

Internal Audit Report

(to be read in conjunction with the Annual Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return)

Name of council:	Lilford-cum-Wigsthorpe and Achurch Parish Council		
Name of Internal Auditor:	Helen Hoier	Date of report:	06/05/2025
Year ending:	31 March 2025	Date audit carried out:	07/04/2025

Internal audit is the periodic independent review of a council's internal controls resulting in an assurance report designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities and operating procedures under the council's control. Managing the council's internal controls should be a day-to-day function of the council through its staff and management and not left for internal audit. It would be incorrect to view internal audit as the detailed inspection of all records and transactions of a council in order to detect error or fraud. This report is based on the evidence made available to me and consequently the report is limited to those matters set out below.

The council is required to take appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit and to respond to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit. Failure to take appropriate action may lead to a qualified audit opinion.

To the Chair of the Council:

I met with Nicki Phillips (Clerk/RFO) on 7 April 2025 via Zoom to carry out the year-end audit of the Council. Upon examination of bookkeeping, due process, risk management, budget, payroll, asset control, bank reconciliations and year-end procedures; it is clear that every effort is made to ensure that the Council acts lawfully, transparently and in accordance with proper practices.

The Council has a turnover of under £25,000 and is therefore obliged to comply with the Transparency Code by publishing its financial and governance documents on its website. The Council is not currently eligible to use the General Power of Competence and as such understands that it must ensure it spends within its legal powers (particularly Section 137 under which there was an item of expenditure in 2024/25).

Issues raised in 2023/24:

- Ensuring that the Council's internal controls and financial procedures with regards to accountability, governance and transparency are as effective as possible for which suggestions included:
 - Recording clearly and regularly that the Council is carrying out its functions correctly to demonstrate the Council's compliance with the latest legislation:
 - Minuting the value of the reconciled bank balance.
 - Including the members' internal control checklist as a standing agenda item and reporting any findings to the Council.

- Providing official e-mail accounts to members for the Council's business and to which it has access. Therefore avoiding the use of private addresses and assisting in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Council is considering the use of a .gov.uk domain as advised in the 2023 and 2024 editions of The Practitioners' Guide.

Issues raised in 2024/25:

- It is evident from governing documents and when speaking with the Clerk/RFO that the Council is fully aware of its responsibilities regarding public finances, especially accountability, governance and transparency. However, this could be even more effective by ensuring the following:
 - Replenishing the current level of reserves for which the recommendation is up to twelve months of net revenue expenditure (paragraphs 5.33 to 5.35 of Practitioners' Guide 2025 refer).
 - Approving the use of a gov.uk or similar authority owned domain to host a generic e-mail account as this will comply with Assertion 10 – Digital and data compliance (previously covered by Assertion 3) which is to appear on the 2025-26 AGAR with its provisions applying from 1 April 2025 (paragraph 1.47 of Practitioners' Guide 2025 refers).

Other than the above matters, the Council appears to be performing well, with its business affairs managed properly by a very competent Clerk/RFO and committed Council members.

Yours sincerely



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The figures submitted in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return are:

	Year ending 31 March 2024	Year ending 31 March 2025
1. Balances brought forward	6,308	6,117
2. Annual precept	6,210	6,830
3. Total other receipts	5,749	5,276
4. Staff costs	3,345	3,685
5. Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0
6. Total other payments	8,805	8,666
7. Balances carried forward	6,117	5,871
8. Total cash and investments	6,117	5,871
9. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	10,335	15,616
10. Total borrowings	0	0

The proper practices referred to in Accounts and Audit Regulations are set out in *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (2024)*. It is a guide to the accounting practices to be followed by local councils and it sets out the appropriate standard of financial reporting to be followed. A copy of the guide is available for free download from:

<https://northantscalc.gov.uk/practitioners-guide>.