

Internal Audit Report for SWEFFLING PARISH COUNCIL

for the period ending 31 March 2025

Clerk	Peter Grogan
RFO (if different)	
Chairperson	Professor John Tesh
Precept	£5,000
Income	£5,852
Expenditure	£5,739
General reserves	£9,412
Earmarked reserves	Nil
Audit type	Annual
Auditor name	Karen Hall-Price

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 2024/25 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		Internal auditor commentary
Is the ledger maintained and up to date?	Yes	The council uses excel spreadsheets to produce reports on a receipts and payments basis. The council ensures that the financial transactions of the parish council are as accurate as reasonably practicable. All transactions are referenced and provide an effective tool for the basis of the council's internal controls. It provides data for analysis allowing the RFO to produce clear financial management reports.
Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure? (under Proper Practices, Councils are required to work on an Income & Expenditure basis when their gross income, or gross expenditure, exceeds £200,000 for 3 consecutive years)	Yes	Council's gross income and expenditure level is below the threshold of £200,000 and has been for three (3) continuous years. Council's operating under this limit may choose either to report on an income and expenditure basis or on a receipts and payments (R&P) basis.
Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?	Yes	The council provides good evidence at each meeting to support the council's underlying statements.
Is the arithmetic correct?	Yes	A number of spot checks were carried out and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order.
Additional comments: It is noted that this is the first year for the clerk to be the RFO following a difficult audit year 23-24		

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		Internal auditor commentary
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	<i>Standing Orders were reviewed on 13th November 2024 and are now reviewed annually. Use of the Model Standing Orders (produced by NALC in 2022) are correct. The Standing Orders are compliant with legislation and have been adapted (where they are not statutory requirements) to ensure that they are relevant to the Parish Council. This was raised as a comment from the internal audit report 23-24 and has been actioned.</i>
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Financial Regulations (FR), as seen on the Council's website show a review date of 10 th September 2024 and are based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations 2024 with provisions included as outlined under NALC Advice Note - Procurement – 8 January 2024. This was raised as a comment from the internal audit report 23-24 and has been actioned, however It is noted within the minutes the date of 10th September 2024 but the Finance Regulations available on the website have not been dated. Recommended to update / date the regulations available on the website at the earliest opportunity.
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Council's Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council. The date needs to be added to the finance regulations as detailed above.
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 at the AGM Meeting of 14 th May 2024 had appointed Cllr Daniel to the post of the RFO until June once the audit was complete and then the Clerk would be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the Parish Council as confirmed within their financial regulations 1.5 refers.
Additional comments:		

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

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		Internal auditor commentary
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	A selection of random payments were cross checked against payment authorisation slips, cash book, bank statement and invoices and all were found to be recorded/ authorised in accordance with Proper Practices
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	<p>Internet banking is operated in accordance with the Council's own Financial Regulations and is used for the settlement of the Council's expenditure. There is clear evidence of good practice - payments have dual authorisation. The online banking and processing protocol document was approved at the 14th January 2025 meeting but the document that has been uploaded is not signed and the minutes are incorrectly dated as 14th January 2024.</p> <p>Recommendation to correct the meeting date as soon as possible. It is clear this is typing error but needs to be corrected.</p>
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is identified within the cash book. The year-end balance for 2024-2025 stands at £69.45 which is to be reclaimed within the next tax year 2025-2026. VAT amount reclaimed for the financial year 22-24 identified as £228.04 was received to bank on 05.09.24
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	N/A	The council has not confirmed eligibility criteria to enable it to exercise the GPOC. The General Power of Competence has therefore not been adopted by Council.

² Localism Act

Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	Yes	Council made no payments under S137 in the year under review. <i>Comment: council is aware that s137 is a capped power and payments should be within statutory limits and deemed to be of benefit to those living in the area.</i>
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	Council does not have any 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 as reviewed 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 Register for the year under review was considered and adopted by the council at its meeting of 14 th January 2025. The report uploaded onto the website is not signed or dated.
<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 in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences.

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 £10.81 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

<p><i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Council has insurance in place under a Charity and Community (Essentials) policy with Ansvar (through Community Action Suffolk) which shows core cover for the following: Public liability: £10million; Public/Products Liability: £10million and Fidelity Guarantee of £25thousand.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has followed recommended guidance by ensuring that its Fidelity Cover is equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April/May.</i></p> <p>The Council's insurance cover was renewed and the payment made at the meeting of 10th September 2024 however there was no minute reference again that a review of the cover had taken place.</p> <p>Recommendation: Council needs to minute reference that the review of its insurance has taken place. This was a recommendation from the previous years audit and is still outstanding.</p>
<p><i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i></p>	<p>Yes / Partly</p>	<p>At the meeting of 14th January 2025 the Council approved several policies, the approval of the online banking protocol and the statement of Internal Control which in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, confirm that the financial and management systems of the council are sound and adequate moving forward. The internal control arrangements are not fully efficient and effective to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.</p> <p>Recommendation: Council should in line with good practice appoint a councillor(s) to review the system of internal control via specific tests and as such demonstrate that it understands the requirements to have in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money. There is a template available for the tests if required.</p>
<p><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></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Contained within the review of the internal controls statement, council also formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements and concluded that the standards were being met and that the work of internal audit was effective. Internal Auditor appointed as SALC at the meeting of 14th January 2025.</p>

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

⁵ Practitioners Guide

		<i>Comment: Council is aware that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulation 2015, it must review the terms of reference and effectiveness of internal audit and demonstrate that it has understood that the role of internal audit is to evaluate and report on the adequacy of the system of internal control.</i>

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
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The budget for the year 2024/2025 was reviewed by the Parish Council on 14 th November 2023. Budget papers were circulated to the council before the November meeting and are now regularly reviewed at each meeting.
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precept was set at the meeting of 9th January 2024 for £5,000 for the financial year 2024/2025 and was paid in 1 instalment of £5,000 - Received by the parish council on 30th April 2024. The precept request for 25-26 was confirmed at the 13th November 2024 meeting set at £6,500. <p>The Council does not indicate the level of increase and do not provide details of the impact on band D Council Tax. <i>Comment: although the minutes show the precept being set and the value it does not give any indication of what was set for last year or that the council recognises the increase or justified reasons why. It is good practice for the minutes to demonstrate the overall increase on a Band D dwelling over that set for the previous year.</i></p>

<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	The minutes evidence that Council carried out its regular reviews covering the budget for the current year with a review of income and expenditure against budget for the year.
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i>	Yes	<p>The Council, as at year-end, had General Reserves of £9,412. It should be noted that there are £0 Earmarked Reserves and £0 CIL monies held or received.</p> <p>Comment: Council is advised 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 held is in accordance with an adopted 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).</p> <p>Recommendation: Council should note that the level of general reserves, currently held at £9,412.00 is on the high side and should be reviewed prior to budget setting for 2026-2027. Council should consider adopting a general reserves policy. This was advised at the last internal audit and not actioned.</p>
<p>Additional comments: <i>Good practice in that recommended key stages of the budgetary process are as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>decide the form and level of detail of the budget</i> <i>review the current year budget and spending</i> <i>assess levels of income</i> <i>bring together spending and income plans</i> <i>provide for contingencies and consider the needs of reserves</i> <i>approve the budget</i> <i>confirm the precept</i> <i>review progress against the budget regularly throughout the year</i> 		

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 ensured 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 within the financial reports submitted to full Council and recorded within the minutes.
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	Council received precept in the sum of £5,000 from East Suffolk District Council for the period under review as reported to full Council within its Financial Reports. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved to being served on the Charging Authority to remittance advice showing the Precept to be paid and receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account received in April as one payment of £5,000.00.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i>	Yes	During the year under review, Council have not received or spent any CIL funds. The annual report for 2023-24 details no CIL funds were received or spent in the year under review and no CIL monies remain. The 24-25 CIL report was reported and reviewed as agreed at the 14 th January 2025 meeting and was available for inspection at the time of audit. Assuming this is another NIL report as no CIL monies have been received
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	N/A	
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	N/A	
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	<i>In Progress</i>	during the audit year under review. The RFO needs to ensure that the CIL report is uploaded onto the parish website. <i>Comment: council is aware that the Regulations provided clarity on the timing of the reports, and by which date they should be brought into the public domain.</i>
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
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	<i>N/A</i>	The Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	<i>N/A</i>	As above
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. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	Council had 1 employee detailed on its payroll during the period under review. Employment contract was not reviewed during the internal audit but

		the Clerk to the Council has confirmed that a Contract of Employment is in place.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	N/A	All salary payments are presented to full Council for approval and payment is made via internet banking in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. Amendments to salary points, working hours, budgets and support for training are all approved by full council. No employee is paid the national minimum wage. <i>Comment: Council ensures that 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>
<i>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?</i>	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>Comment: Council should note the requirement to ensure that it formally approves amendments to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment.</i>
<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 and outsourced. Cross-checks were completed on payments made covering salary and PAYE all found to be in order. Deductions were paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review. P60 and payslips were evidenced and verified and available for the purposes of the internal audit.
<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, but no member of staff was enrolled into a pension provider by the council.
<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes	It was confirmed at the meeting of 9 th January 2024 that the council had completed its re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	There is a satisfactory expense system in place and all staff expenses claimed are approved in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations.
Additional comments:		

