

Moderamen Auditing

Internal Audit Report 2022/23



Internal Auditors Summary:

I have been the Evercreech Internal Auditor since April 2019 and have seen continual improvement each year since then. There will always be areas where things can be improved and internal audit is about ongoing improvement, not getting to a level and stopping, it is pleasing to still be on that journey.

I have examined the accounts, minutes and supporting paperwork for Evercreech Parish Council year ending 31 March 2023. Where I have required further information or clarification this has been provided by the Parish Clerk

The Council's internal controls, governance, and accounting are to a good standard. The Council has split the role of Parish Clerk and RFO and this continues to work well into its third year. Within this year the Council has moved from sector-specific accounting software to Excel spreadsheet.

Folders and the paperwork are easy to navigate. The website is clear and up to date. Generally, the Council is operating to a good standard and has past the AGAR tests, however there are multiple smaller items listed in this report that can be improved upon.

Good to see the Council being active, not least the Skatepark project. Some really good fundraising taking place. Well done to all concerned.

AGAR Box:	Yes / No:	
A	YES	Comments: This year's AGAR Accounting Statement is £1 out.
B	YES	Comments:
C	YES	Comments:
D	YES	Comments:
E	YES	Comments:
F	N/A	Comments: The Council does not operate a petty cash system.
G	YES	Comments:
H	YES	Comments:

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I	YES	Comments:
J	YES	Comments:
K	N/A	Comments: The Council had a limited assurance review.
L	N/A	Comments: This test formally only applies only to those councils with turnover of less than £25,000. However, it is best practice for all councils up to a £200,000 turnover to comply with the Transparency Code – Currently the Council dose not have all the documents in place to comply with the Transparency Code.
M	YES	Comments: Dates should be agreed by the council and minuted.
N	YES	Comments:
O	N/A	Comments:

Further comments and recommendations not affecting the AGAR checks:

Agenda & Minutes Style:

The styling of both the agendas and minutes has not changed much over the last five years. I have suggested a few times over the years that it would be nice to see an uplift in style / quality to reflect the fact that they are agendas and minutes of a professional public body.

Lack of information in some cases; 011 – 07/03/23 who has been appointed and at what cost?

All decisions of the council need to be fully recorded in the minutes.

Payments List:

All payments should be given their identification number on the payments list to assist traceability.

Declarations of Interest / Dispensations:

I highlighted in June 2019 that I felt there was need for Code of Conduct / Declarations of Interests training for all Councillors & Officers.

Dispensations still appear to being applied for inappropriately and a poor process in place for approving.

- sometimes no reason given at all
- sometimes it appears there isn't even an interest.

I recommend that all Members and Officers have a whole Council training session to iron out the process.

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Annual Council Meeting:

By law, the Annual Council Meeting can only take place in May. I have seen an agenda that suggests that council held it on the 4th April 2023 – This meeting doesn't form part of this years audit, but next year the Internal Auditor will have to consider if this meeting was lawful.

Declarations of Office:

There are signed by the Councillors at the start of their term in office run until the next election or until they resign. They are not required to be completed each year.

Code of Conduct:

No clear what code the council is working from. Old, discontinued NALC code in the folder, no code on the website, but minutes do suggest that the new (SALC recommended) Somerset Code would be looked at.

Adoption of Minutes:

Minutes to be adopted at the very next formal meeting. Minutes of 04/05/21 not adopted until 10/05/22

Annual Parish Meeting:

Would be good to see a better separation of this meeting from Council meeting. Maybe a separate page on the website

- Councillors are not summoned to it / it is not a meeting of the Parish Council
- It is called by the Chairman of the Parish council, who should set and sign the agenda.

Recording of Voting:

The voting on agenda item 006 – 02/09/22 seems to be confused, recording that a casing vote was used, when this wasn't required.

Budget setting:

Interesting to see the budget set at the end of November, many councils leave it as late as possible (January) to allow the most amount of information possible to be available. Certainly the council should be looking at the budget lines from September until December but may want to consider taking the final decision in early January.

Asset Register:

Needs to go on to the website. I don't understand why many items haven't been given an insurance value or what the Community Asset column is for. Agreed asset de minimis to be recorded on the register.

Crick Club Takeover:

The council should have undertaken a specific, written, risk assessment for the taking over of the Cricket club, looking at all the risks to the public purse.

Working from Home Allowance:

This should be paid separately from any salary payments. A claim form should be used to create a clear paper trail as to what exactly is being claimed for. No need for it to be claimed monthly, could be quarterly or annually.

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Payment of Grants:

Organisations applying for a grant from the Parish Council should be supplying the council with 3 years worth of accounts and have their own bank account. In one case a payment was made in someone's personal account, this should not have happened.

Website / Register of Interests:

As soon as the new Somerset council has member register of interest on its website the Parish Council should add a link to this page and make this the only place that this information exists (ie remove from the Parish Council website).

Standing Orders:

They should have the Modal document year they are based on recorded, also when the next review is due.

Risk Assessment:

Have the meeting adopted at on. The one online says March 2021

General Website:

A few items have become fragmented.

- Look to have all the internal reports together on the same page
- Look to have all the cemetery information together.
- The links to the planning app no longer work due to new Somerset Council website.
- Missing information from the committees.
- Missing action plan.
- General updates required because of the new Somerset Council.

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19/04/2023