Internal Audit Report for Shadingfield, Sotterley, Willingham and Ellough Joint Parish Council

for the period ending 31 March 2026

Clerk	Vicki Ellis
RFO (if different)	-
Chairperson	Councillor Richard Ellis
Precept	£10,100.00
Income	£15,037.45
Expenditure	£10,537.04
General reserves	£6,793.38
Earmarked reserves	£9,366.52
Audit type	Annual – Exempt Authority
Auditor name	**Victoria Waples**

Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, and corruption
- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts, and data

Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- conduct a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws, and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being conducted as planned

Section 1 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC'S latest model which include legislative changes.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	*Yes*	Council's Standing Orders as seen on the website show a review date of 15th October 2025 and are based on the model published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in 2018 with revisions in 2022 and 2024. *Comment*: *at the next annual review, council should seek to adopt the updated Model Standing Order (England) 2025 which contain amendments to section 18 to comply with new procurement legislation and ensure consistency with the revised Model Financial Regulations.*
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	*Yes*	Financial Regulations, as seen on the Council's website were reviewed at the meeting of 20th May 2026. Those seen on the website are based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations published in 2018. *Comment: at the next annual review, council should seek to adopt the Model Financial Regulations (2025) which contain revisions to the model Financial Regulations in terms of procurement as outlined under NALC Advice Notes previously circulated.*
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	*Yes*	The Council's Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)?[1]	*Yes*	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972(d) (financial administration), council has appointed a person to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority.
Additional comments:		

[1] Section 151 Local Government Act 1972

Section 2 – Budgetary controls The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed	*Yes*	The budget for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the Council meeting of 20th November 2024. Paperwork shows that this was set at £13,128.00. The budget for the year 2026 - 2027 was subject to amendments to be made at the meeting of 21st January 2026 and formally approved at the meeting of 18th March 2026. There is no minute reference to suggest that which was set. From paperwork seen the budget was set at £20,094.00 **Recommendation: council should evidence within the minutes the actual budget being set alongside the reasoning for such a budget thereby ensuring transparency in the budgetary process followed by the council.**
Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	*Yes*	The minutes of 20th November 2024 confirmed that the precept to be levied for the year 2025 - 2026 would be set at £10,100. The precept for the year 2026 - 2027 was discussed and approved at the meeting of 21st January 2026 and set at £12,000. **Recommendation: in accordance with best practice, council should record in the minutes the impact the precept being set would have on a Band D Dwelling in percentage terms.**
Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget	*Yes*	Council received regular reports detailing bank balances and approval of bank reconciliations, along with reviews covering comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure. A monitoring statement is produced which includes a breakdown of all receipts and payments balance with variances against budgets and details of virements as approved by the council to balance the budget set.

Reserves held – general and earmarked[2]	*Yes*	The Council, as at year-end, had overall reserves of 16,159.90 broken down as General Reserves totalling £6,793.38 and Earmarked Reserves of £9,366.52. Guidance as issued by Proper Practices states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of Net Revenue Expenditure and should ensure that the level of general reserves held is in accordance with an adopted General Reserve Policy. *Comment: council should consider adopting a Reserve Policy which would specify the General Reserves to be held which should be equal to that which is set.* There is no upper limit for Earmarked Reserves, but they should be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level subject to regular review and justification (at least annually).
Additional comments:		

Section 3 – Proper bookkeeping
The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council's accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.

Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Is the ledger maintained and up to date?	*Yes*	Excel spreadsheets were submitted for internal audit review, and these have been used to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis.
Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure?	*Yes*	Council's gross income and expenditure level is below the threshold of £200,000 and has been for three (3) continuous years. Council's operating under this limit may choose either to report on an income and expenditure basis or on a receipts and payments (R&P) basis. Council has elected to report its financial matters on a receipts and payments basis.

[2] In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?	*Yes*	The cashbook is reconciled on a regular basis.
Is the arithmetic correct?	*Yes*	A number of spot checks were conducted, and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order.
Additional comments:		

Section 4 – Payment controls
The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.

Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	*Yes*	A selection of random payments were cross checked minutes, cash book, bank statement and invoices and all were found to be recorded / authorised in accordance with Proper Practices. All were found to be in order. A financial statement is submitted at each relevant meeting detailing the payments to be made, with reference made within the body of the minutes as to the payments being authorised.
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	*Yes*	Internet banking is operated in accordance with the Council's own Financial Regulations and is used for the settlement of the Council's expenditure. The council's internal control documentation for electronic payments details the procedure to be followed for the making of such payments in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. Council operates with dual authorisation for online payments.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	*Yes*	VAT is identified in the cash book with the overall balance for the year being £361.72. A reclaim was submitted in June 2026.The claim covering the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 in the sum of £601.22 was settled in May 2025.

		Comment: the Clerk has ensured that the council has complied with section 33 of the 1994 VAT Act which allows local authorities and other public bodies to recover VAT incurred on costs associated with: non-business activities, taxable business activities where the body is VAT registered (subject to the normal rules), and exempt business activities (where the input tax incurred in relation to exempt activities is considered to be insignificant).
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly?[3]	*Yes*	At the meeting of 17th May 2023, the Council, declared that it fulfilled the eligibility criteria to use the general power of competence (at least two-thirds elected members and a qualified Clerk (CiLCA or higher)), and resolved to use the power until the next relevant Annual Council Meeting (May 2027). This was reconfirmed at the Annual Council Meeting of 14th May 2025.
Are payments under s.137[4] separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	*N/A*	Council uses the discretionary power to do anything that an individual can do unless specifically prohibited by law.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	*N/A*	Council has no such loans.
Additional comments:		

Section 5 – Income controls The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.	
Evidence	Internal auditor commentary

[3] Localism Act

[4] *Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £11.10 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.*

Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	*Yes*	Income is recorded in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. The accounting records contain day-to-day entries of all sums of money received. The minutes of 15th October 2025, confirm that council reviewed the list of prices for the cemeteries and agreed to continue with the current fees previously set by the Council. It was further agreed that the Council would review fees annually in January each year. *Comment: council is aware that fee reviews are essential to ensure that the council's income module remains competitive as well as ensuring profitability is maintained. This will ensure that the council's revenue streams are fully optimized allowing for adjustments where necessary.*
Is income reported to full council?	*Yes*	Income received is reported to full Council within the financial reports submitted to full Council
Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?	*Yes*	Council received precept in the sum of £10,100.00 from East Suffolk Council for the period under review as reported to full Council within its Financial Reports at its meeting in May 2025. Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved to being served on the Charging Authority to remittance advice showing the Precept to be paid and receipt of same in the council's bank account.
If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?[5]	*Yes*	CIL reporting schedules are maintained in accordance with the Regulations
Is CIL income reported to the council?	*Yes*	Council receive CIL receipts of £3,254.33 from East Suffolk Council for the period under review (April 2025 £2903.40 and October 2025 £681.25) as reported to full Council within its Financial Reports at its meetings in May and November.
Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?	*Yes*	The CIL workings for 2025 - 2026 shows that there is a balance on 31st March 2026 of £3,254.53. In accordance with the Regulations this has been transferred into a (restricted) earmark reserve.
Has an annual report been produced?	*Yes*	An Annual CIL statement has been produced detailing the relevant figures and carry forward balance.
Has it been published on the authority's website?	*Yes*	The annual CIL statement has been published on the council's website.

[5] Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Additional comments:

Section 6 – Petty cash The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures, and verification processes and that these are up to date.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is petty cash in operation?	*N/A*	
If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?	*N/A*	
Additional comments: *a petty cash system is not operated by the council.*		

Section 7 – Bank reconciliation The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?	*Yes*	Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall, there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted to full council.
Do bank balances agree with bank statements?	*Yes*	Bank balances as of 31st March 2026 agree with the year-end bank statements and at year end stood at £16,159.90 across the accounts held in the parish council's name.

Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?	*Yes*	Balances across the Council's accounts are reported at each relevant meeting. Council's internal control statement confirms that reconciled accounts including bank reconciliation are subject to a review that the bank reconciliation versus the bank statements has been undertaken. This is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives.
Additional comments:		

Section 8 – Payroll controls The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Do all employees have contracts of employment?	*Yes*	Council had one employee on its payroll at the period end of 31st March 2026. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit, but the Clerk to the Council has confirmed that a Contract of Employment is in place.
Has the Council approved salary paid?	*Yes*	All salary payments are presented to full Council for approval and payment is made via internet banking in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. Full Council, at the meeting of 17th September 2025 agreed that the Local Government Pay Award for 2025 should be implemented and the Clerk be paid accordingly, backdated to 1st April 2026. *Comment: Council has noted the requirement to ensure that it formally approves amendments to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment.*
Are all employees paid at least the minimum wage?	*Yes*	The employee is paid above the minimum wage.
Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?	*Yes*	There are suitable payroll arrangements in place which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.

Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?	*Yes*	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines and outsourced. Cross-checks were completed on a sample of payments covering salary and all were found to be in order. There were no deductions due to be paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review.
Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?[6]	*Yes*	Council is aware of its pension responsibilities, and the member of staff is not enrolled into a pension scheme provided by the employer.
Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out	*Yes*	From paperwork seen, the council completed its re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator on 3rd February 2026.
Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?	*Yes*	Expenses claimed are reasonable and approved by the council.
Additional comments:		

Section 9 – Year End procedures		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	*Yes*	Accounts are produced on a receipts and payments basis.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	*Yes*	The Internal Auditor confirms that having reviewed the year-end files, there is a full underlying financial trail from financial records to the accounts produced. The accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation detail is verified along with the correct disclosure of the combined cash and bank balances in the AGAR, section 2, line 8.
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR[7] *documents been completed?*	*Yes*	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and/or expenditure not exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 2.

[6] The Pension Regulator – website click here
[7] Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

		The Accounting Statements were submitted as complete having been signed off on 20th May 2026.
Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	*Yes*	As the council did not have gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 during 2024-2025 it was able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31st March 2025. The minutes of 18th June 2025 demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 and the Certificate of Exemption were signed. **Recommendation: Council is advised to ensure that there is formal evidence of the legal decision taken to claim exemption as referenced in section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulation 2015.**
During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?	*Yes*	The internal auditor is able to confirm that the period for the public rights exercise was set as being between 9th June to 18th July 2025. It is confirmed that the notice of the public rights for the year ending 31st March 2025, dated 8th June 2025, was found on the council operated website. *Comment: within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council correctly provided for the exercise and published a copy of the required "Public Notice" by ensuring that it clearly identified the statutory 30 working day period when the Authority's records are available for public inspection. This is evidenced by the notice on the website which contains the period for the exercise of public right; details of the manner in which the documents can be inspected; the name and address of the external auditor and the provisions as contained under section 25 and section 27 of the Act.*
Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?[8]	*Yes*	The Internal Auditor is able to confirm that the Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000, as it has published the following for the year 2024 - 2025 on a publicly accessible website: • Certificate of Exemption • Annual Internal Audit Report • Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR • Section 2 – Annual Accounting Statements of the AGAR • Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights

[8] Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		• Analysis of variances • Bank reconciliation – year-end
Additional comments:		

Section 10 – Risk management The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?	*Yes*	The risk assessment documentation as provided details the risks associated with the operational functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks. The Risk Register for the year under review was dated 15th October 2025. There is however no minute reference to state that this was formally considered by full council. *Comment: to ensure that there is clarity regarding the steps taken by the council in the management of the risk facing the council, council is advised to evidence that it has arrangements in place and that these are annually reviewed.*
Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?	*Yes*	Council is aware that risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money. There is evidence that overall, the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences. *Comment: council has in place monitoring documents which identify the risks involved with and the potential for improvements to its arrangements to protect public money. It provides the opportunity for reviews of operational as well as financial and governance reviews by members to ensure that it has mitigation measures in place to address the risks associated with the council's day to day operations.*

*Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee **and** has been reviewed on an annual basis?*	*Yes*	Council has appropriate insurance in place. A review of the schedule shows core cover for the following: Public Liability £10million; Employer Liability £10million; and Fidelity Guarantee of £250thousand. One building is shown as being under cover. *Comment: Council has followed recommended guidance by ensuring that its Fidelity Cover is equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April/May and/or during the year upon receipt of grants.* During the year under review, evidenced from a review of the minutes of the meeting of 17th September 2025, council is able to demonstrate that it is aware that it is the responsibility of the Council as a whole to satisfy itself that insurances are adequate and that all steps have been taken to mitigate and manage identified risks with appropriate insurance and that annual reviews of the Council's insurance were undertaken prior to renewal. *Comment: Council has ensured that it is able to demonstrate that it has reviewed the risks facing the Council in transacting its business and has taken out appropriate insurance to manage and reduce the risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things).*
Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed[9]	*Yes*	Council adopted an Internal Control Statement for the year ending 31st March 2026 at the meeting of 15th October 2025. *Comment: As such, it is evidenced from the document seen, that the council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, confirmed that the financial and management systems of the council were sound and adequate and internal control arrangements were efficient and effective to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.*
Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment[10]	*Yes*	The council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements within the adopted internal control statement. *Comment: Council is aware that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulation 2015, the parish council must review the terms of reference and effectiveness of internal audit and demonstrate that it has understood that*

[9] Accounts and Audit Regulations
[10] Practitioners Guide

		the role of internal audit is to evaluate and report on the adequacy of the system of internal control.
Additional comments:		

Section 11 – Asset control The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location, and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?[11]	*Yes*	The Asset Register, as seen on the council's website, reflects those items listed under insurance and within the parish council's remit for maintenance and ownership. It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2026) is £221,933.16.
Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)	*Yes*	Council is mindful of the guidance within the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England March 2025 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied.
Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?	*N/A*	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was conducted via remote means.
Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?	*N/A*	Council has not declared that it has assets located on third party property for which a formal lease is required.
Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?	*Yes*	The asset register seen was reviewed for accuracy by the Vice-Chair on 20th March 2026 and adopted by Full Council at the meeting of 20th May 2026. It

[11] Practitioners Guide

		is confirmed that the values seen on the Asset Register – £221,933 (rounded) - matches those on the Accounting Statements
Cross checking of insurance cover	*Yes*	Council has appropriate insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under the headings on the insurance schedule. Specified cover is in place for the Sotterly Chapel as per the schedule.
Additional comments:		

Section 12 – Assertion 10 The internal auditor will be checking that the council complies to the new assertion 10 introduced in the Practitioners' Guide 2025.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?[12]	*Yes*	As a Data Controller, all local authorities are required to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in accordance with Data Protection Legislation. It is noted that the council's registration was renewed in September 2025. Registration Certificate: ZA628283 with an expiry date of 3rd March 2027 refers.
Is there an adopted council publication scheme and is it reviewed regularly?	*Yes*	The Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the ICO, and to publish information covered by this scheme. Council's publication scheme was viewed on the website and is held in accordance with the defined guidelines and has been fully tailored to the council.
Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?[13] *Councils must:* • *Comply with their legal & statutory obligations under UK GDPR & The Data Protection Act 2018*	*Yes*	Council has taken active steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and has adopted a Data Protection and Information Management Policy which details the manner in which the parish council will protect and handle information relating to personal information. The Policy provides clear responsibilities and obligations of the council in respect of the collecting, using and protecting of personal information in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR and covers the measures that the council will

[12] Data Protection Act 2018
[13] UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

• *Process personal data lawfully, fairly and in line with the prescribed data protection principles* • *Recognise their role as both data controller and data processor*		undertake to ensure adequate provision for the preservation of documents, books and papers belonging to the parish. The council has also sought to ensure compliance with the data protection regulations, by conducting a data audit to identify the personal information held by the council, the manner in which it is held and the lawful basis in which the information is being processed and has adopted and published policies which detail the procedures for dealing with subject access and the manner in which personal information will be protected from data breaches.
Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?	*Yes*	To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code for smaller authorities (turnover not exceeding £25,000), Council is aware that the following should be published on a public website for the year 2025-2026 not later than 1 July: • Internal Audit Report • List of Councillors and Responsibilities • **Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT** • End of Year Accounts • Annual Governance Statement • Asset Register • and that Agendas of Meetings; Associated Papers and Minutes should be published in accordance with the prescribed timescales as set out in the Transparency code for smaller authorities – December 2014. *Comment: the council published certain datasets on its website for 2024-2025 in accordance with the required timescales but the Items of Expenditure Above £100 including recoverable and non-recoverable VAT was missing from the website.*
Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?[14]	*Yes*	The Council has published a website accessibility statement https://shadingfield-jpc.gov.uk/assets/Accessibility-Statement-2026.pdf on the council operated website detailing the technical information of the website stating that the website if sully compliant with the WCAG 2.2 AA Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

[14] Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

Has website accessibility been tested, at least annually?	*Yes*	The council's accessibility statement is up to date and states that the website was last tested in May 2026. The Council assessed accessibility using internal self-evaluation; automated testing tools; manual checks for keyboard navigation and structure.
Does the council have, as a minimum, a single generic email address on an authority owned domain, for correspondence?[15] For example clerk@abccouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abccouncil.org.uk	*Yes*	Council currently operates with the website https://shadingfield-jpc.gov.uk/ . The council uses a dedicated gov.uk email addresses for the Clerk and Councillors.
Does the council have an IT policy that is tailored to the council? [16]	*No*	To warrant a positive response to assertion 10, smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) should have an IT policy. This should explain 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. **RECOMMENDATION: that council adopts an IT policy that mandates the use of authority-owned email accounts for official business. These policies are designed to ensure that all communications are conducted in a manner that is consistent with the authority's standards and legal obligations. It is important to personalise the template for the specific use of the council.**
Additional comments:		

Section 13 – Internal audit
The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.

Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?	*Partially*	The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31st March 2025 was noted by Council at the meeting of 10th June 2025.

[15] Practitioners Guide
[16] Practitioners Guide

		Comment: whilst an audit plan was drawn up to address the commentary and matters raised, council is advised to ensure that the audit plan is reported back to council once each item has been closed.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?	*Yes*	There was one recommendation arising from the report that required an action plan to address areas of improvement or development: 1. Adoption of a Publication Scheme tailored to the parish council. This has been actioned.
Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?[17] *Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?*[18]	*Yes*	The appointment of the person to act as the parish council's independent internal auditor for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the council meeting of 18th January 2026. *Comment: Council has understood the requirement to ensure that there is an appointed person to provide assurance that the financial and management systems of the council are sound and adequate and internal control arrangements are efficient and effective.* The letter of engagement was approved at the same meeting. *Comment: by approving the letter of engagement, Council will be following Proper Practices by ensuring it has clarity on the provision of internal audit including the roles and responsibilities, audit planning and timing of visits, reporting requirements, rights to access to information, members and officers, period of engagement and remuneration.*
Additional comments:		

Section 14 – External audit for the period under review The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.	
Evidence	*Internal auditor commentary*

[17] Practitioners' Guide
[18] Practitioners' Guide

Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?[19]	*N/A*	The council was able to claim exemption from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31st March 2025.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	*N/A*	
Additional comments:		

Section 15 – Additional information The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation? [20]	*Yes*	Council held its Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at which the Chair was elected on 21st May 2025 in accordance with legislation in place at that time.
Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? [21]	*Yes*	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes.
Is there a list of members' interests held?	*Work in progress*	A copy of the members' interests for six of the seven serving councillors was seen on the District Council's website with a direct link from the council's own website. *Comment: the Clerk is aware of this matter and will be communicating with the Councillor direct to ensure their Register of Interests is uploaded.*
Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?	*N/A*	Council has no declared trustee responsibility.

[19] Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e., All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.*

[20] The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

[21] Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011

Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?	*Yes*	Council uses a system whereby a back-up of the council's data is taken and stored appropriately.
Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?	*N/A*	Council does not operate a committee system.
Additional comments:		

Signed: Victoria Waples

Date of Internal Audit review: 04.06.26 & 09.06.26

Date of Internal Audit Report 09.06.2026

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils