



HUDSON ACCOUNTING LTD.
INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT:
TO THE MEMBERS OF ST IVES TOWN COUNCIL
YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024.

ISSUE DATE: 30/05/2024
ISSUED TO: TOWN CLERK & RFO

INTRODUCTION:

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

Scope:

The scope of the audit covers, as a minimum, the areas included in the Internal Audit Report contained in the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

Approach:

Audit work is carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Internal Audit Standards and guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils.

Where applicable we have included reference to 'proper practice' and the associated guidance as laid out in 'Governance & Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England' which is applicable to financial years from 1st April 2023.

Selective testing was carried out and the relevant policies, procedures and controls were reviewed.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

We would like to thank the staff for their assistance and co-operation during the audit.

The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during our internal audit work and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required.

It should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that the internal audit service can provide is a reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in risk management, governance, and control processes. The audit does not guarantee that the accounting records are free from fraud or error.

The review undertaken obtained a level of assurance which has allowed us to complete the Internal Audit Report element of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return with no qualifications, thus in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

We have provided a table of audit recommendations that allow for the Council's response which can be used as an ongoing monitoring tool. We would be grateful if, in due course, it was completed and returned to us.

AUDIT COMMENTARY:

Items in **bold text** within the body of the report represent our findings in respect of the application of controls, text in *italics* represent suggested actions that fall short of being a formal recommendation or do not necessarily pertain to the application of internal controls.

Previous Recommendations

There are no previous recommendations requiring action.

Accounting Records

The accounts have been properly maintained throughout the year.

Payments

A sample of payments was tested to establish whether the spending decision, procurement process, certification and approval for payment were in line with Financial Regulations as well as ensuring that payments were supported by invoices, VAT was correctly accounted for, and payment controls were applied.

Payment

Further testing of payments made revealed no issues to report.

Grants

A sample of grants awarded was traced to Member approvals in the minutes; all was in order.

Risk*Insurance*

The Fidelity Guarantee is now inadequate due to the significant increase in reserves.

The council should determine whether this is a temporary situation due to receipt of Towns Fund grants or whether it is likely to persist and consequently require an increase in the Fidelity Guarantee.

Risk

The Council considered its risk management arrangements in March 2024.

Investments

An amended Investment Strategy was approved by Council in in December 2023

Budgets*Setting*

The 2024/25 budget and precept were properly approved at full council in December 2023.

Detailed estimates of both income and expenditure were provided. Financial performance in the current year was taken into consideration.

The required level of general fund reserves and the use of earmarked reserves was also considered.

Monitoring

Budget monitoring has been carried out in line with Financial Regulations.

Adequacy of Reserves

After allowing for earmarked reserves of £616,200 the general reserve stands at £368,617; equating to 25% of gross expenditure (excluding that funded from earmarked reserves) or 31% of Net Revenue Expenditure for 2024/25 both of which are within generally accepted parameters.

Income

Systems were tested to ensure that suitable controls are in place to ensure that all income is received in a timely manner, that charges are correctly applied and that any cash received is promptly receipted and banked.

Interest

Interest earned on investments has been accurately reflected in the Ledger.

VAT

VAT claims for the year have been submitted.

The year-end claim is in accord with balances held in the accounting statements.

Allotments

A register is in place and tenants are invoiced in accordance with their Agreements; processes for late payers are in place.

Toilets

Toilet charges are managed via a contractor with payment limited to card only. Monthly reports are provided from which the income received and commission charged are posted to the ledger.

We suggested getting updated VAT advice in respect of income received and it has been confirmed that as a non-business activity there is no need to account for VAT.

Benches

Bench applications are processed in line with the Council's policy and payment is required prior to purchase and installation.

Rental income

Rents are invoiced in line with the Agreements in place.

Guildhall Bar

Income for September was tested – tills are balanced each day and posting to the ledger is easy to follow.

Petty Cash

Petty cash sparingly used and is adequately controlled.

Assets

The asset register has been updated to reflect acquisitions and disposals; the total value of assets held has been accurately reflected in the AGAR.

Payroll

The February payroll was tested with no issues to report.

The national pay award has been accurately implemented.

A new employee has been issued with a contract of employment and has been paid in accordance with the Terms therein.

Bank Reconciliation

Monthly bank reconciliations have been carried out in a timely manner throughout the year.

The year-end bank reconciliation was found to be accurate.

Accounting Statements

The accounts were reproduced on an income and expenditure basis in accord with underlying records.

Year-end adjustments have been properly accounted for.

Trusts

The council has met its obligations as trustee.

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

ST IVES TOWN COUNCIL

www.stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/info-page/annual-governance-accountability-return/

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)</i> .	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes ✓	No 	Not applicable

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

12/12/2023 15/03/2024 30/05/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

S P HUDSON CPFA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Date

30/05/2024

***If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**

****Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).**