

## Internal Audit Report for Old Newton with Dagworth and Gipping for the period ending 31 March 2023

Clerk	Karen Hall-Price
RFO (if different)	
Chairperson	Jonathan Miller
Precept	£ 28,604.79
Income	£ 34,288.33
Expenditure	£ 44,330.46
General reserves	£ 14,030
Earmarked reserves	£ 16,200 (£15,000 CIL)
Audit type	Annual
Auditor name	<b>Linda Harley</b>

### Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources

- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, and corruption
- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts, and data

## Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- conduct a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws, and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being conducted as planned

<b>Section 1 – proper bookkeeping</b>		
The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council’s accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The RFO has put in place effective procedures to accurately and promptly record all financial transactions. The Council’s ledger (computerised cash sheet) is well maintained and accurate. The ledger and the minutes clearly identify the spending power used for each item, evidencing the council is operating within its mandate.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	Up to date accounting records are maintained throughout the year and referenced which provides evidence to support the Council's underlying accounting statements.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	Spot checks were made and were found to be correct.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders</b>		
The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC’S latest model which include legislative changes.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	<i>Partly met</i>	The Council’s Standing Orders, as seen on the website are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018. The Standing Orders have not been reviewed during the audit year. Comment: To bring their Standing Orders fully up to date Council may wish to increase the procurement threshold from £25,000 to £30,000 to comply with the full requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 updated on 21/12/2022. Standing Orders should be reviewed annually by the Council and a note made in the minutes that this has been carried out.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council’s Financial Regulations, were reviewed in November 2022 and are based on the Model Financial Regulations produced by NALC in 2019. Comment: To bring their Financial Regulations fully up to date Council may wish to increase the procurement threshold from £25,000 to £30,000 to comply with the full requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 updated on 21/12/2022 and update the figures relating to public contracts.
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Financial Regulations are tailored to the Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? <sup>1</sup>	Yes	Confirmation that the Clerk is the Responsible Financial Officer is included in the Council’s Internal Control Document. Comment: In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), the Council may wish to noted in their minutes, on an annual basis, that a person has been appointed to be responsible for the administration of their financial affairs.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<sup>1</sup> Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)



<b>Section 3 – Payment controls</b> The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	The Council complies with its Financial Regulations and a sample of payments confirmed they were supported by invoices. At each full Council Meeting a list of all payments is presented to the meeting with formal approval of such expenditure being shown in the minutes and evidence of such paperwork in the files submitted for internal audit. A sample taken shows that the Council had the legal power to approve most payments, however please see comment below regarding payments to the church. Comment: Councils should be aware that powers in the Local Government Act 1894 prohibits Council’s involvement in property relating to the affairs of the Church e.g. the maintenance or improvement of buildings or land or contributing to costs.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	<i>Partly met</i>	Payments made by Internet banking are entered and verified by the Clerk (who is an authorised signatory) and checked and released by 1 Councillor, after the payments have been agreed by the Council. In line with their Financial Regulation 6.10, a note is made on the invoice which Councillor has released the payment. However, there are no initials on the invoice to confirm that 2 Councillors have checked the details, against the payment made. It is a general principle that more than one authorised signatory/member of the council should be involved in any payment, whether that is before, at or after the point at which the payment is made. Internet Banking is included within the financial risk assessment document, with dual authorisation in place.

		<p>Comment: Whilst the Council has implemented the procedure whereby evidence is retained showing which Councillors authorised the release of the payment, having only 1 Councillor responsible for this transaction is contra to the Council's own Financial Regulation 6.4. which states that 'cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule as presented to council or committee shall be signed by two members of council or, exceptionally, by one member of council and countersigned by the Clerk, in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment.'</p> <p><b>Recommendation: in order to provide further safeguards, Council may wish to adopt an internet banking policy and if appropriate amend their Financial Regulations to reflect the items contained in it.</b></p>
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is identified in the cash book. The claim for the period July 2021 to December 2022 in the sum of £1,989.28 was settled during the year under review. This agrees to supporting accounting records and the minutes of 1/3/23.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? <sup>2</sup>	N/A	The Council has not adopted the General Power of Competence.
Are payments under s.137 <sup>3</sup> separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	<p>Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £8.82 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants. 1 payment was recorded as being made under this power – the purchase of a poppy wreath.</p> <p>Comment: Council may wish to include the purchase of a wreath for Remembrance Day under the Local Government Act 1972 s.138B which is the power to support a religious event.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Localism Act

