

RYARSH PARISH COUNCIL

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2016-17

I am pleased to report to Members of the Parish Council that I have completed my internal audit of the Parish Council's records for 2016-17 and have been able to complete Section 4 of the 2016-17 Annual Return.

Members should be aware that the audit tests that I undertook during the audit cannot be relied on to identify the occasional omission or insignificant error, nor to disclose breaches of trust or statute, neglect or fraud which may have taken place and which it is the responsibility of the Members of the Council to guard against through the Parish Council's internal control procedures.

Members will be pleased to know that I did not find anything major in my financial audit to report and that I found the record keeping to be of a good standard and the Parish Council's approach to the management of risks to be sound. As a result of my audit and my discussion with your Clerk I was able to answer 'YES' to all the relevant questions contained in Section 4 of the Annual Return for 2016-17.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank your Clerk for the assistance given to me in the conduct of the audit that took place on 15 May 2017.

PREVIOUS AUDITS:

External Audit Certificate 2015-16:

The External Audit Certificate for 2015-16 (Section 3 of the Annual Return) was unqualified. The External Auditor commented about the split of staff and office costs and asked for the 2015-16 comparators in the 2016-17 form be restated.

Internal Audit 2015-16:

There are no matters outstanding from the 2015-16 audit.

FINDINGS THIS VISIT:

During the visit I carried out sufficient work to enable me to complete Section 4 of the Annual return which included reading the minutes, checking the accounting records including the cashbook, payroll, VAT records, bank statements and bank reconciliations with the cashbook. I also reviewed the asset register and insurance schedule.

I found all the financial records to be accurate and up to date. There were no unexplained entries in the bank reconciliations.

The last claim made to HM Revenue & Customs for recovery of VAT covered the period to February 2016. The next claim will include VAT incurred on the play equipment installed during 2016-17. I would recommend that claims for VAT recovery are made at least annually – on grounds of good practice, cash flow, avoidance of loss and consistency between years.

The Clerk discussed with me the matter of councillors' dispensations in respect of setting the precept. There is a divergence of views about this. The National Association of Local Councils is of the view that dispensations are required whereas the Department for Communities and Local Government believes that this is unnecessary for a such a fundamental function of a local (or principal) council. Unless and until the matter is resolved by a court case or legislation the safer course would be to continue to obtain dispensations. However, in my experience a large majority of local and principal councils do not require dispensations for precept or council tax setting so that there would appear to be little risk in Ryarsh Parish Council doing likewise.

Lionel Robbins
Independent Internal Auditor
27 May 2017