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Internal Audit Report for Great Waltham Parish Council

I am pleased to report that I have completed my Internal Audit for the Parish Council for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. The Audit was carried out on 15th April 2026.

Members should be aware that my work cannot be relied upon to identify the occasional omission or insignificant error, nor to disclose breaches of trust or statute, neglect or fraud which may have taken place and which are the responsibility of the Members of the Council to guard against.

Members will be pleased to know that I did not find anything major in my audit to report and that I found the record keeping to be of a very good standard.

I would like to record my appreciation to the Clerk of the Council, Will Adshead-Grant for his assistance during the Internal Audit.

Ann C Wood

Ann C. Wood LL.B.Hons, DMS, Cert.HE., PIALC
2nd May 2026

Items Raised by the 2024/2025 Audit

1. The Council's general reserves are higher than the amount recommended by PKF Littlejohn. The Council should consider whether further reserves should be earmarked
2. Currently a financial report which has comparison of spending to budget is currently only presented annually. The Council should consider making these reports at least quarterly but this should be monthly
3. The recommended guideline for the Council's Fidelity Cover is the year end balances + 50% of the Precept. The current cover is only £25000.00, which means that the Council is under insured. The Council should contact its insurers to discuss raising this amount

The Council considered these matters and drew up a plan to deal with them

Items Raised by the 2025/2026 Audit

1. The General Reserves at £17091.50 are lower than the PKF Littlejohn recommended levels of 3-12 months of expenditure
2. The Precept figure does not agree to the figure published by MHCLG, which is £101635.00. The Parish Council may wish to take this matter up with Chelmsford City Council
3. The Asset Register for 2025/2026 appears to have been updated but not considered and agreed by the Council
4. The Council does not seem to have a Council owned website, which is a requirement for the positive completion of the AGAR IA Report

GENERAL			
Electorate	Approx 2000		
General Power of Competence	Does the Council have the General Power of Competence? And when was it adopted?	Yes	The Council does not operate under the LGA s137 as it adopted the General Power of Competence in May 2023
LCAS	Has the Council attained any of the LCAS levels?	Yes	Foundation
Civility & Respect	Is the Council a Civility and Respect Pledge Council?	No	
ICO Registration	Data Protection Registration Number – Z2154957	Yes	Registered on 17 th March 2010. Expires on 16 th March 2027
VAT Registration	Is the Council registered for VAT?	No	
Transparency Code	Is the Council a smaller authority?	No	
Committees	Does the Council have committees and if so, are there terms of reference?	Yes	
Sole Trustee	Is the Council a sole trustee of any charity?	No	

Accounting Basis	Receipts and Payments		
Bank Accounts	Unity Trust Bank – Current Account 20394204		£236.71
	Unity Trust Bank – Deposit Account 20394217		£81742.78
	Redwood Bank		£17091.50
Petty Cash	Not Applicable		Expenses are reimbursed to the Clerk each month during the year under review and the Council is now considering a credit/debit card

Income			<p style="text-align: right;">Precept - £101614.00</p> <p>This does not agree to the figure published by MHCLG, which is £101635.00. The Parish Council may wish to take this matter up with Chelmsford City Council</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Other Income - £35051.73</p> <p>This includes interest CIL Payments, VAT refund, pavilion hire, allotments, grant, donations and other income</p>
Reserves	<p>Are the general reserves reasonable for the activities of the Council?</p> <p>Are earmarked reserves identified?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>The General Reserves at £17091.50 are lower than the PKF Littlejohn recommended levels of 3-12 months of expenditure. The Council does have a Reserves Policy</p> <p>There are four earmarked reserves - £81979.49 in total – Safety Scheme, Capital works, Asset Refresh and Allotment deposits</p>

Internal Control	Testing		Comments
Proper bookkeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the cashbook maintained and up to date? • Is the cashbook arithmetic correct? • Is the cashbook regularly balanced? 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council now uses AdvantEdge to manage the accounts and the cashbook is kept up to date</p> <p>The bank balances are noted at each meeting and there is a financial report which has a comparison of spending to budget presented monthly</p>

Governance and Policies			
Standing Orders and Financial Regulations	Has the Council formally adopted standing orders and financial regulations?	Yes	The Standing Orders were reviewed and adopted at item 25/2183 on 20 th May 2025 and again at item 25/2264 on 21 st July 2025 The Financial Regulations were reviewed and adopted at item 25/2184 on 20 th May 2025. The Financial Regulations were reviewed again at item 25/2265 on 21 st July 2025
Biodiversity Policy	Has the Council adopted a Biodiversity Policy?	Yes	Adopted in July 2022
IT Policy	Has the Council adopted an IT Policy?	Yes	Adopted on 20 th October 2025 at item 25/2335
Publication Scheme	Does the Council have a Publication Scheme?	Yes	Adopted on 19 th February 2018
Other Policies	Has the Council formally adopted other policies?	Yes	A list of policies is available on the website
Website and IT	Is the Council's website council owned, accessible and is the e.mail address generic?	No	The Council does not have a council owned website but the Clerk has a generic e.mail address. The Council must ensure that the website accessibility complies with WCAG 2.2 AA and that all the documents posted are accessible
FOIA and Data Protection	Is the Council compliant with FOIA and Data Protection legislation?	Yes	

Payments Controls	Have items or services above the de minimus amount been competitively purchased?	N/A	
	Are payments in the cashbook supported by invoices, authorised and minuted?	Yes	Two sample expenditures from April 2025 and June 2025 were checked and found to be correct against the minutes and bank statements
	Has VAT on payments been identified, recorded and reclaimed?	Yes	Four claims were made in May 2025, October 2025, February 2026 and March 2026 and the refunds received

	Is s137 expenditure separately recorded and within statutory limits?	N/A	
	Any tenders exceeding the £30,000 threshold have been advertised on the Contracts Finder website	N/A	

Risk management arrangements	Does a review of the minutes identify any unusual financial activity?	No	The minutes of the Council meetings for the year 2025/2026 were read and no unusual financial activity was noted.
	Do the minutes record the council carrying out an annual risk assessment?	Yes	A financial/reputational risk assessment was carried out during the year and minuted at item 25/2195 on 20 th May 2025
	Is insurance cover appropriate and adequate?	Yes	The Council is insured with Zurich Municipal through Community First Insurance Policy Number – YLL2720278713. The Policy has been seen. The latter is part of a three-year long-term agreement expiring on 31 st May 2027 Employers Liability and Public Liability are both £10 million Fidelity Cover = recommended guidelines of year end balances + 50% of the precept The sum insured has been raised to £100,000.00 following last year's recommendation
	Are internal financial controls documented and regularly reviewed?	Yes	The Council has agreed an Internal Financial Control document
	Has the council adopted a Code of Conduct?	Yes	The Council adopted the amended LGA/Chelmsford City Council Code of Conduct on 19 th December 2022 at item 22/1345
	Has the Council adopted a Data Protection Policy, a Privacy Notice and Publication Scheme?	Yes	

	Was the Annual Parish Council Meeting held within the prescribed timeframe?	Yes	The Parish Council must meet annually. In an election year, this must be on the day when the councillors take office or within 14 days, or on any day in May in any other year. The meeting was held on 20 th May 2025 and the first item 25/2166 was the election of the Chairman
	Was the Annual Parish Meeting held within the prescribed timeframe?	Yes	A Parish Meeting must be held annually between 1 st March and 1 st June (both inclusive). The Annual Assembly took place on 24 th March 2026

Budgetary Controls	Has the council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept?	Yes	A budget was agreed at item 24/2046 on 18 th November 2024, following a recommendation from the Finance & General Purposes Committee The Precept was set on the same date at item 24/2047
	Is actual expenditure against the budget regularly reported to the council?	Yes	The receipts and payments are presented to the Council and minuted monthly and a comparison of expenditure to budget is produced monthly
	Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?	No	Any variances in budget are explained in the Annual Accounts

