

Internal Audit Report for Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council

for the year ending 31st March 2022

Clerk	Marie Blackhouse
RFO (if different)	Judith Golder
Chairperson	Anne Marco
Precept	£ 28,000.00
Income	£ 36,844.09
Expenditure	£ 39,851.99
General reserves	£ 12,550.74
Earmarked reserves	£ 28,511.00
Audit type	Annual
Auditor name	Victoria Waples

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 2020/21 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

Section 1 – proper bookkeeping 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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council uses an excel spreadsheet to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis and ensures that the financial transactions of the parish council are as accurate as reasonably practicable.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) has continued to ensure that the cashbook is the focus for day-to-day accounting and is aware that the balancing off and reconciliation to the bank statement remains the most important control over the accounting system. The cashbook is reconciled on a monthly basis.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	A number of spot checks were carried out and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order.
Additional comments:		

Section 2 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders 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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council reviewed its Standing Orders at its meeting of 8 th September 2021, a copy of which can be found on the Council's website, and are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2018 which take into account changes in legislation since those produced in 2013.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Council's Financial Regulations were reviewed at the meeting of 12 th January 2022, a copy of which can be found on the Council's website and

		which are based on the Model Standing Orders produced by NALC in 2019.
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Council's Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? ¹	Yes	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), the Council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority.
Additional comments: Council might wish to note that LTN87 – Procurement - has provided an update on the thresholds for procuring contracts. The amended values should be incorporated into the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations at the next annual review.		

Section 3 – Payment controls 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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	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. Payments made away from the meeting are also brought back to full Council as retrospective payments and approved at the next meeting. <i>Comment: Council is mindful of its own FR5.2 "A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting at which payment was authorised. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of a contract of employment) may be summarised to</i>

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

		<i>remove public access to any personal information” and has ensured that this is actioned for all meetings at which financial transactions are discussed / approved.</i>
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	<p>Council's Internal Control Statement provides clarity on the treatment of payments made as follows: "Two members must sign every cheque or order for payment. The signatories should consider each payment against the relevant invoice and sign the invoice". However whilst there is no specific reference for how such payments are to be made or the control procedures that should be in place when making payments using online banking, Council's risk assessment documentation states that "At each Council meeting the list of invoices awaiting approval is distributed to Councillors and considered. The Chairman signs the invoices, the cheques/BACS are then raised, two signatories are required before the cheques may be sent. Payment may also be made by BACS with authorisation by 2 signatories".</p> <p>Recommendation: the Internal Control Statement be expanded to provide clarity on the procedures to be followed for payments made by BACS and that evidence be retained as to who has authorised the release of payments for example having the invoice initialled by the members who authorise the online payment in accordance with the payment spreadsheet as submitted at each meeting.</p>
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is clearly identified in the ledger book and claimed in accordance with the guidelines for local authorities and similar bodies. The VAT claim for the period 1 st April 2021 to 30 th September 2021 is verified in the cashbook and was claimed prior to year-end. The claim for the period covering 1 st October 2021 to 31 st March 2022 was submitted in May 2022. The claim for the prior year in the sum of £453.49 was settled during the year under review.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	Yes	At the meeting of 15 th May 2019, full Council confirmed that having met the criteria to adopt the General Power of Competence (Prescribed under Conditions) Order 2012, it would resolve that it be adopted and that it would come into force the day after the day on which it was made.

² Localism Act

Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	<i>Not applicable</i>	The Council is able to use the General Power of Competence to incur expenditure that in its opinion is in the interests of and will bring benefit to its area and any of it or all of some of its inhabitants.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	<i>Not applicable</i>	The Council has no such loans.
Additional comments:		

Section 4 – Risk management 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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i>	Yes	The risk assessment documentation submitted for Internal Audit provides details of the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks. The Risk Assessment for the year under review was adopted by full Council at its meeting of 12 January 2022. <i>Comment: it should be noted that it will be the District Council (under Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972) and not the County Council that will step in to support a Council if it becomes inquorate.</i>
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	Yes	Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money. There is evidence that overall the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences.
<i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability</i>	Yes	Council has insurance in place under a Select for Local Council Policy with Zurich Municipal which shows core cover for the following: Public liability:

³ 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.

