



Clerk to the Council
Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Council Offices
Village Centre,
Trinity Road,
Hurstpierpoint,
West Sussex,
BN6 9UY.

21st October 2025

Dear Sarah

Re: Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Internal Audit for Financial Year Ended 31 March 2026 – Interim Audit report

Executive summary

Following completion of our interim internal audit on 15th October 2025 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines, and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of which is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not at this point in the year. Recommendations for action are shown in bold text and are summarised in the table at the end of the report.

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council are well established and followed and indeed are a model of good practice.

Regulation

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance

with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to “undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit’s function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all Members to support and inform them when they considering the authority’s approval of the annual governance statement.

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Mark Mulberry of Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd, who has over 30 years’ experience in the financial sector with the last 14 years specialising in local government.

Your auditor is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

Engagement Letter and inherent risk assessment

An engagement letter was previously issued to the council covering the 2025/26 internal audit assignment, which includes the scope and plan of works and fee structure. Copies of this document are available on request from anna@mulberrylas.co.uk

In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR.

It is our opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be “walk through testing” on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

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A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Internal audit requirement

Appropriate accounting records have been kept properly during the year.

Audit findings

The audit was conducted on site with the Clerk, who also acts as the council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Clerk had prepared the information advised in advance of the visit, and overall, I have the impression that accounting records are neatly maintained and easily accessible. Other information was reviewed through discussion with the Clerk and a review of the council website <https://www.hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk/>

The council continues to use Rialtus accounting package for recording the council's finances. This is a bespoke system for Town & Parish Councils. The financial reporting package is updated regularly and used to produce management information reports for review at council meetings. The Rialtus package is entirely suitable for this size of council.

There is one user with their own individual logon. Passwords are not routinely prompted to change.

Every month, a "month end" close down is performed by the Clerk, various reports are printed and filed in hard & soft copy, these include but are not limited to, income and expenditure against budget, bank reconciliations and other reports as fit. Filing is in month order and easy to follow.

The system requires the population of key data fields to enable the user to record a transaction. This is a clear and easy to follow system and a review of the cashbook shows that all data fields are being entered, the reports are easy to read.

I conducted a simple walk-through test on a supplier invoice drawn at random and can confirm the underlying documentation was easy to locate and agreed to the cashbook details. Supplier invoices are filed in alphabetical order.

I tested the opening balances as at 1/4/25 by reviewing the balance brought forward on the receipts page on the Rialtas accounting package for cashbook one and confirmed it could be agreed back to the investment reconciliation for the audited accounts for 2024/25 with both documents showing £75,507.44.

I reviewed the nominal ledger entries for the period 1 April to the audit date to ensure items were posted to the correct heading and that there were no instances of netting off and the expenditure was correctly posted to the headings to which the line item related. This has confirmed that the accounting package is being properly used.

The council is not VAT registered; the last VAT return was for the quarter ended 30th of September. The reclaim for Quarter two was for £8,474.64, which was received on the 6th October 2025. This shows the council is up to date with its financial postings and there is no delay between the end of the period, submission of the reclaim and receipt of the refund.

Overall, I have the impression that the accounting systems are well ordered and routinely maintained and as such I make no recommendation to change.

I am of the opinion that the control objective has been met

B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Check the publication and minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit

The External Auditor's Report was not qualified. The AGAR has been correctly published on the council website along with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and was reported to full council on the 25 September 2025 Minute C25/26.066(ii)

I note the council received and considered the previous internal auditor report at the council meeting held on 22nd May 2025 (minute ref Minute C25/26.017).

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms together with a formal acceptance to receive information by electronic means "As per Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, I consent to the receipt of all council meeting papers by electronic methods. I understand I may withdraw this consent at any time"

The council website includes a councillor page where the individual Register of Members' Interests forms are published.

Confirm that the council is compliant with GDPR

It was noted the council has a single established .gov email address. For all councillors and staff. A single common email is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's Guide (March 2025) contains updated guidance on the matter as below, including details of the new Governance Assertion to be included in the 2025/26 AGAR:

Assertion 10 - Digital and data compliance

To warrant a positive response to this assertion, the authority needs to have taken the following actions:

1.47 Email management - Every authority must have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain, for example clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abcparishcouncil.org.uk rather than abcparishclerk@gmail.com or abcparishclerk@outlook.com for example.

1.48 All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must meet legal requirements for all existing websites regardless of what domain is being used.

