

**INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT
2025/2026 - ANNUAL RETURN
SEATON with SLINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

1. Background

1.1. Following the abolition of the Audit Commission a new organisation has been established which is responsible for issuing proper practices in relation to the accounts of smaller authorities. It is called the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Board (SAPPB), and is made up of members of the SLCC, NALC, CIPFA, the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the National Audit Office and a representative of the external audit firms appointed to smaller authorities

1.2. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 must complete Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) at the end of each financial year.

Where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less, a council can certify themselves as exempt from a limited assurance review, and complete part 2 of the AGAR. The AGAR for part 2 is made up of 2 sections along with an annual internal audit report. which is to be completed by the Parish Council's independent internal auditor, who is to give an opinion on the Parish Council's internal controls.

1.3. Members agreed the certification of exemption on 14th May 2025 annual meeting.

1.4. CDALC have previously provided Councils with a checklist to be used, this annual audit uses this list as the minimum of the tests to be carried out.

2. Objectives of the Audit

2.1. To examine the system of internal controls to ensure that the Parish Council may obtain an adequate level of assurance for its activities.

3. Scope of the Work and the areas of Audit Work examined.

3.1. The Scope of Work covers the ten key control tests identified in the AGAR, only nine of these were examined, as the Parish Council does not have any petty cash.

3.2. To properly complete the audit the following areas of activity have been examined and tested by the Internal Auditor:

- Payroll
- Creditors (including postage book)
- Risk Management
- Income collection and Banking arrangements
- Accounting records,
- Assets
- Debtors
- Budgetary Control (including year end procedures)

3.3. The audit findings of this report have been discussed with the Clerk of the Council and any audit recommendations have been agreed with her.

4. Findings

4.1. Payroll

4.1.1 The Parish Council has 1 employee who works the agreed hours and is paid in line with NJC paycales.

4.1.2 Payroll information is processed by J.A.C.S.(Accountancy Services) who provide payslips and payroll

information which allows the Clerk to pay her salary and tax by cheque. through the Council's bank account. All payments are confirmed by Councillors during the accounts paid each month procedure.

- 4.1.3. All payroll information was checked for the year and was processed correctly, and the amounts were found to be properly paid from the Council's bank account.

4.2. Creditors

- 4.2.1. There are no separation of duties at Seaton with Slingley Parish Council as the Parish Clerk is the only Officer responsible for Finance and Administration. Compensating checks are carried out by the Members and Financial Regulations outline the system to be followed.
- 4.2.2. Cheques for payment are normally prepared by the Responsible Finance Officer (Clerk) and together with the relevant invoices are presented to Members each month to view and check. 2 Members sign the cheques at the Parish Meeting and initial the cheque stubs. A record of all cheques numbers and details of expenditure are shown in the Council's minutes to be approved.
- 4.2.3. I confirmed all payments and the associated records for the year and these were found to be properly recorded in the Receipts and Payments book, with 0 queries for investigation.
- 4.2.4. All donations paid had been agreed by the Council prior to payment being made and were properly recorded as Section 137 payments in the Receipts and Payment book.
- 4.2.5. All purchases and issues of stamps are recorded in a postage book and this was found to be properly recorded and the balance of stamps (2) in hand confirmed, at the time of the audit.

4.3. Governance Arrangements

- 4.3.1. The Financial Regulations and Standing Orders of the Council along with other policies and a review of the Councils Risk Management policy and Risk Management Strategy were approved at the Annual Council meeting on 14th May 2025 within the effectiveness of internal control, and at the Council meeting on 18th March 2026 with the annual review of policies.

These are essential for good governance for the Council, and for effective internal controls. The minimum internal audit testing required by CDALC states that Financial Regulations and standing orders should be reviewed within the current financial year.

- 4.3.2. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to the accounts. The statement for 2024/25 was approved at the Annual Meeting on 14th May 2025 to support the AGAR.
- 4.3.3. The Council have an annual review of policies and procedures in March (18th March 2026 meeting).
- 4.3.4. There appears to be adequate insurance cover for all assets of the Council, which was reviewed at the 16th July 2025 meeting.
- 4.3.5. The announcement of the public rights for 2024/2025 was dated 2nd June 2025 with the inspection of the accounts available between 3rd June to 4th July 2025 and was placed on the website.
- 4.3.6. A report on compliance to Assertion 10 within the AGAR was agreed at the 18th March 2026 Council meeting

4.4. Income collection and Banking arrangements

- 4.4.1. All Income received is banked through a paying in book which is recorded in the Receipts and Payments Book. The paying in book gives details of the banking.
- 4.4.2. I examined all the income records for the year and confirmed that all income had been received, promptly banked, and properly recorded in the Receipts and Payments book.

- 4.4.3. Vat is recorded in the Receipt and Payments cash book and is claimed annually. Vat refund had been received for 2024/20254 on 25th April 2025 and was found to be correct. The VAT claim for 2025/26 has been recently completed and submitted.
- 4.4.4. There is 1 current bank account held by the Council which shows all income and expenditure for the Council.
- 4.4.5. I agreed the reconciliation of the bank statement at the end of the year to the Receipts and Payments book as at 31st March 2026

4.5. Accounting Records

- 4.5.1. All Receipts and Payments were properly recorded in the cash book, the Clerk carries out regular bank reconciliations, which are submitted to Members monthly.

4.6. Security/Assets

- 4.6.1. I understand that the Council does not own any assets.

4.7. Debtors

- 4.7.1. There are no accounts raised for debts as Debtors either pay by cash or a cheque is received for work/service carried out.

4.8. Budgetary Control

- 4.8.1. The budget was initially discussed at the 19th November 2025 Council meeting and the detailed budget and precept was agreed at the Council meeting on 10th December 2025. The annual budget was prepared to support the precept.
- 4.8.2. I understand that at every Council meeting Members are provided with details of receipts and payments reports, and details of the financial position in comparison to the budget.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. Of the key controls examined within part of the return there was nothing which was considered to be of concern, and all were found to be working satisfactory.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. There were no recommendations to make.



Gordon Fletcher (C.M.I.I.A.)
Internal Auditor
Date: 24th April 2026