<i>and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i>		£10m; Public/Products Liability: £10m; Property – Allotments, Garage, Storage & Sales Shop and Fidelity Guarantee of £100k. An annual review of the Council's insurance was undertaken during the year with Council being aware that it is the responsibility of the Council as a whole to satisfy itself that insurances are adequate and that all steps have been taken to mitigate and manage identified risks with appropriate insurance.
<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i>	Yes	In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council is aware that it should formally review the effectiveness of its system of internal control to ensure that it has mitigation measures on place to address the risks associated with the management of public finances. <i>Comment: the Council's internal control measures are contained within its Internal Control Statement which was presented to and adopted by full Council at its meeting of 16th March 2022. The interim review of the council's internal controls were carried out on 18th February 2022 and adopted at the meeting of 16th March 2022.</i>
<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 appointment⁵</i>	Yes	The effectiveness of internal audit was discussed by full Council during the discussion of the approval and adoption of the internal control statement for the year ending 31 st March 2022 at the meeting of 16 th March 2022. <i>Comment: by reviewing the terms of reference and effectiveness for internal audit, the council has followed guidance and demonstrated that it recognises that the function of internal audit is to test and report to the authority on whether its system of internal control is adequate.</i>
Additional comments:		

Section 5 – Budgetary controls 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	
Evidence	Internal auditor commentary

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

⁵ Practitioners Guide

Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed	Yes	The budget for the year 2021-2022 was approved at the Council meeting of 20 th January 2021 although there is no minute detailing the budget that was set. Separate papers showing the budget set at £29,595 were seen on the Council's website. <i>Comment: to provide clarity on the budget being set and to demonstrate that Council has decided the form and level of detail of the budget to be set, evidence should be shown, via a minute reference, as to the budget being formally approved.</i>
Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	Yes	The precept was set at £28,000 for 2021/2022, as confirmed at the above meeting and as noted in the minutes for that meeting.
Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget	Yes	In accordance with Council's own standing orders and terms of reference, a quarterly statement summarizing the Council's receipts and payments and aggregate receipts and payments for the year to date with balances held is submitted and considered by the Council. The reports provide evidence of comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure and form the basis of approval for virements in accordance with Council's own Financial Regulations.
Reserves held – general and earmarked ⁶		Council's final accounts show general reserves in the sum of £12,550.74 with earmarked reserves in the sum of £28,511.00 <i>Comment: Council might wish to note guidance as issued by Proper Practices which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure and should ensure that the level of general reserves adopted is in accordance with its General Reserve Policy. There is no upper limit for Earmarked Reserves, but they should be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level subject to regular review and justification (at least annually).</i>
Additional comments: Council shows good practice by ensuring the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process are followed for the year and has ensured that progress against the budget is reviewed regularly throughout the year.		

⁶ 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

Section 6 – income controls		
The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?</i>	Yes	Income is recorded in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. A number of items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statement and found to be in order and recorded in accordance with Proper Practices. The RFO has continued to ensure that the accounting records contain all day-to-day entries of all sums of money received.
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	Income received is reported to full Council and included within the Council's receipts and payments for each quarter as submitted. 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 council received precept of £28,000.00 during the year under review in April and September 2021. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved at the meeting of 20 th January 2021 (signed 26 th January 2021), served on the Charging Authority to receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i>	Yes	For the year under review Council received CIL Receipts in the sum of £6.81.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	CIL receipts are reported to full Council once received by the Council.
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	In accordance with the 2010 Regulations, the Council having a retained balance of CIL funds has ensured that retained balances are transferred into an Earmarked Reserve specifically allocated. Retained balance at 31 st March 2022 was £6.81.
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	Council has still to formally approve the Annual CIL Statement, a copy of which should be sent to the District Council in accordance with the timescales specified by the Regulations.
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	The report for the year ending 31 st March 2022 has been uploaded onto the Council's website although it is unsigned by the Chair of the Council.

