



Internal Audit Review April 2023

Covering Dates between October 2022 – March 2023

Plus Year End & AGAR review

Provided by: Account-ant Yorkshire Limited

For: Clerk & Deputy Clerk

Date Issued: 20th April 2023

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Introduction & Scope

- I. Local councils in England must complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) which includes an Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements, and an Annual Internal Audit report.
- II. Proper practices for Town Councils and the preparation of the AGAR is included in Joint Panel on Accountability & Governance (Practitioner's Guide) March 2022. A copy of which can be found on nalc.gov.uk
- III. Internal Audit is a key component of the council's system of internal control. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the council whether its systems of financial and other internal controls and procedures are effective.
- IV. As part of the AGAR, the council's internal auditor, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carries out assessments of compliance with relevant procedures and controls in operation throughout the financial year.
- V. Our work with Bingley Town Council commenced on 17th April 2023 and was completed in April 2023. The period covered was October 2022 to March 2023
- VI. All aspects of internal audit were covered bar the year end procedures which will be covered in our post year end visit.

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Findings

Proper Bookkeeping

Bingley Town Council uses an Accounting System called Rialtas to record all financial transactions. The system is arithmetically correct. Monthly Reconciliations are undertaken and subsequently presented to the Finance & General Purpose Committee & Full Council.

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Standing orders and Financial Regulations were agreed at Full Council in May 2022. These documents are reviewed yearly

Payment Controls

Staffing

The Finance department comprises of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk & Admin Support. Each employee has an up to date job description and has been appointed with specific duties.

Purchases above De Minimus

The Financial Regulations state that any contract over £4,000 will require 3 quotes to be obtained by the Clerk or RFO and for any amount over £1,000 they shall strive to receive 3 quotes.

Items observed as purchased over De Minimus were related to contracts

Sample Review

The Auditor reviewed a sample of purchase and sales invoices. All items were found to have an audit trail and were authorised. A list of payments are provided to Full Council at each meeting where payments are agreed.

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VAT reporting

VAT has been reported and reclaimed correctly. The council uses Rialtas and MTD reporting to provide the information to HMRC.

S137 Expenditure

The Council has been granted “General Power of Competence” to process such items through the P&L.

Risk Management Arrangements

Risk Assessments

Risk Assessment documentation reviewed in Interim Audit and found to be sufficient and recommended improvements made in the Interim Audit have been implemented.

The risk assessment was reviewed on 28th March 2023 and per Audit suggestions will be reviewed yearly going forward.

Unusual Financial Activity

The minutes and accounts have been reviewed for unusual financial activity and none has been identified.

Insurance Cover

The council has insurance policies including Public and Employer’s Liability along with assets with Hiscox under the Communities scheme and is on continuous rather than a policy with an end date. Each policy appears to be adequate and appropriate.

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Internal Controls

Internal Controls are set out in the Financial Regulations and audit checks can confirm they are being completed.

Budgetary Controls

Budget Preparation

Each year the Council undertakes an extensive budget process. This starts with a draft budget being reviewed, line by line by the Finance & General Purpose Committee. The process starts in November. Once the Finance & General Purpose Committee are in agreement with the budget it is given to Full Council for review and/or agreement in January.

Only once the budget is agreed Full Council will the precept be requested from Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

Budget for both 22/23 and 23/24 seen.

Budget Reviews

The Finance & General Purpose Committee receives a copy of actual vs budget on a quarterly basis for review. Evidence of this being discussed is evident in the meeting minutes

Budget Variances

The budget was underspent in staffing and overspent in Service Delivery.

Income Controls

Precept

The precept reviewed matches the request sent to Bradford. Bradford does not provide a notification.

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Cash and Near Cash Security

The Council has never held Petty Cash. The only cash is from the toilet block which is collected and banked fortnightly.

Multipay Card

No samples chosen were paid via the Multipay Card during this Audit, although some have on the previous Audit. The limit on the card is £500 which is cleared down monthly via Direct Debit.

Payroll Controls

Staffing

All members of staff have current job descriptions and terms and conditions. The council also has an annual appraisal process.

Payroll Processing

Bradford Community Payroll processes and pays salaries on behalf the Council. They provide a quarterly estimate of the payroll bill plus their fees which Bingley Town Council then pay. A reconciliation of the difference between payment received and payroll processed is provided.

Also provided is a separate report showing the NEST pensions output which has been checked against the Direct Debit leaving the bank account.

Expenses

Expenses are rare as there is a Multipay Card available. One item of expense was chosen in the sample and found to be small in value and risk free.

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Asset Control

Register

An up to date version of the asset register has been provided. A small number of assets have been purchased in the year. The Asset register is agreed by Full Council once per year and agrees to the AGAR

Insurance

The insurance of assets is covered under the Hiscox Community Schemes Policy.

The insurance has recently been reviewed by Council and a new policy is to start around May/June 23.

Bank Reconciliations

Bank reconciliations are present for all accounts. These are reconciled monthly in Rialtas and match physical bank statements. No differences have been observed.

Burial & Marketing Authorities

Bingley Town Council is neither a Burial or Marketing Authority

Year End Reconciliations & AGAR

Year end accounts match back to the bank statements and reports from Rialtas.

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Other items of Note

The council is registered with the Information Commissioners Office under membership number: ZA221639 and expires in December 2023.

The council has sufficient security over information and uses Cloud Storage.

The Council does not hold Trust Funds.

The Council has CIL funding from a number of developments in the area. The receipts and payments are monitored and reported to the Finance and General Purpose Committee.

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Recommendations/Further Information Required

We recommend that;

- Recommend the Council notes PKF now require 5 year's accounts on the website to cover Objective L of the Internal Audit section of the AGAR.
- Recommended dates for Exercise of Public Rights per PKF are 5th June – 14th July 2023
- That the Asset Register be available to review twice per year to enable time to highlight differences prior to year end's tight deadlines. The Auditor notes the Asset Register will be reviewed internally quarterly, therefore enabling Internal Audit review half yearly to be possible.
- Navigation on the website is not very user friendly. Meeting minutes under "2023" are purely 2023 but there is no navigation to 2022 meeting minutes or earlier. I found them using the search function instead. A navigation location of "financ" also observed.
- Council Policies either not on the website or not easily found. For Transparency Auditor suggests as many policies as possible be added to the website. This may also help resolve queries such as the ones which have come up in F&P meetings with regards the Allotments.

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