

Final audit report & Risk Assessment of financial systems' internal controls for Sandhurst Town Council 2020/21
prepared by the Internal Auditor, Executive Officer/RFO on 18 November 2020

No	Internal Control Tests	Findings
1	Proper Bookkeeping	
1.1.	Is the cashbook maintained and up to date? Format used?	The cashbook is maintained on the RBS Omega system and was prepared up to 31 October 2020. It was up to date and accurate.
1.2	Is the cashbook arithmetically correct?	The cashbook is analysed into Budget head codes for both receipts and payments and these were arithmetically correct.
1.3	Is the cashbook regularly balanced?	<p>The Cashbook is balanced monthly for both the Current and Deposit accounts. Daily transactions are input by the Deputy Executive Officer and the Accountant will support monthly closedown of the accounts shown in the cashbook. The Accountant will sign the bank statements to confirm that a full Bank Reconciliation has been carried out and agreed to the cashbook.</p> <p>We are pleased to report that the Executive Officer now signs and dates the cash book reconciliation sheet to confirm that the totals agree to the monthly bank reconciliations for both the current and deposit accounts. We also note that the Chairman of Strategy and Policy Committee now signs and dates these Reconciliations on at least a quarterly basis to confirm they are accurate as part of the governance and monitoring role.</p>
2a	Standing Orders and Financial Regulations	
2.1	Has the Council formally adopted Standing Orders and Financial regulations, & dates approved?	<p>Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were approved and adopted by the Town Council on the 7 May 2020 Minute ref 2136.</p> <p><i>Audit Note: Financial Regulations and Standing Orders should be reviewed by the Executive Officer every year and should be submitted for approval by Town Council. The approval should be detailed in the Town Council minutes.</i></p>
2.2	Has an RFO been appointed with specific duties noted in both contract & Fin./Regs?	The Executive Officer is the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), and the duties are detailed in the Financial Regulations.
2.3	Have items or services above a de minimis amount been competitively purchased?	<p>The Executive Officer has as delegated power for emergency needs. In the reviewed Financial Regulations, the Executive Officer is always required to obtain value for money quotations, usually by obtaining 3 quotations or estimates. Where the value is above £5000 the Executive Officer shall obtain 3 quotations.</p> <p>A £60k level applies for obtaining three tenders for project work shown in the new Financial Regulations.</p> <p><i>Audit note: Any Town Council project should be confirmed in the minutes of the Town Council and the funds used during the agreed financial years. (Projects and spending/allocation of funds are approved at the time.</i></p>

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2b	Payments Controls	
2.4	Are payments in the cashbook supported by invoices, authorised and minuted?	<p>Any full-time member of staff can be responsible for raising purchase orders. Purchase orders are completed and held at the Town Council Offices and matched with invoices. Where part deliveries are received this is noted on the original order to ensure that subsequent delivery information is correct.</p> <p>All contracts with Suppliers/Contractors are held and are signed off as accurate by the Executive Officer or Deputy Executive Officer if required.</p> <p>Payments for Utilities: All invoices are passed to the Deputy Executive Officer for checking and confirmation of contract information before payment is made. If required consultation will take place with the Utility Company and the Caretaker re the consumption totals before they are passed for payment.</p> <p>Proper invoices support all on-line payments. Monthly payment schedules are prepared by the Deputy Executive Officer for the Executive Officer who will present this for retrospective approval at the Town Council meeting. This is approved by resolution and decision will be noted in the minutes of the meeting. Currently seven Councillors are appointed as bank signatories to sign cheques and on-line payments to confirm that details for payment are correct. The Executive Officer and Deputy Executive Officer are also signatories on the bank account mandate.</p>
2.5	Has VAT on payments been checked, recorded and reclaimed? Frequency, & refunds into which A/c?	<p>Proper VAT invoices are provided, when relevant, with VAT checked and entered in VAT column in Cashbook. VAT elements for reimbursement are listed in the Omega system and will be checked on a monthly basis by the Accountant. Reimbursement is made on a quarterly basis and paid direct into the Current Account.</p> <p>The last VAT claim reimbursement was submitted in October 2019 for £11,629.78 covering the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020 paid into Nat West Bank Current Account 474066682 on 22 October 2020</p>
2.6	Is S.137 expenditure separately recorded & in limit?	<p>The Executive Officer will obtain committee approval for all grant payments. These are coded separately and shown in the cash book.</p> <p>There are 15,169 Electors in the Sandhurst Town Council area.</p> <p>Section 137 amount allowed per elector for 2020-21 is £8.32.</p>

