

Agenda item: FC 38/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Tuesday 30th April 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To assess whether there is a desire to see a picture of King Charles III hanging in the council chambers.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council decides if they would like to have a picture of the King on the wall in the Chambers.**
- 2. If council decides that this is something that is wanted, that the Council Manager liaises with the powers that be to obtain a suitable picture.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

A suggestion was made that Woughton Community Council may wish to have a picture of the sitting monarch in the Chamber.

There hasn't been a picture previously, but some councils do have a picture within their Chambers.

It is believed that there will be the opportunity to apply for a portrait to be provided by the Palace at little or no cost (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/portraits-of-his-majesty-the-king-for-uk-public-authorities>), but this scheme has yet to be launched.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 39/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Tuesday 30th May 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To inform council of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and agree submission to the external auditors.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) form and agrees to the signing of and submission to the external auditors by the Chair of Council and Clerk to Council (Council Manager).

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Council has seen the internal audit within this meeting.

Following agreement of this, the next stage of compliance is to submit the relevant paperwork to the external auditors – in this case, that is PKF Littlejohn who have been appointed by the relevant umbrella organisation (Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments – SAAA).

This is the AGAR form, in the usual style that details income / expenditure, assures that we have had suitable safeguards and systems in place and that we are compliant with the necessary rules and regulations. This is prepared and needs to be agreed and signed by Chair or Council and Clerk to Council (the Council Manager).

Once signed, WCC also needs to ensure that the public can inspect and ask questions about the accounts – this is set in statute (Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015). The period of the exercise of public rights must include the first 10 working days of July. PKF Littlejohn have suggested the dates Monday 5th June – Friday 14th July 2023. However, the latest possible dates that comply with the statutory requirements are Monday 3rd July – Friday 11th August 2023.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Failure to submit this paperwork correctly can lead to additional costs and charges, as well as reflecting badly on the council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

AGAR for 2022 – 23.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** must be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2023**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2023**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2023 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2023 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2023.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (Section 2, page 5). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on page 5. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2022) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2023).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2023**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?		
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights, been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?		
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.sda.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Woughton Community Council

<https://www.woughtoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations: payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored, and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt (if the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick 'not covered').			✓
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.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) - The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

17/11/2022 17/04/2023

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Adrian Shepherd-Roberts

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

17/04/2023

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

Woughton Community Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
			✓

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

30/05/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

FC 39/23

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

Clerk

www.woughtoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

Woughton Community Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	444,649	404,327	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	577,811	631,141	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	412,334	476,494	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	675,911	739,146	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	26,821	26,821	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	327,736	377,256	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	404,327	368,738	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	375,925	308,802	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	411,649	396,144	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	126,687	101,509	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.
Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

Date

22/05/2023

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

30/05/2023

as recorded in minute reference:

FC 39/23

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Woughton Community Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>.

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2022/23

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

External Auditor Signature

Date

Agenda item: FC 40/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Tuesday 30th May 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update council on the outcome of the internal audit and next steps for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council notes this report.**
- 2. That council notes the internal audit, agrees the content and provides confirmation to the Auditor that this has been seen and agreed.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Year end has now been well completed and the end of year reports submitted and audited by Auditing Solutions. The report (attached) gives the council a fully clean bill of health, with all necessary steps in place to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice. This reflects the hard work that the Finance Officer has undertaken over the past few months in the absence of the RFO – this is very appreciated.

If in agreement, the Council Manager will write to the Auditor with an official message of thanks, confirming the agenda item number of this agreement.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Woughton CC Interim Report 2022-23

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Woughton Community Council

Internal Audit Report 2022-23: Interim

Adrian Shepherd-Roberts

*For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd*

Background

All town and parish councils are required by statute to make arrangements for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Governance and accountability Return (AGAR).

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2022-23 financial year which was completed by 17th November 2022. We have again undertaken our review for the year remotely: we wish to thank the Finance Assistant in assisting the process, providing all necessary documentation in electronic format to facilitate completion of our review for the year to date. We have ensured that governance and financial controls remain effective.

Internal Audit Approach

In undertaking our reviews 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/AGAR. We have employed a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks in a number of key areas in order to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls are appropriate and fit for the purposes intended.

Our programme of cover has been designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council's financial systems are robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any 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 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the Council's AGAR, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

We have concluded that, on the basis of the programme of work we have undertaken to date the Council has maintained adequate and effective internal control arrangements.