1.49 All websites must meet the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA](#) and the [Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) \(No. 2\) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#) (where applicable).

1.50 All websites must include published documentation as specified in the [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#) and the [Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities](#) (where applicable).

1.51 All smaller authorities, including parish meetings, must follow both the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) 2016](#) and the [Data Protection Act \(DPA\) 2018](#).

1.52 *All smaller authorities, including parish meetings, must process personal data with care and in line with the principles of data protection.*

1.53 The [DPA 2018](#) supplements the [GDPR](#) and classifies an authority as both a Data Controller and a Data Processor.

1.54 *All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must also have an IT policy. This explains how everyone - clerks, members and other staff - should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software. This relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment.*

I recommend that the council contact the website provider to confirm the website is up to date with regulation and to also conduct a data audit. I understand NALC maybe issuing a new assertion 10 tool kit in the next week or so and I have sign posted the clerk to a council site where this can be seen in action.

Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year

Full council meets circa month together with committees & working groups as required. Terms of reference were last reviewed in May 2025.

A diary of future meeting dates is also published on the council website, along with historic agendas and minutes for council.

Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice

I was able to confirm that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. Whilst we have not tested every single committee and council meeting there was no evidence of non-compliance.

The council correctly publishes supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office (page 3 of this link) www.ico.org.uk/minutesandagendas

Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website

Draft minutes are uploaded to the council website.

Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months

The Standing Orders are based on the current NALC model and were most recently reviewed and adopted by council in May 2025 (minute ref C25/26.009).

Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations

Financial Regulations are based on the current NALC model and were last reviewed and adopted by council in May 2025 (minute ref minute ref C25/26.010). The regulations contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council.

Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed

The council has thresholds in place at which authorisations to spend must be obtained as below:

5.15. *Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:* • the Clerk/RFO, in consultation with the Chair of the Council or Chair of the appropriate committee, for any items below £3,000 excluding VAT. • a duly delegated committee of the council for all items of expenditure within their delegated budgets for items under £10,000 excluding VAT. • in respect of grants, a duly authorised committee within any limits set by council and in accordance with any policy statement agreed by the council. • the council for all items over £10,000. Such authorisation must be supported by a minute (in the case of council or committee decisions) or other auditable evidence trail.

Based on the level of financial activity of the council, and through discussion with the Clerk, these authorisation thresholds appear appropriate.

The council had only a few individual payments over £3,000 in the six month period to 30th September – cemetery roof being one of them. I was able to confirm that amounts have been properly authorised in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations, and payment lists are appended to the minutes of relevant meetings with the minutes recording the approval of such.

The council has in place a system to segregate duties in terms of the setting up and subsequent release of payments made via online banking in accordance with the council's adopted Financial Regulations, and has sufficient individuals authorised to complete these steps, minimising the risk of being unable to make payments in a timely fashion.

Confirm the council has adopted the General Power of Competence (GPC) and met the eligibility criteria at the time of adoption, or if GPC not adopted, confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £11.10 per elector

The council has the GPC. S.137 expenditure does not apply

Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor

The council conducts six monthly internal control checks. I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure.

I am of the opinion that the control objective has been met.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE

Internal audit requirement

This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

Audit findings

The council's adopted Financial Regulations include a section covering Risk Management and state:

FR 2.1 The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.

FR 2.2 The Clerk/RFO shall prepare, for approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

FR 2.3 When considering any new activity, the Clerk/RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.

FR 2.4 At least once a year, the Council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.

The council has a risk assessment process in place, which was last reviewed and approved by council in May 2025 (C25/26.026). I reviewed the risk assessment policy, which includes a risk matrix to assess the overall risk based on likelihood and consequences of an event occurring and then assesses the risks within each sector of the council's business operations.

Each potential risk is identified, assessed using the risk matrix, prior to any mitigation measures, existing internal controls are listed. The assessment also includes details of who is responsible for any actions and when these are to be completed by.

This is a comprehensive approach and includes analysis of all risks typically associated with a council of this size with its range of services and facilities. I have no doubt that the council takes its risk management responsibilities seriously.

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Ecclesiastical Insurance which covers the year under review. The policy includes Public Liability cover of £10 million, Employers Liability cover of £10 million and a Fraud & Dishonesty (Fidelity Guarantee) level of £500,000 which is sufficient for a council of this size, although the council is advised to keep this figure under review to ensure it covers the maximum balance held.

