

Report to Thurston Parish Council

The Internal Audit of the Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020

1. Introduction and Summary.

1.1 The Internal Audit for the year 2019/20 was undertaken during the period of 'lockdown' following the coronavirus pandemic; at that time travel was severely restricted, social distancing was in place and many Clerks and Councillors were having to self-isolate.

1.2 In view of this unprecedented situation, the essential information required for the completion of the Internal Audit was e-mailed by Mrs Vicky Waples, the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), to the Internal Auditor, who undertook the work remotely/electronically. All relevant published data held on the Council's website was accessed by the Internal Auditor. This detailed Audit Report, and the Annual Internal Audit Report within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), were accordingly completed. Any areas that could not be covered as a result of these remote-working arrangements have been recorded in the reports in order that they can be addressed at a later date, either at the next scheduled internal audit or when circumstances permit.

1.3 The Internal Audit work undertaken confirmed that during the 2019/20 year the Council maintained effective governance arrangements including a robust framework of financial administration and internal control.

1.4 The Council displays many examples of strong governance and good financial practice, including a strategic 3-year Business Plan for the period May 2019 to May 2022 with measurable objectives. The Council secured a number of significant achievements in the year 2019/20, including the progress of the Thurston Local Development Plan which received the approval of voters at the local referendum held in September 2019.

1.5 The Council demonstrates good practice by maintaining and regularly reviewing a wide range of formally agreed Policies and Procedures. The Internal Audit review, undertaken on the documentation provided to the Internal Auditor and that published on the Council's website, has confirmed the overall adequacy of the financial arrangements in place within the Council.

1.6 By examination of the 2019/20 accounts and supporting documentation it was confirmed that the Clerk, in the role as the Council's RFO, satisfactorily undertook the administration of the Council's financial affairs and produced satisfactory financial management information to enable the Council to make well-informed decisions.

1.7 The Accounts for the year confirm the following:

Total Receipts for the year: £188,867.99
Total Payments in the year: £110,091.60
Total Reserves at year-end: £114,559.78 (of which £107,624.00 is earmarked)

1.8 The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to the External Auditors was examined and the following figures agreed with the Clerk/RFO for inclusion in Section 2 Accounting Statements 2019/20 (rounded for purposes of the Return):

<i>Balances at beginning of year (1 April 2019):</i>	<i>Box 1: £35,784</i>
<i>Annual Precept 2019/20:</i>	<i>Box 2: £96,889</i>
<i>Total Other Receipts:</i>	<i>Box 3: £91,979</i>
<i>Staff Costs:</i>	<i>Box 4: £46,646</i>
<i>Loan interest/capital repayments:</i>	<i>Box 5: nil</i>
<i>All Other payments:</i>	<i>Box 6: £63,446</i>
<i>Balances carried forward (31 March 2020):</i>	<i>Box 7: £114,560</i>
<i>Total cash/short-term investments:</i>	<i>Box 8: £114,560</i>
<i>Total fixed assets:</i>	<i>Box 9: £191,555</i>
<i>Total borrowings:</i>	<i>Box 10: nil</i>

1.9 Sections One and Two of the AGAR are due to be approved and signed at a forthcoming meeting of the Council. The Internal Auditor has completed the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20 within the AGAR.

1.10 The following Internal Audit work was carried out on the adequacy of systems of internal control in accordance with the scope approved by the Council. Comments and any recommendations arising from the review are made below.

2. Governance, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other Regulatory matters (examination of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Formal Policies and Procedures, Tenders where relevant. Acting within the legal framework, including Data Protection legislation).

2.1 At its meeting on 4 March 2020 the Council reviewed and approved the Standing Orders and confirmed that they were fit for purpose (Minute 8c refers). The Standing Orders reflect the latest model standing orders issued in 2018 by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

2.2 At its meeting on 4 March 2020 the Council reviewed the Financial Regulations, agreed the amendments proposed and confirmed that they were fit for purpose. The Council accordingly approved the Financial Regulations (Minute 8c refers). The Council's Financial Regulations reflect the latest model Regulations issued by NALC in August 2019.

2.3 At its meeting on 8 May 2019 the Council reviewed and agreed bank signatories and confirmed the continuation of the Clerk to the Council as the Responsible Financial Officer (Minute 11 refers).

