

May 19, 2025

West Down Parish Council Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Testing was carried out using sampling where appropriate and covering a range of financial, risk and governance assessed as appropriate for a council of this size and complexity.

The findings are reported below:

✓ Governance and Control

All councils of whatever size are required to annually prepare and consider:

- A general and financial risk assessment covering the council's activities.
- A statement of internal control.
- Annually review any charges for services whether or not they are increased and record this in minutes.

Councils under £25,000 turnover are legally required to publish on a website disclosure of information required by the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities 2014.

Councils with total turnover or expenditure over £25,000 are subject to the requirement of the Freedom of Information Act, where it is a requirement that public bodies publish certain information on their website, and should as best practice comply with the Local Government Smaller Bodies (Transparency Requirements) Regulations 2015.

Councils should ensure compliance with the rules regarding General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which came into effect in May 2018.

Councils should have in place and periodically review:

- Standing orders for the conduct of council meetings are required by law and should be periodically review and changed to reflect current legislation.
- Financial regulations for the control of its financial administration are required by law and should be periodically reviewed for either changes in legislation or internal control procedure changes.
- Any Council moving away from 2 cheque signatories by Councillors and utilising online banking, should have procedures and controls in place to establish appropriate safeguards.

Satisfactory. The website is very comprehensive and compliant with the Transparency Code.

✓ Precept, Budgets and Reserves

The precept was agreed to the minute setting the precept, the principal authority tax collecting authority records. The receipt was traced and agreed to bank and cash book records. The

precept was set after consideration of a budget and consideration of an appropriate level of free reserves (the General Fund) which is generally accepted should lie between 3 and 12 months' expenditure.

Whilst the council have prepared a budget for 2025/26, no earmarked reserves are identified. In addition, the council minutes do not document any discussion of considerations of reserves that are held.

It is recommended that the council consider earmarked reserves and that the minutes reflect, in more detail, the budget and precept setting process.

✓ **Other Receipt or Income**

A sample of other receipts were tested to ensure that, as appropriate:

- That grants and interest were correctly recorded in the cash book and agreed to bank statement
- Chargeable services were correctly and promptly charged to the beneficiaries of those services and that arrangements were in place to pursue late payment.

It is recommended that the council should utilise their balances more in order to improve bank interest received. There is also a loss of VAT reclaimable due to invoices not being in the name of the parish council.

The grant receipts and payments that arise from the Parish Paths scheme (P3) are required to be identified separately with any balances that arise being ring-fenced. There was no P3 claim in 2024/25 despite considerable expenditure.

It is recommended that a reconciliation, including previous years, is prepared and any grants claimed promptly.

✓ **Staff Cost**

Testing was carried out as appropriate to ensure that:

- Rates of pay were as approved by Council.
- Additional hours worked were approved and supported by time records.
- Employees are paid in accordance with contractual obligations and on the correct pay date.
- Employees have a written statement of principal terms and conditions.
- That PAYE and NI are operated and paid promptly.

Generally satisfactory, however, the details of the clerk's appointment and pay scale information have not been formally approved in the confidential minutes.

✓ **Payments including Bank and Petty Cash**

A sample of payments were tested as appropriate to confirm:

- Payments are made in accordance with financial regulations
- Payments are supported by invoice, receipt, expense claim, petty cash voucher or other appropriate documentation.
- Grant payments are subject to a proof of need assessment, are required to be evidenced as spent for the approved purpose, and unless having the general power of competence are made within permitted powers.
- Cheque payments are promptly cleared.
- Where payments are made other than by cheque with 2 councillor signatories the council has considered and actioned the requirements of appendix 10 of Governance and Accountability and have documented the process followed and annually review the control of wider definition "money".

Satisfactory, although the council may wish to pursue alternative banking arrangements to avoid unnecessary banking charges.

✓ **Insurance**

Insurance cover was reviewed as appropriate to confirm

- Adequate Fidelity Guarantee cover in place
- Range of cover in place has been reviewed at renewal and this has been recorded in the council minutes
- By sample test that assets other than land that appear on the Fixed Asset Register are insured or if not that there has been a decision not to cover them (for example because the excess is greater than the asset value insured).

Generally satisfactory, however, the indicative level for Fidelity Guarantee (FG) insurance would be the year-end balances plus half the annual precept. At 1st April 2025, this is approximately £38k, with the level of FG set at £25k on the insurance policy. The council may wish to review the adequacy of the cover.

✓ **Fixed Assets**

Tests were carried to confirm as appropriate

- Fixed asset register is up to date
- Additions have been correctly identified and a system exists for the identification of fixed assets
- That the disposal by scrapping, selling or part exchange of assets has been approved by council
- That where an insurance value has been used as the cost of an asset was unknown that the value is not increased as the insured value increases.

Satisfactory, however, on the asset register the value is identified as recommended insurance valuation. The Practitioners guide provides more information on the basis of valuation and this may be based on net cost.

Please refer to the audit checklist and request clarification for any of the audit points if necessary.

Many thanks for your assistance in the completion of the audit.

Kind regards
Julie