

Internal Audit Report for Tuddenham St Mary Parish Council for the period ending 31 March 2026

Clerk	None in post
RFO (if different)	None in post
Chairperson	Councillor Mark Dunnett
Precept	£16,275.00
Income	£16,298.05 (see Section 5 below)
Expenditure	£13,547.32 (See Section 4 below)
General reserves	£8,065.09 (to ensure that this matches the year-end bank balances)
Earmarked reserves	£9,300.00
Audit type	Annual – Exempt Authority
Auditor name	Victoria Waples

Summary

The primary aim and objective of internal audit is to review, evaluate and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems, and the internal auditor has examined the activities of the council to ensure that they conform to the regulations and proper practices in which the parish council must operate. Acknowledging that council has faced a challenging year without a Clerk and/or a Responsible Financial Officer, the internal audit has highlighted weaknesses in certain aspects of the Council's financial management and governance procedures.

While these findings are not of any significant concern, they will provide a valuable opportunity to address shortcomings, improve transparency, and enhance operational effectiveness. The Council will need to prioritise the implementation of corrective measures and to monitor progress closely. It is highly recommended that Council seeks to ensure that it appoints an officer to be responsible for the financial administration of the Council in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Recommendations made and/or commentary provided are to ensure that council has a framework which will assist it in ensuring that matters raised are considered and that action is taken to prevent reoccurrence of the issues raised.

A detailed action plan should be developed to ensure that all recommendations are implemented promptly with progress reported regularly to the community.

Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, and corruption
- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts, and data

Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- conduct a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws, and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being conducted as planned

Section 1 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC'S latest model which include legislative changes.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Council's Standing Orders, as adopted at the meeting of 28 th May 2026, are based on the model published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in 2025.
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Financial Regulations, as adopted at the meeting of 28 th May 2026 are based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations published in March 2025.
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	<i>Partially</i>	The adopted Financial Regulations have not been tailored to the Parish Council as they contain generic provisions that should be completed and adopted to the needs of the council. Council should also consider dating the document to ensure that the document is version controlled.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)? ¹	No	Post November 2025 there was no one person appointed in the role of Responsible Financial Officer Recommendation: in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), council should note the requirement to appoint a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. Whilst Council needs to ensure that there is the proper segregation of duties and noting that the Chair of the authority should never be appointed (even on a short-term basis) as a RFO, other members may perform these roles, unpaid, on a short-term basis providing appropriate safeguards are in place or if their appointment is unavoidable to ensure statutory functions continue to be fulfilled.
Additional comments:		

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972

Section 2 – Budgetary controls		
The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed</i>	Yes	The budget for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the Council meeting of 21 st January 2025 and was set at £16,275 to be funded by the precept. The budget for the year 2026 - 2027 was approved at the council meeting of 15 th January 2026 but there is no evidence produced detailing that which would be set. <i>Comment: council is advised to evidence within the minutes the actual budget being set alongside the reasoning for such a budget thereby ensuring transparency in the budgetary process followed by the council.</i>
<i>Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted</i>	Yes	The minutes of 21 st January 2025 confirmed that the precept to be levied for the year 2025 - 2026 would be set at £16,275. The paperwork submitted for internal audit review demonstrates that this would be result in a Council Tax Band D of £96.68 which was a 9.90% (£8.62) increase on that set the previous year. The precept for the year 2026 - 2027 was discussed and approved at the meeting of 20 th November 2025 and set at £16,275.00 which was acknowledging as being a decrease over that set for the previous year. <i>Comment: in accordance with best practice, council should record in the minutes the impact the precept being set would have on a Band D Dwelling in percentage terms.</i>
<i>Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget</i>	Yes	Council received regular reports detailing bank balances and approval of bank reconciliations, along with reviews covering comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure.
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked²</i>	Yes	The Council, as at year-end, had overall reserves of £17,365.09 broken down as General Reserves totalling £8,065.09 and Earmarked Reserves of £9,300.