<sup>3</sup> Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £8.41 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	Yes	The Council has a loan with the Public Works Loan Board. Minutes evidence 2 repayments during the year of £2613.62. The outstanding balance of the loan of £7,666.93 was evidenced by a report from the PWLB.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 4 – Risk management</b> The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.		
<b>Evidence</b>	Internal auditor commentary	
<i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i>	Yes	The Risk Assessment Document for the period 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023 was considered at a meeting of the Financial Review on 23/11/22 and covers in general terms the matters which could possibly prevent a smaller relevant body from functioning. The Council has taken appropriate steps to manage those risks including the introduction of internal controls and external insurance cover. The Council noted the need for a cemetery risk assessment to be written and this has now been published on the website.
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	Yes	Council has a Financial Risk Assessment which identifies the risks associated with ensuring that public finances are adequately protected and managed and has taken steps to mitigate such risks. Comment: the documentation of the specific control procedures that have been adopted by the council for payments not only protects the RFO but also fulfils an internal control objective
<i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee <b>and</b> has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i>	Yes	General Insurance is in place under an Ansvar Commercial Policy Schedule and shows core cover including Business Interruption, Public Liability and Employer’s Liability of £10m. Fidelity Guarantee Cover is £50,000 which is just within the recommended guidelines of the Council’s balance at 31/3/23 + the annual precept.



		<p><i>Comment: Council should continue to monitor its bank balances in both April and September / October to ensure that the level of Fidelity Cover is appropriate and covers the recommended guidelines.</i></p> <p>Council reviewed its current insurance cover at the meeting of 5/10/22.</p>
<p><i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed<sup>4</sup></i></p>	<p><i>Partly met</i></p>	<p>The Council has shown that it has a system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions, ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective and includes effective arrangements for the management of risk. The Finance Committee minutes of 23/11/22 confirm Internal Control meetings took place on 6/5/23 and 18/11/22. These minutes were approved by full Council at the meeting of 7/12/22. The internal control statement published on the website is dated 2021 and this has not been updated in 2022.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council may wish to update their internal control statement annually and include a note in the minutes that this has been carried out.</i></p>
<p><i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment<sup>5</sup></i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The effectiveness of internal audit was discussed at the Finance Review on 23/11/23. The minutes were then accepted at full Council on 7/12/22.</p> <p><i>Comment: by reviewing the terms of reference for internal audit, Council has followed guidance within the Governance and Accountability Guide and recognises that the 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.</i></p>
<p><b><i>Additional comments:</i></b></p>		

<sup>4</sup> Accounts and Audit Regulations

<sup>5</sup> Practitioners Guide

<b>Section 5 – Budgetary controls</b>		
The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The Financial Review committee prepared the budget for the year, prior to the setting of the precept and the approval of full Council at their meeting on 7/12/22.
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The full Council has considered, approved and adopted the annual precept/ for the year. This was set at £30,030.52 at the meeting of 4/1/23.
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	Comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure is included within the documentation periodically circulated to Councillors in accordance with Council's own Standing Orders. The minutes reflect that they have been received and noted.  The regular review of spending against budget is also noted in the Council's financial risk assessment documents
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked<sup>6</sup></i>	Yes	Council's final accounts show general reserves in the sum of £14,030 with earmarked reserves in the sum of £16,200, which includes restricted reserves in the sum of £15,000. For CIL.  The financial risk assessment document states that General Reserves are reviewed at budget setting and earmarks at the review of accounts by the Financial Committee.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<sup>6</sup> In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

<b>Section 6 – income controls</b>		
The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<b>Internal auditor commentary</b>
<i>Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?</i>	Yes	Expected income was received, properly recorded and promptly banked. Several items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statements and found to be in order. Comment: in accordance with Proper Practices, the Responsible Financial Officer ensures that the accounting records contain entries from day to day of all sums of money received.
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	All income received by the parish council is reported as part of the Financial Reports submitted by the RFO. The RFO ensures that monies received are promptly banked.
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	The precept recorded agrees with the notification from Mid Suffolk District Council.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?<sup>7</sup></i>	Yes	Council did not receive any CIL funds during the year under review. In accordance with the 2010 Regulations, the Council having received a proportion of CIL funds previously, has ensured that retained balances are transferred into the Earmarked Reserve specifically allocated. Comment: Council has noted its duty to comply with the CIL Regulations to produce an annual report that details the amount of CIL funds received, spent and retained for each financial year until the funds are totally expended. Annual reports are uploaded onto the Councils website. The annual report for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023 should be uploaded onto its website by 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2023. Council minuted the payment of £5,000 towards kitchen refurbishment for their village hall from CIL funds.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	