Income Controls	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Yes	The income is recorded on AdvantEdge. Most income received is by BACS or bank transfer but the small number of payments that aren't, are promptly banked
	Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax authority's notification?	No	The recorded Precept does not agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification. Please see above

	Are security controls over cash and near-cash adequate and effective?	Yes	
	Does the Council Review its fees on a regular basis?	Yes	

Petty cash procedures	The Council does not operate a petty cash system	N/A	The Clerk is reimbursed for purchases during the year and it is noted that the Council is investigating the use of a credit card
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Payroll Controls	Has a Responsible Financial Officer been appointed with specific duties?	Yes	The current Clerk was employed on 1 st March 2019 and there is specific mention of the appointment as RFO
	Do all employees have contracts of employment with clear terms and conditions?	Yes	The Clerk is not the only employee and the contracts of employment have been seen
	Do salaries paid agree with those approved by the Council?	Yes	
	Are other payments to employees reasonable and approved by the Council?	Yes	The Clerk is paid for the mobile telephone and mileage
	Has PAYE/NIC been properly operated by the Council as an employer including the issue of P60s?	Yes	The payroll is outsourced to DM Payroll, who submit information to HMRC by RTI. Regular payments are made to HMRC and Essex Pension Fund
	Does the Council pay the Parish Basic Allowance? Employer's Reference – 083/VZ60477	No	
Asset Controls	Does the council maintain a register of all material assets owned or in its care?	Yes	
	Are the assets and Investments registers up to date?	Yes	The Asset Register was agreed at item 24/1853 on 22 nd May 2024, which considered the Register for the 2024/2025 year. The Asset Register for 2025/2026 appears to have been

			<p>updated but not considered by the council</p> <p>The values used should not be those of the insurance. It should be noted that there should be no variation in Box 9 of the AGAR, unless assets have been bought or disposed of</p>
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Bank Reconciliation	Is there a bank reconciliation for each account?	Yes	Bank reconciliations are carried out monthly
	Is a bank reconciliation carried out regularly and in a timely fashion?	Yes	
	Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?	No	

Year-end procedures	Are year-end accounts prepared on the correct accounting basis (Receipts and Payments or Income and Expenditure)?	Yes	Accounts are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, as the Council is below the £200,000.00 threshold
	Do the accounts agree with the cashbook?	Yes	
	Is there an audit trail from underlying financial records to the accounts?	Yes	Two sample expenditures from April 2025 and June 2025 and were found to be correct
	Where appropriate, have debtors and creditors been properly recorded?	N/A	
	Were the Annual Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Accounts and Accounting Statement signed by the Council?	No	The AGAR for the Year End 31 st March 2026 was partially completed but not signed as it had not been presented to the Council
	Is there a Certificate of Exemption?	N/A	
	Has the Council published five years of the Annual Return (AGAR) on its website under The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015?	Yes	

	Has the Council published the Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights under The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 on its website?	Yes	The period was 3 rd June 2025 – 12 th July 2025
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Auditor's Reports	Was the Internal Auditor's Report reported to the Council?	Yes	The Internal Auditor's Report was reported to the Council at item 25/2243 on 30 th June 2025, and a plan is minuted
	Was the External Auditor's Report reported to the Council?	Yes	The External Auditor's Report for 2024-2025 was reported to the Council at item 25/2348 on 20 th October 2025 and a plan is minuted

Loans	Were any loans made to volunteer bodies during the year?	No	
	Are there any PWLB Loans outstanding?	No	

Co-option	The co-option of members should appear on an agenda as a separate item for the Council to action	Yes	The Council has co-options as agenda items and they are minuted as such
Grants	Does the Council make any grants to the church?	No	