² In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

		Council has followed guidance as issued by Proper Practices which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure and should ensure that the level of general reserves held is in accordance with an adopted General Reserve Policy. <i>Comment: The Council might wish to consider adopting a formal Reserves Policy which sets out the rationale for the level of general reserves, including how it intends to achieve and maintain an appropriate level in line with Proper Practices.</i> Council has noted that there is no upper limit for Earmarked Reserves, but they should be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level subject to regular review and justification (at least annually).
Additional comments:		

Section 3 – Proper bookkeeping The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council's accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	Excel spreadsheets were submitted for internal audit review, and these have been used to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis.
<i>Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure?</i>	Yes	Council's gross income and expenditure level is below the threshold of £200,000 and has been for three (3) continuous years. Council's operating under this limit may choose either to report on an income and expenditure basis or on a receipts and payments (R&P) basis. Council has elected to report its financial matters on a receipts and payments basis.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	The cashbook is reconciled on a regular basis. <i>Comment: a review of the cashbook indicated that the bank charges for the month of December had been omitted. This omission had caused the Accounting Statements to be "out" in their casting – see Section 9 below.</i>

Is the arithmetic correct?	Yes	A number of spot checks were conducted, and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order.
Additional comments: the RFO might wish to demonstrate good practise by referencing in the cashbook the powers used to incur expenditure. Statutory powers are granted by Parliament and give local councils the choice or opportunity to take action and are therefore discretionary Local Councils must exercise their powers subject to the provisions of the general law.		

Section 4 – Payment controls		
The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	Yes	A selection of random payments were cross checked against cash book, bank statement and invoices and all were found to be correctly recorded. Whilst a financial statement is submitted at each relevant meeting detailing the payments to be made, there is no reference made within the body of the minutes as to the payments being authorised. <i>Comment: council should note that the Practitioners' Guide 2025 details the manner in which refunds and repayments should be treated. Noting that the treatments for the sums of money is to be reported net as the refund has been received from the original payee, council will need to restate its other expenditure incurred by £146.86 – see Section 9 below.</i> Recommendation: in accordance with Council's adopted Financial Regulation 6.10, a schedule of payments requiring authorisation ... shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	Internet banking is operated in accordance with the Council's own Financial Regulations and is used for the settlement of the Council's expenditure. The

		council's own internal controls for electronic payments details the procedure to be followed for the making of such payments in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. Council operates with dual authorisation for online payments.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	VAT is identified in the cash book. The claim covering the period 1 st April 2024 to 31 st March 2026 in the sum of £1,075.46 was submitted after the year had closed (post 31 st March 2026). <i>Comment: the Clerk has ensured that the council has complied with section 33 of the 1994 VAT Act which allows local authorities and other public bodies to recover VAT incurred on costs associated with: non-business activities, taxable business activities where the body is VAT registered (subject to the normal rules), and exempt business activities (where the input tax incurred in relation to exempt activities is considered to be insignificant).</i>
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ³	N/A	The Council has not declared that it fulfils the eligibility criteria to use the general power of competence.
Are payments under s.137 ⁴ separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	<i>Partially met</i>	Payments allocated in the cashbook as being made under this power totalled £5,313.24. Whilst Council clearly identifies s137 payments within its accounts, it is advised that s137 has an expenditure limit of £11.10 per elector for the year 2025-26. This would allow expenditure in the sum of £3,729.60 for the year under review which should be justified by the direct benefit to the area or residents. This power is also a "power of last resort" and should only be used where there is no specific statutory power available. From a review of the payment allocations, the following payments were reviewed, and commentary is provided as to whether a more appropriate power should have been used to incur such expenditure: 1. Payment to the Bowls Club – £1500.00 – Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19

³ Localism Act

⁴ Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £11.10 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

		2. Annual Grant for Playing Field – £500 – Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9 and 10 – power to contribute / maintain land for public recreation 3. Grant for Playing Field - £1500.00 – as above 4. Grant to St Mary's Church for wall - £1,500 – Open Spaces Act 1906 ss 9 and 10 – power to contribute to / maintain burial grounds 5. Remembrance Wreaths - £95.00 (two payments) – correctly allocated against s137 6. Christmas Decorations - £59.99 correctly allocated against s137 7. Christmas Activities for community - £158.25 – correctly allocated against s137
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	N/A	Council has no such loans.
Additional comments:		