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

<p>Section 9 – Asset control</p> <p>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.</p>		
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	<p>The Asset Register, as viewed on the Council's website, and as approved at the meeting of 14th January 2025, was reviewed during the Internal Audit 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 value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2025) is £25,884.00 which reflects no movement in the asset register covering acquisitions and disposals in the last 12 months it is correctly entered in Section 2, Box 9 of the 2024/25 AGAR. Having purchased and installed a defibrillator in the year under review this should be included on the asset register and updated accordingly.</p> <p>Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2023 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.</p> <p>Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was conducted via remote means.</p>
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/A	

⁹ Practitioners Guide

<i>Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?</i>	N/A	Council does not have any assets located on third party property.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The values submitted on the Draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return for Internal Audit show an asset value of £25,884 (rounded) which matches that approved by the council at its meeting in January 2025. <i>Comment: Council has ensured that the values stated above mirrors the declared value on the unaudited accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025.</i>
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has insurance for its assets as specified on the insurance schedule.
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 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. Evidence was seen of the year end account balance which reconciled to the year-end accounts.
<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 2025) the balance across the council's accounts stood at a total of £9,411.74. Reflecting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barclays Business Premium Account balance of £5,012.18 Community Account balance of £4,399.56. The Agar confirms this figure rounded to £9,412.

<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. Financial reports are submitted to the Council including a summary of income and expenditure in accordance with the Council's own Standing Orders.
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Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Are appropriate accounting procedures used?</i>	Yes	Accounts are produced on a receipts 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. There is a full audit trail from records to presented accounts.
<i>Has the appropriate end of year AGAR¹⁰ documents been completed?</i>	Yes	As the Council was a smaller authority with a gross income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 for the period under review, it was able to certify itself as an exempt authority and AGAR Form 2 was completed
<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	Yes	As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it was able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review. The minutes of 14 th May 2024 demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 and the Certificate of Exemption were reviewed, and permission was given for the Chair and RFO to sign the documents. <i>Comment: Council has ensured that there is formal evidence of the legal decision taken to claim exemption under section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulation 2015.</i>
<i>During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of</i>	Partly	Council has demonstrated that during the year under review, it ensured that the period for the exercise of elector's rights during Summer 2024 was in accordance with the period specified within the Accounts and Audit

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

<p><i>public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?</i></p>		<p>Regulations 2015. The dates set were 2nd June being a Sunday to Friday 12th July 2024 with the Notice being dated 31st May 2024 as seen on the council's website.</p> <p>Comment: within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council correctly provided for the exercise and published a copy of the required "Public Notice" by ensuring that it clearly identified the statutory 30 working day period when the Authority's records are available for public inspection. This is evidenced by the notice on the website which contains the period for the exercise of public right; details of the manner in which the documents can be inspected; the name and address of the external auditor and the provisions as contained under section 25 and section 27 of the Act. Technically the 30 days period was short by 1 day as a Sunday is not classed as a working day and the first 10 working days of July should have taken you to 13th July.</p> <p><i>Public Inspection: All files were available to view on the councils website.</i></p>
<p><i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i></p>	<p><i>Partly</i></p>	<p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as a smaller authority with income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 and published the following on a public website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Exemption, • Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24 • Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24, • Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 • Analysis of variances • Bank reconciliation – Year end • Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. <p>Recommend: As above - Council ensures it correctly provides for the exercise of public right and publish the information before the 1 July</p>

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		on the smaller authorities website – Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015
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	The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31 st March 2024 was formally considered and noted by full Council at the meeting of 9 th July 2024.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes / Partly	At the 14 th January 2025 meeting the council reviewed / adopted the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of updated risk assessment, On-line banking protocol, Statement of Internal Control, CIL Report 24/25, Privacy and Legal Statement and Fixed Asset Register, Data Retention Policy, • Quarterly reviews of expenditure from budget – Actioned • Apologies are noted but not accepted. – From November 2024 onwards it is noted that any apologies are approved within the minutes. – Actioned • It is noted that the council tried to correct the notice for the exercise of public rights but this was still not correct. The council needs to note that the requirements for the notice are 30 days notice and must include the first 10 working days of July. • Council was advised 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