2.4 As part of its governance responsibilities the Council confirmed, at its meeting on 8 May 2019, the appointment of Councillors on the Planning Committee, Emergency Planning Committee, Recreational Facilities Committee and the Policy & Resources Committee (Minute 11d refers). At its meeting on 5 February 2020 the Council received the Clerk/RFO's paper recommending a change in the manner in which the Council operates its Committees and Working Groups as a result of the number of vacancies held. The Council agreed the changes to the Committee structure and the manner in which the Council operates, to take effect from March 2020 (Minute 8c refers).

2.5 Significant progress was achieved with the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) during the 2019/20 year of account. The Council agreed at its meeting on 5 June 2019 that the terms of reference for the Thurston NDP Team should be changed to allow the group to become a Sub-Committee of the Planning Committee and allow it to monitor the Plan and the meeting of objectives (Minute 11 refers). Following the presentation of information to residents, including local NDP Surgeries, a local referendum took place on 12 September 2019 and the NDP was approved by voters. Details of the referendum and the NDP have been published on the Council's website. On 24 October 2019, Mid Suffolk DC adopted the Thurston NDP, which now carries full weight in terms of the Joint Local Plan and a material consideration in all planning matters for Thurston.

2.6 The Council confirmed at the meeting on 8 May 2019 that it was eligible to exercise the General Power of Competence (GPOC) as at least 2/3rds of the total number of councillors were elected at the ordinary election on 2 May 2019 and that the Clerk holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA). Having met the conditions, the Council noted that it was eligible to use the GPOC for the next four years (Minute 11b refers). At the meeting on 5 February 2020, the Council noted that as a result of the resignation of two members of the 2/3rds elected at the 2019 elections it no longer fulfilled the eligibility to carry out new projects under the GPOC (Minute 8b refers).

2.7 The Council maintains a rolling 3-Year Business Plan which details the Council's overall vision and objectives, strategic planning/key projects, communication/engagement, a listing of specific actions with measurable outcomes and areas of active involvement. At its meeting on 3 July 2019 the Council considered and agreed the strategic 3-Year Business Plan for the period May 2019 to May 2022 (Minute 8c refers). This Business Plan is reviewed annually in July. Some of the areas covered in the Plan are ongoing and will cover more than one financial year. Accordingly the Council reviews the Plan on a six-monthly basis in order to ensure that updates are made regularly and that any further appropriate actions identified during the six-monthly period are included or, where appropriate, are signed off as having been completed.

2.8 The Council's Minutes are very well presented and provide clear evidence of the decisions taken by the Council in the year.

2.9 The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Fee Payer/Data Controller for the provision of council services under Data Protection legislation (Registration ZA027284 refers, expiring 12 November 2020). In response to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) the Council maintains appropriate policies, procedures and protocols, including the Data Protection Policy, the Document and Electronic Data Retention Policy, Privacy Notice and Privacy Statement, an Information Security Policy and Data Impact Assessments and Risk Assessments.

2.10 At the meeting on 28 February 2020 the Policy and Resources Committee demonstrated good data protection practice by agreeing that the Checklist awareness for GDPR should be issued to all Councillors and should be used as a learning/training exercise once the results had been collated.

2.11 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2020 shows a total amount of £62,516.96 CIL Receipts paid to the Council on 14 October 2019. Expenditure of £850.00 was applied in the year to New Green CCTV. The amount of overall CIL Receipts retained as at 31 March 2020 was £62,296.65.

2.12 In accordance to the Localism Act 2011 sections 26 to 37, the Council adopted the revised Suffolk Local Code of Conduct at a meeting held on 2 July 2014 (Minute 7a refers). The Council demonstrates good practice by periodically reminding Councillors of the requirements and responsibilities the Code places upon each individual Councillor (the meeting on 4 December 2019, Minute 1 refers).

2.13 The Council demonstrates good management practice by placing emphasis upon adequate and appropriate training for Councillors and Officers. At its meeting on 8 May 2019 all Councillors were reminded of the effectiveness of training and details of councillor refresher courses, for both new and longer-standing councillors, as offered by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC). The Council was reminded that there was a budget for such training, and all Councillors were encouraged to take-up such opportunities (Minute 18d refers).

2.14 Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the Council receives reports and documentation on Officer Decisions and details are published on the Council's website.

2.15 As part of its governance responsibilities the Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 1 November 2019, reviewed the Scheme of Delegation relating to the powers specifically delegated to the Clerk/RFO and approved the proposed changes. Officer decisions are regularly reported to Council and published on the Council's website.

