

Final audit report & Risk Assessment of financial systems' internal controls for Sandhurst Town Council 2023/24
prepared by the Internal Auditor, Executive Officer/RFO on 04 December 2023

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 2023. 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?	The Cashbook is balanced monthly for both the Current and Deposit accounts. 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. The Deputy Executive Officer 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.
2a	Standing Orders and Financial Regulations	
2.1	Has the Council formally adopted Standing Orders and Financial regulations, & dates approved?	Standing Orders were amended and approved at the Town Council meeting on the 02 November 2023 Minute Ref 3085 and Financial Regulations were approved and adopted by the Town Council on the 18 May 2023 Minute ref 2927.
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?	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. A £60k level applies for obtaining three tenders for project work shown in the new Financial Regulations.
2b	Payments Controls	
2.4	Are payments in the cashbook supported by invoices, authorised and minuted?	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. All contracts with Suppliers/Contractors are held and are signed off as accurate by the

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		Executive Officer or Deputy Executive Officer if required. 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. 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.
2.5	Has VAT on payments been checked, recorded, and reclaimed? Frequency, & refunds into which A/c?	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. The last VAT claim reimbursement was submitted in October 2023 for £10,663.32 covering the period 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023 paid into Nat West Bank Current Account 474066682 on 15 October 2023.
2.6	Is S.137 expenditure separately recorded & in limit?	The Executive Officer will obtain committee approval for all grant payments. These are coded separately and shown in the cash book. There are 15,169 Electors in the Sandhurst Town Council area. Section 137 amount allowed per elector for 2023-24 is £9.93
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 2023/2024 at the Strategy and Policy Committee and full Council in January 2024.
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

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		and was last carried out on the 03/04/23 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 05/04/23. 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 2023 to 30 September 2024. Fidelity Guarantee cover is showing £1m.
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, Rialtas Business Solutions top desk 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	A business continuity plan has been produced to ensure that the Council can operate during unexpected or tragic circumstances.	The Executive Officer will produce plans to react to issues that might affect the business continuity plan of the Town Council.
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 2023/2024 the notification was sent in February 2023
4.2	Is actual expenditure against the budget regularly reported to the Council & minuted?	Budget to actual comparisons is 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.

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4.4	Any potential loss of income to the Town Council is known and action has been taken to adjust the budget for 2023/2024.	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.
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 2023/24 of £304,466.25 was received on 28/04/2023 and paid direct into Nat West Bank Current Account no 47406682. The second half year Precept payment of £304,466.25 was received on 29/09/2023 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. The salaries were reviewed last

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		year in line with other salaries in the sector.
7.2	Are other expenses to the Clerk/staff reasonable and approved by the Council?	The Executive Officer continues to overview the performance of staff 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?	Payroll Provider (Rice Associates) provide 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 e.g., play areas more often than annually). The list 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 March 2023.
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. 2023/24 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 £567,532.00 as at 31/03/2023 and anticipated at £509,188 for general reserves and £734,538.00 for all earmarked reserves at the end of 2023/24.

Signed ____Tim Light FMAAT _____

Date ____04/12/2023_____

Internal Auditor

Signed _____ RFO Date _____
RFO

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Action Plan for Recommendations			
No.	Recommendations	Actioned by	Date
	There are no formal recommendations for the 2023/2024 financial year.		

Signed ___Tim Light FMAAT_____ Internal Auditor Date ___04/12/2023_____

Signed ___ __Angela Carey_____RFO Date __4/12/23_____