

# Internal Audit Report

(to be read in conjunction with the Annual Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return)

Name of council:	Ashton Parish Council		
Name of Internal Auditor:	Caroline Holgate	Date of report:	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024
Year ending:	31 March 2024	Date audit carried out:	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024

*Internal audit is the periodic independent review of a council's internal controls resulting in an assurance report designed to improve the 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 council through its staff and management and not left for internal audit. It would be incorrect to view internal audit as the detailed inspection of all records and transactions of a council in order to detect error or fraud. This report is based on the evidence made available to me and consequently the report is limited to those matters set out below.*

**The council is required to take appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit and to respond to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit. Failure to take appropriate action may lead to a qualified audit opinion.**

## To the Chairman of the Council:

I carried out an Internal Audit of Ashton Parish Council, with information available via the website, and further information requested for audit purposes provided by the Clerk/RFO, Lynn Lavender. I would like to thank Lynn for her time and assistance.

The council have a new website in place which is easy to navigate and use. I was able to find copies of all relevant minutes and other documents.

The work completed is identified in the table below. Please note the points in bold on which the council is required to take appropriate action.

<b>Area of Work</b>	<b>Observations/Points</b>
Audit – Internal and External	The Council received and approved Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR at their June meeting. The Notice of Conclusion of the Audit was noted at the September meeting, with no issues raised.
AGAR Publication Requirements	The Council have published all relevant information in order to comply with the AGAR Publication Requirements on their website.
Adoption of Policies	Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and other relevant policies were reviewed and re-adopted at the Annual Meeting.
Accounting Records	The Accounts were properly maintained during the financial year and the correct carry forward figure was rolled over. Receipts and payments are reported to the Council at each meeting, as well as the current bank account balance.
Asset Register	The Council keep a register of assets which is updated, and the correct asset figure is stated in the Accounting Statements.

Budget	There is evidence that there is a budgetary process in place. At their January meeting the Council resolved a budget of £30,400 for 2024/25, and a precept amount of £21,000.
Employees	The Clerk is the only employee and is paid regularly on approval of the Council. Regular payments made to HMRC for PAYE.
Exercise of Public Rights	The dates for Exercise of Public Rights were agreed at the Council's meeting in June, and included the first 10 days of July. The Notice of Exercise of Public Rights was published on the Council's website.
General Power of Competence	The Council have the General Power of Competence in place, which was reaffirmed at their Annual Meeting in May 2023.
Income	A grant is received from EDF in relation to a wind farm, and the amount received is duly noted in the minutes and recorded separately in the cash book.
Minutes of Meetings	Minutes were reviewed and do not reveal any unusual activity.
Precept	The precept was received in two equal payments of £10,000. The Council have agreed an increased precept figure of £21,000 for the 2024/25 financial year.
Reserves	Reserves are at an acceptable level. The Council have agreed to open a Public Sector Deposit Fund for any cash reserves.
Risk Assessments	The Council reviewed and adopted their Risk Assessment at the Annual Meeting in May.
Transparency Code	Expected information is published on the Council's website, including the audited accounts. The Council have a new .gov website which is clear and easy to navigate.
VAT return	VAT is claimed on a regular basis and reported to the Council when received.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Caroline Holgate  
Internal Auditor to the Council  
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The figures submitted in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return are:

	Year ending 31 March 2023	Year ending 31 March 2024
1. Balances brought forward	35,076	49,688
2. Annual precept	19,172	20,000
3. Total other receipts	17,443	20,983
4. Staff costs	5,666	5,465
5. Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0
6. Total other payments	16,337	46,264
7. Balances carried forward	49,688	38,942
8. Total cash and investments	49,688	38,942
9. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	68,092	90,009
10. Total borrowings	0	0

The proper practices referred to in Accounts and Audit Regulations are set out in *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (2023)*. It is a guide to the accounting practices to be followed by local councils and it sets out the appropriate standard of financial reporting to be followed. A copy of the guide is available for free download from:

<https://www.northantscalc.com/practitioners-guide-2023>.