<sup>7</sup> Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

	CIL funds are reviewed at the annual meeting of the Finance Committee 23/11/22.
<b><i>Additional comments:</i></b>	

<b>Section 7 – petty cash</b>		
The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures, and verification processes and that these are up to date.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	N/A	The Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	N/A	
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 8 – Payroll controls</b>		
The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	Council had 1 employee on its payroll at the period end of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit, but all salary payments are authorised by full council. Comment: in accordance with Proper Practices, Council has ensured that the remuneration payable to all employees has been approved in advance by the Council.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	Yes	
<i>Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?</i>	Yes	There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	In accordance with Proper Practices, PAYE taxes and employee and employer National Insurance contributions (NIC) are calculated and recorded for every employee. Deductions are paid to HM Revenue and Customs, if applicable, on or before the dates prescribed. Evidence of P60 seen.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?<sup>8</sup></i>	Yes	In line with their pension responsibilities the Council has completed a re-declaration of compliance with regards to automatic enrolment duties in April 2022. This was registered with The Pensions Regulator. Council uses the Nest pension scheme and shows good practice by including the amount paid by the employee and employer in the minutes. Council uses the NEST pension scheme and evidence seen of monthly payments.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	All payments are approved by the Council before being made.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<sup>8</sup> The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

<b>Section 9 – Asset control</b>		
The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location, and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?<sup>9</sup></i>	Yes	The Council's assets are properly maintained and efficiently managed. The Asset Register was reviewed during the Internal Audit for year-end and accurately reflects those items listed under insurance and within the Parish Council's remit for maintenance and ownership. It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2023) was £79,664 which agrees with box 9 of the AGAR. All assets have been stated as at the acquisition value and where assets have been gifted or where there is no known value have been given the proxy value of £1. The register has been updated with most additions or disposals during the year. The purchase of an overhead projector and case in 2022 has been included in the asset register figures. Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/S	
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	

<sup>9</sup> Practitioners Guide

	items as listed under the Asset Register were reviewed against items under insurance and cover was deemed to be appropriate. Cross checking of insurance cover is included in the financial risk assessment.
<b><i>Additional comments:</i></b>	



<b>Section 10 – bank reconciliation</b>		
The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.		
<b>Evidence</b>		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	Statements reconciling each of the Council’s bank accounts with it’s accounting records are prepared on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. They are subject to independent review by Councillors and signed as evidence of this review. Bank statements are periodically independently verified to the balances stated in the bank reconciliations The clerk shows good practice by including the regular review of bank statements and reconciliations within the financial risk assessments documentation.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances were noted from the following accounts: Barclays Community Account £26589.65 Barclays Savings Accounts : £254.05 and £3385.86 Total across all accounts: £30229.56. This agrees with Box 8 of the AGAR.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Bank balances are reported at each Council meeting and noted in the minutes.

<b>Section 11 – year end procedures</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounting statements prepared during the year are produced on a Receipts and Payments basis and agree to the cashbook. All were found to be in order.
<i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i>	Yes	There is a clear audit trail from the financial records held to the presented accounts.
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR<sup>10</sup> documents been completed?</i>	Yes	As Council's gross expenditure exceeds £25,000 the Council has correctly completed part 3 of the AGAR. Under Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, Council has annotated 'yes' to item 7 relating to 'taking appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit', however the recommendation from the internal auditor that the fidelity insurance be increased to cover the guidelines of 'the annual balance at year end + amount of the precept' has not been action. Box 4 of the AGAR relating to staff costs includes underpayment for the tax year 20-21 of £377.75 and 21-22 of £462.69.
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	N/A	The Council does not meet the criteria to declare itself exempt from an external audit.
<i>During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?</i>	Yes	The Internal Auditor was able to confirm the details of the arrangements for the exercise of public rights for the period ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023 from 26/6/23 to 4/8/23.
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?<sup>11</sup></i>	Yes	The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and has published the following on a public website:

<sup>10</sup> Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

<sup>11</sup> Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

	<p>Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2) Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the AGAR Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate Notice of the conclusion of audit</p>
<p><b><i>Additional comments:</i></b></p>	

