Bridget.C.Bowen FCA
86 High Street
Weston
Bath BA1 4DD

Tel: 07465 416597
Email: bridget.c.bowen@outlook.com

Craig Bolt
Clerk to Bleadon Parish Council
Coronation Halls,
Coronation Rd,
Bleadon BS24 0PG

22 April 2025

Dear Craig

BLEADON PARISH COUNCIL

Internal audit report - Year ended 31 March 2025

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended) require all Town and Parish Councils to undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of their risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.

I am bound by the ethical guidelines of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales. I confirm that I am independent of the Council.

The internal audit work I have carried out has been planned to enable me to give my opinion on the control objectives set out in the Annual Internal Auditor's Report on the 2024-25 Annual Governance and Accounts Return.

I have complied with the legal requirements and proper practices set out in:

- 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners' Guide (England)' 2024
- The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended)
- I was appointed as internal auditor to the Parish Council for 2024-25 on 13 may 2024.

My second internal audit review for 2024-25 was undertaken on 22 April 2025.

Background

Bleadon Parish Council has income and expenditure of between £50,000 and £100,000 for 2024-25 and is subject to review by the external auditor, BDO LLP. BDO LLP issued an audit report for 2023-24 with other matters relating to the administration of the charity funds.

The Council is the sole managing trustee of Bleadon Children's Playground.

The Council's accounting records are maintained on Scribe.

Internal audit checks

I have undertaken a series of audit tests on the Council's financial records, vouchers, documents, minutes, policies, procedures and insurance documentation to ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of the Parish Council's internal control framework. This internal audit report is based on the audit testing carried out during the review.

During this visit I checked the following:

- Minutes of Council Meetings
- Policies and procedures
- Bank and cash
- Income
- Expenditure
- VAT claims
- Payroll
- Asset register
- Action taken on the recommendations in prior report
- Year end checks

Findings

Details of good practice noted, my recommendations and other matters to be brought to the Council's attention are set out below.

Good practice

- The Clerk is ILCA qualified
- The Council maintains its books and records on Scribe software
- All records were up to date and easy to follow
- The Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are reviewed regularly and are tailored appropriately for the Council
- The Council has appropriate policies in place
- The Clerk is aware of the requirements of GDPR and the Council is registered with the ICO
- Councillors attend training by the local branch of the National Association of Local Councils
- Bank reconciliations are prepared accurately and regularly
- Bank reconciliations are carried out promptly each month, and are checked by a councillor

Good practice - continued

- Details of all payments authorised at meetings are recorded in the minutes
- All payment vouchers tested were evidenced as approved
- There are strong internal controls over cash receipts
- All allotment holders have signed tenancy agreements
- HMRC Toolkit is used for the payroll
- All eligible employees have either been auto-enrolled in a pension scheme or have opted out in writing
- All employees have contracts of employment
- The budgeting process is detailed and thorough and monitored throughout the year
- VAT claims are made regularly
- The risk assessment has been adopted during the year
- The asset register is complete and accurate and has been properly maintained
- Action has been taken, or is underway on all of the recommendations in the last internal audit report

Recommendations

I have no new recommendations. The following recommendations that were noted in my report of 7 January 2025 are currently in progress and will be actioned in May and June 2025.

Policies and procedures

- Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Investment strategy are due for review and update.
- It is good practice for the Council to formally consider the independence of the appointed internal auditor annually, and to record this in the minutes.

Risk assessment and insurance

- The Council should consider increasing its fidelity guarantee insurance to cover the maximum amount that the Council anticipates will be in its bank accounts during the year. This is usually approximately equal to the year end balance plus half the annual precept

Year end

- I recommend that the approval of Section 1 of the AGAR and approval of section 2 are recorded separately in the minutes to make it clear that section 1 was approved before section 2 as required by law.

Other matters to be brought to the Council's attention

- The minutes of the January 2025 Council meeting should be initialled on every page
- The Annual Internal Audit Report was completed with positive responses to all relevant objectives.

Conclusion

Based on the tests I have carried out, the internal control procedures in operation are adequate to meet the needs of Bleadon Parish Council.

Next Steps
This report should be noted and taken to the next meeting of the Parish Council. The Council should decide what action will be taken on the recommendations I have made.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Bridget Bowen FCA

Internal auditor