. Controls include the checking of routine financial procedures; the examination of financial comparisons; the recording of assets and liabilities; and the identification of risk. The Council must evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. Personnel involved with Internal Control

a. The Council:

All decisions made by the Council should be in accordance with its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, and approved by the Council.

The Council has appointed a Budget Committee to prepare a draft Budget for the consideration of the full Council. At its November meeting the Council considers the

Budget and the level of Precept for the following financial year. The final decision on both is taken by no later than January of each financial year.

The Council has appointed an Internal Control Officer (ICO) to monitor progress against objectives, financial systems and procedures, and budgetary control. The ICO carries out regular reviews of financial matters. The Council receives reports from the ICO and monitors progress against its aims and objectives.

The Council receives a financial statement showing its Actual expenditure against its Budgeted expenditure, which it approves at its Council meetings at least six times a year. Payments are made in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

The Council moved to online banking from June 2022.

Two signatories make the payments online. One of these signatories is the Clerk/RFO. The Clerk/RFO sets the bank payments and does not make the final approval/confirmation of the payment. This is carried out by a second signatory. The signatories ensure that the payment agrees with the amount of the invoice and the payee named on the invoice. The signatories initial the invoices.

The Council occasionally makes payments by cheque. Two signatories sign cheques. The signatories ensure that the cheque agrees with the amount of the invoice and the payee named on the invoice. The signatories initial the cheque stubs.

The Council agrees the receipts and payments made for each month.

At the year end, the ICO ensures that the cash book totals are reconciled to the year end bank statement and signs the cash book and the year end bank statement as evidence of this check.

b. Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer:

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's adviser and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for the day to day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to, and for managing risks. The Clerk ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and policies are maintained.

The duties of the Clerk/RFO are laid down in a Job Description which is reviewed each year. A copy of the Clerk's contract of employment and job description is held by the Chairman and the Clerk. The performance of the Clerk is appraised annually by the Staff Committee.

The Council is internally audited each year by an independent Internal Auditor. The RFO submits all the requested information to the Internal Auditor by the required date.

The Council is externally audited each year by an independent Internal Auditor. The RFO submits all the requested information to the External Auditor by the required date.

The RFO arranges for the Public Notices to be displayed.

The RFO retains all relevant documents relating to the financial year for five years (Annual Return, VAT Returns, PAYE/NIC information, Public notices, Asset Register, Risk Assessment reports; accounts and supporting information).

c. Internal Auditor:

The Council has appointed an independent and competent Internal Auditor who reports to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- records
- procedures
- systems
- internal control
- regulations
- risk management
- reviews

The effectiveness of the Internal Audit is reviewed annually, and the Council agrees the appointment of the Internal Auditor (IA). The IA, who is competent and independent, is advised of the scope of the work required by the Council.

The scope of the work (and the fee) of the Internal Audit is reviewed annually and the review and the appointment is minuted.

The IA inspects the accounts and at the year end (prior to completion of the Annual Return) and completes the relevant page of the Annual Return.

The IA writes a separate report to the Council (a copy of which is sent to the Chairman) detailing any findings he/she might have.

The report of the IA is copied to all members of the Council and considered as an agenda item at the next meeting. Recommendations from the report are recorded in the minutes.

d. External Auditor

The Council's External Auditor, appointed by the Audit Commission, submits an External Auditor's Report, which is presented to the Council.

e. Internal Control Officer

Internal Control checks cover all financial activities of the Council over the whole of the financial year on a sample basis. Regular activities are included at each quarterly check, with other activities being included at least once a year. Checks are reported to the next Council meeting.

Regular Activity Checks

The ICO inspects at least six payments during each quarter.

The ICO inspects receipts as received during each quarter.

Payments are checked as follows:-

Invoice total matches the invoice countersigned by two signatories.
Payment has been advised to the Council and authorised.

Receipts are checked as follows:-

Amount is correct.
Payment has been banked.
The receipt has been advised to the Council.

Bank Transfers are checked as follows:-

Amount debited from Building Society account has been credited to Current Account.

Control Check Calendar

Check 1 (first quarter of the financial year) ie April-June
Check 2 (second quarter of the financial year) ie July-September
Check 3 (third quarter of the financial year) ie October-December
Check 4 (fourth quarter of the financial year) ie January-March

4. Review of Effectiveness

The Council is responsible for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work and any issues are identified by:

Full Council - identification of new activities

Internal Control Officer - regular reports made

Clerk to the Council/RFO, who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control procedures and managing risks - risks identified.

Internal Auditor, who reviews the Council's system of internal control. The Internal Auditor will make a written report to the Council (in addition to completing the relevant section in the Annual Return - action arising from reports.

External Auditor, who makes the final check using the Annual Return, a form completed and signed on behalf of the Parish Council by the RFO, Chairman and Internal Auditor. The External Auditor issues an annual audit certificate - action arising from Audit Report.

5. Significant Internal Control Issues

The significant internal control issues identified during the financial year to 31st March 2021 were:

None.

Action taken was:

N/a.

6. Annual Return

There were matters raised on the Annual Return for the financial year to 31st March 2021 which were:

Amendments to Boxes 4, 7 and 8.

Salary adjustment incorrectly recorded on the form.

Action to be taken in next Annual Return:

Amend Boxes 4, 7 and 8 in accordance with the External Auditor's guidance. These will be amended on the comparison figures for this year's audit. In consequence of the above, the Parish Council must answer 'No' to assertion 4 of the Annual Governance statement for 2020/21 and ensure it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2021/22

Approved: March 2022.

Next review: March 2023.

Appendix A

Internal Audit Action Plan for the Financial Year

The Parish Council annually:-

- a. Considers and amends its Internal Control Policy as necessary.
- b. Reviews its Risk Management Policy.
- c. Assesses the effectiveness of its Internal Audit arrangements.
- d. Reviews the effectiveness of its Banking arrangements.
- e. Considers its Insurance policy and whether an alternative insurance provider should be sought.
- f. Appoints an Internal Control Officer.
- g. Considers a Risk Assessment of Assets Report prepared by the clerk. The report includes the Asset Register.
- h. Appoints an independent and competent Internal Auditor
- i. Considers the Internal Auditor's report and formalises any necessary action plan.
- j. Completes, considers and signs the Annual Return.
- k. Approves its Budget and Precept for each financial year.
- l. Provides training as required for the clerk/RFO and councillors
- m. Provides adequate resources to complete the above.

Internal Control Officer's Report

CHECK 1 (first quarter of the financial year) ie April-June

1. Please check at least six payments and all receipts

1.....	Date	Payee.....	Value.....
2.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
3.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
4.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
5.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
6.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....

Receipt	Date.....	From.....	Value.....
	Date.....	From.....	Value.....

2. Have the audited accounts for the year been presented to the Council for approval ?

Yes / No Date of meeting.....

3. Has the Annual Return been presented to the Council ? Yes / No

Date of meeting.....

4. Has a report from the Internal Auditor been presented to the Council ?

Yes / No Date of meeting.....

5. VAT Return.

Has a Return been submitted Yes / No.

6 Has the rent for the former Highway Surveyors land been received ? Yes / No.

7. Has the rent re Fir Acre been received ? yes / No.

8. Has the rent for the Shipdham Lane playing field been received ? Yes / No.

9 Has the bank reconciliation been checked against the bank statements ? Yes / No.

10 Have any bank transfers been crosschecked ? Yes / No.

Any other comments

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Reported to Council Meeting on.....

Signature.....Date.....

It is at the discretion of the ICO to contact one or more payees/contractors to confirm that payment has been made to them in accordance with the Council's records.

CHECK 2 (second quarter of the financial year) ie July-September

1. Please check at least six payments and all receipts

1.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
2.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
3.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
4.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
5.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
6.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....

Receipt	Date.....	From.....	Value.....
	Date.....	From.....	Value.....

- 2. Has the bank reconciliation been checked against the bank statements ? Yes/No
- 3. Have any bank transfers been crosschecked ? Yes/No
- 4. Is the Council in line with its budget for the financial year ? Yes/No

Reported to Council Meeting on.....

Signature.....Date.....

Any other comments

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It is at the discretion of the ICO to contact one or more payees/contractors to confirm that payment has been made to them in accordance with the Council's records.

CHECK 3 (third quarter of the financial year) ie October-December

1. Please check at least six payments and all receipts

1.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
2.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
3.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
4.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
5.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
6.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....

Receipt	Date.....	From.....	Value.....
	Date.....	From.....	Value.....

- 2. Has the bank reconciliation been checked against the bank statements ? Yes/No.
- 3. Has the rent in respect of the former Broadway Allotment been paid ?
- 4. Have any bank transfers been crosschecked ? Yes/No.
- 5. Is the Council in line with its budget for the financial year ? Yes/No

Any other comments
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Reported to Council Meeting on.....

Signature.....Date.....

It is at the discretion of the ICO to contact one or more payees/contractors to confirm that payment has been made to them in accordance with the Council's records.

CHECK 4 (fourth quarter of the financial year) ie January-March

1. Please check least six payments and all receipts

1.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
2.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
3.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
4.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
5.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....
6.....	Date.....	Payee.....	Value.....

Receipt	Date.....	From.....	Value.....
	Date.....	From.....	Value.....

- 2. Has the bank reconciliation been checked against the bank statements ? Yes/No
- 3. Have any bank transfers been crosschecked ? Yes/No
- 4. Is the Council in line with its budget for the financial year ? Yes/No

Any other comments
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Reported to Council Meeting on.....

Signature.....Date.....

It is at the discretion of the ICO to contact one or more payees/contractors to confirm that payment has been made to them in accordance with the Council's records.