<b>Section 12 – internal audit</b>		
The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i>	Yes	The Internal Auditor’s Report for the year ending 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022 was considered and accepted at the meeting of the Finance Review Committee on 23/11/23 and the minutes of this meeting were approved by full Council on 7/12/22.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	The following items were raised under the internal audit for 2021/22: 1. Council’s Fidelity Insurance is below the recommended guidelines.
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	SALC was appointed the Council’s Internal Auditor at a meeting of the Financial Review on 23/11/22 and these minutes were accepted by full Council on 7/12/22.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

<b>Section 13 – external audit for the period under review</b>		
The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?<sup>12</sup></i>	Yes	Following the completion of the audit, the full Council received and considered the audit letter (Annual Return and Certificate) from the external auditor, at their Finance Review meeting on 23/11/22 and this was reflected in the minutes of 7/12/22.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i>	Yes	The external auditor raised the following comment and Council has taken steps to correct the weakness identified: In the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, and their detailed report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to significant weaknesses in relation to objective G, payroll systems. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address this area of weakness in a timely manner.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

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<sup>12</sup> Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e., All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.*

<b>Section 14 – additional information</b>		
The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
<b>Evidence</b>		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> <sup>13</sup>	Yes	The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council was held on 4/5/22 with the first item on the agenda being the election of the Chairman in accordance with the Local Government Act of 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7(2) and Schedule 15(2).
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> <sup>14</sup>	Yes	The Council's Minutes are well presented and provide clear evidence of the decisions taken by the Council in the year. Council notes that minutes are accepted and signed at the next meeting. Overall they are in accordance with legislation. Comment: S85 of the 1972 Local Government Act states that "...if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority." Council is advised to ensure that all absences are not merely recorded but approved by the Council thereby ensuring that the absence is not treated as unapproved. An accidental or unforeseen absence at a subsequent meeting could then lead to an unnecessary disqualification.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	A list of members' interests held is published on the District Council's website. Comment: Council may like to publish a link to these documents from their own website.
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	N/A	The Council does not have trustee responsibilities.
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Yes	To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller authorities (turnover not exceeding £25,000), Council has published the following information on a public website for the year 2022/23:

<sup>13</sup> The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

<sup>14</sup> Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011

		<p>List of Councillors and Responsibilities                  Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT                  End of Year Accounts                  Annual Governance Statement                  Details of Public Land and Building assets / asset register and that Agendas of Meetings; Associated Papers and Minutes should be published in accordance with the prescribed timescales as set out in the Transparency code for smaller authorities – December 2014.                  The Internal Auditor was able to confirm that the documents/information were readily accessible on the Council's website:  <a href="http://oldnewton.onesuffolk.net/">http://oldnewton.onesuffolk.net/</a>                  Comment: To be fully compliant Council may wish to publish their full Internal Audit Report.</p>
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?<sup>15</sup></i>	Yes	The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller. Under the data Protection Act 2018 and Registration Z286173 refers.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	The Council are compliant with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). These are regularly reviewed by the Finance Committee and include the Data Protection Policy, Freedom of Information Policy, Subject Access Request Policy and Procedure and a Document and Electronic Data Policy, all of which have been published on the Council's website.
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?<sup>16</sup></i>	Yes	Council has published on its website a website accessibility statement - Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?<sup>17</sup></i>	Yes	In line with the Practitioners Guide, the Council has an official email address for correspondence parish.clerk@oldnewtonpc.co.uk

<sup>15</sup> Data Protection Act 2018

<sup>16</sup> Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

<sup>17</sup> Practitioners Guide

		Comment: Council might wish to consider the use of a secure e-mail system with a gov.uk address thereby identifying that it has local government status and demonstrating authenticity when building trust and credibility with the public. Such an address would be owned by the parish council (section 5.16 of the Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices – March 2021) refers.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Evidence that electronic files are backed up are included in the Council's documentation.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Partly met	Council has the following committees/sub committees and working groups: Planning; footpaths and environment; highways, infrastructure, potholes; Cemetary; finance; finance internal control; Allotments and employment. Comment: Council may wish to put in place terms of reference for their committees to confirm if they have the powers to make decisions, to act on their decisions and to spend without reference to full Council. These terms of reference could then be reviewed annually.
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

Signed: *Linda Harley*

Date of Internal Audit Report: 5/6/23

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils