Jane Olds
Parish Clerk, Caversfield Parish Council
13 Oak Close
Bicester
OX26 3XD

27th April 2024

Elaine Anstee
16 Foxwood
Aston
Oxfordshire
OX18 2DZ

Dear Jane,

Internal Audit Report 2023-24 for the attention of the Parish Council

I have carried out an internal audit review, acting independently, proportionally and basing this review on the requirements of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023-24 and JPAG Governance, Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England 2023, and Transparency Act 2015. I have looked at the assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls that should have been in operation during the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

I use the guidance noted above to ensure that all internal audits are conducted with due professional care, integrity, and independence. Conclusions arrived at as part of the audit are based upon objectivity and evidence. The internal audit is not a detailed inspection of all records and transactions of the Council to detect error or fraud. It is the periodic independent review of a Council's internal controls designed to support the development of effective and efficient procedures under the Council's control. The management of the Council's internal controls is the responsibility of the staff and Councillors and internal audit. (Reference: Governance and Accountability for Smaller Councils - A Practitioners' Guide 2021 – Section 4).

This audit has been carried out using the council's website and the summary document attached which was completed by the Clerk prior to the audit. The use of the website for the internal audit is to enable the internal auditor to have the Transparency Guidance integral to the process. The form and 3 months of financial transactions were checked. The Clerk and I met via Zoom on 27th April 2024, discussed the checklist that had been completed and the physically signed minutes that I needed to see.

There have been no significant issues identified.

The internal audit process has noted the following:

1. Code of Conduct – this was noted on last year's internal audit as it had reissued by Cherwell District Council in 2022 but training for Parish Councils was awaited. The revised 2022 version has now been adopted as of January 2023 and is on the website.
2. Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration, Section 7.40 - Minute Book says ' Looseleaf minute books are lawful provided that the pages are consecutively numbered and initialled by the person signing the minutes at the time of signature'. This is generally interpreted that these run on from meeting to meeting.
3. The Section 137 calculation is a useful benchmark for grant funding. The Parish Council holds the General Power of Competence, and this is the primary power under which the grants are made so use of the S137 in the budget/finance papers is only as a 'reference' not the power to spend.
4. It was noted and recommended on the internal audit for 2023 that the clerk have an appraisal. This recommendation stands and it would be best practice, even for the most experienced clerk, to have a review of training and performance.
5. There is a clear process for reviewing the effectiveness of the internal audit.
6. This is my 4th year of internal audit for Caversfield Parish Council, and my recommendation/best practice is that a new internal auditor be sourced for the 24-25 fiscal year.

In summary

The Council has continued to have competent arrangements in place to satisfy itself that its systems of internal financial control are transparent and effective. There are clear approval and authorisation controls to minimise risk. The audit and management trail for financial transactions is excellent.

Yours sincerely

By email

Elaine Anstee

BA Hons: Community Governance
Attachments:
Page 3 of the AGAR for 2023-24 – signed by post /unsigned by email
Review Framework for 2023-24
Invoice Number EA/2024/0002