2.16 In view of the current coronavirus situation, at the meeting on 18 March 2020 the Council confirmed that the powers specifically delegated to the Clerk/RFO under

the Scheme of Delegation (as dated March 2020) were fit for purpose and would ensure minimal disruption to the work of the Council if Councillors are not able to attend meetings. The Council also agreed to approve advance authorisation of payments occurring on an annual basis for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 and to allow, with reference to item 6.6 of Financial Regulations, the signing of cheques other than at meetings. To allow proper scrutiny of records of payments and the accounts, in accordance with section 5 of the Financial Regulations, any signatures obtained away from such meetings are to be reported to the Council at the next convenient meeting.

3. Accounting Procedures and Proper Book-keeping (*examination of entries in the Cashbook, regular reconciliations, supporting vouchers, invoices and receipts and VAT accounting*).

3.1 The RBS Rialtas accounting system was used in the year to produce the Council's Financial Reports and Statements. The financial system is well referenced and overall provides a good audit trail to the supporting documentation. The system has been used for the preparation of the 2019/20 End-of-Year accounts. The Cashbook transactions are referenced and provide an appropriate audit trail. VAT payments are tracked and identified within the End-of-Year Accounts. In view of the Internal Audit for 2019/20 being conducted remotely/electronically, the supporting vouchers, invoices and receipts were not examined. However, the Clerk/RFO has confirmed to Internal Audit that payments made in 2019/20 were supported by invoices/vouchers and that all are checked by the Councillor Internal Controller during the quarterly internal audits.

3.2 Re-claims for VAT paid have been regularly submitted to HMRC. Amounts received in the year from HMRC for VAT paid were as follows:

- a) £3,178.75 VAT paid during the period 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2019 (received at bank on 9 July 2019).
- b) £1,638.44 VAT paid during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 June 2019 (received at bank on 27 August 2019).
- c) £1,399.65 VAT paid during the period 1 July 2019 to 31 December 2019 (received at bank on 29 January 2020).

3.3 The End-of-Year Accounts and supporting documentation were extremely well presented for the Internal Audit review. At its meeting on 4 March 2020 the Council received indicative year-end balances noting general, earmarked and restricted reserves. The Council received the indicative year-end balances and noted that these were work-in-progress and that the formal consideration of the allocation of reserves would be at the meeting in May 2020 to sign off the annual accounts (Minute 11h refers).

3.4 A Statement of Variances has been produced as at 31 March 2020 to support the submission of Section 2 – the Statement of Accounts – in the AGAR to the External Auditors and for publication on the Council's website.

4. Internal Control and the Management of Risk (Review by Council of the effectiveness of internal controls, including risk assessment, and Minuted accordingly).

4.1 At its meetings on 1 November 2019 and 28 February 2020 the Policy and Resources Committee reviewed the Council's Financial Risk Assessment 2019/20 and agreed that the amendments put forward for consideration were acceptable and that the document was a true reflection of the financial risks facing the Council and the manner in which they would be mitigated. The Committee noted that the Risk Assessment was a 'live' document and changes would be included in line with changes in legislation.

4.2 Similarly, at the meetings on 1 November 2019 and 28 February 2020 the Committee reviewed the Risk Management Strategy for 2019/20. The Committee considered the Strategy to be appropriate for a Parish the size of Thurston and that the Strategy provided an accurate assessment of the management of risks carried out by the Parish Council. The Committee noted that the document was also 'live' and would be amended in accordance with changes in legislation.

4.3 At its meeting on 28 February 2020, the Policy and Resources Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the Internal Control arrangements and considered that the internal control document, as used during the past year, was an effective mechanism for Council to review its processes and to support the audit process. It was agreed that the proposed amendments for Compliance with Website Accessibility Requirements (Website Security Certificate, Digital Accessibility, Standards for web content and Accessibility statement on website) and numerical ordering system in accordance with Financial Regulations, should be incorporated into the document for the year 2020/21.

4.4 At its meeting on 4 March 2020 the Full Council noted that the Internal Control Document had been amended to reflect changes relevant to the forthcoming year 2020/21 (Minute 11e refers).

4.5 The Policy and Resources Committee also reviewed, at its meeting on 28 February 2020, the effectiveness of the Internal Audit carried out for the previous year and the proposed works for 2019/20. The scope of the review covered independence, competence, relationships and audit planning.

4.6 At its meeting on 4 March 2020 the Council noted the Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee's meeting on 28 February 2020. The Clerk/RFO briefed the Council on the year-end procedures work that had been carried out by the Committee and this was noted and approved by the Council (Minute 8b refers).

