Internal Audit
Woodcote Parish Council
Year ending March 2025

Internal auditor Lisa Wilkinson

This internal audit report is based upon the Practitioners' Guide 2025: Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England.

Name of Council	**Woodcote**	**Name of Clerk to the Council**	Laura White
No. Of Councillors	10	**Name of RFO**	Laura White
Quorum	4	**Precept (for audit year)**	**£130,858**
Electorate	**1999**	**Gross budgeted income**	**£144,787**

A sample-based review was carried out, assessing relevant policies, procedures, and controls. Findings were referenced through the examination of digital records, paper documentation, and a review of the parish council's website.
This report highlights the issues identified during the internal audit but does not provide an exhaustive list of all potential weaknesses or areas for improvement.

Internal control objective	Response	Notes/Recommendations
A. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for	Yes	Standing orders were reviewed and re-adopted on 1st May 2024. The new model Financial Regulations were adopted on 6th November 2024. There were no publicly advertised contracts this year. The sample of invoices provided matched the bank account. Payments are verified by inspection of invoices at council meetings. Quarterly reviews are undertaken by the vice chair. Quotes are obtained for work in accordance with the council's financial regulations. Example given of 6 quotes received for professional assessment of trees. Payments are made in accordance with financial regulations.

Internal control objective	Response	Notes/Recommendations
B. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	Yes	The risk assessment was formally reviewed and minuted 5th June 2024. The insurance policy was reviewed at the September 2024 meetings, with the renewal date for the policy of 1st October. A 3-year long term agreement with Zurich was taken out. Levels of insurance cover are appropriate The PC is registered with the ICO. The playground is inspected fortnightly by the clerk. A ROSPA inspection is carried out annually. The clerk and a councillor are booked to attend inspection training.

Internal control objective	Response	Notes/Recommendations
C. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate	Yes	A budget was approved on 6th December 2023 for this financial year. The precept of £130, 858 was approved at the same meeting. Budget reports are submitted to full council for approval every two months. Any significant variances are addressed through authorisation of virements at the meeting. Earmarked reserves are considered annually and inform the budget setting process. There are currently a large among of reserves – this is due to CIL and a detailed reserves budget has been drawn up. General reserves are regularly reviewed and are maintained at around 50% of the precept. A 3-year financial plan is currently being written to explain and deal with the large level of reserves.

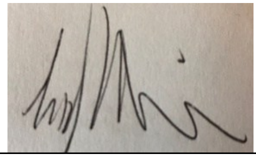
Internal control objective	Response	Notes/Recommendations
D. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the year	Yes	The accounting system used is Scribe, a local council accounts package. Accounts are carried out on a Receipts and Payments basis. The opening balances in the cashbook agree to the audited accounts for 23-24, as published on the Council website. The closing balance on the bank accounts was £380,481. This agrees to box 8 on the audited accounting statements for 23-24. The closing balance for 2024-25 is £513,315 agreeing to the end of year bank statement. Council minutes are up to date and are published as draft within a month of the meeting.

Internal control objective	Response	Notes/Recommendations
E. Expected income was fully received based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT appropriately accounted for.	Yes	VAT due in respect of financial year 2023-24 was received on 14th August 2024. VAT claims are undertaken every 6 months. VAT claim for April to July 2024 was provided as evidence. The only other income received is fees from the sports club. This is minuted. An investment strategy has been adopted, although there are currently no investments. This is under review.
F. Petty Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for	N/A	There is no petty cash.
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied		The clerk holds a formal contract of employment. The council is registered with HMRC as an employer and PAYE is properly dealt with. The clerk's April 2024 payslip was provided as evidence. A pension has been offered.
H. Asset and investment registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained		A formal asset register is held and updated annually – at the Annual PC meeting held in May. Additions and disposals are minuted. Assets are shown at cost value. Additions and disposals on the asset register agree to the difference between the asset value stated on the current and prior year Accounting Statements. The clerk physically verifies the assets regularly.
I Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.		Bank reconciliations are carried out monthly, noted at PC meetings and signed as per internal controls. Year end bank reconciliation agrees with the accounting statements and the corresponding bank statements.

J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis, agreed to the cashbook, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records		Accounting statements are prepared accurately and agree to the cashbook. Value of receipts and value of payments agree to the cashbook. Line 8 agrees to the year-end bank reconciliation and supporting bank statements. Difference in asset register values is explained fully in Explanation of Variances report
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the prior year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.	N/A	
L. The authority publishes information on a free to access website / web page, up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant transparency code requirements		The Council does not fall within the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities limit however it is good practice to publish all the information requested in the code. Woodcote PC meets these requirements: • All items of expenditure above £100 • End of year accounts • Annual governance statement • Internal audit report • List of councillor or member responsibilities • Location of public land and building assets • Minutes, agendas and papers of formal meetings
M. The authority, during the previous year, correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations		Notice of Public Rights was published correctly for the financial year 2023-2024. The Council confirmed in Minutes the dates set for the Notice of Public Rights (this is not a statutory requirement but it is accepted as audit evidence that the Council complied with the publication requirements).
N. The authority complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.		The PC correctly published the Annual Governance Statement, the Accounting Statements, the External Auditor's report and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit.

O. Trust funds (including charitable) - the Council met its responsibilities as a trustee	Yes	The PC is a trustee of the Woodcote Allotment Charity Meetings and accounts are held separately from the PC and the return was submitted on time for 2024.

Internal control objective	Response	Notes/Recommendations
Miscellaneous		
Website Accessibility	Yes	The Council website is partially conformant with WCAG 2.1 level AA Documents are published as pdfs.
Members' interests		Code of conduct was reviewed on 1st May 2024. South Oxfordshire District Council holds the list of members' interests. Any declarations of interests are recorded in the minutes.
Policies		GDPR: • Privacy notice • Data Protection policy • Information Request policy • Freedom of Information Publication scheme • Document Retention policy
Committees		The following committees/working groups exist: • Staffing committee • Public spaces Working Group • Greenmoor Pond Restoration committee Terms of reference are available for these groups.
Data storage		Electronic data is backed up on Onedrive regularly. Physical records are securely stored.
S137/GPC		The PC is not eligible for the General Power of Competence. S137 payments are well within the allowed limit and noted separately.

Internal audit carried out by	**(signed)** 	**(print)** **Lisa Wilkinson**
Audit type (delete as appropriate)	~~**INTERIM**~~ **ANNUAL**	
Date 07/05/2025		

Any further comments
The overall internal audit assurance rating is EXCELLENT
Acknowledgments The help and co-operation of Laura White is greatly appreciated.

Part 3 of Annual Return form completed and signed	**07/05/2025**