

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

80 Hewell Road, Birmingham, B45 8NF

0121 447 9893

exec@barntgreen.org.uk
www.barntgreen.org.uk



Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Barnt Green Cricket Club, B45 8LN on Monday 15 November 2021 at 7.00pm

Members present: Cllrs C Hotham, J Jagger, J Nilsson, P Perry and M Roberts

In attendance: Worcs County Cllr A Kriss
Executive Officer, Tracy Bodley

21/069 Apologies

Cllrs R Cholmondeley, O Polton and S Whitehand

21/070 Declarations of Interest: Councillors were reminded that to ensure transparency and retain public confidence in the council's decisions they are required to -

- a) Keep their Register of Interests form up to date;
- b) Declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) and any Other Disclosable Interests (ODI) in agenda items and the nature of those interests.

None received.

21/071 To consider any dispensations

No dispensation requests were received.

21/072 Open Session Participation to hear from:

- a) **Members of the Public** – None present.
- b) **Supporting organisations**, Alvechurch & Wythall SNT, West Mercia Police.
Not present.
- c) **Worcestershire County Councillor** – Adrian Kriss (Beacon division)

Cllr Kriss reported that it had been a busy 4 weeks and that he had attended a site visit at a commercial trade waste facility based in Hartlebury, endorsing the education of disposing of waste correctly in order to maximise recyclable material and that burned in the incineration process producing energy to power homes within the County.

He also reported that there was an £86m bid to boost Worcestershire Bus Services in an effort to drive people to use public transport. It was estimated that 88% of Worcestershire households are multi car owners.

There has also been an increase in burglaries within the county and a plea forwarded to those who had not registered for SmartWater to do so.

Cllr Kriss updated the council on pavement resurfacing and road crossing dropped kerb near to the Barnt Green Inn with works planned to commence from the 22/23 budget.

An update was also received regarding a traffic survey on Sandhills Green to establish the speed of vehicles with reference given to concerns of lack of lighting under the bridge, the survey will provide data to gauge if it is a viable proposition to plan one-way priority on the road in order to reduce speed for safer pedestrian access.

Cllr Kriss also stated that he has requested the reinstatement of a dropped kerb at the end of Fiery Hill Road to stop vehicles mounting the kerb, in the meantime bollards will be placed there as a short-term preventative measure.

Cllr Hotham suggested that the 145-bus service, running at a loss and heavily subsidised, should not be removed as this was the only service running through Barnt Green.

Cllr Kriss left the meeting at 19:35hrs

d) Bromsgrove District Councillor - Charles Hotham (Barnt Green & Hopwood)

Cllr Hotham reported on the following:

- i) There had been several meetings held between the Head of Planning, Development and the legal team regarding the locked gate and gated public open space at the Cala development. The matter is ongoing, and he assured that as much effort as was warranted was taking place to ensure that both issues were resolved.
- ii) It was confirmed that additional funding had been approved for the use of HGV drivers to reinstate brown bin collection services commencing 16 November.
- iii) The licencing application for 'The Garrity' micro pub was being considered at a licencing committee meeting next week and several objections had been received mainly in relation to closing times and the close proximity to residential housing.
- iv) BDC were in receipt of a sewage report that identified a licence agreement for Severn Trent to discharge raw sewage into the brook behind Margesson Drive beyond Bittell Road Playing Field. This had occurred 5 times during the past year for a period of over 15 hours. It was clarified that this was half treated sewage and only occurred when all the flood defences have failed.

21/073 To adopt previous minutes

To approve adoption of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 18/10/2021.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting be approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

21/063 Vice Chairman's Report

- i) Cllr Hotham stated that the council was in receipt of a meeting table and four chairs provided by the Doctors surgery who no longer required it. The table is large enough to gather around for meetings when the new office becomes available. It was requested that a letter of thanks be forwarded to the surgery for the donation.
- ii) Judges for the Best Dressed Shop Window were requested and a proposal to ask the Chairman's sister, former Head Teacher of St Andrew's First School and Cllr Polton to carry out the duty.
- iii) There was a concern that Operation London Bridge Protocol should be refreshed in Cllrs minds given recent health concerns of the monarch with the EO confirming that she had recently discussed this with the Chairman.
- iv) The Christmas Lighting Contractor seen within the village installing the lights was asked to move the motifs round so that they were side on to the road opposed to face on as in the previous year.
- v) Cllr Hotham stated that as this was the last meeting that the EO would be Clerking, on behalf of the council he wished to express his congratulations in her new role and thanked her for her great contribution over the time spent at Barnt Green Parish Council.