We ask that members consider the content of this report and acknowledge that the report has been reviewed by Council.

Detailed Report

Maintenance of Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations

The Council uses Scribe accounting software to maintain its accounting records covering the Metro Bank and Barclays Bank accounts.

Our objective in this area is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers. We have:

- Checked that there is a full and effective cost centre and nominal account code structure;
- Checked detail of transactions recorded on the combined cashbook for two bank accounts and the savings account to supporting bank statements for April and October 2022;
- Agreed detail of all inter-account transfers between the three bank accounts for the same sample month;
- Checked and agreed detail on the bank reconciliations on the combined cashbook as at 30th April 2022 and 31st October 2022 noting that Councillors have been receiving and signing copies of reconciliations.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no significant issues have been identified in this area to date. We will undertake further work at our final review.

Review of Corporate Governance

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has a robust regulatory framework in place; that Council and Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and that, as far as we are able to ascertain, no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been taken nor are such being considering currently.

We note that both Standing Orders (SOs) and Financial Regulations (FRs) were reviewed by the Council in accordance with the latest revised NALC model documents, copies of which are displayed on the website.

We have commenced our review of the minutes of the Full Council and its Standing Committees meetings for the year to date in order to ensure that no issues affecting the Council's financial stability either in the short, medium or long term exist: no such matters were identified.

We also note that the Council have reviewed their Code of Conduct.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no significant issues have been identified in this area. We will undertake further work at our final review.

Review of Expenditure

Our aim here is to ensure that: -

- Council resources are released in accordance with the Council's approved procedures and approved budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- Official orders are raised wherever deemed appropriate;
- All potential prompt payment discounts have been identified and taken;
- 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 and that the annual submission has been returned in a timely manner.

We have commenced our testing in this area, examining a sample of payments processed in the year to date of the non-pay related spending. Our sample has again been determined to ensure compliance with the above criteria.

We have also examined the periodically prepared VAT returns which have been or are in the process of being submitted to HMRC for the financial year to September 2022.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no significant issues have been identified in this area. We will undertake further work at our final review.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our aim here is to ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition. We have: -

- Noted that the Council's Operational Risk assessments and Financial Risk Register was reviewed for the 2022-23 financial year; at the Annual Meeting on 16th May 2022; - and
- Obtained and examined the Council's current year insurance policy with Aviva (Local Council) to ensure that appropriate cover is in place and that members have reviewed its content and determined that cover in each area is appropriate to the Council's needs.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no issues warranting formal comment or recommendation have been identified in this area.

Precept Determination and Budgetary Control

We aim in this area of our work to ensure that the Council has appropriate procedures in place to determine its future financial requirements leading to the adoption of an approved budget and formal determination of the amount of the precept placed on the Unitary Authority, that effective arrangements are in place to monitor budgetary performance throughout the financial year and that the Council has identified and retains appropriate reserve funds to meet future spending plans. We are pleased to note that members continue to receive regular budget monitoring reports with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review.

The Council will commence consideration of the 2023-24 budgetary requirements later this year and we shall consider the action taken and outcomes, together with the approved level of precept at a future visit.

We are pleased to note that members continue to receive regular budget monitoring reports with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review.

Conclusions

We have been advised that the Council are to formally consider and finalise its budget and precept requirements for 2023-24 later in the financial year. Consequently, we shall review this area further at our final visit, also examining the year's budget outturn, following up any significant variances and obtaining appropriate explanations: we shall also consider the appropriateness of retained reserves to meet the Council's ongoing revenue spending requirements and any development aspirations.

Review of Income

The Council receives income from a relatively limited number of sources including meeting room and hall hire fees, interest, grants, donations and recoverable VAT. We note that the hire of the hall facilities has only commenced in October 2021

Our objective is to ensure that robust procedures are in place to ensure that all income due to the Council is identified and invoiced (where applicable) appropriately with recovery effected within a reasonable time span. Consequently:

- We note that hall hire fees were reviewed in September 2020.
- We have examined the Sales Ledger transaction report for the current year's income in respect of the hall hires for the Coffee Hall, Tinkers Bridge, Eaglestone and Netherfield; and
- We have reviewed the ledger, unpaid invoices report and noted the clearance of the long outstanding debts in respect of the Rialtas accounts which are no longer used.

-
- On the Scribe accounts there are currently 54 outstanding invoices 46 of which are overdue ranging from 13 days to 335 days.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no significant issues have been identified in this area to date. We will undertake further work at our final review.

Petty Cash

We are required, as part of the annual Internal Audit Reporting process on the AGAR, to indicate the soundness of controls in this area of the Council's financial activities and note that the Petty cash is now being operated at both the Council office and the Youth Centre.

We have not physically checked the cash but have reviewed the holdings from the information that we have been provided and we consider that it continues to operate effectively. As we are working remotely, we suggest that where possible a Council Member should confirm that the cash has been checked and the accounts balance. This should be minuted accordingly.

Conclusions

No issues have been identified in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Review of Staff Salaries

In examining the Council's payroll function, we aim to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the Employee Rights Act 1998 and the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions, together with meeting the requirements of the local government pension scheme, as further revised from 1st April 2022 in relation to employee percentage bandings.

We have reviewed the procedures in place for the assessment and calculation of salaries which are completed in house. Consequently, we have:

- Checked and agreed the gross payments for each of the Council's employees for September 2022 against the Council Manager's establishment record;
- Checked the computations for net pay, tax, NI contributions and superannuation deductions for the same sample month by reference to the relevant HMRC and Pension Fund contribution tables; and
- Verified the physical net payments to staff, together with payments to HMRC and the Pension Fund Administrators.

Conclusions

There are no matters requiring formal comment or recommendation in this area of our review process.

Investments and Loans

The Council has specific funds in investments, the "surplus" funds available being held in a Barclays Premium interest-bearing bank account in a CCLA deposit account and Property Fund. Council should note that the Property Fund should be accounted for in the Fixed Assets for accounting purposes.

The Council have two PWLB loans We have as part of our above expenditure review checked the current cash book entries to the PWLB statements and ensured that the capital and interest payments have been correctly reported in the accounts.

We also note that The Council have approved an Investment Strategy in September 2021 and it will be reviewed again for this financial year.

Conclusions

There are no matters requiring formal comment or recommendation in this area of our review process. We will undertake further work at our final review.

Agenda item: FC 41/23

2023/24 Budget with 5 year projection

2023/24	2020/21	Variance reasons	Poss Savings
EXPENDITURE - Democracy and Governance			
Clr Ward Initiatives Fund	£ 3,800.00		
Communities and Environment Fund	£ 12,000.00		
Grant Aid - Res Associations	£ 3,500.00		
Member Allowances and Expenses	£ 25,749.00	Six vacancies, so £5k less	£ 7,000.00
Democracy and Governance Total	£ 45,049.00		
EXPENDITURE - Whole organisational services			
Meeting and hospitality costs	£ 2,000.00		
Insurance Inc Vans	£ 9,000.00		
HQ - Building Costs (regulars)	£ 25,000.00		
Vehicles	£ 9,630.00	Lower, following new pickup - res	£ 4,000.00
Uniforms	£ 500.00		
Branding and engagement	£ 500.00		
Whole organisation services total	£ 46,630.00		
EXPENDITURE - Organisational Management			
Affiliations	£ 5,250.00		
Professional Services	£ 4,000.00		
Audit Fees	£ 4,800.00		
Capital Loan Repayment	£ 26,818.00		
Insurance Inc Vans	£ 9,000.00		
Newsletters, Websites and Communications	£ 5,510.00		
Stationary and Amenities and services - HQ	£ 4,000.00		
I.T (previously included broadband and Members IT)	£ 25,000.00		
Training, Development and Conferences	£ 8,000.00		
Organisational Management Total	£ 84,378.00		
Organisational Costs Total	£ 176,057.00		
Staffing Costs - increments included			
HQ Staffing	£ 205,592.71		
Youth Staffing	£ 96,686.18		
Community Staffing	£ 145,064.12		
Landscape and Environment Staffing	£ 249,677.26		
Members Staffing	£ 32,906.38		
Meeting Places Staffing	£ 66,229.55		
Increments & payrise (5%)	£ -		
Staffing cover	£ 25,000.00	Potential to not use	£ 25,000.00
Staffing Total	£ 821,156.20		
Landscape - Building costs	£ 6,000.00		
Landscape - Services Budget	£ 18,000.00		
Youth - Building Costs	£ 7,000.00		
Youth - Services Budget	£ 8,000.00		
Advice - Services Budget	£ 500.00		
Environment - Services Budget (inc dog bins)	£ 9,500.00		
Community Food - Services Budget	£ 2,000.00		
Community Development - Services Budget (incl events)	£ 9,000.00		
Meeting Places (Costs)	£ 65,000.00	Possible reduction, with investme	£ 10,000.00
Service Plan Delivery	£ 20,000.00	No service plan	£ 20,000.00
Emerging priorities	£ 10,000.00	On hold	£ 10,000.00
Grants - services payments (BLF)	£ 37,629.51	Reduce - spent in 22/23	£ 12,000.00
Community Centres investment (agreed)	£ 90,000.00		
Services Delivery Total	£ 282,629.51		
Depot / Landscape Investment			
EXPENDITURE TOTAL	£ 1,279,842.71		£ 88,000.00
INCOME			
Bank and Investment Interest	£ 3,200.00		
MKC LTRS Grant / Deprivation grant	£ 168,592.99		
Hire of Meeting Places	£ 65,000.00		£ 15,000.00
Landscape Grant	£ 189,182.87		
Precept	£ 688,403.88		
Grants Income (agreed)	£ 54,009.51		
MKC Funding - Comm Centres and CIF	£ 52,000.00		
Additional Income Generation	£ 30,000.00		£ 15,000.00
Income Total	£ 1,250,389.25		£ 30,000.00
SURPLUS / DEFICIT	£ 29,453.46		£ 88,546.54
Balance carried over from 2022/23 (NB Includes £100k in long term CCLA)	£ 468,738.10		£ 468,738.10
Proposed surplus / deficit	£ 29,453.46		£ 88,546.54
End of year carry over	£ 439,284.64		£ 557,284.64

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Tuesday 30th May 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To consider options around filling vacant council seats, following the May election.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That council notes the report and the available options.
 - a. That council can, until 27th June 2023, simply fill the vacancies without need for advertising or otherwise (see below) and could then be considered at the Full Council meeting on 26th June.
OR
 - b. That council agrees to publicise the vacancies, inviting expressions of interest from residents or other qualifying applicants.
2. If 'b' above, that council agrees to a 'cut off' for applications of *either*:
 - a. Friday 14th July 2023, for consideration at Full Council on 24th July, OR
 - b. Friday 15th September 2023, for consideration at Full Council on 25th September.
3. That whichever option is preferred, applicants are invited to submit a short, written submission, covering the reasons that they would be of benefit to the council to enable effective decision making if there needs to be a competitive selection process.
4. That council agrees to consider any specific skills that would benefit the council so that potential applicants can consider those issues.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Following the elections in May, there are currently only 13 of the 19 potential seats filled. This means that there are vacancies on:

- Beanhill (2 vacancies)
- Eaglestone (2 vacancies)
- Coffee Hall (1 vacancy)
- Netherfield (1 vacancy).

The *Representation of the People Act 1985* section 21 allows the elected members, provided there is a quorum, to co-opt within 35 days from the date of the election in which to do (so prior to 27th June). If this is the preferred option, the Full Council meeting in June will be needed to agree any co-options and would squeeze in on the final day.

The alternative is that rather than rush the process, the vacancies are advertised, with applicants asked to provide a statement of interest that details the reasons why they feel suitable for the position(s). These can then be used by Council to decide on the most suitable candidates. This could then take place at Full Council in September (it could happen in July, but with August a 'fallow' month, may not be especially helpful).

As Council is currently quorate, there is no time pressure, but as discussed previously, having these vacancies is likely to put additional pressure on existing councillors, especially on those estates with 2 vacancies.

Council is also able to suggest specific areas where there may be skills gaps in the current council and focus on co-opting applicants who best meet those needs. It is important that these skills should be relevant, legal and in compliance with relevant legislation (e.g. Equalities Act) – it would be inappropriate to advertise for specific demographic groups, whilst acknowledging that it is essential that the council represents the residents of the parish. This may, for example, include skills in planning, community development, HR or finance.