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Additional comments:

Section 7 – petty cash

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.

Evidence

Internal auditor commentary

Is petty cash in operation?

Not applicable

Petty cash is not operated by the Council.

Additional comments:

Section 8 – Payroll controls

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. If the Clerk was recruited after 1st April 201, evidence will be required to show compliance with the new requirements for the statement of employment, Induction, probation periods and training requirements. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.

Evidence

Internal auditor commentary

Do all employees have contracts of employment?

Yes

Council had 3 employees on its payroll at the period end of 31st March 2022. (4 for the year under review). Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit.

Has the Council approved salary paid?

Yes

All salary payments are authorised by full council. It is noted in the Council's risk assessment documents that salary rates are assessed annually by a committee and applied on 1st April each year.

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?

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	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines. Cross-checks were completed covering salary and PAYE were found to be in order. Deductions paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made in accordance with timescales as set out in the regulations.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁸</i>	Yes	Council is aware of its pension responsibilities and a re-declaration of compliance as submitted to the Pensions Regulator was seen dated 9 th November 2020.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	Council is aware of the changes in the Practitioners Guide for 2020 on the treatment of what can be included as employment expenses within the Annual Governance and Accountability Guide 2020 - section 2.16 refers and submitted within Box 4 of the AGAR. All expenses / payments made are against itemised invoices submitted to and approved by the Finance full Council.
Additional comments:		

Section 9 – Asset control 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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?⁹</i>	Yes	The Asset Register was reviewed during the Internal Audit Visit for year-end and reflects those items listed under insurance and within the Parish Council's remit for maintenance and ownership. It is noted that the declared

⁸ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

⁹ Practitioners Guide

		value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2022) is £88,277.96 which shows overall movement of +£9,560.
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2021 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied and if/where amended, it will need to publish and provide explanations in changes in value to any previously recorded assets
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	Not applicable	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 asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The asset register is still to be signed off by the council however, the assets declared on the Draft Accounting Statements of the AGAR are expected to reflect the Council's Asset Register value as seen on the website and submitted for internal audit at £88,278 (rounded).
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has insurance under an all risks cover for assets up to the value of £150thousand as confirmed at the meeting of 16 th March 2022 following reviews and amendments made to the register.
Additional comments:		

Section 10 – bank reconciliation		
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.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is a bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted at each meeting.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end (31 st March, the balance across the councils accounts stood at £41,061.74 as recorded in the Draft Statement of Accounts and on the Year-end Bank Reconciliation.

<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Balances across the Council's accounts are reported at each meeting of full Council. In accordance with Council's Internal Control Statement, a Councillor is appointed to have responsibility for bank reconciliation checks.
Additional comments:		

Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounts are produced on an income and expenditure basis, and all found to be in order.
<i>Financial trail from records to presented accounts</i>	Yes	The end of year accounts and supporting documentation were well presented for the internal auditor review.
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR¹⁰ documents been completed?</i>	Yes	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete Part 3 of the AGAR. Section 2 - Accounting Statements of the AGAR were completed but unsigned by the RFO at the time of Internal Audit.
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	Not applicable	As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was not able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review.
<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 is able to confirm that the parish council can demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the 2015 Regulations. Dates set were from 7 th June to 16 th July 2021.
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i>	Yes	The Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million for the year ending 31 March 2021 and published the following on a public website:

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		Internal Audit Report of the AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR Section 3 – External Audit Report and Certificate. Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights Notice of the conclusion of audit
Additional comments:		

Section 12 – internal audit 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.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i>	Yes	In accordance with Proper Practices, Council considered the internal audit report for the year ending 31 st March 2021 at its meeting of 14 th July 2021 and agreed an audit plan to take appropriate action of the weaknesses identified.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	The following recommendations were made within the internal audit report for the period ending 31 st March 2021: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adherence to Council's own procedures for payments 2. Disclosure of all payments within or as an attachment to minutes 3. Payments to be made in accordance of FR 6.9 4. Compliance with publication requirements under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 5. Issues raised within the internal audit report should be reported to and considered by Council along with appropriate actions undertaken 6. External Audit Report and Certificate to be reported to and considered by full Council including relevant actions
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	SALC were appointed as the Council's internal auditors for the year ending 31 st March 2022 at the meeting of 12 th January 2022.