21/075 Executive Officer's Report

The council was advised of decisions taken under delegated powers, updated on ongoing matters and relevant office communications were reported upon.

a) Station Lift Update	<p>An update received on 11 November, reporting that intrusive survey work, including borehole drilling has concluded with the results included in designs for foundations, lift towers etc. Approval has been given for the safety strategy by a System Review Panel. As design continues, cost estimates will be assembled, and an approach made for funding. As previously mentioned, the intention is to secure funding while the detailed design work continues, thus avoiding a delay between finish of design and contract award.</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</td></tr></table>	RESOLVED: That the report be noted.
RESOLVED: That the report be noted.		

b) Worcestershire County Council – Publication of the Statement of Community Involvement and Local Development Scheme	<p>It was reported that following a 6 week consultation the updated SCI and consultation response can be accessed using the link provided within members papers.</p> <p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
c) Bittell Road Playing Field – Large Oak Tree Maintenance	<p>It was reported that a large branch from the oak tree had split and partially fallen. Work was carried out on 1 November 2021, however a bench was damaged in the process, this has now been replaced by the tree surgeon.</p> <p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
d) Public Realm Audit – BDC	<p>Members were notified that the BDC Leader is keen to organise visits to centres with available Parish, District, County Councillors and Officers. Members were asked if the council wished to arrange a meeting and it was suggested that improvements to signage into the village centre on Bittell Road and from the Station could be explored at this meeting.</p> <p style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">RESOLVED: That a meeting is requested, and suitable dates circulated to members.</p>

21/076 Finance

- a) To note the current financial position and bills for payment

RESOLVED:

- i) That the current financial position be approved.
- ii) That the list of November payments be approved.

- b) To be advised of any expenditure decisions taken by Executive Officer. It was reported of expenditure on the Christmas Lights advertising banners and the Best Dressed Shop Window postcards.

RESOLVED: That the expenditure be noted.

- c) Office Lease Renewal – There were no further updates given. A request was made to send further chase emails and a phone call to move the matter on.

- d) Welcome Back Funding - £2,000 grant funding allocation.

There was discussion over the terms of the grant and timescale to spend the money and a suggestion that the area at the rear of Millennium Park along the boundary with the Friends Meeting House could be tidied and planted with shade loving plants.

RESOLVED: That members having suitable ideas circulate accordingly to progress.

21/077 Environment & Community Wellbeing

- a) Wassail Walk – No further updates were provided, a meeting between key players yet to be organised.
- b) Food Festival – Cllr Hotham stated that the council were fully supportive of the event and local traders were also keen to take part. A suggestion that a food related circular route through the village be organised to draw in visitors, such as a ‘soup loop’, ‘Ale Trail’ or other similar food or beverage related enterprise that shops could take part in, and members of the public would sample.
- c) Village Green Update – Cllr Hotham reported that the form was near completion, and he would circulate to members for comments prior to sending out.

21/078 Planning Applications

- a) Members' response to the following consultations:
None received.

21/079 Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Next Parish Council meeting will be Monday 17 January 2022, 7pm, venue to be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 19:58hrs

Signed:..... Date.....
Chairman, Barnt Green Parish Council 17/01/2022

Minute Reference 21/076 a) To note the current financial position and bills for payment.
Bank Reconciliation 31 October 2021

	Bank Reconciliation at 08/11/2021		
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2021		104,006.27
	ADD Receipts 01/04/2021 - 08/11/2021		69,459.88
			173,466.15
	SUBTRACT Payments 01/04/2021 - 08/11/2021		39,698.12
A	Cash in Hand 08/11/2021 (per Cash Book)		133,768.03
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements		
	Petty Cash 31/10/2021	0.00	
	Cambridge Building Society 31/10/2021	64,187.34	
	Unity Bank Deposit Account 31/10/2021	67,499.35	
	Unity Bank Current Account 31/10/2021	2,081.34	
			133,768.03
	Less unrepresented payments		
			133,768.03
	Plus unrepresented receipts		
B	Adjusted Bank Balance		133,768.03
	A = B Checks out OK		

Minute Reference 21/076 a) To note the current financial position and bills for payment.

