



## MULBERRY & CO

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Mrs E Fulham  
Crowhurst Parish Council  
Ten Acre Court  
Cat Street  
Upper Hartfield  
Hartfield  
Surrey  
TN7 4DT

Date 03 April 2020

Dear Emma

**Re: Crowhurst Parish Council**  
**Internal Audit Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

Following completion of our interim internal audit on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and final audit on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date. Where appropriate **recommendations for future action are shown in bold text.**

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time of the final audit, this was carried out remotely, and I would like to thank Emma for ensuring all of the requested information was sent through in a timely fashion to allow this process to be completed.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all members to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement.

### **Interim Audit – Summary Findings**

At the interim visit we reviewed and performed tests on the following areas:

- Review of the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders
- Review of the risk assessments
- Review of the budgeting process
- Proper bookkeeping – review of the use of the accounts package
- Review of salaries
- Review of fixed asset register

It is our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Crowhurst Parish Council are well established and followed. The Clerk is very experienced and ensures the council follows best practice regulations and has overseen changes to the internal procedures as regulations and technologies have changed to maintain compliance.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures very seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose. I would like to thank Emma for her assistance and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

### **Final Audit – Summary Finding**

At the final visit we reviewed and performed tests on the following areas:

- Review of annual accounts and AGAR
- Review of bank reconciliation
- Review of income
- Review of salaries
- Review of information for external auditor

I am of the opinion that the annual accounts and AGAR are ready to be signed off by council and the external auditor and that the AGAR is a true and fair reflection of the financial transactions of the council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. Accordingly, I have signed off the AGAR.

### **A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT (INTERIM AUDIT)**

The council continues to use Excel spreadsheets as a day to day accounting package. This is entirely appropriate for a council of this size and I make no recommendation to change. The system is used regularly to report on and record the financial transactions of the council. The Clerk is the sole user.

Regular reports are produced for council detailing income and expenditure against budget and completed bank reconciliations. These are clear and easy to follow, and the hard copy reports are easy to read and logically filed.

My audit testing showed that supporting documentation could be easily located from records. I make no recommendation to change in this system.

I tested opening balances as at 1/4/19 and confirmed they could be agreed back to the audited accounts for 2018/19.

Overall, I have the impression that the accounting systems are well ordered and routinely maintained and as such I make no recommendation to change.

I am of the opinion that the control assertion of “Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year” has been met.

### **B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**

#### **Interim Audit**

*Check the publication and minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit*

The external auditors report was not qualified in 2018/19. This has recently been received and will be reported to the next council meeting. The notice of conclusion of audit and audited AGAR will be posted to the council website.

### *Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms*

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms and Register of Members Interests and that a separate declaration has been signed for the office of chairman, in line with regulations. The councillors have also signed acceptance to receive information by electronic means.

### *Confirm that the council is compliant with the GDPR*

The council is aware of GDPR and has taken appropriate steps to follow the legislation. It was noted the council has common email addresses for councillors which gives a natural segregation so it is clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting, gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers. The council has appointed an external Data Protection Officer (DPO).

### *Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year*

The council has the following committees:

- Full Council - meets every other month
- Planning – meets on alternate months

There are also a number of working parties and groups which meet as and when necessary to cover specific tasks.

### *Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice*

The Clerk was able to demonstrate that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on both web site and hard copy agendas and supporting documentation for the agendas is also posted to the website.

### *Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website*

Draft minutes are uploaded to the council website, usually within a few days of the meeting being held. These are clearly marked as draft and replaced with final versions once adopted.

### *Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months*

The current standing orders are based on a previous NALC model, and were re-adopted at the May 2019 meeting. The council is about to adopt the revised 2018 model version.

### *Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations*

The current financial regulations are based on a previous NALC model and were re-adopted at the May 2019 meeting. The council is about to adopt the revised 2019 model version. The regulations being based on the NALC model contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council.

### *Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed*

Financial regulation 2.2 deals with bank reconciliations, the council is performing a regular bank reconciliation, and this is minuted in accordance with regulations.

Financial regulation 4 deals with budgetary control and authority to spend. The council has thresholds in place at which authorisations to spend must be obtained.

Financial Regulations 5 and 6 deal with the authorisation and making of payments. Once received, invoices are filed before being entered onto the accounting system and being added to the payment list. The Clerk writes out the cheques and references cheque numbers to the invoices. The minutes show authorisation of payments lists in accordance with regulations. Sample testing of payments from April and May 2019 show invoices being correctly authorised and cheque stubs being initialled by two signatories.

*Confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £8.12 per elector*

The council has no section 137 expenditure as it holds the General Power of Competence (GPC).

*Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor*

The system noted above details internal review takes place at councillor, committee and council level. I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure.

I am of the opinion the council is following its own regulations and that any changes to financial regulations are to be considered minor and no indicative of errors in the system.

#### **Final Audit**

I am of the opinion that the control assertion “This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for” has been met.

### **C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**

#### **Interim Audit**

The council undertakes a full risk assessment that covers operational and financial risks, and this is reviewed regularly by the council.

I have confirmed that the council has a valid insurance certificate. The council reviews its insurance requirements as part of the renewal process. Money and asset cover appear adequate.

#### **Final Audit**

I am of the opinion that the control objective of “This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these” has been met.

### **D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**

#### **Interim Audit**

I confirmed that the 2019-20 budget and precept setting process is about to commence. The Clerk will prepare an initial draft, and this will be reviewed and amended as required by council.

The council has a rolling five-year business plan, which includes a budget projection and information on future projects.

General reserves are circa £5,400 which is slightly lower than the recommended 50% of precept. Earmarked reserves are clearly itemised and are for projects which are all likely to be completed.

#### **Final Audit**

I am of the opinion that the control objective of “The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate” has been met.

### **E. INCOME (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**

#### **Interim Audit**

Other than the precept, the council receives circa £1,800 in fees for the hire of the lake but otherwise has minimal other income. Further testing on income will be conducted at year-end.

#### **Final Audit**

The precept income was tested to the figure recorded by the District Council and found to be correct. Other income has been correctly noted in the accounting records.

I am of the opinion that the control objective of “Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for” has been met.

#### **F. PETTY CASH (INTERIM AUDIT)**

The council has no petty cash.

#### **G. PAYROLL (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**

##### **Interim Audit**

The Clerk’s salary is processed in house using HMRC PAYE online tools. Further testing on salaries will be conducted at year-end.

##### **Final Audit**

A review of the accounting records made available remotely confirms the total salary costs as accurately recorded on the AGAR. Detailed checking of PAYE and NI deductions was not possible, and this will be checked at the next audit.

I am of the opinion that salaries are correctly stated on the AGAR and that the control objective of “Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority’s approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied” has been met.

#### **H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**

##### **Interim Audit**

The council has limited fixed assets and a simple register is in place detailing asset locations and historic or proxy cost. While more detail could be added, due to the limited nature of the assets this is unnecessary for a council of this size.

##### **Final Audit**

The asset register was checked, and the total found to match that entered on the AGAR.

I am of the opinion that the control objective of “Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained” has been met.

#### **I. BANK AND CASH (INTERIM AND FINAL AUDIT)**

##### **Interim Audit**

At the interim audit date, the council had a reconciled bank position which has been signed in accordance with Financial Regulations and reported to the council. Reconciliations are performed regularly and reviewed by the council.

The council is reminded that the provisions of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) does apply to the council as a small local authority (annual budget under €500,000).

##### **Final Audit**

At the year-end audit date, the council had a reconciled bank position across all its accounts. There were eight unrepresented items on the main current account, all of them recent.

I am of the opinion that bank and cash balances are properly shown on the AGAR and that the control objective of “Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out” has been met.

## J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS (FINAL AUDIT)

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on the receipts and payments basis, and the AGAR correctly casts and cross casts.

The explanation of variances has been completed with sufficient detail and explanations provided for variances in excess of 15%.

The council has completed the Certificate of Exemption, which it is qualified to do as neither gross income nor gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

At the time of the year-end audit, the AGAR figures presented for checking were as below:

AGAR Box Number		2018/19	2019/20	Auditor Notes
1	Balances brought forward	14,596	14,722	Correctly carried over from box 7 2018/19
2	Precept or rates and levies	13,500	14,850	Confirmed against precept amount received
3	Total other receipts	6,502	7,305	Confirmed against accounting records
4	Staff costs	10,153	7,888	Confirmed against accounting records
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	No borrowing
6	All other payments	9,723	5,741	Confirmed against accounting records
7	Balances carried forward	14,722	23,248	Total correctly equals (1+2+3) – (4+5+6)
8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	14,722	23,248	No difference as accounts prepared on receipts and payments basis
9	Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	5,185	6,485	Total matches asset register
10	Total borrowings	0	0	No borrowing

I am satisfied that the control objective “Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis, agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records” has been met.

## K. TRUSTESHIP (INTERIM AUDIT)

The council has no trusts.

**L: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS (FINAL AUDIT)**

**Final Audit**

<b>Inspection - Key date</b>	<b>2018/19 Actual</b>	<b>2019-20 Proposed</b>
<b>Accounts approved at full council</b>	8 April 2019	To be confirmed subject to remote meetings protocol agreement
<b>Date Inspection Notice Issued</b>	10 June 2019	1 June 2020
<b>Inspection period begins</b>	17 June 2019	15 June 2020
<b>Inspection period ends</b>	26 July 2019	24 July 2020
<b>Correct length</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Common period included?</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Summary of rights document on website?</b>	Yes	Yes

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2018-19, and assertion 4 on the annual governance statement can therefore be signed off by the council. Plans are also in place to allow for inspection periods to be published and set correctly for 2019-20 accounts.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

*A Beams*

**Andy Beams**