Section 5 – Income controls The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Yes	Income is recorded in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. The accounting records contain day-to-day entries of all sums of money received. <i>Comment: council should note that the Practitioners' Guide 2025 details the manner in which refunds and repayments should be treated. Noting that the treatments for the sums of money is to be reported net as the refund has been received from the original payee and not as income, council will need to restate its total other income received by £146.86 – see Section 9 below.</i>
Is income reported to full council?	Yes	Income received is reported to full Council within the financial reports submitted to full Council

<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	Council received precept in the sum of £16,275 from West Suffolk Council for the period under review as reported to full Council within its Financial Reports at its meetings in May 2025. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved to being served on the Charging Authority to remittance advice showing the Precept to be paid and receipt of same in the council's bank account.
<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁵</i>	N/A	CIL is not operated within the district in which the council is situated.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	N/A	
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	N/A	
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	N/A	
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	N/A	
Additional comments:		

Section 6 – Petty cash The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures, and verification processes and that these are up to date.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	N/A	
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	N/A	
Additional comments: a petty cash system is not operated by the council.		

⁵ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Section 7 – Bank reconciliation		
The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall, there was reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted to full council.
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	Bank balances as of 31 st March 2026 agree with the year-end bank statements and at year end stood at £17,365.09 across the accounts held in the parish council's name.
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	Balances across the Council's accounts are reported at each meeting of full Council. <i>Comment: council might wish to expand its internal controls by evidencing that reconciled accounts including bank reconciliation are presented to a nominated councillor demonstrating that an internal review and verification of the bank reconciliation versus the bank statements has been undertaken. This is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives.</i>
Additional comments:		

Section 8 – Payroll controls	
The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.	
Evidence	Internal auditor commentary

<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	Council had no employee on its payroll at the period end of 31 st March 2026. Employment contracts for those in post during the year were not reviewed during the internal audit, but the Chair to the Council has confirmed that Contracts of Employment were in place.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	All salary payments were presented to full Council for approval and payment was made via internet banking in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. <i>Comment: Council has noted the requirement to ensure that it formally approves amendments to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment.</i>
<i>Are all employees paid at least the minimum wage?</i>	Yes	The employee(s) were paid above the minimum wage.
<i>Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?</i>	Yes	There were suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensured the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines and outsourced. Cross-checks were completed on a sample of payments covering salary and all were found to be in order.
<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁶</i>	Yes	Council is aware of its pension responsibilities, and the member of staff is not enrolled into a pension scheme provided by the employer.
<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes	From paperwork seen, the council completed its re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator in 2023. <i>Comment: if the Council last carried out its re-enrolment duties in 2023, it will be aware that every three years further re-enrolment duties will apply. Council should ensure that it comply with any deadlines for 2026 as stated in communications from the Pension Regulator.</i>
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	Expenses claimed are reasonable and approved by the council.
Additional comments:		

⁶ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

Section 9 – Year End procedures		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	Yes	Accounts are produced on a receipts and payments basis.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	Yes	The Internal Auditor confirms that having reviewed the year-end files, there is a full underlying financial trail from financial records to the accounts produced. The accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation detail is verified along with the correct disclosure of the combined cash and bank balances in the AGAR, section 2, line 8.
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR ⁷ documents been completed?	Yes but work required	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and/or expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 2. The AGAR covering the Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statements and Accounting Statements were signed at the meeting of 17th June 2026. Recommendation: as council has treated refunds as income, amendments will be required to the approved Accounting Statements. Whilst the overall position remains unchanged, council is advised that it reviews guidance on the productions of its accounts to ensure that it follows regulatory guidance on the annual production of its accounts. Council has also incorrectly allocated costs within both Box 4 and Box 6 and amendments should be carried out as follows: Box 2 of the Accounting Statements should be amended to read £23. Box 4 should be amended to £2,326 (locum and payroll costs are not regarded as staff costs). Box 6 amended to read £11,221 (which includes the omitted bank charges for December 2025 and the locum and payroll costs)
Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	Yes	As the council did not have gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 during 2024-2025 it was able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31 st March 2025. The minutes of 14 th

⁷ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

		May 2025 demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 and the Certificate of Exemption were reviewed, exemption claimed, and permission was given for the Chair and Clerk to sign the documents. <i>Comment: Council has ensured that there is formal evidence of the legal decision taken to claim exemption under section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulation 2015.</i>
<i>During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?</i>	No	For the year 2024-25, the Accounting Statements were completed and signed off at the meeting of 17th July 2025 which is outside of the period specified in legislation (Section 1 and 2 must be approved before 1 July 2025). This would also mean that the period for the exercise of public rights could not have begun until 19th July at the earliest which is outside of the defined dates as set out under Sections 26 and 27 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Council also failed to ensure that the relevant documents were published on the website in operation at that time prior to the commencement of the public rights. <i>Comment: within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council correctly provided for the exercise and published a copy of the required "Public Notice" by ensuring that it clearly identified the statutory 30 working day period when the Authority's records are available for public inspection. This is evidenced by the notice on the website which contains the period for the exercise of public right; details of the manner in which the documents can be inspected; the name and address of the external auditor and the provisions as contained under section 25 and section 27 of the Act.</i> Recommendation: council is advised to consider its response to Assertion 4 – Exercise of Public Rights as it failed to comply with statutory deadlines. <i>Comment: Council should also note that it must ensure that the Public Notice is uploaded to the website in accordance with the instructions on the frontpage of the AGAR Form (by 1st July). It is understood that the Council has commenced the period for this year on 8th July which is outside of the statutory timescales and will need to account for this in its responses to the AGAR for the year 2026-2027.</i>

<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?⁸</i>	No	The Internal Auditor is unable to confirm that the Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000, as it has not published all of the following for the year 2025 - 2026 on a publicly accessible website by 1st July 2026: • Certificate of Exemption • Annual Internal Audit Report • Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR • Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR • Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights • Analysis of variances • Bank reconciliation – year-end <i>Comment: those in bold were missing from the website for the year 2024-2025.</i>
Additional comments:		

Section 10 – Risk management The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?</i>	Yes	The risk assessment documentation as provided details the risks associated with the operational functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks. The Risk Register as reviewed was considered and adopted by the council at its meeting of 12th March 2025 and covers the review of risks such as financial, security, legal, IT and reputational (see paragraph 5.90 of the Practitioners' Guide 2025. <i>Comment: whilst Council has confirmed that it reviewed its risk register, it is advised to ensure that the updated document is dated accordingly and</i>

⁸ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		<i>uploaded to the website thereby demonstrating that council has considered and addressed all risks that could have financial or reputational consequences on the parish council.</i>
<i>Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?</i>	Yes	Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money. There is evidence that overall, the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences. <i>Comment: council has in place monitoring documents which identify the risks involved with and the potential for improvements to its arrangements to protect public money. It provides the opportunity for reviews of operational as well as financial and governance reviews by members to ensure that it has mitigation measures in place to address the risks associated with the council's day to day operations.</i>
<i>Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee and has been reviewed on an annual basis?</i>	Yes	Council has insurance in place under a Select for Local Council Policy with Zurich Municipal Insurance. The schedule shows core cover for the following: Public Liability £12million; Employer Liability £10million; and Fidelity Guarantee of £250thousand. <i>Comment: Council has followed recommended guidance by ensuring that its Fidelity Cover is equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April/May and/or during the year upon receipt of grants.</i> During the year under review, evidenced from a review of the minutes of the meeting of 16th October 2025, council is able to demonstrate that it is aware that it is the responsibility of the Council as a whole to satisfy itself that insurances are adequate and that all steps have been taken to mitigate and manage identified risks with appropriate insurance and that annual reviews of the Council's insurance were undertaken prior to renewal. <i>Comment: Council has ensured that it is able to demonstrate that it has reviewed the risks facing the Council in transacting its business and has taken out appropriate insurance to manage and reduce the risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things).</i>

