

## INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

**Eaton Parish Council** for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

This Internal Audit was undertaken in accordance with the guidance set out in the 2025 edition of the SAPPP Practitioners Guide. Eaton Parish Council is a small authority which met the criteria for exemption from External Audit.

### **Work to address issues identified in 2024/25 Internal Audit**

The Internal Audit for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 was undertaken by Adam Keppel-Green. It identified three specific issues:

#### 1 – Assertion L: Transparency Code

*The council again did not publish the amended 2023/24 AGAR approved at the May meeting, nor did it publish the Internal Audit report for the 2023/24 financial year as required.*

*The council does not publish a list of payments made in accordance with the Code. It should ensure it does this by 1<sup>st</sup> July for the 2024/25 financial year.*

*The council's website does not list the council's landholdings in accordance with the Code. It should state that it has a leasehold interest in Millennium Park.*

*The authority should:*

- a) Publish the correct AGAR and Internal Audit report for 2023/24*
- b) Ensure it publishes the full AGAR for 2024/25*

*The minutes do not record the council receiving the Internal Audit report. This should be minuted, particularly where there have been recommendations for improvement, to evidence the council as a body has received the report.*

This has been actioned, and the required information has been published.

#### 2 – Assertion N: 2023/24 AGAR Publication

*As above.*

This has been actioned.

#### 3 - Customised Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

*The council has partially customised model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, however the method by which it has done so could lead to confusion. In sections it has marked as irrelevant, it has a “N/A” notation. This is easy to miss, and it is recommended that where sections are not relevant that they be removed completely to avoid confusion. This is particularly the case in Financial Regulations.*

*There are also sections where personalisation is required but has been missed i.e. Standing Order 6d and 24b.*

*Financial Regulations refer to “regulations issued under section 27 of the Audit Commission Act 1998”. That Act was repealed in 2014 and the correct reference to the extant Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 should be stated. Similarly, the Audit Commission Act 1998 is referred to in other financial regulations and in some sections the personalisation has not been complete making it read as though the Clerk and RFO are separate people (e.g. FR 17.1)*

*The latest model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are available from NALC/ChALC.*

This has been actioned.

## **Issues Identified 2025/26**

### **Assertion C Risk Register**

Whilst the council has reviewed risks, the minute of its approval of this shows it was not a lawful decision (see *Other Governance Matters* below).

The council must ensure it is an express item, specified on the agenda for the meeting at which it is to be approved.

### **Assertion H Asset Register**

The council has identified additional assets which were not included on previous asset registers. The council also received donated items which were initially recorded on the register at a value as though they had been purchased.

Guidance has been provided to the Clerk:

- a) That it is a requirement to the requirement to restate the figure for the previous year on the AGAR – this ensures the comparison between the years will refer to change in assets during the year
- b) That it is a requirement to record donated items at a proxy value of £1.

The Asset Register has been updated and figures corrected and no further action is required.

### **Assertion O Data and Digital**

The council has adopted a suitable IT policy (but, see *Other Governance Matters*, below) and the website has an accessibility statement. The council has set up a dedicated email address for the clerk on a council owned domain.

The council has provided a Data Protection Policy, however it is in draft form and has not yet been adopted. The council should ensure this is formally approved.

## **Other Governance Matters**

It is a requirement of the Local Government Act 1972 that the business to be transacted must be specified on the agenda. The purpose of this is to ensure that the areas where decisions are to be made are clear to councillors and, under the Transparency Code, the public.

At the March meeting, the council had an item:

*16. Any other correspondence, including any matters to be included in the Parish magazine*

The “Any other correspondence” is not specific, therefore no lawful decisions could be made under this item; it would be acceptable to receive/note correspondence.

However, the minutes of this meeting show that a number of decisions unconnected with this item were made, significantly this involved approval of policies:

*2207 Any other correspondence, including any matters to be included in the Parish Magazine*

*It was RESOLVED to make an amendment in the FOI policy to include the fact that the minutes are available on the noticeboard as well as the website. Providing the above amendment is made, it was RESOLVED to approve the FOI policy, the newly drafted IT policy and financial risk assessment.*

*The Clerk will draft a Health and Safety policy for approval at the May.*

*Cllr. Waltho provided a brief update on a meeting that he had attended at Congleton Town Council. There was nothing to include in the Parish Magazine this time.*

The decisions highlighted were not lawful. No-one reading this agenda would have been aware decisions would have been made on approval of an FOI policy, IT policy or the financial risk assessment. They were not specified sufficiently on the agenda.

The council should:

- a) ratify these decisions under a specific item
- b) ensure that all decisions are made under specific items