		<p>the level of general reserves held is in accordance with an adopted General Reserve Policy. - Outstanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual / recorded review of insurance – Outstanding
<p><i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i></p> <p><i>Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?</i></p>	Yes	<p>The appointment of the person to act as the parish council's independent internal auditor for the year 2024-2025 was approved at the council meeting of 11th March 2025, however the letter of engagement and appointment of SALC as the internal auditor for the financial year 2024-2025 was not recorded or agreed within the minutes. <i>Comment: Council has understood the requirement to ensure that it has a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities for internal audit but needs to record that it has understood and accepts the terms of engagement.</i></p>
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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<p><i>Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?¹²</i></p>	N/A	<p>The Parish Council did not have gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 and was able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year 2023-2024.</p>

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.*

<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i>		N/A
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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹³	Yes	The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council was held on 14th May 2024 and the first item on the agenda was apologies and not the election of Chairperson. I appreciate this may be a small error but the first item on the agenda and recorded in the minutes should be the election of Chairperson, acceptance of their office before moving into the order of business to be discussed and acceptance of apologies.
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹⁴	Yes	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is noted that the individual meeting minutes are numbered but they are not numbered consecutively. The Clerk has confirmed this has been implemented and takes effect from May 2025 – This is best practice guidance and is now in place for the current financial year and moving forward. It is also noted that apologies are noted but not accepted until the November 2024 meeting - This was raised in the previous audit and the council have reviewed this as part of the audit review and now action this at each meeting. <p>Overall the minutes are now administered in accordance with legislation.</p>

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

¹⁴ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011

<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	Evidence was seen on the District Authority's Website the Register of Interests for 7 Parish Councillors with a direct link from the Council's own website.
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	N/A	Council does not have any trustee responsibilities
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Yes	<p>To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller authorities (turnover not exceeding £25,000), Council is aware that the following should be published on a public website for the year 2024/2025 not later than 1 July:</p> <p>Internal Audit Report List of Councillors and Responsibilities Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT End of Year Accounts Annual Governance Statement Asset Register and that Agendas of Meetings; Associated Papers and Minutes should be published in accordance with the prescribed timescales as set out in the Transparency code for smaller authorities – December 2014.</p> <p>Comment: Councils website could be clearer marked signposting members of the public where to find the finance information, meeting information etc, presently the folders are split into current year and previous year but all documents are randomly uploaded.</p>
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁵</i>	Yes	<p>The Council is correctly registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation. Certificate Registration number ZB018491 expiring 14/03/26 is not available on the parish council's website and should be uploaded. The certificate was provided via a link through the ICO website to download for the purpose of the audit and verified.</p> <p>Recommendation: The ICO certificate as a licenced data controller needs to be uploaded onto the parish council website.</p>

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	Council has taken active steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and has adopted a number of GDPR Policies during the year that provides clear responsibilities and obligations of the Council in respect of the collecting, using and protecting of personal information in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR. The council is building a suite of policies and procedures to help the council adequately handle personal data. Records Retention Policy as advised in previous audit has been adopted during the year under review – Actioned.
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁶</i>	Yes	Council has accessibility tools on its website thereby allowing for the increased functionality of the council's website, along with a website accessibility statement on the Council operated website detailing 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 2.2 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?¹⁷</i>	Yes	<p>Currently, Council uses an outlook email address sweffling.clerk@outlook.co.uk but has a pc.gov.uk website address. With Cllrs using private email addresses for correspondence.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council needs to consider the comments raised in the Practitioners Guide to Proper Practices (effective March 2024 1.26 which states that every authority should have an email account that belongs to the council and to which the council has access.</i></p> <p>The minutes of 11th June 2024 demonstrate that councillors agreed to discuss adopting "gov.uk" email addresses and for the clerk to obtain some costings. At the July meeting it was agreed to move over to Microsoft office and to make the arrangements to move over to the gov.uk email addresses and the 10th September meeting states that the move had been made, however due to some issues the November meeting informs the council of the termination of the .gov.uk email address. It is best practice to have designated parish council emails for all members of the parish council not</p>

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁷ Practitioners Guide

		just the Clerk and Cllrs should not be using personal email addresses or shared family email addresses. Further guidance issued over the use of a secure e-mail system with a gov.uk address with dedicated email address for councillors can be found at sections 5.210 to 5.219.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Clerk has confirmed that a back-up of the council's data is taken and stored appropriately on a monthly basis.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	N/A	Council does not operate with a committee system.
Additional comments:		

Signed: *Karen Hall-Price*

Date of Internal Audit Report: 23rd May 2025

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils