

Internal Audit Report for Shimpling Parish Council for the period ending 31 March 2024

Clerk	Natasha Byford
RFO (if different)	
Chairperson	David Dunkley
Precept	£11,265
Income	£27,088 rounded
Expenditure	£39,246 rounded
General reserves	£5887.10
Earmarked reserves	£15,995.53
Audit type	Annual
Auditor name	Sandra Brown

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 2022/23 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 Scribe Accounting 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. All transactions are well 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.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	Council follows Proper Practices in ensuring that its accounting procedure gives an accurate presentation of an authority's true financial position on a monthly and annual basis. This provides good evidence to support the council's underlying statements.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	Accounting records were spot checked – they are well maintained and clearly identify expenditure and income at any given point.
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		Internal auditor commentary
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	<p>At a meeting on 15 May 2023 the Council carried out an annual review of its Standing Orders.</p> <p>Council's Standing Orders, are based on the latest model published by the National Association of Local Councils (2018) 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.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council may wish to update at the next review the public contracts figure from £25,000 to £30,000 which have been increased.</i></p>
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	<p>At a meeting on 15 May 2023 the Council carried out an annual review of its Financial Regulations.</p> <p>Council's Financial Regulations, are based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations 2019 with provisions included as outlined under LTN 87 - Procurement – March 2022.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council may wish to update at the next review the public contracts figure from £25,000 to £30,000 which updated 21 December 2022.</i></p>
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 the Clerk to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. This is confirmed within Council's own Financial Regulations.

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

Additional comments:

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	A selection of random payments were cross checked against cash book, bank statement and invoices and all were found to be recorded/ authorised in accordance with Proper Practices. A financial report is provided to Council at each meeting and this is included within the minutes covering bank balances, CIL, reserves payments and income received. This demonstrates good practice in that there are measures in place that help safeguard public money supported by a straight forward and clear audit trail for each payment.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	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 are checked and authorised by councillors and online authorisation is then completed by the approved member with evidence retained demonstrating the council is working in line with its own Financial Regulations.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is identified in the cash book with the reclaim for the period covering the year 2022-2023 in the sum of £2,152.55 being verified in the cashbook and bank statements. VAT for the year 2023-24 has been reclaimed with £2,007.06 being received in March 2024.
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	No	<i>The General Power of Competence has not been adopted by Council.</i>

² Localism Act

Are payments under s.137 ³ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	N/A	No payments were made in the year under review.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	Council has no such loan
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 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 documentation (Financial, Play Equipment, Spring Clean) were reviewed at a meeting of Council on 15 May 2023.
<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. It is noted the Council is responsible for play equipment with an independent annual inspection carried out by Playquip this was confirmed at a Council meeting of 10 July 2023.

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 £9.93 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

<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>	Yes	<p>Council has insurance in place under a specialist policy for local councils with Clear Councils which shows core cover for the following: Public liability: £10m, Public/Products Liability: £10m and Fidelity Guarantee of £50,000. 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 to be received in the following April.</p> <p>During the year, 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, annual review of the Council's insurance was undertaken prior to renewal. The minutes of 15 May 2023 evidence that such a review was undertaken with the renewal taking place in December 2023.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has ensured that it is able to demonstrate that it has reviewed the risks facing the Council in transacting its business and has taken out appropriate insurance to manage and reduce the risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things).</i></p>
<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i>	Yes	<p>At the meeting of 15 May 2023, Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, confirmed that the financial and management systems of the council were sound and adequate and internal control arrangements were efficient and effective to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.</p> <p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the Council has understood the requirements to have in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money.</p>
<i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including</i>	Yes	In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Parish Council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

<i>consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment⁵</i>		arrangements, evidence of which is contained within its Internal Control Policy as reviewed by Council on 15 May 2023.
<i>Additional comments:</i> <i>the Council has identified a number of risks to Shimpling Parish Council and taken steps to control these. These are clearly identified and approved by the Council. In accordance with proper practices the council has demonstrated it has taken steps to manage key risks in a way it can justify to a level which is tolerable by transferring the risks and taking out insurance, and that the review of insurance cover has been reported back to full Council and duly minuted. By reviewing the terms of reference for internal audit the council has followed guidance and demonstrates it recognises that the internal audit function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily.</i>		

⁵ Practitioners Guide

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 2023/2024 was approved at the Council meeting of 21 November 2022.
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The precept was set at £11,265 for the year 2023/2024, as confirmed at the above meeting, with a clear minute reference being made.
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	<p>The minutes clearly evidence that Council receives a full financial report for each meeting. Council's Financial Regulations state a quarterly review of expenditure against budget takes place.</p> <p>Comment: Council may wish to minute receipt of the quarterly review for transparency.</p>
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i>	Yes	<p>The Council, as at year-end show General Reserves in the sum of £5,887.10 and Earmarked Reserves in the sum of £18,000.82 with overall reserves standing at £21,882.63</p> <p>The generally accepted recommendation with regard the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between 3 and 12 months net revenue expenditure. At the current level, council's general reserves are considered to be within this level.</p> <p>It is noted Council has in place a General Reserves Policy which shows good practice.</p>

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

Additional comments:

Good practice in that recommended key stages of the budgetary process are as follows:

- *decide the form and level of detail of the budget*
- *review the current year budget and spending*
- *assess levels of income*
- *bring together spending and income plans*
- *provide for contingencies and consider the needs of reserves*
- *approve the budget*
- *confirm the precept*
- *review progress against the budget regularly throughout the year*

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 Council within the financial reports presented at each meeting.
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	Council received precept in the sum of £11,265 from Babergh District Council for the period under review in April and September. 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.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i>	Yes	During the year under review, Council received CIL receipts totalling £750.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	CIL receipts received are reported to full Council within the financial reports submitted to full Council. The CIL annual report for 2023/2024 shows that there is a retained balance of £3,318.06 which has been transferred into in an Earmarked Reserve specifically allocated, in accordance with the Regulations.
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	The Council has complied with its duty to produce an annual report that details the amount of CIL funds received and spent. The Council has demonstrated it understands the requirements to comply with its duty to

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	produce an annual report that details the amount of CIL funds received and spent. The annual report for the year ending 31 March 2024 showing income received and retained balance was verified by the internal auditor and is available on the Council's webiste.
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	Yes	
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

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>	Council does not operate a petty cash system.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>		
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>	Yes	Council had one employee on its payroll at the period end of 31 March 2024. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit but the Clerk to the Council has confirmed they have a Contract of Employment in place.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	All salary payments are presented to the Council for approval and payments made in accordance with Council's own Financial Regulations.
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	N/A	No employee is paid the national minimum wage.
<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	<p>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.</p> <p>The payroll function is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines. 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 employment legislation.</p>
<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 to Suffolk Association of Local Councils. Cross-checks were completed on three payments 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. In accordance with Proper Practices, PAYE taxes and employee and employer National Insurance contributions (NIC) are calculated and recorded for every employee. Deductions are paid to HM Revenue and Customs on or before the dates prescribed.
<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. No pension payments are in operation.
<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes	The Clerk has confirmed Council completed a re-declaration of compliance to the Pension Regulator on 22 August 2023.
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	All staff expenses and additional costs claimed are approved by 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

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

<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 had a declared purchase value of £88,389.27 and insurance value of £410.869 for the year ending 31 March 2024 and is entered in Section 2, Box 9 of the 2023/24 AGAR.</p> <p>Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2022 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>
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	<p>The Asset Register lists items under insurance that fall within the Council's remit for maintenance and ownership. The register states two values one at the date of acquisition and where assets have been gifted or have an unknown value have been given an approximate value, the other the insurance valuation.</p>
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available</i>	Not covered	<p>Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.</p>
<i>Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?</i>	Not covered	<p>Licences or leases for any assets sited at third party property were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.</p>
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	<p>The asset register was reviewed by Council at its meeting on 15 May 2023 confirming it covers assets within the ownership or responsibility of the Council.</p>
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	<p>Council has insurance for its assets as specified under generic headings on the insurance schedule. The Policy held includes play equipment cover of £76,464, Building cover £384,480 contents £22,134, street furniture £24,000, mowers & sport equipment £12,000 memorials and wall, gates & fences.</p>

⁹ Practitioners Guide

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	There is evidence of good financial practice and the Council has implemented a system whereby bank reconciliation of both accounts are correctly verified by the Council on a regular basis. This not only safeguards the Responsible Financial Officer but also fulfils an internal control objective.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	<i>Bank balances agree with period end statement and, as at year end (31st March) for the period under review the balance across the Council's accounts stood at £21,882.63</i> <i>Lloyds Treasurers Account £3,881.81</i> <i>Lloyds Business Account £18,000.82</i>
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Bank Balances are included within the monthly report submitted to the Council at each meeting. The minutes of Full Council meetings, demonstrate that a review of the bank reconciliation has been undertaken. This is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives The Council is aware that in accordance with proper practices, the bank reconciliation is a key tool for management as it assists with the regular monitoring of cash flows and therefore aids decision-making.

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 Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete Part 3 of the AGAR. The Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000, it has completed Sections 1 and 2 of Part 3 of the AGAR which were unsigned at the time of internal audit.
<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 for the year 2022/23 it was able to certify itself as an exempt authority which was confirmed at a meeting of Council on 15 May 2023.
<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	During the review of the publication requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it is noted that, for the year 2022-2023, the Council correctly provided for the exercise of elector's rights during Summer 2023. The RFO had set the dates for the inspection of the Council's accounts and associated documents as 5 June to 14 July 2023 with the date of the notice being 17 May 2023.
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i>		In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, as a smaller authority with either income or expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it is

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

	Yes	<p>confirmed that the Council did comply with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for the year ending 31st March 2023 as it published the following on its website:</p> <p>Certificate of Exemption Internal Audit Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement Section 2 - Accounting Statements Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15(2) Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.</p>
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

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 2023 was formally considered and reviewed at a meeting of full Council on 15 May 2023.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	<i>Partly Met</i>	The following recommendations were raised in the internal audit report for the period ending 31 st March 2023: Financial Risk Assessment to include internet banking procedures – Actioned Internal Controls Statement to include internet banking procedures – Outstanding
<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 2024 at the meeting of 15 May 2023 <i>Comment: Council has understood the requirement to ensure that it has a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities for internal audit, audit planning and timing of visits, reporting requirements; access to information; period of engagement and remuneration.</i>
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	N/A	Council declared itself exempt from a Limited Assurance Review.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	N/A	
Additional comments:		

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.

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 15 May 2023 and the first item on the agenda was the election of Chairperson.
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹⁴	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.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	A list of members interests are available through a link clearly shown on the Council's 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>Whilst the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 applies to local authorities, including parish councils with annual income or expenditure (whichever is higher) over 200,000, Councils with income or expenditure over £25,000 but under £200,000 are expected (but not legally required to do so) to follow its recommendations.</p> <p>Comment: Council might wish to review its provisions and consider whether it might be able to work towards ensuring compliancy with the requirements of publishing the following data on its website in accordance with the required timescales:</p> <p>Publish quarterly: Individual items of expenditure that exceed £500 (currently published on an annual basis); Government Procurement Card transactions; Invitations to tender for contracts over £5000; Details of contracts that exceeds £5000</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

		Publish annually: Details of all land and building assets; Grants to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations; Organisational Chart.
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁵</i>	Yes	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 ZA174927 expiring 3.4.2025. Freedom of Information Schedule of Publications is published on the Council's website.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	<p>Council has taken active steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and has adopted a number of GDPR Policies 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.</p> <p>The Data Protection and Information Management Policy was reviewed at a Council meeting held on 15 May 2023. There is a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures to help the council adequately handle personal data.</p>
<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 2.1 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?¹⁷</i>	Yes	Council operates with an official email address: shimplingpc@gmail.com

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁷ Practitioners Guide

<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	The internal Auditor presumes Council uses a system whereby a back-up of the council's data is taken and stored appropriately.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	N/A	Council did not operate any committees.
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Signed: *S.J. Brown*

Date of Internal Audit Report: 26 April 2024

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils