

Babraham Parish Council

Internal Audit Report 2019-20

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*for and on behalf of
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Background

Statute requires all town and parish councils to arrange for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and systems of internal control, and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2019-20 financial year.

Internal Audit Approach

In undertaking our review for the year, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts / AGAR. We have again employed a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks in the required key areas to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls are appropriate and fit for the purposes intended.

Our programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Internal Audit Report' in the Council's AGAR process which requires independent assurance over several internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

We have concluded that, based on the programme of work undertaken, the Council has maintained adequate and effective internal control arrangements during the year. Consequently, we have completed and signed the 'Internal Audit Report' as part of the year's AGAR process having concluded that, in all significant respects, the internal control objectives set out in that report were achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

Detailed Report

Maintenance of Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations

Our objective in this area has been to ensure that accounting records are being maintained accurately and on a timely basis, and that no anomalous entries appear in the cashbook.

The accounting records have again been maintained using an Excel spreadsheet, which we consider appropriate for a council of Babraham's size. The Council operates both a current and a deposit bank account with Unity Bank.

To ensure the appropriateness and accuracy of the recording of transactions, we have:

- Confirmed the accurate carry-forward of prior year closing balances to 2019-20;
- Ensured that the spreadsheet affords appropriate analysis of receipts and payments;
- Checked and agreed the cashbook detail for the full year to supporting bank statements;
- Verified the bank reconciliation detail on each bank account as at 31st March 2020, also ensuring the accurate disclosure of the combined balances in the year-end Accounts.

Conclusion

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Review of Corporate Governance

Our objective is to ensure that the Council has a robust regulatory framework in place; that Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders (SOs) and that, as far as we are reasonably able to ascertain, no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation.

We have reviewed minutes of Council meetings held during 2019-20, the principal aim being to consider whether any issues exist that may have an adverse effect on the Council's financial stability in the short, medium or longer term, also that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ensure. no indication exists that the Council may either be considering or have taken decisions that might result in ultra vires expenditure being incurred.

We are pleased to note that the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders have been reviewed, updated and re-adopted in the 14th November 2019 Meeting (minute Refs. 1911/14 and Ref 1911/13 respectively).

We have reviewed the Council's website and are pleased to acknowledge compliance with the disclosure requirements of the Transparency Code. We also note that the external auditor's report, issued since our last visit, had no matters regarding the Councils accounts and governance.

We thank the Chairman for completing our “Corporate Governance Questionnaire”, which aims to afford us further assurance as to the soundness of the Council’s overall governance arrangements

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this review area requiring formal comment or recommendation.

Review of Payments

We have reviewed the procedures in place for receiving invoices; checking their authenticity, accurate detail recording, processing by the Clerk and formal approval for payment by Members. Our objective is to ensure that:

- Payments have been made in accordance with the Council’s approved procedures and budget for the financial year;
- Payments are supported by a trade invoice or acknowledgement of receipt;
- VAT has been calculated correctly and is recovered at appropriate intervals;
- The Council has formally approved each payment;
- Payments have been correctly analysed in the cashbook and year-end Statement of Accounts prepared for members; and
- Noted that no Section 137 payments have been made during 2019/20

We have examined a sample of payments processed in the year totalling £10,115 which represents 51% of total expenditure.

We have noted that a VAT claim has been submitted during the Financial Year and payment has been received from HMRC for the prior year.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that we consider the controls over the authorisation and release of expenditure adequate and to be operating effectively with the above criteria met for each payment in the year.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and operational / health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition. We are pleased to note that:

- An appropriate Risk Register is in place, which was reviewed and readopted at the Council meeting on 11th April 2019 (minute ref.1904/) and is scheduled to be reviewed again in April 2020.

- The Council's insurance cover is provided by Hiscox: we have examined the current policy schedule and consider that it meets the present needs of the Council with both Public and Employer's Liability at £10 million and Fidelity Guarantee cover of £500k.
- Further noted that the Council does not own any play spaces or playing fields

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this review area requiring formal comment or recommendation.

Budgetary Control and Reserves

We are pleased to note that the Council considered and agreed the budget and precept for 2020-2021 at its meeting in January 2020 adopting the latter at £12,255 (minute ref 2001/10). We also note that information relating to the budget and performance to date during the year was considered when determining the 2020-2021 budget and precept requirements.

Members continue to receive regular updates of the financial position at each council meeting, with details of the bank balances, income received and payments either made or due for approval. We are also pleased to note that the new clerk has introduced quarterly budget performance reports, which we consider an example of best practice, as it affords members a more detailed measure of activity against the at planned when setting the year's budget and precept.

At the year end, total reserves stood at £71,862: we note that the Council has earmarked £61,862 for various projects including the funds received from developers under S106 agreements' available for use on other community related projects. This leaves a general reserve balance of £10,000 which equates to approximately 10 months of revenue spending at the current level and is over the generally recognised guidance of between 3 & 6 months.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no issues have been identified in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Review of Income

The Council receives income by way of the annual precept, a small amount of bank interest and recoverable VAT. We have checked and agreed in full the cashbook transactions to bank statements and other underlying supporting documentation for the financial year.

Conclusion

We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this area of our review that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Petty Cash

The Council no longer operates a petty cash account, with any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the clerk reimbursed routinely throughout the year.

Review of Staff Salaries

In examining the Council's payroll function, our objective is to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the Employee Rights Act 1998 and the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and National Insurance Contributions (NIC).

Processing of the Council's payroll has been contracted out to Yorkshire Tax Bureau (YTB), who are responsible for preparing and submitting the necessary returns to HMRC using the online RTI software and providing details to the Council regarding the payments to be made to the Clerk.

Conclusion

We are pleased to report that no matters have arisen from this area of our review that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Asset Registers

The Governance and Accountability Manual requires all councils to develop and maintain a register of assets identifying detail of all land, buildings, vehicles, furniture and equipment owned by the Council.

We were previously pleased to note that the Clerk had prepared a detailed asset register which has been updated to include additions purchased in 2019/20

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that there are no significant issues arising in this area of our review process warranting formal comment or recommendation. We have ensured the appropriate recording of these assets in the AGAR.

Investments and Loans

The Council has no loans repayable either to or by it, nor are any funds held in long-term investments.

Statement of Accounts and AGAR

We have examined and verified the detailed Receipts and Payments account produced by the Clerk and the draft figures he had included in statutory Accounting Statements that the Council is required to complete (Section 2 of the AGAR).

Conclusions

No issues arise in this area this year and, based on the work undertaken during our review for the year, we have completed and signed the Annual Internal Audit Report in the AGAR, assigning positive assurances in each relevant area.

