

Annual Internal Audit Report

(to be read in conjunction with Section 4 of the Annual Return)

Name of council:	Oundle Town Council		
Name of Internal Auditor:	John Marshall	Date of report:	30.05.2014
Year ending:	31 March 2014	Date audit carried out:	29.05.2014

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 staff and management and not left for internal audit. This report is based on the evidence examined and made available to me. It would be incorrect to view internal audit as the detailed inspection of every record and transaction of the Council in order to detect error or fraud. 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 Chairman of the Council:

I carried out the year-end audit of Oundle Town Council on 29 May; thanks are due to Debra Harper, Clerk to the Council and to Paul Smith, Finance Officer and Hanneke Soanes, Administrative Officer for their assistance.

Through the examination of hard evidence and questioning I tested all of the objectives of Internal Controls set out in Section 4 of the Annual Return. This audit also looked in detail at the management of the council owned Cemetery, including records and registers and the charging regime. I would comments as follows;

- the Council has a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures in place, all of which are, quite rightly made publically available via the website. Some of these documents cross-refer to others and where such a cross-reference exists there is a need to establish a system to ensure than an update to one document is reflected in others. An example is the Complaints Procedure that draws attention to an important requirement in Standing Orders, restricting the Council's ability to revisit decisions it has made. The reference is to an earlier version rather than the current version of Standing Orders which tends to undermine the value of what is otherwise a very good policy. The need for consequential updating will be at its greatest when updating of core documents such as Standing Orders and Financial Regulations takes place; citing these other documents, perhaps in the footer of the main document might be a way of keeping track of the consequential updates that will be required.
- The Members' Code of Conduct does not appear to be displayed on the website. Whilst there is no requirement to do so, it would be worthwhile addition.
- Cemetery charges are reviewed and revised from time to time, with the review being based around the charges made by neighbouring authorities rather than the actual cost to the Council of providing and maintaining the cemetery service. The Council is

advised to determine the true cost, taking into account not only administrative time but also the significant grounds maintenance costs and then consider what policy it wishes to follow eg whether, as is common the service is to be provided on a cost neutral basis, making neither a profit nor a loss.

I am satisfied that the Council has effective policies, procedures and systems in place to manage, monitor, control and deliver its business and that the governance arrangements are fit for purpose going forward. Accordingly, I am pleased to report that I have been able to answer 'yes' to all of the questions in Section 4 of the Annual Return (AR) and have signed off the Return as required.

John Marshall
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