

BARTON BENDISH PARISH COUNCIL

INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

Barton Bendish Parish Council is a local authority funded largely by public money and is responsible for ensuring its financial business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council is required to review at least annually the effectiveness of its systems of financial control. This is informed by the work of the internal auditor and the Council as the body corporate who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal audit environment and any comments made by the Council's appointed internal and external auditors in their respective interim and annual reports.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. THE INTERNAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

The Council:

The council reviews its obligations and objectives throughout the year and approves budgets for the following year at its January meeting. The January meeting of the council is also when the council approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The full council meets 6 times each year and monitors progress against its aims and objectives at each meeting by receiving relevant reports from the Parish Clerk.

The council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems and procedures.

Clerk to the council/responsible finance officer:

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for advising on the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing risks. The Clerk also provides advice to help the Council ensure that its procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to.

Payments:

All payments are reported to the council for approval. Two members of the council must sign every cheque or authorise every online payment. The signatories should consider each cheque or online payment against the relevant invoice, sign the invoice and initial the cheque counterfoil. All authorised cheque signatories are members of the Council. No officer of the Council can sign cheques.

Online Payments:

In addition to traditional cheque payments, Barton Bendish Parish Council also facilitates online payments for greater efficiency and convenience.

Online payments are initiated and set up by the Clerk to the Council, who acts as the Responsible Financial Officer. Before any online payment is authorised, two members of the council, appointed as authorised signatories, independently review and authorise each online payment. This process includes a thorough examination of the relevant invoices, ensuring accuracy and adherence to the council's financial policies. The authorised signatories are council members, and no officer of the Council has the authority to authorise online payments.

Income:

All income is received and banked in the council's name in a timely manner and reported to the council.

Risk Assessments/Risk Management:

The council reviews its risk assessment annually in March, and regularly reviews its systems and controls.

Internal Audit:

The council appoints an independent internal auditor who reports to the council on the adequacy of its:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| • Records | • Procedures |
| • Systems | • Internal control |
| • Regulations | • Risk management |

External Audit:

Providing the council is able to certify that it meets the various qualifying criteria set out on the Certificate of Exemption, and the higher of its annual gross income and gross expenditure was £25,000 or less, the council will declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review by the external auditor by **resolution** at a meeting of the council after the conclusion of a financial year. The Certificate of Exemption will then be completed, signed and returned to the external auditor.

Where the council does not meet the exemption criteria, the council's external auditors, submit an annual certificate of audit which is presented to the Council.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

The council has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control, which should include a review of the effectiveness of internal audit. The results of that review must be considered by the Council, which should also approve the Statement on Internal Control.

W Chapman

S Sweet

Chairman

RFO/Clerk

Reviewed Nov 2023

Review Nov 2024