Additional comments:

Section 13 – external audit for the period under review

The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Has the Council considered the previous external audit report? ¹²	Yes	At the meeting of full Council of 13 th October 2021, Council considered the report from the External Auditor for the year ending 31 st March 2021.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	Yes	The following matters were raised by the External Auditor: “Other matters not affecting their opinion but are drawn to the attention of the authority: The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance assertion in Section 1, Box 7. This is due to the internal auditor raising the point in their detailed report that the smaller authority had not fully addressed all of their recommendations from the prior year. In the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, and their detailed report for the current year, the internal auditor has drawn attention to significant weaknesses in relation to payment controls and approval procedures. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner.”
Additional comments:		

Section 14 – additional information

The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.

Evidence	Internal auditor commentary
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¹² 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.

Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation? ¹³ (Note to auditor- emergency Regulations because of the COVID-19 pandemic) ¹⁴	Yes	Council held its Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at which the Chair and other Officers were elected on 19 th May 2021 in person. Comment: in accordance with the repeal of the Coronavirus Act 2020 legislation all meetings held after 7 th May 2021 were held in person.
Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? ¹⁵	Yes	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes. Whilst the minutes show valid reasons for apologies given (where applicable), there is no formal record to show that Council has approved the apologies submitted. Recommendation: s85 of the 1972 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.
Is there a list of members’ interests held?	Yes	Evidence was seen on the District Authority’s website for the Register of Interests for all current Parish Councillors. There is no direct link from the Parish Council’s website to the Registers held.
Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?	None	Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council has 12 Parish Councillors who also operate independently as the sole Trustee of the New Orford Town Trust. “The Parish Council act as sole trustee for the New Orford Town Trust

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

¹⁴ The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

¹⁵ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011

		(Registered Charity 10537290) and is Custodian Trustee for the Orford Recreation Trust (304804)"
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	<i>Partly met</i>	Councils with income over £25,000 but under £200,00 will be expected (but are not legally required to do so) to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000). Council is working towards ensuring compliance with the requirements under the Transparency Code 2015.
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁶</i>	Yes	The council is correctly registered with the ICO as a Data Controller in accordance with legislation. Reference: ZA255291 Expiry 18 June 2022.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	As identified in the previous year's audit, Council has taken steps to ensure compliancy. A range of documents were able to view on the website detailing the framework that the public can expect for the handling of requests from individuals who have the right to know what data is held on them, why the data is being processed and whether it will be given to any third party. <i>Comment: During the year a number of documents were reviewed and added to the Council's GDPR suite of policies: Data Protection Policy; Subject Access Request Policy; Data Retention Policy and Data Breach Policy.</i>
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁷</i>	Yes	The website accessibility statement seen on the Council operated website details the technical information of the website along with the methods used for testing the website; the steps being taken to improve accessibility and how the site is being improved to ensure that content meets the WCAG 2.1 Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?¹⁸</i>	Yes	Council has its own email address which is owned by the parish council and not connected to a personal email account. <i>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>

¹⁶ Data Protection Act 2018

¹⁷ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁸ Practitioners Guide

<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>		Council has in place a system whereby an auto back-up of Council's day to day records to a cloud-based system takes place on a weekly basis.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Yes	
Additional comments: <i>Transparency Code 2015 - To ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (turnover exceeding £200,000), the following information should be published in accordance with the required timescales:</i> <i>quarterly:</i> <i>Individual items of expenditure that exceed £500 (currently published on an annual basis); Government Procurement Card transactions;</i> <i>Invitations to tender for contracts over £5,000; Details of contracts that exceed £5,000;</i> <i>annually:</i> <i>Details of all land and building assets; Grants to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations.</i>		

Signed: Victoria S Waples

Date of Internal Audit Visit: 14.06.22 & 21.06.22

Date of Internal Audit Report: 22.06.22

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils