



# ANSTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Interim Internal Audit Review January 2024**  
May

**Audit Trail Checks covering October 2023 – March 2024  
Plus Year End Processes, AGAR  
&  
Independent Examination of Charity**

Provided by: Account-ant Yorkshire Limited  
For: Michael Gazur, RFO  
Date Issued: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Where information resulting from investigation and/or audit work is made public or is provided to a third party by the client or by Account-ant Yorkshire Limited then this must be done on the understanding that any third party will rely on the information at its own risk. Account-ant Yorkshire Limited will not owe a duty of care or assume any responsibility towards anyone other than the client in relation to the information supplied. Equally, no third party may assert any rights or bring any claims against Account-ant Yorkshire Limited in connection with the information. Where information is provided to a named third party, the third party will keep the information confidential.

## Introduction & Scope

- I. Local councils in England must complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) which includes an Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements, and an Annual Internal Audit report.
- II. Proper practices for Town Councils and the preparation of the AGAR is included in Joint Panel on Accountability & Governance (Practitioner's Guide) March 2024. A copy of which can be found on [nalc.gov.uk](http://nalc.gov.uk)
- III. Internal Audit is a key component of the council's system of internal control. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the council whether its systems of financial and other internal controls and procedures are effective.
- IV. As part of the AGAR, the council's internal auditor, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carries out assessments of compliance with relevant procedures and controls in operation throughout the financial year.
- V. Our work with Anston Parish Council commenced on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2023 for the 22/23 year end and continued into 23/24.
- VI. All aspects of internal audit were covered.

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## About Account-ant Yorkshire Limited

Anston Parish Council has appointed Account-ant Yorkshire Limited with the view to complete Interim and Year End Internal Audits for the Council.

Account-ant Yorkshire Limited is an Accountancy Practice owned and run by Rachel Pearson who is a CIMA Qualified Management Accountant and Member in Practice. She has been fully qualified for over 10 years and been in a finance role for over 20 years.

Rachel started of Town and Parish Council Audits in 2018 and has gained a vast amount of knowledge and experience in the subsequent years.

The Auditor for the period April 2023 to March 2024 is Rachel Pearson ACMA (MiP)

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## Summary

I have reviewed a wide range of documentation including documentation provided by the Clerk & RFO as well as the Parish Council website.

Our Audits were completed remotely I have only met Michael Gazur & Andrew Woodhead via email.

The Council has been open and clear with regards any queries I have made.

Having reviewed the Council, I believe they are at a High standard whilst there is always room for continuous improvement even in a High standard Parish Council.

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## Findings

### Proper Bookkeeping

Anston Parish Council uses an Accounting System called Scribe to record all its financial transactions. The system is arithmetically correct. Monthly Reconciliations are undertaken as a minimum.

As mentioned in previous Audits, we note this Council duplicates efforts in accounts production. Producing everything in Excel and then backing it up in Scribe.

Whilst this is not ideal, I understand it is personal preference to work in this way.

### Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Standing orders and Financial Regulations were agreed at Full Council in January 2024.

Both are accessible on the website:

Financial Regulations:

<https://www.anston.gov.uk/uploads/apc-financial-regulations-15th-january-2024.pdf?v=1708949260>

Standing Orders:

<https://www.anston.gov.uk/uploads/anston-parish-council-standing-orders-16th-may-2022.pdf?v=1653317486>

### Documentation Readoption by Finance & General Purpose Committee

In the prior year, several policies were reviewed and readopted during the year, however, from reviewing the Finance meeting minutes I have not observed any discussed between April and October

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## Payment Controls

### Staffing

The Finance department comprises of a Clerk and RFO. Each employee has an up to date job description and has been appointed with specific duties.

### Purchases above De Minimus

The Financial Regulations state that any contract over £3,000 will require 3 quotes to be obtained by the Clerk or RFO and for any amount over £100 they shall strive to receive 3 quotes.

During the period April to September it was a struggle to find documentation which has been attributed to a change of personnel. During the year the Council have found it difficult to find suppliers to quote for projects. They have strived for 3 quotes but it has not always been possible.

Items for October 2023 to April 2024 are listed below:

Date	Total	Supplier
07/03/2024 00:00	7315.2	Noticeboard Company Cumbria
07/03/2024 00:00	3190	Anston Parish Council Recreation Ground
28/02/2024 00:00	12836.56	Flood Disaster Recovery Grant (in trust)
30/01/2024 00:00	7165.06	C S Surveying
28/11/2023 00:00	6480	D&J Hobson
06/11/2023 00:00	3285.6	Yorkshire Tail Lift Services Ltd
10/10/2023 00:00	4900	J S Joinery & Maintenance

### Sample Review

The Auditor reviewed a sample of purchase and sales invoices. All items were found to have an audit trail and were authorised. A list of payments are given during each Finance & General Purpose meeting.

### VAT reporting

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Vat returns observed. Auditor satisfied the Council are reporting VAT correctly.

### S137 Expenditure

The Council has General Power of Competence and therefore is not required to report S137 expenditure separately.

As the Council has General Power of Competence they cannot use the S137 Power.