November payments to approve

Voucher	Code	Description	Net	VAT	Total
116	Office Running Costs	Landline and Broadband	39.27	7.85	47.12
117	Field Maintenance	Grounds maintenance at playing field	266.72	53.34	320.06
118	Community Walks & Other Events	Father Christmas Costs	74.97	0.00	74.97
119	Meeting Rooms & Refreshments	Room Hire	50.00	10.00	60.00
120	Lengthsman Charges	Lengthsman Work	180.00	0.00	180.00
121	Outdoor Parish Caretaker	Outdoor Parish Caretaker	450.00	0.00	450.00
122	Field Maintenance	Pruning of snapped tree branch at Playing Field	180.00	36.00	216.00
123	Staff Costs	Salary	1,890.07	0.00	1,890.07
124	Staff Costs	Pension contributions	243.40	0.00	243.40
125	Lights Electricity	Continuous Lighting Streetlamps	13.24	0.66	13.90
126	Lights Electricity	Dusk to Dawn Streetlamps	232.96	46.59	279.55
			3,620.63	154.44	3,775.07

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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Barnt Green Parish Council Office on Tuesday 30 November 2021 at 10:30am

Members present: Cllrs R Cholmondeley, P Perry and O Polton

In attendance: Executive Officer, Tracy Bodley

21/080 Apologies

Cllrs C Hotham, J Jagger, J Nilsson, M Roberts and Whitehand

21/081 Declarations of Interest: Councillors were reminded that to ensure transparency and retain public confidence in the council's decisions they are required to -

- a) Keep their Register of Interests form up to date;
- b) Declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) and any Other Disclosable Interests (ODI) in agenda items and the nature of those interests.

No declarations were received.

21/082 To consider any dispensations

No dispensation requests were received.

21/083 Office Premises - Ratification of Rear Office Lease, 80 Hewell Road.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Deed of Surrender for the front office of 80 Hewell Road be approved and signed by the Chairman and witnessed by Cllr Perry
- b) That the lease for the rear office of 80 Hewell Road be approved and signed by the Chairman and witnessed by Cllr Perry

21/084 Welcome Back Fund

RESOLVED:

- a) That a request be made to BDC for funding improved signage into the village centre.
- b) That a working party comprising of Cllrs, Hotham, Perry and Polton be formed to investigate cost of signs, required location and permissions to obtain.
- c) That any remaining funds be spent on improvement planting work be carried out at the rear boundary of Millennium Park.

21/085 Wassail Walk

It was noted that promotional banners had now been purchased and that a meeting would take place with key organisers of the event on Friday 3 December.

21/086 Planning

a) Members' response to the following consultations:

BDC ref	Site Address	Proposal
21/01627/FUL	24 Fiery Hill Road, Barnt Green	Construction of agricultural storage barn
BGPC Recommendation: No objection subject to conservation and green belt constraints.		

The meeting ended at 11:22hrs

Signed:..... Date.....
Chairman, Barnt Green Parish Council 17/01/2022

BUDGET 2022/2023

	Actual Outcome 20/21	21/22 Budget	Actual Figures as at 31/10/21	Expected Outcome 31/03/2022	Proposed Budget 22/23	
Receipts						
Precept	64,000.00	65,000.00	65,000.00	65,000.00	68,000.00	
Interest	273.97	100.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	Assumed 0.1% on average £50K balance
Lengthsman Reimbursement	1,537.50	1,888.00	1,415.60	1,888.00	1,888.00	Total reclaim allowed from WCC is £1,888
Other Income	10,115.00	1,500.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	Electric vehicle charging points
Hires (room/playing field)	170.00	510.00	340.00	510.00	600.00	Total Football (with shed); no allowance for PC office hire as Church are advertising their facilities
SUB TOTAL	76,096.47	68,998.00	66,755.60	68,398.00	71,538.00	
VAT Reclaim		5,000.00			5,000.00	
					76,538.00	
Payments						
Administration						
Staff Costs	22,057.10	23,000.00	15,594.23	22,300.00	24,500.00	New EO at LCP27, including Employer Tax and NI with allowance for inflation up to 5%
Chairman's Expenses	0.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	Chairman's Xmas Buffet (cancelled during covid)
Office Running Costs	7,264.77	7,400.00	5,396.44	10,500.00	11,500.00	New premises, rent, service charges, landline, broadband, energy, refuse collection. Office move costs in 2021 y/e estimate
Training & Publications	60.00	300.00	30.00	200.00	300.00	New EO CilCA qualified so refresher + new councillor training
Meeting Rooms & Refreshments	0.00	50.00	250.00	500.00	50.00	PC meetings to return to PC office. Annual meeting at Friends Meeting House
Subscriptions	1,853.34	1,400.00	1,454.47	1,500.00	1,600.00	Inflationary uptick
Insurance	1,157.53	1,250.00	1,247.36	1,250.00	1,500.00	New premises has increased risk of illegal entry
Auditor Fees	247.40	650.00	520.00	520.00	650.00	Inflationary increase
Legal/Professional Fees	1,336.67	750.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	Standard legal assistance starts in the region of £750 so included as a contingency.
Loan Repayments	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	No current borrowing
Elections Costs	0.00	500.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	Standard provision should a Casual Vacancy prompt an election if requested by 10 local government electors.

Grants/Donations	500.00	1,000.00	0.00	500.00	1,000.00	Last 2 years: £500 to Bromsgrove Citizens Advice Bureau. Other local grants have been made in the past
General Admin Costs (inc bank charges)	868.18	1,200.00	603.51	1,000.00	1,200.00	On line meetings have reduced printing of agendas and reports + cost reduction by working from home in 2021
SUB TOTAL	35,344.99	37,700.00	25,096.01	38,270.00	43,750.00	
Bittell Road Playing Field						
Field Mowing	2,556.51	3,000.00	1,566.01	3,000.00	3,000.00	Currently invoices from the contractor are not sufficiently broken down to ascertain a definitive split between park mowing, spraying around play equipment and strimming of Greenbank Embankment. This was historically how the contract was set up. Going forward when going out for a re-quote this will be broken down further to reflect real spend in each cost centre.
Field Maintenance	1,214.41	1,500.00	813.44	1,500.00	1,500.00	Contingency to cover future tree work, strimming back of paths and annual perimeter hedge cut.
Field Safety Inspections	68.50	70.00	68.50	68.50	70.00	Annual safety Inspection has not significantly increased over the past year.
SUB TOTAL	3,839.42	4,570.00	2,447.95	4,568.50	4,570.00	
Communications						
Newsletters	820.00	600.00	270.00	600.00	600.00	Retain current budget of £600 should there be an increase of printing of The Bulletin.
Website	0.00	140.00	120.00	120.00	140.00	Budget £140 should there be an increased website hosting fees.
SUB TOTAL	820.00	740.00	390.00	720.00	740.00	
Highways						
Lengthsman Charges	600.00	2,000.00	1,650.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	WCC pay £1,888 as its contribution to Lengthsman duties, BGPC top this up to £2,000 which approximately equates to 11 hours of Lengthsman duties per month at £15.00 an hour.
Highways	0.00	500.00	0.00	500.00	250.00	Contingency covers inter alia batteries for village speed signs
SUB TOTAL	600.00	2,500.00	1,650.00	2,500.00	2,250.00	

Millennium Park						
Park Mowing	1,202.00	1,300.00	780.00	900.00	1,200.00	Tenders out for new contract. The park receives 14 cuts per annum - 2 times per month during Apr-Jul and once in March and October. Historic increase of 3-5% p.a.
Park Maintenance	1,130.18	800.00	178.00	300.00	500.00	Contingency for remedial perimeter hedging work.
Park Safety Inspections	68.50	70.00	68.50	68.50	70.00	
SUB TOTAL	2,400.68	2,170.00	1,026.50	1,268.50	1,770.00	
Street Lighting						
Light Maintenance/Repairs	195.00	400.00	0.00	0.00	400.00	LEDs guaranteed to 2024. Contingency for repairs should vehicles damage streetlamps as has occurred in the past.
Lights Electricity	2,911.08	2,800.00	1,961.92	3,000.00	2,800.00	Fixed contract with SSE ended in Feb 21 & with the new LEDs in all council owned street lights: costs should reduce.
Christmas Lights/Tree	7,259.40	8,000.00	2,705.57	8,000.00	8,000.00	3yr hire contract commenced 2020; £500 contingency added.
SUB TOTAL	10,365.48	11,200.00	4,667.49	11,000.00	11,200.00	
Village Environs						
Hanging Baskets	0.00	660.00	400.00	400.00	500.00	Lower shop take up?
Planters	466.67	1,200.00	850.00	850.00	1,200.00	No winter planting in 2020. Tiered planters add £300-£400 to costs of planters in Hewell Rd.
Other Environmental	2,094.75	1,500.00	700.25	1,000.00	1,200.00	Includes provision of dog waste bags, defibrillator maintenance, verge cutting on Hewell Road and hedge cutting within the village, collection of waste from litter bins and dogwaste bins at playing field and commuter car park.
Outdoor Parish Caretaker	5,400.00	5,800.00	3,600.00	5,400.00	5,400.00	Re-tendered March 2021. Tasks include litter picking village wide including the car parks, park inspections, replenishment of sanitisers and dog waste bags, checking defibrillator, watering planters.
Pollinator Site	686.48	800.00	0.00	200.00	200.00	Re-seeding and £100 contingency; to be volunteer resourced
Commuter Car Park	402.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	Annual maintenance requires a contingency budget created from the sum received from Cala Homes.
Covid-19	1,263.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	No future costs anticipated.
SUB TOTAL	10,312.90	10,960.00	5,550.25	7,850.00	9,000.00	

