

Moderamen Auditing

Internal Audit Report 2023/24



Internal Auditors Summary:

I have examined the accounts, minutes and supporting paperwork for Evercreech Parish Council year ending 31 March 2024.

The Council's internal controls, governance, and accounting are to a very good standard. This is the second year of the move from accounting software to a formatted Excel spreadsheet and it continues to work well, the layout of the reports is accessible for everyone.

Paperwork is easy to navigate, invoices are divided into months and all numbered in accordance with the Cash Book number, overall, the format that is now in place is pretty exemplary with the experience and skills of the RFO shining though.

The website is clear and up to date. Overall, the Council is operating to a good standard and has passed the AGAR tests.

Noted that many members of the council have attend training events over the last year, but I am still concerned about the way declarations of interests are being handled, not least dispensations.

| AGAR Box: | Yes / No: | |
|-----------|-----------|---|
| A | YES | Comments: |
| B | YES | Comments: |
| C | YES | Comments: |
| D | YES | Comments: |
| E | YES | Comments: |
| F | N/A | Comments: A partial VAT claim has been made from 01/04/23 to 31/01/24 The Council does not operate a petty cash system. |
| G | YES | Comments: |
| H | YES | Comments: |
| I | YES | Comments: |
| J | YES | Comments: |

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|---|-----|--|
| | | |
| K | N/A | Comments: |
| | | The Council had a limited assurance review. |
| L | YES | Comments: |
| | | The Council is complying with the Transparency Code and has its principal policies on the website as well. |
| M | YES | Comments: |
| | | |
| N | YES | Comments: |
| | | |
| O | N/A | Comments: |
| | | |

Further comments and recommendations not affecting the AGAR checks:

Payments List:

The payments list a public document and is being published onto the website, this should happen before the meeting takes place to allow the public to see what payments are to be made at that meeting.

- It should be reported in the minutes of the meeting how many payments were approved at that meeting and the total amount of these payments (ideally, giving the payment number reference range)

Declarations of Interest / Dispensations:

I highlighted in June 2019 and again in 2023 that I felt there was a need for Code of Conduct / Declarations of Interests training for all Councillors & Officers.

I see that in the last year many of the Councillors have attended Code of Conduct training with SALC – but the way the council is handling Declarations of Interests / Dispensations at the formal council meetings still appear to be rather loose with forms not being filled in in full, minutes not recording if a Dispensation was awarded or why they have even been applied for (Not clear from the minutes if one member of the council was given the opportunity to address the council on their own planning application or why this would have been applied for).

- I recommend that a robust procedure is put in place for the handling of dispensations.

Raffle Prize:

I am not convinced by the use of public money to buy a gift card to donate as a raffle prize. Clearly, I am not so alarmed that I have given a 'no' response on the audit, but I highlight it now that this is not best practice. Supporting the running of the Village Hall by the gifting of a grant would be a much better way to support.

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Asset Register:

Lovely, all updated and now on the website.

Salary Payments, Working from Home Allowance & Other Expenses:

- For best practice salary payments should be made in one payment on a standalone BACS transfer. The payment doesn't need to be authorised by the council, as it's a contractual obligation, but all payments should be reported to the council at the earliest opportunity.
- For best practice payments for WFHL should have some supporting paperwork to show what exactly is being claimed for, this should then be listed as a standalone payment on the payment list and be paid separately from salary payments (but maybe mixed in with other expenses claims made that month)
- For best practice a claim form should be used for travel claims and other related expenses, to create a clear paper trail as to what exactly is being claimed for. This then should be listed as a standalone payment on the payments list and authorised by the council before being paid, with it then being paid separately to any salary payment.

Website / Register of Interests:

Links to somerset council website not working / need updating.

A few references to Mendip District Council need removing / updating.

Simon Pritchard PSLCC

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