I am of the opinion that the control objective has been met.

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

Audit findings

The council set a precept of £331,861 in the meeting of 23rd of January 2025, minute ref C24/25.12. This was agreed to the underlying accounts and has been correctly posted.

The Clerk confirmed that the 2026/27 budget and precept were under way with deadlines achievable.

The budget report dated 30th September 2025 shows income/receipts reported as 96% of budget and expenditure/payments at 49%. There is no evidence to suggest that the budget has not been accurately set and carefully monitored throughout the year. There is evidence within the minutes of meetings that councillors regularly receive budget reports for review, providing them with sufficient financial information to make informed decisions.

The council currently holds circa £429k in earmarked reserves. The earmarked reserves are list and for bonafide ongoing projects. There is evidence in the accounts of the earmarked reserves being used.

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's guide provides updated guidance on the appropriate level of general reserves that councils should retain as below:

5.33 The general reserve of an authority comprises its cash flow and contingency funds to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances.

5.34 The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure.

5.35 The reason for the wide range is to cater for the large variation in activity level between individual authorities. The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards 3 months equivalent general reserve.

5.36 In all of this it is important that each authority adopt, as a general reserve policy, the level appropriate to their size, situation, risks and plan their budget so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained. Consideration of the minimum level of reserves requires not only consideration of level of income and expenditure but also the risks to that income.

5.37 Authorities with significant self-generated income (other than the precept or levy) should take into account situations that may lead to a loss in revenue as well as increased costs and adapt their general reserve accordingly.

The general reserve balance is currently circa £328k, which is within the recommended range at the half way point of the year.

I am of the opinion that the control objective has been met.

E. INCOME

Internal audit requirement

Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Apart from the precept, the council receives income from a range of sources including, cemetery, grants, bank interest & VAT refunds.

From a review of the accounting records, income appears to be recorded with sufficient narrative detail to identify the source and allocated to the most appropriate nominal code. I tested a sample of invoices issued for each aspect of the council's operations and was able to confirm rates charged were consistent with the council's published charging schedule.

FR 13.2 states *"The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk/RFO. The Clerk/RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council."*

The fees and charges were last reviewed on the 28 November 2024 Minutes C24/25.098.3, with a reviewed scheduled again for November 2025.

F. PETTY CASH

Internal audit requirement

Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts; all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

The council has a £200 petty cash float. This is for office sundries. Vouchers are properly processed and VAT reclaimed. I tested the petty cash count and it reconciled exactly.

G. PAYROLL

Internal audit requirement

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

Audit findings

The council has five employees on the payroll. All staff members have a signed contract of employment, based on the NALC template, and the council is a member of the LGPS pension scheme. Performance reviews for staff members are completed by the Clerk.

Payroll is processed by a third party firm, who completes all the PAYE calculations. I reviewed the payroll summary for August and the payroll deductions appear correct. I was able to verify the net pay per the payroll summary to the physical payment shown in the financial reporting package and the bank statement.

There are councillor allowances and they are processed via the payroll.

I recommend the council consider signing up for a Gateway account to monitor the PAYE position during the year.

I am of the opinion that the control objective has been met

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Internal audit requirement

Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

Audit findings

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's guide provides updated guidance on assets and asset registers as below:

5.58 *The asset register should contain in its most simple form the date of acquisition, cost of acquisition, useful life estimate and location along with value held for investments; however, it is desirable for the register to contain other such supplementary information to enable the user to better understand the nature and scope of the use of the fixed asset. It is therefore recommended to show insurance value, replacement value, custodian, date last physically vouched.*

5.59 *Each authority may choose an appropriate minimum value for deciding between fixed assets and general consumables. The limit chosen will relate to expected useful life, whether the item would be included on an insurance claim and whether it is included in the risk assessment of the authority in any way. This minimum level is to be minuted and reviewed at least annually. The rationale and methodology should be recorded in the minutes.*

5.60 *One item or group of similar items shall be regarded for inclusion in the fixed asset register.*

5.61 *Assets should be first recorded in the asset register at their actual purchase cost.*

5.62 *Assets that are either under construction or have not been brought into use should be included on the asset register only once complete and they benefit the community.*

5.63 *Obsolete assets that are no longer in use or are awaiting disposal should be clearly recorded as such.*

5.64 *Where an authority receives an asset as a gift at zero cost, for example by community asset transfer, it should be included with a nominal one-pound (£1) value as a proxy for the zero cost.*

5.65 *Assets that do not have a functional purpose or any intrinsic resale value (for example, a village pond or war memorial) are often referred to as 'community assets'. Authorities should record community assets in the asset register in the same way as gifted assets.*

5.66 *The particular method of asset valuation is not specified in proper practices so authorities may use any reasonable approach to be applied consistently from year to year. The method of asset valuation adopted should be set out in a policy approved by the authority and recorded in the authority's minutes and in the asset register.*

5.67 *For authorities covered by this guide, the most appropriate and commonly used method of fixed asset valuation for first registration on the asset register is at acquisition cost. This means that the recorded value of the asset will not change from year to year, unless it is materially enhanced.*

5.68 *Commercial concepts of depreciation, impairment adjustments, and revaluation are not required nor appropriate for this method of asset valuation.*

5.69 *The total value of an authority's assets recorded on the asset register as at 31 March each year is reported at Line 9 on the authority's AGAR. Authorities should be able to track and explain fully any changes in the asset register from year to year.*

The council has a simple fixed asset register in place, maintained in an Excel format, which includes details of asset location, date of acquisition, original purchase price, replacement value and insurance value. Assets are correctly listed at cost/proxy cost, or where gifted/donated, given a nominal £1 value for the purpose of the asset register.

The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's guide provides updated guidance on investments, and defines a long-term investment as below:

2.23 *Short-term investments, which mainly include deposit and savings accounts typically provided by banks, are those that display the following characteristics:*

- a. are denominated in pounds Sterling;*
- b. be realisable at full value on demand or have a maturity end date of not more than 12 months;*
- c. the whole of the original sum invested can, from the time that the investment is made, be accessed for use by the authority without any reduction; and*
- d. the authority has assessed the counterparty and is satisfied that the original sum invested is not subject to unreasonable risk.*

2.26 *A long-term investment arises where the authority invests money in anything other than a short-term investment.*

1.11 *Arrangements need to be in place to ensure that the authority's funds are managed properly and that any amounts surplus to requirements is invested appropriately, in accordance with an approved strategy which needs to have regard to the government's Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments. If total investments are to exceed the threshold specified in the statutory guidance at any time during a financial year, the authority needs to produce and approve an annual Investment Strategy in accordance with the guidance.*

The council has CCLA investments – these are shown on the register and updated annual with new valuations.

The council has no PWLB borrowing.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.

Audit findings

Financial Regulation 2.6 states '2.6. At least once a month, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the Clerk/RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the Finance, Governance and Estates Committee.'

Bank reconciliations are completed monthly and presented to the finance committee for review. I reviewed the bank reconciliation for all accounts for April & June 2025 and was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and found no errors.

I was able to confirm that the bank reconciliations have been verified in accordance with Financial Regulations

As the council's annual budget is above the €500,000 (£430,950 as of 3 July comparative date) threshold, it is not protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

Audit findings

The council, at its meeting to sign off the year-end accounts, must discuss Section 1 of the AGAR (Annual Governance Statement) and record this activity in the minutes of the meeting. **COUNCIL IS REMINDED THAT THIS MUST BE A SEPARATE AGENDA ITEM PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF SECTION 2 OF THE AGAR (ANNUAL ACCOUNTS).**

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

Based on the internal audit finding I recommend using the table below as the basis for that discussion.

	Annual Governance Statement	'Yes', means that this authority	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	YES – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	YES – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.
3	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	YES – the Clerk advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
4	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	YES – the requirements and timescales for 2023/24 year-end were followed.
5	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	YES – the council has a risk management scheme and appropriate external insurance.
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	YES – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor.
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	YES – matters raised in internal and external audit reports have been addressed.
8	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	YES – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.

	authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.		
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<i>has met all its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>	YES – the council has met its responsibilities

Section 2 – Accounting Statements

AGAR box number		2023/24	2024/25	Internal Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	497,630	506,216	Agrees to 2024/25 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	303,638	318,161	Figure confirmed to central precept record
3	Total other receipts	128,972	200,008	Agrees to underlying accounting records
4	Staff costs	180,228	183,162	Agrees to underlying accounting records. Includes only expenditure allowed as staff costs (see section G)
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Confirmed to PWLB documents
6	All other payments	243,796	277,346	Agrees to underlying accounting records
7	Balances carried forward	506,216	563,877	Cast correctly and agrees to balance sheet

8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	507,777	569,521	Agrees to bank reconciliation for all accounts
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	687,372	707,182	Matches asset register total and changes from previous year have been traced
10	Total borrowings	0	0	Confirmed to PWLB documents

For Local Councils Only		Yes	No	N/A	
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	☒			<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	☒			<i>The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

Audit findings

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on an income and expenditure basis with a box 7 and 8 reconciliation properly completed. I have verified the entries to underlying transactions and where applicable supplier and sales invoices.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2024/25 and published on the council website.

The variance analysis has been completed to explain the variances where required.

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2024/25.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW

Internal audit requirement

IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the previous year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.

Audit findings

The council did not certify itself exempt in 2024/25 due to exceeding the income and expenditure limits and this test does not apply.

L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

Internal audit requirement

The authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage, up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with relevant legislation

Audit findings

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

13(1) An authority must publish (which must include publication on that authority's website)

- a. the Statement of Accounts together with any certificate or opinion entered by the local auditor in accordance with section 20(2) of the Act; and
- b. the Annual Governance Statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(3)

13(2) Where documents are published under paragraph (1), the authority must

- a. keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and
- b. ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

We have considered the requirements of Statutory Instruments 2015/480 The Local Government (Transparency Requirements) Regulations 2015 [<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/480/made/data.pdf>] and, 2015/494 The Smaller Authorities (Transparency Requirements).
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/494/pdfs/ukxiem_20150494_en.pdf

In addition to this, we have considered the additional publication requirements as set out in the ICO Model Publication Scheme for Parish Councils. <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/publication-schemes-a-guide/> & <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/publication-schemes-a-guide/definition-documents/>

The council has income & expenditure greater than £200k and is following as best practice the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

I reviewed the model publication scheme requirements and can confirm the council has a dedicated web page in place to cover the requirements.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS*Internal audit requirement*

The authority, during the previous year, correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2024/25 Actual
Date AGAR signed by council	22 nd May
Date inspection notice issued	2 nd June
Inspection period begins	3 rd June
Inspection period ends	14 th July
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2024/25, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement can therefore be signed yes by the council.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS*Internal audit requirement*

The authority complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Before 1 July 2025 authorities must publish:

- *Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited*
- *Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2024/25, approved and signed, page 4*
- *Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2024/25, approved and signed, page 5*

Not later than 30 September 2025 authorities must publish:

- *Notice of conclusion of audit*
- *Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate*
- *Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.*

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

Audit findings

I was able to confirm that the Notice of the Period of Public Rights and Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement) and Section 2 (Accounting Statement) were published on the council's website before 1 July 2025.

I was able to confirm that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and External Auditor Report and Certificate were published on the council's website before 30 September 2025.

The council has therefore met the publication requirements for 2024/25 have been met.

O. TRUSTEESHIP

Internal audit requirement

Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

Audit findings

FR 18.1 Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Clerk/RFO shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial reports made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk/RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.

The Parish Council acts as sole trustee of the Hurstpierpoint Village Centre Charity No. 305265. A review of the charity commission website shows filings are up to date, with the latest being filed on the 19th September 2024. The charity has income and expenditure of circa £50k each year.

The accounting records are maintained on the council system under cost centre 701 and an independent examination has been carried out. These records do not form part of the council accounts.

The last trustee meeting was in July 2025.

Achievement of control assertions at final internal audit date

Based on the tests conducted during the interim audit, our conclusions on the achievement of the internal control objectives to date are summarised in the table below.

	INTERNAL CONTROL OBJECTIVE	YES	NO	NOT COVERED
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year	✓		
B	This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for	✓		
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the previous year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.			✓
L	The authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M	The authority, during the previous year correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		
N	The authority complied with the publication requirements for prior year AGAR.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	✓		

Should you have any queries please contact me directly on mark@mulberrylas.co.uk.

Yours sincerely



Mark Mulberry
Director, Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd

Interim Internal Audit - Points Carried Forward

Audit Point	Interim Audit Findings	Council comments
Assertion 10	I recommend that the council contact the website provider to confirm the website is up to date with regulation and to also conduct a data audit. I understand NALC maybe issuing a new assertion 10 tool kit in the next week or so and I have sign posted the clerk to a council site where this can be seen in action.	
Payroll	I recommend the council consider signing up for a Gateway account to monitor the PAYE position during the year.	