

METHWOLD PARISH COUNCIL
Annual Internal Audit Report
(as required by section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972)
Financial Year 2023/24

I have in the (virtual) presence of Mrs. Rachel Buckle (Parish Clerk) inspected the parish council documents as appropriate, and in line with, the scope of the annual audit requested. Rachel also acts as the Responsible Finance Officer for the council. Cllr. Martin French is presently Chairman of the Council.

I would like to thank the Parish Clerk for providing me with all the information required to carry out the audit.

Methwold Parish Council also represents the residents of Methwold Hythe and Brookville. The Parish Council holds assets such as the Queen Elizabeth II Recreation Ground and childrens' play area; Methwold Cemetery; a bus shelter; the War Memorial; various parcels of land; a number of noticeboards, as well as a considerable amount of street lighting.

Charitable status was obtained for the St. George's Hall Complex and Methwold Social Club in June 2022 and these assets have been transferred to the charity. The charity (known as the Methwold Hall Complex Charitable Trust) is run separately from the Council who act as sole managing trustee. A support grant of £12,000 was made to MHCCT during 2023/24.

The Parish Council has calculated and agreed an annual precept of £69,896 for 2023/24 (the Council's meeting of 12th January 2023 refers).

There are no significant unexplained variances in the budget.

Total of cash and short term investments stand at £129,935. There exists a very small discrepancy in the bank reconciliation of £2.11.

The cashbook is well maintained.

The bank is reconciled on a monthly basis.

Regular monthly financial reports are made to councillors.

The Council has a Finance & Governance committee.

Receipts & Payments is used as the basis for accounting.

There are no petty cash transactions.

The sum of £2,551 was received by way of Community Infrastructure Levy and a Section 106 payment of £43,451 was also received during the financial year in question.

No formal recommendations were made in last year's internal audit report (May 2023).

The clerk's salary is paid in accordance with members approval and statutory guidance, and documented in the relevant minutes.

PAYE and NIC have been properly operated (Payroll Services are provided by NALC).

VAT has been properly implemented. £4,320 was reclaimed during the year.

The Risk Assessment Policy should be reviewed annually. Rachel informs me that a Policy & Procedures Group is in the process of being constituted. This will improve the effectiveness and timeliness of policy scrutiny.

Financial Regulations were reviewed in June 2022 and Standing Orders (also in June 2022). I would suggest that both documents are reviewed at least once during each four year council cycle.

Likewise, cemetery fees should be reviewed at least once during each four year cycle. The last review took place in May 2018. I understand that cemetery fees will be reviewed again later in 2024.

I have inspected the Assets Register which is very detailed. I would suggest the Register is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that levels of insurance remain adequate. Insurance is provided by Zurich.

The council's website is of a good standard with agendas and minutes being regularly updated.

Policies include Data Protection, Code of Conduct, Financial Controls, Equal Opportunities, Open Spaces and Safeguarding. The Council is compliant with the Transparency Code.

Play equipment is inspected annually by Wicksteed or similar. In addition, trained volunteer councillors carry out weekly checks and report back to Council.

Staff and councillor training is provided by NPTS and NALC.

I would make no formal recommendations to members as I believe that governance procedures and accountancy records for this council are of a good standard.

In conclusion, I am satisfied that this parish council is functioning well and is fully discharging its legal and statutory responsibilities.

In accordance with the above I have duly signed and completed the relevant section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, Form 3, 2023/24.

ROBIN GOREHAM

(Internal Auditor)

June 2024