Miscellaneous						
Community Walks & Other Events	1,014.21	2,000.00	149.97	200.00	1,500.00	£500 for promotional material and toilet hire for existing events. Food festival will add up to £1000 more.
Neighbourhood Plan	0.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	Having agreed to explore BG Plan as part of that of Bromsgrove DC, their progress is restrained by the the fluidity of Government's policy
Contingency	0.00	658.00	0.00	0.00	258.00	
Section 137 / GPC	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	General power of competence runs to 2023, if not sustained, £3.00 per elector to be added.
Fixed Assets	0.00	500.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	Expenditure on Capital Projects for 2022-23 includes ground treatment for Millenium Park play equipment.
SUB TOTAL	1,014.21	4,158.00	149.97	200.00	3,258.00	
TOTAL:	64,697.68	73,998.00	40,978.17	66,377.00	76,538.00	
Capital Projects funded via Reserves						
	4627.02	20,000	459		18,000.00	Suggestions for how reserves could be spent. This does not mean that this committed expenditure items but needed to justify retention of savings.
New Bus Shelter Noticeboard					7,000.00	
Circular Route signage at Playing Field					1,000.00	
Neighbourhood Plan					2,500.00	
New Park Signs - Millennium Park					1,000.00	
Seating at pollinator site					3,500.00	
Contested elections costs					2,000.00	
Groundwork for playing field play equipment					1,000	
Office move		0		2000	0	

DKE AUDIT SERVICES

INTERNAL AUDITOR & INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Specialist provider to Parish & Town Councils

Barnt Green Parish Council (DRAFT)

Internal Auditors assessment for the completion of the AGAR Part 3 – Financial Year 2021-22

1. Introduction

I have concluded the Council's annual internal audit. I am therefore able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22 which forms part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

My internal audit considers the evidence available to assess and ensure the Council has effective governance arrangements in place for the areas examined. In examining the governance arrangements focus has been placed on compliance with the Council's key governance 'rules', its management of risk and its financial controls. Consideration is given to the size and scope of activities undertaken by the Council.

The internal audit is not designed to identify all weaknesses in the Parish Council's systems but, it is a sample examination of systems and of testing those systems. Where weaknesses are identified during the internal audit process, which impact on governance and control, recommendations are made.

The responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and non-compliance with the law or regulations rests with the Council. The internal audit should not be relied upon to disclose all material misstatements or frauds, errors or instances of non-compliance as may exist.

Special note – the annual internal audit in 2020/21 was undertaken during the restrictions introduced by the Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and as a result the audit was conducted remotely. With the lifting of restrictions, but being mindful of the need to maintain a sensible approach, the process this year has been a mixture of the electronic exchange of information and a visit to meet with the Parish Clerk.

2. Summary

In the section below I have recorded my AGAR responses and offered some comments by way of explanation for these. Members need to be mindful that this assessment is for governance and control during 2021/22 to the time of the audit review.

During the internal audit review no significant control issues or non-compliances have been identified that prevents a positive response to each of the areas covered by the AGAR. No control recommendations have been made.

3. Internal Audit Assessment

The table below follows the format of the AGAR, for each section questions have been answered with supporting evidence provided which has been examined and assessed.