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3	Risk Management Arrangements	
3.1	Does a scan of the minutes identify any unusual financial activity, projects, events etc.?	All projects and events are risk assessed and minuted accordingly by Town Council or the relevant committee. It is noted that the formal review of risks will be completed for 2020/2021 at the Strategy and Policy Committee 26 January 2021.
3.2	Do the minutes record the Council carrying out any annual risk assessments? Play areas/BMX/skateparks regularity of checks & documentation?	The Executive Officer oversees the risk management process and will report to the Strategy and Policy Committee once a year in order to generate a recommendation for the Town Council. A full Play area and the Skatepark check is carried out by the Play Inspection Company and was last carried out on the March 2020. An additional yearly check (for the Skatepark only) is also undertaken by Full-Circle Leisure Ltd trading as Evolution Skateparks and this was carried out in May 2020. This continues to greatly assist the Council with any litigation claims brought for accidents.
3.3	Is insurance cover appropriate and adequate? Policy nos. & broker/company? FG cover level correct?	Standard local council policy held with Hiscox policy number 1891376 covering from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021. Fidelity Guarantee cover is now showing £500,000.
3.4	Are internal financial controls documented and reviewed regularly?	This initial risk assessment for financial systems' internal controls was prepared for 2018/19 and will be updated annually. Also, RBS desk top procedures are used to support the processes used for payments/bank reconciliations and income. <i>Audit Note: These should be reviewed if there is a change in key staff or an introduction on a replacement financial system.</i>
3.5	Risk Assessments and action plans have been completed to ensure that the Business of Council is continued during the Covid 19 pandemic. A business continuity plan has been produced to ensure that the Council can operate during unexpected or tragic circumstances.	Risk Assessments have been completed for all areas to enable staff to return to work. Risk Assessments for hirers have been completed and each hirer has been asked to complete their own RA and to give us a copy. All outside clubs (football, cricket & tennis) have been asked to complete a Risk Assessment and to give us a copy. Council Meetings have been conducted via zoom. The Executive Officer is in the process of producing a new business continuity plan and this will be introduced during 2020/2021

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4	Budgetary Controls	
4.1	Has the Council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept? Council minute & date?	The Executive Officer prepares the draft total budget for the Town Council following closedown in December which is prepared and discussed with relevant committees to ensure that the budget preparation and bids are accurate. This will be finalised by Strategy and Policy Committee each January, with a recommendation made to the Town Council, where the precept and budget will be approved in February. Bracknell Forest District Council will be notified of precept requirements in February. For 2020/2021 the notification was sent in February 2020.
4.2	Is actual expenditure against the budget regularly reported to the Council & minuted?	Budget to actual comparisons are reviewed continually by the Town Council staff and reported quarterly to the Strategy and Policy Committee by the Executive Officer. Appropriate action is taken by the Strategy and Policy Committee and if required a recommendation will be made to the Town Council.
4.3	Are there any significant and unexplained variances on budget?	A process is in place to carry out budget monitoring and to report significant variations to the spending committees. Any action required will be assessed by the Executive Officer and approval will be obtained from Strategy and Policy Committee for any additional funds required or other action to be taken.
4.4	Any potential loss of income to the Town Council is known and action has been taken to adjust the budget for 2020/2021. Budget setting for 2021/2022 has considered the continuation of the Covid 19 pandemic.	The current financial position has been discussed with the delegated decisions committee and will be included in all budget meetings. All committees have been provided with an up to date budget position in their November meetings for information. Budget setting will include reduced income figures in case the pandemic prevents hires. Events will be included in the budget setting as some are not until late 2021. As with this year, the loss of income and the saving from not having events just about balance each other out. <i>Recommendation: We recommend that the Council should consider an increase in its Precept for 2021/2022.</i>

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5	Income Controls	
5.1	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Income sources from Precept, Grants, football pitches, tennis courts, cricket pitches. Also, income from the Flat, hire of the community hall and room, plus the cafe rental.
5.2	Does the precept recorded in the cashbook agree to the DC's notification? Yearly review of scale of fees?	The first half Precept for 2020/21 of £296,488.16 was received on 30/04/2020 and paid direct into Nat West Bank Current Account no 47406682. The second half year Precept payment of £296.498.16 was received on 30/09/2020 and paid direct to the Nat West Bank Current Account.
5.3	Are security controls over cash adequate and effective?	Very little cash income is received by the Town Council.
6	Petty Cash Procedures	
6.1	Is all petty cash spent noted in book /sheets with pro forma &/or voucher to support, esp. those with VAT? Imprest basis used?	The Town Council office holds £250 Imprest/petty cash (cashbook 4). Vouchers are completed and attached to the receipts for reimbursement. The vouchers are signed by the claimant and countersigned by the Deputy Executive Officer or Executive Officer to agree the transactions. Arrangements are in place to protect the Executive Officer and Deputy Executive Officer and ensure they do not have to sign for their own petty cash claims.
6.2	Is petty cash reported to each Council meeting?	At present there is no formal reporting of Imprest Account expenditure detail to the Town Council.
6.3	Is petty cash reimbursement carried out regularly?	All Petty Cash is reconciled on a monthly basis.
7	Payroll Controls	
7.1	Do staff salaries/wages paid agree with those approved by the Council & what is review frequency?	It was noted that the Town Council do not use the NALC/SLCC model template or use the Local Government NJC Pay Scales but have decided to use their own supported by the services of a Personnel Organisation; Peninsula.
7.2	Are other expenses to the Clerk/staff reasonable and	The Executive Officer confirmed she continues to overview the performance of staff