<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁹</i>	<i>Not for year under review</i>	Whilst Council adopted an Internal Control Statement for the year ending 31st March 2027 at the meeting of 28th May 2026, there is no minute reference to demonstrate that such a statement was adopted for the year 2025-26 nor were there any control tests carried out to feed into the annual review of the internal controls. <i>Comment: Council should be aware that an annual review of the effectiveness of its internal controls must be evidenced to demonstrate that council is acting in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.</i> The internal controls as outlined, in the adopted Statement, if followed, will provide confirmation that the financial and management systems of the council are sound and adequate and internal control arrangements were efficient and effective to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.
<i>Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment¹⁰</i>	<i>Not for year under review</i>	The council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements within the adopted internal control statement. <i>Comment: Council is aware that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulation 2015, the parish council must review the terms of reference and effectiveness of internal audit and demonstrate that it has understood that the role of internal audit is to evaluate and report on the adequacy of the system of internal control.</i>
Recommendation: as council failed to review the risks associated with safeguarding public finances and failed to review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, it is advised to consider its response to Assertion 2 of the Annual Governance Statement.		

Section 11 – Asset control

The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location, and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.

⁹ Accounts and Audit Regulations

¹⁰ Practitioners Guide

Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?¹¹</i>	Yes	The Asset Register, as seen on the council's website, reflects those items listed under insurance and within the parish council's remit for maintenance and ownership. It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2026) is £115,131. It has been confirmed that the Parish Council completed a review of the asset register and found that a number of assets had been historically undervalued and these were corrected during the year under review. In addition, it is confirmed that assets missing from the register have now been added with the correct value.
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2025 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied. <i>Comment: council should ensure that it applies a consistent approach to its asset register which should not vary from year to year other than to include acquisitions or disposals.</i>
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/A	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was conducted via remote means.
<i>Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?</i>	N/A	Council has not declared that it has assets located on third party property for which a formal lease is required.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	Yes	The asset register seen was reviewed at a meeting of 25 th March 2026. It is confirmed that the values seen on the Asset Register – £19,172 (rounded) - matches those on the Accounting Statements
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	Yes	Council has appropriate insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under the headings on the insurance schedule. Specified cover is in place for named items on the schedule.
Additional comments:		

¹¹ Practitioners Guide

Section 12 – Assertion 10		
The internal auditor will be checking that the council complies to the new assertion 10 introduced in the Practitioners' Guide 2025.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹²</i>	Yes	As a Data Controller, all local authorities are required to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in accordance with Data Protection Legislation. Registration Certificate: ZA090229 with an expiry date of 14 th December 2026 refers.
<i>Is there an adopted council publication scheme and is it reviewed regularly?</i>	No	The Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the ICO, and to publish information covered by this scheme. Recommendation: Council should seek to review the information it holds under its scheme and ensure that it is up to date and ensure that it is available to view on its website.
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?¹³</i> <i>Councils must:</i> • <i>Comply with their legal & statutory obligations under UK GDPR & The Data Protection Act 2018</i> • <i>Process personal data lawfully, fairly and in line with the prescribed data protection principles</i> • <i>Recognise their role as both data controller and data processor</i>	Partially	Council has taken some active steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and has adopted policies which details the manner in which the parish council will protect and handle information relating to personal information. RECOMMENDATION: To achieve best practice, councils are recommended to: • Adopt a comprehensive Privacy Policy • Evidence of review of Privacy Policy • Inclusion of employees within the Privacy Policy • Adopt a Data retention policy to include information on disposal • Adopt a Data Impact Assessment identifying categories of personal data held, the format in which it is stored and the legal justification for its processing under the UK GDPR.

¹² Data Protection Act 2018

¹³ UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

		• Adopt procedures for dealing with Freedom of Information requests. • Adopt procedures for dealing with data breaches • Carry out data protection audits, mapping personal data being processed and carry out data risk assessments. • Provide regular data protection compliance training for council staff and councillors.
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	<i>Not for 24-25</i>	To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller authorities (turnover not exceeding £25,000), Council should be aware that the following should have been published on a public website for the year 2025-2026 not later than 1 July: • Internal Audit Report • List of Councillors and Responsibilities • Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT • End of Year Accounts • Annual Governance Statement • Asset Register • and that Agendas of Meetings; Associated Papers and Minutes should be published in accordance with the prescribed timescales as set out in the Transparency code for smaller authorities – December 2014. <i>Comment: the council failed to publish certain datasets on its website for both 2024-2025 and 2025-26 in accordance with the required timescale.</i>
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁴</i>	<i>Yes</i>	The Council has published a website accessibility statement on the council operated website detailing the technical information of the website stating that the website is fully compliant with the WCAG 2.2 AA Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
<i>Has website accessibility been tested, at least annually?</i>	<i>Unclear</i>	The accessibility statement does not confirm when the site was last tested.
<i>Does the council have, as a minimum, a single generic email address on an authority owned domain, for</i>	<i>Yes</i>	Council currently operates with the website https://tuddenham-pc.gov.uk/ . The council uses a dedicated gov.uk email addresses for the Clerk.