4.7 The Council accordingly complied with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which require a review by the full Council at least once a year of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control, including the arrangements for the management of risk, with the review suitably Minuted.

4.8 The Council demonstrates good financial practice by considering a quarterly Internal Control Report, prepared by a designated Councillor and reported to Full Council in order to regularly confirm that internal controls are effective and to consider any points arising. The meetings held on 5 June 2019 (Minute 12e), 9 October 2019 (Minute 13f), 8 January 2020 (Minute 13e) and 4 March 2020 (Minute 11e) refer. Similarly, the Council receives regular reports from the Councillors nominated to undertake monthly inspections of the Play Area.

4.9 Insurance was in place for the year of audit. At its meeting on 9 October 2019 the Council noted that the Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk/RFO had carried out an annual review of the insurance policy documents. The insurance premium renewal, based on a new policy, had been reviewed and found to be consistent with the Council's requirements. The Council approved the payment of the insurance renewal premium of £949.62 to CAS Business Services Ltd (Minute 13 refers).

4.10 The Policy and Resources Committee reviewed the Council's Insurance Schedule against the Asset Register and noted that cover for assets was an All Risks cover for assets to the value of between £150,000 and £200,000. The Committee agreed that this provided sufficient cover but would be reviewed once further play equipment had been installed on New Green.

4.11 The Council's Employer's Liability insurance cover and Public Liability cover each stand at £10m. The Fidelity Guarantee (Councillor/Employee Dishonesty) cover stands at £250,000, which meets the current recommended guidelines which provide that the cover should be at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants.

5. Policies and Procedures in place

5.1 The Council has a wide range of formal policies and procedures in place, in addition to those in compliance with the GDPR, to assist good governance and management, including the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Equality Policy, Health & Safety Policy, Environmental Policy, Electronic and Social Media Communications Policy, Reserves Policy, Training & Development Policy and Grant Awarding Policy.

5.2 The Policies and Procedures are available for public inspection on the Council's webpage <https://thurstonparishcouncil.uk/parish-council/policies-procedures-and-strategy/> together with information relating to the Business Plan, Community Engagement, GDPR and Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

5.3 The Council and its Policy and Resources Committee undertake regular reviews of its policies, procedures and protocols. The Policy and Resources Committee reviewed 25 key Policies and Procedures at its meeting on 28 February 2020 and found them all to be relevant and up to date. The Committee also noted the amendments made in line with changes in legislation to the Council's Model Publication Scheme. The Full Council noted the work undertaken by the Committee in this respect at the meeting on 4 March 2020.

6. Budgetary controls (*Verification of the budgetary process with reference to Council Minutes and supporting documents*).

Precept 2019/20: £96,889 (23 January 2019, Minute 7c refers).

Precept 2020/21: £105,162 (8 January 2020, Minute 13h refers).

6.1 Good budgetary procedures are in place. The Council considered a Draft Budget for 2019/20 at its meeting on 9 January 2019 (Minute 12f refers). The Final Budget for 2019/20 was considered and agreed by the Council at its meeting on 23 January 2019 (Minute 7c refers).

6.2 The Precept for 2019/20 was considered by the Council at its meeting on 23 January 2019. The meeting instructed the Clerk/RFO to rework the technical aspect of setting the precept at a maximum increase of 3% over that of 2018/19 with email approval of the setting of the precept to be given by Councillors. The meeting granted approval for the Precept Form to be served on the Charging Authority to be signed by the Chairman, the Clerk/RFO and two Councillors and issued to Mid Suffolk District Council on the understanding that the increase for the Precept was to be limited to the maximum increase of 3% (£96,889).

6.3 The Policy and Resources Committee considered a First Draft of the Budget for 2020/21 at its meeting on 1 November 2019 and agreed to put recommendations before the Council. The Full Council considered the Draft Budget at its meeting on 4 December 2019 (Minute 13h refers) and reviewed and finalised the Budget for 2020/21 at its meeting on 8 January 2020. The Council resolved to set a Precept of £105,162 to fund the budget of £118,175 with the balance coming from reserves and known grant sources (Minutes 13g and 13h refer).

6.4 The Precepts were agreed in Full Council and the precept decision and amount have been clearly Minuted. The Council prepared detailed estimates of the annual budget and of receipts and payments. The estimates for the year 2020/21 can be used effectively for financial control and budgetary control purposes.

6.5 The Clerk/RFO ensures the Council is aware of responsibilities, commitments, forward planning and the need for adequate reserves.

6.6 The Council demonstrates good financial practice by regularly considering a comparative statement – the Budget to Actual Statement – for budgetary control purposes. Variances in the actual versus expenditure are noted and explanations provided for the variances in expenditure to actual and income to actual. The Budget to Actual monitoring report for the 1st Quarter ending 30 June 2019 was presented to the Council on 3 July 2019, the 2nd Quarter to the meeting on 6 November 2019 and the 3rd Quarter to the meeting on 5 February 2020. The Bank Reconciliation for the period just ended is similarly presented to Council for approval.

6.7 The Reserves available to the Council at the year-end 31 March 2020 totalled £114,560 of which £107,624 has been earmarked leaving £6,936 as a General Reserve. The generally accepted best practice requires General (non-earmarked revenue) Reserves to be equal to 3 to 6 six months of contractual expenditure. Whilst the General Reserves have increased from the £4,600 at the end of the previous year, the General Reserves continue to be significantly below the best practice guidance. The Community Infrastructure Levy receipts of £62,517 in the year, whilst being restricted in their use, has significantly increased the level of overall reserves as at 31 March 2020. The Clerk/RFO confirmed that the Council is continuing to work towards maintaining sufficient general reserves and contingency sums to meet, within reason, any unforeseen items of expense that may occur.

7. Income Controls (regarding sums received from Precept, Grants, Loans and other income including credit control mechanisms).

7.1 Income controls were examined on a test-check basis. Income received and recorded in the Cashbook was cross referenced on a sample basis with the bank statements and found to be in order.

8. Petty Cash (Associated books and established system in place).

8.1 No Petty Cash is held; an expenses system is in place.

9. Payroll Controls (PAYE and NIC in place; compliant with HMRC procedures; records relating to contracts of employment).

9.1 PAYE is operated in accordance with HMRC regulations. Regular payments have been made to HMRC and detailed pay slips are produced for the Council employees. P60 End-of-Year Certificates (2019/20) for employees were presented to Internal Audit.

9.2 At the meeting held on 3 April 2019 the Council agreed to adopt the new pay scales for the Clerk/RFO and the Litter Picker, both of whom are employed under National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) Contracts, the new salaries to take effect from 1st April 2019. The Council also agreed to advance the Litter Picker's salary to the next spinal column point, to take effect from 1st April 2019 (Minute 18 refers).

9.3 At its meeting on 3 April 2019 the Council approved a new post of administrative assistant to provide support to the Parish Clerk for 4 hours per week, to be based in the Parish Council Office. Maximum costs envisaged would be under £2,000 per annum (Minute 12h refers). Following interviews for the position, at its meeting on 3 July 2019 the Council noted the appointment of Mrs Angela Dean as Administrative Assistant to the Clerk to the Council (Minute 8d refers).

9.4 At the meeting on 5 February 2020, the Council considered the Clerk/RFO's performance and agreed that the Clerk/RFO's salary be increased by two SCP points backdated to July 2019 (Minute 19a refers).

9.5 The Clerk/RFO is enrolled into the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Suffolk County Council. At its meeting on 5 June 2019 the Council noted that the Clerk/RFO has complied with the Council's duties as an employer and completed a Redecoration of compliance for the workplace pension scheme to the Pensions Regulator; the Chair confirmed that the completed declaration of compliance for the workplace pension operated by the Council had been approved by the Pensions Regulator (Minute 8e refers).

10. Assets Controls (*Inspection of asset register and checks on existence of assets; recording of fixed asset valuations; cross checking on insurance cover*).

10.1 At its meeting on 4 March 2020 the Council noted that the Asset Register had been updated (Minute 11 e refers).

10.2 The Register complies with the current requirements which provide that each asset should be recorded on a consistent basis, year-on-year. Values are recorded at original purchase cost (where known) and a nominal value for community assets.

10.3 The Register displays a total value of £191,555 as at 31 March 2020 (compared to the value of £193,090 at the end of the previous year) and reflects the acquisition of Bus Shelters at Norton Road – South (£3,849), a double litter bin (£451) and furniture and equipment for the Parish Council Office (£365), all brought into the Register in the year of account. Disposals include the Youth Shelter (New Green Centre) which was recorded at a valuation of £6,200.

10.4 Box 9 of Section 2 of the Annual Return correctly records the value of assets as at 31 March 2020.

11. Bank Reconciliation (*Regularly completed and cash books reconcile with bank statements*).

11.1 The Lloyds Treasurer's Account and the Lloyds Business Account bank statements as at 31 March 2020 reconciled with the End-of-Year Accounts.

11.2 The bank accounts were regularly reconciled to the Accounts during the year. Bank account balances (with a bank reconciliation) are presented to the Council as a matter of routine at each meeting under the Finance item on the agenda.

12. Year End procedures (Regarding accounting procedures used and can be followed through from working papers to final documents. Verifying sample payments and income. Checking creditors and debtors where appropriate).

12.1 End-of-Year accounts are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis and were in good order. Sample audit trails were undertaken and were found to be in order.

13. Responsibilities as a Trustee (Regarding the Council's role and responsibilities under the Charity Acts; submission of returns to Charity Commission).

13.1 The Council is a sole trustee of the Thurston Recreation Ground Trust Charity (Charity No: 304946). The Recreation Facilities Committee has been established to formally manage and operate the Recreation Ground and the Pavilion and to maintain the parking area and to oversee the recreational facilities within the parish.

13.2 The Council has a standing agenda item at each meeting for the Recreational Facilities Committee; a schedule of the accounts is presented for the Council's consideration, including details of income received, accounts paid and accounts awaiting payment. The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019 were presented to and accepted by the Council at its meeting on 3 April 2019 (Minute 14aiii refers).

13.3 The Charity Commission's Register of Charities confirm that the most recent annual update was for 31 March 2019, having been received by the Commission on 15 January 2020. Formal Accounts are not required to be submitted to the Commission as the Charity is below the Annual Return £10,000 threshold.

14. Internal Financial Controls, Payments Controls and Audit Procedures (Confirmation that the Council has satisfactory internal financial controls in place for making payments with adequate documentation to support/evidence payments made. Any previous audit recommendations implemented).

14.1 The Council has satisfactory internal financial controls in place. The Clerk/RFO provides comprehensive financial reports to Council meetings and Councillors are provided with information to enable them to make informed decisions.

14.2 The Council received and approved the payments to be made under Direct Debit and Standing Orders for the year 2019/20 at its meeting on 8 May 2019 (Minute 15g refers) in accordance with the requirement of the Council's Financial Regulation 5.6.

14.3 Receipts and payments are listed in the Council's Minutes as part of the overall financial control framework. The legislative basis on which payment is made is notated against the items of expenditure. In addition, the Clerk/RFO confirmed that (a) cheque numbers are noted on the paid invoices/vouchers to assist the verification of the payment (b) invoices/vouchers for payment are signed or initialled by the

Cheque Signatories in confirmation of the payment being correctly made and (c) Cheque Book counterfoils are initialled by Cheque Signatories, all as a matter of routine in accordance to the requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations (Item 6, Instructions for the Making of Payments). These areas were not examined due to the Internal Audit being conducted remotely/electronically but the Clerk/RFO advised that they are subject to regular review by the Councillor Internal Controller.

14.4 The Internal Audit report for the previous year (2018/19) was received and approved by the Council at its meeting on 8 May 2019 (Minute 15a refers). There were no matters of concern arising from the report.

14.5 At its meeting on 4 March 2019 (Minute 11f) the Council confirmed the appointment of the Internal Auditor for year 2019/20 in accordance with the recommendation received from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 28 February 2020 following the review by the Committee of the Terms of Reference and Audit Plan supplied.

15. External Audit (*Recommendations put forward/comments made following the annual review*).

15.1 No issues were raised by PKF Littlejohn LLP, the External Auditors, following their review of the Accounts for the previous year (2018/19).

15.2 The External Auditors' Report and Certificate were received and accepted by the Council at its meeting on 7 August 2019 (Minute 12a refers).

16. Publication Requirements.

16.1 Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities were required to publish in 2019 the following information on a publicly accessible website:

Before 1 July 2019 authorities must publish:
Notice of the period for the exercise of Public Rights
AGAR - Sections 1 and 2.

Not later than the 30 September 2019 authorities must publish:
Notice of Conclusion of Audit
AGAR - Section 3
AGAR - Sections 1 and 2 (including any amendments as a result of the Limited Assurance Review).

16.2 The Internal Auditor was able to confirm that the documents were readily accessible on the Council's website: <https://thurstonparishcouncil.uk/parish-council/>

17. Additional Comments.

17.1 The Annual Parish Council meeting was held on 8 May 2019, within the required time limit. The first item of business was the Election of Chairman, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

17.2 I would like to record my appreciation to the Clerk to the Council for her assistance during the course of the audit work.

Trevor Brown

Trevor Brown, CPFA

Internal Auditor

25 April 2020