## **Risk Management Arrangements**

### Risk Assessments

The Risk Assessment was presented to Council in November 2023.

### Burial Authorities

No burials took place in October 2023 to April 2024 per the Burial Register in Scribe.

### Unusual Financial Activity

The minutes and accounts have been reviewed for unusual financial activity and none has been identified.

### Insurance Cover

Insurance cover appears to be comprehensive

### Internal Controls

Evidence of Monthly internal controls being undertaken per the meeting minutes

### Investments

The Council does not have any investments

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## GDPR

The GDPR policy forms part of the Privacy Policy is on the website

## **Budgetary Controls**

### Budget Preparation

Budget meetings start in October (usually two or three) then approval by Finance Committee and referral to full council for final approval. This was January 2024

### Budget Reviews

The management accounts are reviewed by the Finance and General Purpose Committee monthly this includes a variance to budget

### Budget Variances

Variances to budget were observed in a number of areas but satisfactorily explained and the overall position is not significant.

## **Income Controls**

### Precept

The precept reviewed matches the request sent to the District Authority who does not provide a notification.

### Cash and Near Cash Security

The Council does not have Petty Cash. If cash is handled, it relates to the Allotments and is promptly banked

### Multipay Card/Credit Card

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The Council currently does not have a card but has recently applied for a Unity Trust Credit Card. The RFO has advised at year end the Council still did not have a Credit Card in place.

## **Payroll Controls**

### Staffing

All members of staff have current job descriptions and terms and conditions. The council also has an annual appraisal process.

### Payroll Processing

Payroll is processed in house using Sage Payroll. Payment is made around 15<sup>th</sup> of the current month. No differences have been observed in the sample chosen.

### Expenses

Expense claims observed as part of the sampling exercise and found to be reasonable.

### Approval of salaries and increments

The Council adopts NJCP terms and conditions. NJC increases are budgeted and reported to Council. These are reviewed by the Staffing Committee

### Minimum Wage Threshold Met

All members of staff are paid above the National Living Wage

### HR Procedures and policies adopted

HR policies are present

### Training Policy and record for staff and elected members

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The Training Policy Procedure are in Draft at the time of Audit. No training has been undertaken. Therefore there is no training schedule at the moment.

### Qualified Clerk

RFO is CILCA qualified and the Clerk is working towards CILCA

### Annual Staff Appraisals

Appraisals are undertaken.

### H&S review of Staff Workstations and PC equipment

H&S for workstations are completed at the start of employment or when changes of health occur.

## **Asset Control**

### Register

The register is held Excel and has been reviewed by the Auditor. There has been no movement in assets during the year. This is unusual to see.

### Insurance

Insurance appears to be comprehensive

## **Bank Reconciliations**

One bank reconciliation presented which matches the accounts

## **Grants**

A log of receipt vs expenditure is kept for Grants received

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## **Accounting Principles**

The Council are operating as Income and Expenditure.

## **Allotments**

The Council has now moved from Edge IT and then paper based to Scribe.

Allotments are charged pro rata based on size of plots. For 23/24 this will be £59 per 300 sq yards.

## **Facilities Management**

Offices are rented but this is not managed through a booking system

## **Earmarked Reserves**

The policy is on the web site (Finance page). Reserves are discussed monthly (Finance meeting) and monthly update on reserves is posted on the web site (Finance page).

## **Monies in Bank**

The overall bank balance is higher than the FSC regulations. However, only the required amount for the normal day to day running of the Council is held in a Current Account

## **Year End & AGAR**

Year End AGAR does not match in Scribe Accounts. We would encourage the Council to use the system. A manual trial balance has been provided. Banks are reconciled.

## **Trust Funds Independent Examination**

The Recreation Ground Trust which is reported to The Charity Commission under Charity Number: 1086515 will be reviewed at year end

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## Other items of Note

The council is registered with the Information Commissioners Office under membership number: Z8005784 and expires in August 2024

The council has sufficient security over information and uses Cloud Storage.

### Arrangement for inspection of public records

Members of the Public are welcomed to attend the Parish Council offices on any day during the inspection period. The relevant documentation will be provided for inspection on arrival

### Memberships

The Council has many memberships in place in order to assist with the successful management of the Council and it's amenities.

YCLA – for advice regarding the running of the Council along with relevant training courses

ICCM – Burial Association

NAS – National Allotment Society

Open Spaces Society

Chesterfield Canal Trust

ICO

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## Recommendations/Further Information Required

We note these previous recommendations appear to be unactioned as the time of audit:

- The Auditor did not find the website particularly user friendly. This may be a consideration for review in the future
- Recommend that all policies available on the website under a policies section. This is for transparency for the public.
- Recommend per the Transparency code the Council publishes payments over £500 on the website
- Recommend per the Transparency code the Council publishes an organisation chart

Link to Transparency code for review: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-transparency-code-2015/local-government-transparency-code-2015#annex-a-summary-of-all-information-to-be-published>

- Recommend per the JPAG 2024 the Council has a 3 year plan/budget.
- There has been no movement in assets during the year, recommend the asset register is thoroughly reviewed during this current financial year

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