AGAR Internal Control Objective, Internal Audit assessment and related comments	Yes /No
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	Yes
<p>The Council has put in place effective procedures to accurately and promptly record all financial transactions, it has maintained up to date accounting records throughout the year, together with all necessary supporting information. Invoices are recorded on the Scribe Accounting Software the payments are supported by purchase confirmation and delivery acknowledgements that are retained as hard copies with the invoices.</p> <p>The cashbook is up to date, the financial position and payments are reported to the Council, payments are approved, and all are recorded in the minutes. The Council has an internal control/check process (accounting checks) whereby Members verify the operation of selected controls/financial information (quarter 1 was reviewed). An effective overall internal control environment operates.</p>	
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes
<p>Based on a sample examination of a number of payments selected from the cashbook confirmation was gained that payments have been made in accordance Financial Regulations, payments are supported by invoices.</p> <p>There are effective links and controls between the order of goods, works and services and the payment, with transaction being properly and promptly recorded in the cashbook. The payments have been properly approved and VAT has been appropriately accounted for.</p> <p>The review of the minor payments made on the Monzo card show these are in line with that expected, these are controlled and approved retrospectively.</p> <p>A sample number of Financial Regulations were tested and appropriate evidence and explanations were obtained to confirm compliance, this included the letting of contracts during the year and the awards of grants.</p> <p>Effective management and control over the Council’s bank accounts and its investments are present.</p>	
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	Yes

AGAR Internal Control Objective, Internal Audit assessment and related comments	Yes /No
<p>The Council has a comprehensive risk management policy that includes risk assessment and risk control arrangements. The Council's risk register includes control arrangements and frequency of review. The register shows control compliance. Events have been limited in the year as a result of Covid-19. Last year's audit showed that where events are held effective risk reviews are undertaken.</p> <p>There is a range of appropriate policies in line with the size and operations of the Council. Key risk areas are covered.</p> <p>The insurance policy covers the areas expected for a Parish Council and the assets have been insured in line with the assessed values.</p> <p>IT arrangements have been discussed and there is effective IT and data control arrangements operating.</p>	
<p>D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>The budget covers all of the Councils activities, income sources and expenditure, and these are included in all budget monitoring reports. An effective budget setting process operates that identifies the funding need based on services and commitments. The precept has been set in accordance with the agreed and approved budget requirement.</p> <p>Budget monitoring is by monthly payment reports presented at Council meetings. The budget impact from contract quotations received are reported. The budget position for quarter 2 was reviewed.</p> <p>The Council has a Reserves Policy, and reserves are maintained in accordance with the policy. The reserves are appropriate for the Council (based on its expenditure levels). The earmarked were discussed and confirmation obtained that these are for specific projects and projected costs. The reserves were confirmed by Members in July 2021.</p>	
<p>E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>The Council receives limited income beyond the precept. Where income is due it is promptly invoiced and when received banked. The income for the use of the football pitch was returned due to the impact of Covid-19 and appropriate approval to do this is present.</p> <p>Assurances that all expected income is received occurs through the budget monitoring process. Income related VAT is properly accounted for.</p>	

AGAR Internal Control Objective, Internal Audit assessment and related comments	Yes /No
<p>F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.</p>	<p>Not Covered (no Petty Cash)</p>
<p>The Council does not operate a traditional petty cash system. It does have the Monzo card which is used for minor purchases, this is effectively controlled through the payment approval process.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>The salary payable to the Parish Clerk has been approved by Members through the employment contract process. Actual payments are in accordance with agreed terms and relevant employment related deductions are made. Employer liabilities have been paid.</p> <p>An approved allowance for the Council Chair is budgeted for.</p>	
<p>H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>The Council has a comprehensive and up-to-date asset register which is periodically reviewed by Members. The regular review of the insurance value for the assets held should be undertaken to ensure these are appropriate and adequate.</p> <p>There is evidence of effective control systems to ensure the Council's assets have been secured, properly maintained and efficiently managed throughout the year. All assets on land within the parish owned by the Council are inspected regularly by the Outdoor Parish Caretaker with inspection records being retained. All playground areas are inspected annually by ROSPA.</p> <p>During the year an outdoor gym was completed, the project being managed by the District Council.</p> <p>The Council's retained funds are held in investment accounts that are periodically reviewed.</p>	
<p>I. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.</p>	<p>Yes*</p>
<p>Evidence shows that statements reconciling each of the Council's bank accounts with its accounting records been undertaken and presented on a regular basis (in accordance with Financial Regulations), and these have been reviewed and agreed by Members.</p>	