If the number of applicants is equal to or less than that number of vacancies, applicants will be appointed, so long as they are qualified to do so (i.e. are qualified to be a councillor). Given this, a competitive process is to be encouraged.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 43/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Tuesday 30th May 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To propose that former councillors are awarded honours and added to the relevant 'shield'.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council agrees to the following honours being awarded:**
 - a. Honorary Citizen awarded to:**
 - i. John Orr**
 - ii. Jordan Coventry**
 - b. Freedom of the Parish awarded to:**
 - i. Pam Wilson**
- 2. That council agrees formal criteria for the Freedom of the Parish award.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Following the recent elections, some long standing councillors 'stood down' and as such, are considered to have finished their time with WCC. The criteria for Honorary Citizen is:

Honorary Citizen of Woughton

Criteria

- That the Council agrees to recognise the role of former members by awarding the title of 'Honorary Citizen of the Parish of Woughton' (known commonly as Honorary Citizen of Woughton) to all former members of the Council who have served as members of the Council for eight (8) years or more.
- That each award be formally agreed at a full meeting of the Council.
- That the award to be made at the Annual Meeting of Council or other suitable meeting of the council.
- That Honorary Citizens be invited to the Annual Meeting of the Council, the Chairs Awards and other appropriate events.
- That a list of all Honorary Citizens be recorded in the Annual Report of the Council and be displayed in the Offices of the Council.

This applies to former Cllr Orr (2014 – 2023). Former Cllr Coventry has served two terms but is six months shy of 8 years, having joined in November of 2015. It is recommended that this be considered sufficient to warrant inclusion.

The Council Manager was unable to find specific criteria for the 'Freedom of the Parish', other than that which is included within the 'scroll' – '*In recognition of the eminent, valued and constant service*'.

Former Cllr P Wilson has served on WCC since 1999 – 24 years. During this time she has been a constant within the council, serving diligently and offering unwavering support to the people of the parish. This length of service may be one of the deciding factors in awarding the Freedom of the Parish.

It is recommended that the three former Councillors noted above are awarded honours stated.

There is currently no formal agreement in place regarding the awarding of the Freedom of the Parish. Given this, it is recommended that the following be considered:

Awarding of the Freedom of Woughton Parish

Criteria

- That the Council agrees to recognise the role of former members by awarding 'Freedom of the Parish' to all former members of the Council who have served as members of the Council for twenty (20) years or more.
- That each award be formally agreed at a full meeting of the Council.
- That the award to be made at the Annual Meeting of Council or other suitable meeting of the council.
- That those receiving the Freedom of the Parish be invited to the Annual Meeting of the Council, the Chairs Awards and other appropriate events.
- That a list of all who have the Freedom of the Parish be recorded in the Annual Report of the Council and be displayed in the Offices of the Council.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 44/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Tuesday 30th May 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To propose the new council training programme, following the recent elections.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the training programme previously agreed now commences.**
- 2. That council agrees to the best time and day for sessions to take place.**
- 3. That the Committee and Members Services Officer (CMSO) and / or Council Manager sends round a monthly training update, covering both internal and external options.**
- 4. That if new sessions are arranged that are time sensitive, that these are sent immediately.**
- 5. That identifying training needs becomes part of any Councillor 'appraisal' system, if this is agreed.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

In February, a training paper was presented to Operations (OC 107/23) detailing a range of sessions that were proposed. This was agreed and, following the elections, the Council Manager is eager to assess the best times / days for sessions to take place.

Since the election, a 'new councillor' session has been held and the following sessions were previously agreed:

- Introduction to Local Councils (overview of how the sector works)*
- Standards in public life*
- Safeguarding
- Data Protection and GDPR*
- Best Practice for Chairing and facilitating meetings
- Finances in local councils*
- Communication and social media*
- Working with your community
- Diversity, equality and inclusion

There is a challenge around suitable times / days, with the council and councillors increasingly busy with activities outside usual working hours. To try and find the best options, it is proposed that the following times / dates are considered:

- Tuesday at 6pm
- Wednesday at 6pm
- Thursday at 6pm

- Weekday afternoon
- One Saturday each month (am or pm).

For internal training provided by officers of WCC, there is more flexibility. If 'buying in' external training providers, evenings and weekends are more difficult. However, with online options, this

becomes easier. Equally, the sessions noted with an asterix (*) *could* be provided online (although this will not be as effective, in the opinion of the Council Manager).

It is recommended that this process starts in June with the Standard in Public Life session.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Agenda item OC 107.23 Training programme report.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager