Chartered Certified Accountants

Southgates

Withernsea Town Council

Final Internal Audit

2024/2025

Antony Rookes FCCA

6th June 2025

Background and Scope

There is a statutory requirement for all town and parish councils to make arrangements for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal controls each year and for the conclusions to be reported in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Southgates, Chartered Certified Accountants were appointed to provide this service to Withernsea Town Council for the 2024/2025 financial year.

This report sets out the results of our final audit in relation to 2024/2025, which was undertaken in May and June 2025. We wish to thank the Town Clerk and her colleagues for providing the documentation required for review in an electronic format.

Internal Audit Approach

In carrying out our internal audit work for the year to date, 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, operating a mix of 100% substantive or selected sampling techniques where considered applicable.

Our audit programme is designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council's financial systems remain robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Internal Audit Report' in the AGAR, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

On the basis of the programme of work we have undertaken for the year to date, we have concluded that the Council continues to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal controls. The records held in support of the accounting transactions continue to be of a high standard and provide an effective audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation.

In the sections below, we have explained the objectives of each area of our audit, summarising the work undertaken and our findings. Other than 1 minor point which we detail later, we are pleased to report that there are no matters arising that require a recommendation for further action. We ask that Members consider the content of this report.

This report has been prepared for the sole use of Withernsea Town Council. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no responsibility or liability is accepted by Southgates, Chartered Certified Accountants to any third party who purports to use or rely, for any reason whatsoever, on this report, its contents or conclusions

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Detailed Report

Accounting and Banking Arrangements

Our objective in this area is to confirm that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and kept up to date, that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers, and that appropriate banking arrangements are in place.

As in previous years, the Rialtas Omega accountancy package is used to maintain the financial records.

Banking services continue to be provided by Lloyds Bank Plc.

In the course of our final audit, we have:

- Checked that the opening Omega trial balance agrees with the closing balances in the 2023/2024 AGAR;
- Confirmed that the ledger remained in balance at the time of our final audit;
- Confirmed that the cost centre and nominal ledger coding structure remains appropriate for the Council's needs;
- Checked and agreed the detail on the Omega combined cash book for the Business Current Account and Business Premium Account, examining the transactions for two sample months (October 2024 and March 2025), agreeing these to the supporting bank statements;
- Similarly, checked and agreed the detail of transactions on the Salaries cashbook, again agreeing these to the supporting bank statements for the sample months;
- Checked and agreed the bank reconciliations as at 31st October 2024 and 31st March 2025 on all accounts, confirming that reconciliations continue to be prepared routinely at the close of each month and that there is evidence of independent review, and
- Confirmed, through discussion with the Town Clerk, that the Rialtas accounts and booking system are regularly backed up to the Council's server, which is itself backed-up to the 'Cloud' each evening.

Conclusion

On the basis of our audit work, we consider that the controls in place in this area were adequate and were operating effectively. The bank reconciliation for October 2024 does include an amount of -£0.84 relating various adjustments between April 2024 and October 2024. This was resolved in the March 2025 bank reconciliation. There are no other matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Corporate Governance

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place and that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain (as we do not attend Council meetings), all meetings are conducted in an appropriate manner and no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been, or are being, considered for implementation.

During the course of our final audit, we have confirmed the following:

- Our review of the minutes of the Council and Committee meetings for the year to date did not identify any issues that we consider may have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council's future financial stability;
- The review of minutes also confirmed that the Council has taken appropriate measures to ensure that it is able to maintain effective governance arrangements;

Conclusion

On the basis of our audit work to date, we are satisfied that the Council continues to adopt a sound approach to its corporate governance responsibilities. There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Expenditure

Our objective in this area is to ensure that:

- Council resources are released in accordance with approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate forms of documentation confirming the payment is due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt where no other form of invoice is available;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

We have commenced our testing of expenditure for 2024/2025. In total, we examined a sample of 19 payments for the period March 2025. Our sample included all individual payments, as recorded in the accounts. The total value of items in our sample was £23,007.036, including VAT.

We have confirmed that VAT returns continue to be completed in a timely and accurate manner, with electronic "on-line" submission in place, in line with current HMRC requirements. We have examined the reclaims for the first two quarters, confirming that the submissions agreed to the Omega VAT control account.

Conclusion

On the basis of our review, we are satisfied that the arrangements in place for the coding and authorisation of payments are sound, with adequate supporting documentation present for all payments in our test sample, and that appropriate action has been taken with regard to the re-claim of VAT. There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Budget setting, budgetary control and reserves

Our objective here is to confirm that the Council has robust procedures in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and the level of Precept to be drawn down from East Riding of Yorkshire Council: also, that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also aim to confirm that the Council retains sufficient funds in earmarked and general reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans and to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

From our review of the minutes, we noted that Members continue to be provided with budget monitoring reports and formal bank reconciliations during the year, with the detail now being considered by the FB&S Committee rather than by the full Council.

We have reviewed the approach followed by the Council in determining its budget and Precept requirements for 2025/2026, and reviewed its reserves position.

Conclusion

On the basis of our audit work in this area to date, we consider that the budgetary control arrangements are adequate and are operating effectively. There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Income

In considering the Council's income streams, our objective is to confirm that robust systems are in place to ensure the identification of all income due to the Council from its various sources, that invoices are raised in a timely manner and that effective procedures are in place to pursue recovery of any outstanding monies due to the Council.

In our final audit, we undertook the following work:

- We examined a sample of Cemetery related activities for the period 1st November 2024 to 31st December 2024, that the invoices subsequently raised were in order and that the income due was received and banked on a timely basis;
- We examined the Sales Ledger "Aged Debtors Report" as at 31st March 2025. We note that the overall value of long-standing debts (over 3 months) amounts to £4,789.42, or 62% of the total outstanding of £7,641.64. However, it can be seen that steps are being taken to reduce the balance on all 4 accounts that make up the figure.

Conclusion

On the basis of our audit work in this area to date, we consider that the controls over income are adequate and are operating effectively. There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation

Salaries and Wages

In examining the Council's payroll function, our objective is to confirm that extant employment legislation is being adhered to, that the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation are satisfied regarding the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions and that the requirements of the local government pension scheme are met.

To confirm compliance with the above criteria, we have:

- Ensured that Tax and National Insurance deductions for all employees have been made applying the appropriate PAYE code and NIC Table following the annual budgetary increases in personal allowances with effect from April 2024;
- Checked that the correct local authority pension scheme percentage deductions are being applied, where applicable;
- Ensured that any variations to standard payments, such as overtime and mileage, have been subject to formal timesheet records and approval by senior officers;
- Verified the net payments to staff from payslips to the summary BACS settlement reports; and
- Checked and agreed the payments to HMRC and the Pension Fund.

Conclusion

On the basis of our audit work in this area to date, we consider that the controls over salaries and wages are adequate and are operating effectively. There are no other matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation for further action.