¹⁴ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

correspondence? ¹⁵ For example clerk@abccouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abccouncil.org.uk		
Does the council have an IT policy that is tailored to the council? ¹⁶	No	The Council has not adopted an IT Policy. Recommendation: to demonstrate compliance with Assertion 10 – Digital and data compliance - Council must adopt an Information Technology Policy covering the use of IT equipment for authority business for both Staff and Councillors which explains how all involved with the authority – clerks and members - should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software.
Recommendation: as council has failed to put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management, it is advised to consider its response to Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance Statements.		

Section 13 – Internal audit The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?	Yes	The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31 st March 2025 was formally considered by and approved for adoption at the meeting of full Council of 14 th May 2025.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?	No	The following recommendations were brought to the attention of the council for which an action plan to address areas of improvement or development was required: Section 13: Internal audit 1. Ensure that there are effective procedures to record all financial transactions of the council

¹⁵ Practitioners Guide

¹⁶ Practitioners Guide

		2. Adopt latest version of Standing Orders to show compliance with changes in legislation 3. Reference in the cashbook powers used to incur expenditure 4. Annual assessment of the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority 5. Annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control 6. Annual review of the effectiveness of internal audit 7. Publish statutory documents within the time limit as specified under the Regulations 8. Ensure that the Accounting Statements cast 9. Ensure that council correctly provides for the exercise of public rights 10. Demonstrate compliance with the Transparency Code 2014 11. Publish a website accessibility statement <i>Comment: where the internal audit report draws council's attention to areas that require improvement, it is considered best practise that the Clerk produces an Audit Action Tracker which can be regularly updated with action taken to address the recommendations and commentary contained within the internal audit report for this and previous years. Council has recognised this matter and answered in the negative to Assertion 7 of the Annual Governance Statement.</i>
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?¹⁷</i> <i>Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?¹⁸</i>	Yes	The appointment of the person to act as the parish council's independent internal auditor for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the council meeting of 19th March 2026. <i>Comment: Council has understood the requirement to ensure that there is an appointed person to provide assurance that the financial and management systems of the council are sound and adequate and internal control arrangements are efficient and effective.</i> The letter of engagement was approved at the meeting of 28th May 2026. <i>Comment: by approving the letter of engagement, Council will be following Proper Practices by ensuring it has clarity on the provision of internal audit</i>

¹⁷ Practitioners' Guide

¹⁸ Practitioners' Guide

		<i>including the roles and responsibilities, audit planning and timing of visits, reporting requirements, rights to access to information, members and officers, period of engagement and remuneration.</i>
Additional comments:		

Section 14 – External audit for the period under review		
The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?</i> ¹⁹	N/A	The council was able to claim exemption from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31 st March 2025.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?</i>	N/A	
Additional comments:		

Section 15 – Additional information		
The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
Evidence		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> ²⁰	Yes	Council held its Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at which the Chair was elected on 22 nd May 2025 in accordance with legislation in place at that time.

¹⁹ Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e., All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.*

²⁰ The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? ²¹</i>	Yes	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	A copy of the members' interests for all serving councillors was seen on the District Council's website with a direct link from the council's own website.
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	N/A	Council has no declared trustee responsibility.
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Council uses a system whereby a back-up of the council's data is taken and stored appropriately.
<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	N/A	Council does not operate a committee system.
Additional comments:		

Signed: Victoria Waples

Date of Internal Audit review: 02.07.26, 06.07.26 & 13.07.26

Date of Internal Audit Report 13.07.2026

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils

²¹ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011