AGAR Internal Control Objective, Internal Audit assessment and related comments	Yes /No
*This assessment is provisional based on the evidence at the time of the internal audit. Confirmation that the financial year-end statements, reconciling each of the Council's bank accounts with its accounting records have been presented, reviewed and agreed by members of the Council, will be gained after the end of March 2022.	
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.	Yes
The accounting statements have been prepared on the correct accounting basis. The accounting process as reviewed is effective and appropriate; the accounting statements agree to the cash book and are supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records. Members review payments each meeting and verify the bank reconciliation, there is adequate evidence to show that Members have effective financial control.	
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2020/21, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 AGAR tick "not covered").	Not Covered
The Council did not certify itself as exempt in 2020/21 and therefore had a limited assurance review of its AGAR.	
L. The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2021 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Yes
Evidence confirms the Council correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	
M. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Not Applicable
The Council (as a body) does not have trust or charitable responsibilities.	

Other Area – to be covered as appropriate

Internal Control areas and Internal Audit comments
Review of the implementation of recommendations from the previous year's Internal and External Audit Reports

From last internal audit report

Improvement Opportunity

As part of the sample review of payments it was noted that the Council has two separate contracts for similar, but not identical, types of grounds maintenance work. These contracts run to differing renewal dates. In order to ensure and demonstrated best value has been considered then upon renewal there may be opportunity to test the market as both a combined contract and as separate contracts. The offer of a contract extension or a short-term award may be needed in order to align the contract terms.

Progress - The contracts were extended to coincided for reletting. The invitation to tender was advertised and resulted in eight requests to tender, closing date for submission of tenders was post audit, being 5th January 2022, with a start date of 1 April 2022.

Improvement Opportunity

The Council has employee related policies. As the 'employer' it would be beneficial to have a risk assessment undertaken of the Parish Clerks home working arrangements to ensure appropriate Health & Safety requirements are met.

Progress – A risk assessment was undertaken in July when a policy and home working risk assessment was undertaken and approved.

Recommendation

The fees for the hire of the football pitch, and any other charges the Council may make, should be formally reviewed and approved in accordance with Financial Regulation 9.3. 'The council will review all fees and charges at least annually, following a report of the Executive Officer'.

Progress – This fee was reviewed in September and was increased to £200 per term, this increase linked to the improvement of the facility, the supply of an equipment shed.

From last external audit report

There were no recommendations from the external auditor, there was a comment about the Internal Audit AGAR return that was addressed.

Any other governance or financial control issues arising during the internal audit

None

Any 'unusual' matters arising from the review of the minutes of Council and Committee meetings (these approach to risk and control)

None
Any matters referred by the Council or the Clerk for review
None
JPAG Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guide 2021 (sample compliance assurance)
Members are aware of this guidance; it is referenced as proper practice in Financial Regulations and the Clerk has advised she makes periodic reference to it in meetings.

The draft version of this report was discussed and agreed by the Parish Clerk.

The internal auditor wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance provided by the Parish Clerk during the internal audit review.

Duncan Edwards

Internal Audit undertaken on 26 October 2021

Duncan Edwards (2021/22 internal audits)

Reports for Parish Council Meeting, Monday 17 January 2022

21/087f) New Office Premises Telephone Arrangements

A new 2 year contract has been arranged with PlusNet effective from 25 January 2022. The number remains the same. The old contract was for £39.25 pcm with limited downloads. The new contract is for £26.00 pcm with unlimited downloads. All other terms remain the same.

21/088a) Christmas Lights Switch On Saturday 27 November 2021

It was a successful event attended by over 100 people assembled primarily around Blackwell Brass Band outside Restore with support from Village Vineyards selling crepes and alcohol. Father Christmas handed out sweets to the children. A megaphone should have been used for a countdown to the actual lights switch on as the tree is on the other side of the road. The weather was dry.

21/088b) Wassail Walk – Tuesday 28 December 2021

Last held in 2019 with 60 participants, 91 signed on this time. Some changes had to be made on the morning of the event when one of the organisers tested positive for covid. Though dry for the event, it had been wet over Christmas. The depth of the flooding under the railway bridge on Cofton Church Lane was unexpected. It prompted a change of route after the commencement of the short walk. A successful formula appears to have been established and the organisers have set a tentative date for next Christmas of Wednesday 28 December 2022.