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	approved by the Council?	through annual appraisals. Where appropriate she will recommend to the Strategy and Policy Committee each year any performance bonus payments to be made to their salary.
7.3	Have PAYE/NIC/ Pensions been properly operated by Council as an employer? Payment frequencies/method?	The Executive Officer will ask the Payroll Provider (Rice Associates) to provide them with the figures for PAYE and NI Contributions and these will be paid to HMRC by the Council. To meet the requirements of the Pension Auto Enrolment Legislation for all staff the Town Council have put in place arrangements a Pension Provider (Peoples Pension) that commence on the 1 April 2017.
8	Assets Controls	
8.1	Does Council keep an asset register of all assets owned incl. serial nos.? Annual physical check noted?	The Council's Maintenance and Grounds Maintenance teams maintain excel spreadsheets showing asset locations, serial numbered. Property and equipment are subject to recorded, regular check by these teams at least annually (and sometimes more depending on item eg play areas more often than annually). The list now includes insured values.
8.2	Are the Asset/Investments registers up to date, incl. disposals? Note all Investments held with a/c nos.	Yes, the asset register does show all the current asset items and was last updated in 2020.
8.3	Do asset insurance valuations agree with those in the asset register?	Yes, Asset Register does currently show any insured values.
9	Bank Reconciliation	
9.1	Is there a Bank reconciliation for each account held? Note each A/c with bank/branch & a/c no. If relevant, review Money Market transfers & documentation.	Yes, for Nat West Bank Current Account 47406682(cashbook 1), Nat West Bank Capital Reserve Account 474278841 (cashbook 2), Nat West Bank Business Reserve Account 47406690 (cashbook 3), Nat West Bank Mayors Charity Account 22121781 (cashbook 5). Also, a separate cashbook is held to reconcile the Indemnity Deposit cashbook (cashbook 6)
9.2	Are Bank reconciliations conducted on receipt of statements & with what frequency?	All bank accounts are reconciled monthly on receipt of the bank statements.
9.3	Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?	No, all entries were recorded correctly in the cash books.

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10	Year-end Procedures	
10.1	Are Year-end, final accounts prepared on a Receipts and Payments or Income and Expenditure basis?	Income & Expenditure basis. Audit Note: The Chairman of Strategy and Policy Committee should conduct the Executive checklist at year-end as part of self-assessment controls.
10.2	Do the accounts agree with the cashbook codings?	Yes, RBS Omega Final year-end accounts confirm that entries made in cashbook are accurate & agree to Bank accounts held. 2019/20 balances confirm that entries made in the cash book are accurate and agree to all bank accounts held by the Town Council.
10.3	Is there an audit trail from underlying financial records to the accounts, for both receipts & payments?	On-line information for payments, and bankings using paying in slip details to show in the cash book with separate analysis of budget heading for budget monitoring purposes.
10.4	Where appropriate, have debtors and creditors been properly recorded? Are the year-end, General and Earmarked reserves held at reasonable levels?	Debtors, creditors & accruals are all accounted for in the Balance Sheet. Reserves held at year-end were satisfactory, general reserves at £ 228,207.00 as at 31/03/2020 and anticipated at £128,054.00 for general reserves and £456,418.00 for all earmarked reserves at the end of 2020/21.

Signed _____ Tim Light FMAAT _____

Date ___19/11/2020_____

Internal Auditor

Signed Angela Carey

RFO

Date 04/01/2021

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Action Plan for Recommendations			
No.	Recommendations	Actioned by	Date
4.4	<i>We recommend that the Council should consider an increase in its Precept for 2021/2022</i>		

Signed _____ Tim Light FMAAT _____ Internal Auditor Date 19/11/2020 _____

Signed Angela Carey _____ RFO Date 04/01/2021
