

EASTON PARISH COUNCIL

INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT FOR YEAR 2024-25 (approved 20 January 2025)

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Easton Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The council is 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.

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 and approves budgets for the following year at its November meeting. The November meeting of 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/RFO.

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

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. A Responsible Financial Officer has been appointed 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.

The Council uses on-line banking. All invoices must be authorised by 2 members of the council. Paper copies of the invoices are initialled by the authorisers and held by the Clerk/RFO.

Two members of the council must sign every cheque or order for payment. The signatories should consider each payment against the relevant invoice, sign the invoice and initial the cheque counterfoil.

All authorised cheque signatories or authorisers are members of the Council. Where delegation permits, as per s.101(1)(a) of the Local Government Act of 1972 and the Council's Financial Regulations, a report will be provided to the next full Council.

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 January and regularly reviews its systems and controls.

Internal Audit:

The council appoints an independent and competent internal auditor who reports to the council on an annual basis on the adequacy of it's:

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

External Audit:

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 of Internal Control.

Approved and adopted by Easton Parish Council at their meeting on 20 January 2025

Next Review: January 2026

EASTON PARISH COUNCIL

INTERNAL CONTROL REPORT

The Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 aims to strengthen governance and accountability through requirements related to internal control and internal audit.

Whilst the Parish Council has reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit (independence, competence, proportionate and scope), it has a requirement levied on it to ensure that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control: -

‘The regulations require active participation by members in providing positive assurance to the electors of their stewardship of public money. The framework of accountability is risk-based i.e. level of control and management must be appropriate to the risk involved. The Council must determine the most appropriate method of internal control.... care should be taken to ensure that internal control tests are proportionate and relevant and that they are neither seen as, nor intended as, undue interference in the RFO’s day to day management of financial affairs.’

As part of its internal control, the Easton Parish Council has appointed a non-signatory Councillor to conduct a review of the system of internal control via the following tests on an annual basis with a written report of any findings to be submitted to the Council and minuted as received.

| CONTROL TEST | TEST DONE | COMMENTS – check documents and initial |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|
| | Yes or No | |
| Ensuring an up to date Register of Assets | | |
| Regular maintenance arrangement for physical assets | | |
| Annual review of risk and the adequacy of Insurance cover | | |
| Annual review of financial risk | | |
| Awareness of Standing Orders and Financial regulations | | |
| Adoption of Financial and Standing Orders | | |
| | | |
| Regular reporting on performance by | | |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--|
| contractors | | |
| Annual review of contracts (where appropriate) | n/a | |
| | | |
| Regular bank reconciliation, independently reviewed | | |
| Regular scrutiny of financial records and proper arrangements for the approval of expenditure | | |
| Recording in the minutes or appendices of the minutes the precise powers under which expenditure is being approved | | |
| Payments supported by invoices, authorised and minuted | | |
| Regular scrutiny of income records to ensure income is correctly received, recorded and banked | | |
| Scrutiny to ensure precept recorded in the cashbook agrees to District Council notification | | |
| | | |
| Contracts of employment for staff Contract annually reviewed Updating records to record changes in relevant legislation PAYE/NIC properly operated by the Council as an employer | | |
| | | |
| VAT correctly accounted for VAT payments identified, recorded and reclaimed in the cashbook | | |
| | | |
| Regular financial reporting to Parish Council | | |
| Regular budget monitoring statements as re- | | |

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| ported to Parish Council | | |
| Compliance with DCLG Guide <i>Open & Accountable Local Government 2014</i> , Part 4: Officer Decision Reports | | |
| Compliance with Local Transparency Code Of 2014: Items of expenditure incurred over £500 | | |
| Verifying that the Council is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements Are the following in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit / Impact Assessment • Privacy Notices • Procedures for dealing with Subject Access Requests • Procedure for dealing with Data breaches • Data Retention & Disposal Policies | | |
| Minutes properly numbered and paginated with a master copy kept in for safe-keeping | | |
| | | |
| Procedures in place for recording and monitoring Members' Interests and Gifts of Hospitality | | |
| | | |
| Adoption of Codes of Conduct for Members | | |
| Declaration of Acceptance of Office | | |

Date of review of system of Internal Controls.....

Review of system of Internal Controls carried out by:

Name.....Signature.....

Report submitted to Council (date).....

(minute reference)

Next review of system of Internal Controls due.....

Additional comments by reviewer: