

# **Wendlebury Parish Council**

## **Internal Audit report 2025-26**

**Internal auditor: Lisa Wilkinson**

## **Internal Audit Report 2025/26 – Wendlebury Parish Council**

### **Introduction**

This internal audit was undertaken in accordance with the scope and requirements set out in the Practitioners' Guide 2025: Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England. The audit is based on a review of documentation provided by the Clerk, responses to the Internal Audit Questionnaire 2025/26, sample testing, and the auditor's professional judgement.

### **Overall Conclusion**

On the basis of the work carried out, it is my opinion that Wendlebury Parish Council has generally sound systems of internal control and governance arrangements in place.

The Council has appropriate policies and procedures in place, maintains a comprehensive website, and demonstrates good levels of transparency and publication compliance. Financial controls, VAT arrangements, payroll administration and website compliance arrangements appear appropriate for a council of this size.

Two governance weaknesses were identified during the audit relating to the formal review of the effectiveness of internal control and approval of the annual budget and precept, which have not been clearly evidenced or minuted during the year. A recommendation has therefore been made in this area.

### **Internal Audit Objectives and Findings**

#### **A. Proper accounting records were kept throughout the year**

The Council maintains accounting records using a spreadsheet accounting system on a receipts and payments basis.

Records reviewed appeared orderly and consistent with supporting documentation provided.

**Response: Yes**

#### **B. The Council complied with its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed and approved by Council on 27 November 2025 (Ref 28/25).

Payments are approved through approved payment schedules and appropriate controls appear to be in place for banking and authorisation.

A VAT reclaim covering April 2024 – March 2025 was reviewed during the audit.

**Response: Yes**

#### **C. The Council assessed significant risks and reviewed the effectiveness of internal control**

The Council maintains a Risk Assessment, which was reviewed and approved by Council on 26 March 2026.

The Clerk confirmed that arrangements for internal control operate in practice through reporting, bank reconciliations and payment approvals; however, no separate formal review of the effectiveness of internal control was identified within the minutes reviewed.

The review of effectiveness of internal control is a requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and should be formally considered and minuted annually.

**Response: Yes (with recommendation)**

**Recommendation:** The Council should ensure that a formal annual review of the effectiveness of internal control is undertaken, approved by Council and clearly minuted.

#### **D. The precept resulted from an adequate budgetary process and progress was monitored**

Budget monitoring information is published on the Council website and monitoring arrangements appear to operate during the year.

However, during the audit the (new) Clerk was unable to locate evidence that the detailed budget and precept requirement for 2025/26 were formally approved by Council.

Proper Practices require the Council to formally approve both the annual budget and resulting precept requirement and retain a clear audit trail within the minutes and supporting records.

**Response: No**

**Recommendation:**

The Council should ensure that the annual budget and precept requirement are formally approved by Council and clearly recorded within the minutes, with supporting budget papers retained with the year-end records.

#### **E. Expected income was fully received, properly recorded and VAT appropriately accounted for**

Income sampled during the audit appeared properly recorded and banked.

VAT arrangements appear appropriate and a recent VAT reclaim was reviewed.

**Response: Yes**

#### **F. Salaries and allowances were paid in accordance with approvals and statutory requirements**

Payroll arrangements appear compliant and PAYE requirements are being met. A recent payslip was reviewed during the audit.

The Clerk confirmed that staff contracts are in place and pension obligations are being complied with.

**Response: Yes**

**G. Asset and investment registers were complete and properly maintained**

The Council maintains an Asset Register which was reviewed and checked on 24 February 2026 and subsequently noted by Council on 26 March 2026.

The register includes acquisition dates, valuation basis and asset locations. The total agrees to Box 9 of the AGAR.

**Response: Yes**

**H. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out**

The Council operates appropriate banking controls including dual authorisation arrangements.

Bank reconciliations and supporting bank statements were reviewed during the audit and found to agree to the accounting records and AGAR balances.

**Response: Yes**

**I. Accounting statements were prepared on the correct accounting basis and supported by an audit trail**

The Council prepares its accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

Accounting statements, cashbooks, reconciliations and supporting bank statements were reviewed during the audit and appeared consistent with the AGAR.

A small discrepancy was identified within the supporting variance worksheet relating to prior year comparative totals; however, the AGAR balances themselves reconciled correctly to the underlying bank reconciliation and bank statements.

**Response: Yes**

**Recommendation:**

The Council should consider using clearer expenditure categories within the accounting records to improve transparency and the audit trail.

**K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the prior year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt**

The Council certified itself as exempt from external audit for 2024/25 and the relevant exemption certificate appears to have been published appropriately.

Based on the information currently available, the Council appears to have met the exemption criteria.

**Response: Yes**

**L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation**

The Council maintains a website containing governance and transparency information.

The website includes AGAR documents, variance explanations, audit reports and statutory notices.

**Response: Yes**

**L2. Members' interests were properly registered and managed**

Members' interests are published via Cherwell District Council and links are provided on the Parish Council website.

**Response: Yes**

**M. In the year covered by this AGAR the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights**

The Council has published a Notice of Public Rights and exemption documentation on its website.

Based on the information available during the audit, publication requirements appear to have been met.

**Response: Yes**

**M2. Governance policies**

The Council maintains and publishes key governance policies including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Privacy Notice, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and Information/Data Protection policies.

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed by Council on 27 November 2025 (Ref 28/25).

**Response: Yes**

**N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for the prior year's AGAR**

The Council website includes publication of the 2024/25 AGAR documentation, including the accounting statements, exemption certificate, variance explanation and internal audit report.

**Response: Yes**

**N2. Website accessibility and publication compliance**

The Council website includes an Accessibility Statement and Privacy Notice and appears to comply with website accessibility requirements.

The website uses HTTPS security and governance documents appear accessible and appropriately organised.

**Response: Yes**

### **N3. Biodiversity duty**

A Biodiversity Policy has also been adopted in accordance with the Environment Act 2021.

**Response: Yes**

### **P. Digital and data governance (Assertion 10)**

The Council has data protection and digital governance arrangements in place including council-controlled email systems, ICO registration and relevant policies.

The Clerk confirmed that arrangements including cloud storage, password controls and software security measures are in use.

**Response: Yes**

## **AGAR Page 3 – Internal Audit Opinion Summary**

Based on the work undertaken, the responses to the individual control objectives are set out above and should be reflected accordingly in Section 1 of the AGAR.

Internal audit work was carried out on a sample basis and therefore cannot provide absolute assurance. However, the work completed provides reasonable assurance that the Council's systems of internal control are generally operating effectively and in accordance with proper practices.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. M. S.', is written over a yellow rectangular background.

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2026