

Report to Redgrave Parish Council

The Internal Audit of the Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025

1. Introduction and Summary.

1.1 On 4 June 2025 the Internal Auditor visited the Chair of the Council, Andy Warnes, and the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), Alison Spouncer, to complete the End of Year Internal Audit review following preparatory work undertaken remotely/electronically.

1.2 The overall Internal Audit work undertaken confirmed that during the 2024/25 year the Council continued to maintain effective overall governance arrangements. The Review, undertaken on the documentation provided to the Internal Auditor and on the information published on the Council's website, confirmed that the Council maintains an effective framework of financial administration and internal financial control and a robust framework of internal control and risk management.

1.3 By examination of the 2024/25 accounts and supporting documentation it was confirmed that the Clerk, in the role of the Council's RFO, satisfactorily undertook the administration of the Council's financial affairs and produced financial management information to enable the Council to make well-informed decisions.

1.4 The Accounts for the year confirm the following:

Total Receipts for the year: £44,398.93

Total Payments in the year: £28,190.06

Total Reserves at year-end: £64,607.41

1.5 The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for submission to the External Auditors was approved by the Council at its meeting on 8 May 2025. The Internal Auditor has completed the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 within the AGAR.

1.6 The following Internal Audit work was carried out on the adequacy of systems of internal control in accordance with the Audit Plan. Comments and any recommendations arising from the review are made below.

2. Governance, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other Regulatory matters (*examination of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Formal Policies and Procedures, Tenders where relevant. Acting within the legal framework, including Data Protection legislation*).

2.1 The Annual Parish Council meeting in 2024/25 took place on 9 May 2024. The first item of business was the Election of a Chair, as required by the Local Government Act 1972.

2.2 Standing Orders are in place and were reviewed and approved by the Council on 6 June 2024 and 3 October 2024. The Standing Orders are based on the model

documents and guidance published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). A copy has been published on the Council's website. Revisions to the model Standing Orders were published by NALC on 31 March 2025 and these can be considered by the Council at its next review of Standing Orders.

2.3 Similarly, Financial Regulations are in place and were reviewed and approved by the Council at its meeting on 3 April 2025. NALC had issued a revised template for Financial Regulations to be adopted by Parish Councils. A revised version of the Parish Council's Financial Regulations to incorporate the changes was circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting and the Council agreed to adopt the revised Financial Regulations.

2.4 The Council has a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) in post. The Council resolved at its meeting on 1 September 2022 to appoint Alison Spouncer to the permanent post of Clerk/RFO from 1 September 2022 and approved the terms and conditions of her employment.

2.5 A Redgrave Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2037 is in place. The Council's website confirms that on 20 July 2022 the District Council adopted the Redgrave Neighbourhood Plan, a copy of which has been published on the website. At its meeting on 5 December 2024 the Council discussed the option of re-engaging the Neighbourhood Plan Team in readiness for the renewal required in 2027/28. It had been two years since approval of the Plan. The Council noted that NALC suggests it is good practice to review it again every five years but GOV.uk advises it is not mandatory unless there have been major changes. The Council has agreed a review is not currently necessary as there were no major changes or outcomes following the Housing Needs Survey.

2.6 The Council's eligibility for the General Power of Competence (GPoC) ceased in May 2023 as it no longer met the eligibility criteria for adoption as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012.

2.7 The Minutes of the meetings of the Council are well presented, pages are consecutively numbered and provide adequate evidence of the decisions taken by the Council in the year. The Clerk/RFO confirmed that Minutes of meetings are being signed/initialled by the Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes are approved to secure an authentic and legal record.

2.8 The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Fee Payer/Data Controller for the provision of council services under Data Protection legislation (Registration ZA148950 refers, expiring 17 January 2026).

2.9 The Council has adopted formal Data Protection Policies and Procedures to evidence compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).as follows:

Data Protection Policy
Information Security Incident Policy.
Document Control and Records Management Policy
Communication Policy

2.10 The Council also has a Privacy Notice in place and a copy is published on the Council's website.

2.11 The Council demonstrates good governance practice by maintaining a Schedule of Policies and Procedures (updated in May 2025) which displays the date of adoption and the next review date. The Schedule lists the range of formal policies and procedures and is published on the Council's website. The following Policies were reviewed and adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3 October 2024:

- Child & Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Environmental Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Statement on Internal Control
- Grievance Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Appendix 1 to Freedom of Information Policy (Publication Scheme)
- Redgrave Parish Council Standing Orders
- Redgrave Parish Council Vexatious Complaints Policy
- Risk Assessment
- Health & Safety Policy
- General Privacy Notice

2.12 On 7 November 2024 the Council reviewed and approved the following:

- Charity Trustee Appointment Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Communications Policy
- Document Control & Records Management Policy
- Information Security Incident Policy

2.13 The Council also agreed on 5 December 2024 to adopt a Sexual and General Harassment Policy which was based on the NALC template.

2.14 The Council agreed to adopt the up-to-date NALC/LGA Code of Conduct for Councillors at its meeting on 9 May 2024. The Council also agreed to continue to accept and comply with the Local Suffolk Code of Conduct. The Council demonstrates good governance practice by annually reviewing the Codes in place for the purposes of discharging its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within its area.

2.15 NALC recommendations and Best Practice Guidelines for 2025/26 provide that local councils should look to register under an official .gov.uk domain name with councillor email addresses linked to that domain name. Many Councils are looking to apply for a gov.uk domain and email address in order for Councillors to keep their council emails separate. It is an issue the Council may wish to consider during 2025/26.

2.16 The Council has not yet published a Website Accessibility Statement to assist compliance with the current website accessibility legislation. It is good practice for a Council to publish (or require the website host on behalf of the Council) to publish a Website Accessibility Statement to assist and evidence compliance. The Statement should detail what the Council has done to ensure that as many people as possible

are able to use the website, any areas of the website that may not be fully accessible with contact details to report accessibility problems. The Auditor discussed this issue with the Chair and the Clerk/RFO who agreed to examine this issue during the year 2025/26.

3. Accounting Procedures and Proper Book-keeping (examination of entries in the Cashbook, regular reconciliations, supporting vouchers, invoices and receipts and VAT accounting).

3.1 The Scribe Accounting System has been used for the completion of the 2024/25 accounts. Scribe is a cloud-based operating system, accessed by personal log-in and password, and can be accessed through any internet platform and connection. The accounting package produces reports suitable for internal and external audits and provides financial and budgetary information for Councillors, who have been offered read-only access to the application. The Chair and the Clerk/RFO have full access to the Scribe system as system administrators.

3.2 The Scribe Accounting System is well referenced and provides a good audit trail to the financial information prepared by the Clerk/RFO.

3.3 VAT reclaims are being submitted to HMRC. The re-claim for the £911.11 VAT paid in the year 2023/24 was reimbursed by HMRC on 3 May 2024 and reported to Council at its meeting on 9 May 2024.

3.4 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Report for the year ended 31 March 2025 shows a balance of £14,701.98 brought forward from previous years, CIL receipts of £16,565.52 with £0 CIL spent in the year. A balance of £31,267.50 is accordingly displayed as retained as at 31 March 2025 as a Restricted Reserve. The Annual Report has to be published on the Council's website and has to be submitted to the District Council no later than 31 December 2025.

3.5 A Statement of Explanation of Variances (explaining significant differences in receipts and payments between the years 2023/24 and 2024/25) has been prepared by the Clerk/RFO for submission to the External Auditor and for publishing on the Council's website.

4. Bank Reconciliation (Regularly completed and cash books reconcile with bank statements).

4.1 Bank balances are reported to meetings of the Council. A quarterly bank reconciliation was approved by the Council on 11 July 2024 and signed by the Clerk and the Chair.

4.2 The bank statements as at 31 March 2025 display the following:

Unity Trust Bank Current Account:	£3,429.97
Unity Trust Bank Instant Access Savings Account :	£61,177.44

The total amount of £64,607.41 reconciled with the Accounts as at 31 March 2025.

5. Year End procedures (Regarding accounting procedures used and can be followed through from working papers to final documents. Verifying sample payments and income. Checking creditors and debtors where appropriate).

5.1 End-of-Year accounts are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis and were in good order.

6. Internal Control and the Management of Risk (Review by Council of the effectiveness of internal controls, including risk assessment, and Minuted accordingly).

6.1 The Council has a Statement of Internal Control in place which was reviewed and adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3 October 2024 (Minute 11 refers). The Statement is detailed and includes reference to the Risk Assessment of the Council's assets and key activities.

6.2 The Council's Risk Assessment document is comprehensive and provides details of identified risks, the level of risk (H, M or L), the internal control arrangements in place to mitigate the risks, the actions taken by the Council and Clerk/RFO and confirmation of the adequacy of the procedures in operation. The review of the documentation was completed during the year of account under the headings of Financial and Management, Third Parties or Individuals, Employer Liability, Physical Equipment or Areas and Emergencies. The document was formally reviewed and adopted on 3 October 2024 (Minute 11 refers).

6.3 The Council accordingly complied with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which require a review by the Full Council at least once each financial year of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control, including the arrangements for the management of risk, with the review suitably Minuted.

6.4 The Council receives routine reports regarding the Play Area. The Council is included in a package of annual inspections arranged by Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Council. This inspection is carried out by The Play Inspection Company. In addition, visual inspections of the play equipment are undertaken on a weekly basis with reports published on the Council's website.

6.5 Insurance was in place in the year of account. The Policy runs from 14 October 2024 to 13 October 2025. On 2 November 2023 the Council approved insurance cover with Zurich Municipal Insurance and agreed the payment of the premium of £533.00, a significant saving on the previous year's premium.

7. Budgetary controls (Verification of the budgetary process with reference to Council Minutes and supporting documents).

Precept 2024/25: £25,252.16 (18 January 2024, Minute 12 refers).

Precept 2025/26: £26,001.65 (9 January 2025)

7.1 For the year 2024/25, the final budget figures were presented to the Council on 18 January 2024 when it was resolved to set a Budget of £24,139.94 for the year

2024/25 and to request a Precept of £25,252.16 from the District Council. The Precept for 2024/25 was agreed in Full Council and the precept decision and amount have been clearly Minuted.

7.2 A Draft Budget for 2025/26 was considered by the Council at its meeting on 5 December 2024. The Budget and Precept for the year 2025/26 were discussed and agreed by the Council at its meeting on 9 January 2025. The amount of the Precept was not recorded in the Minutes. (The Chair advised the Internal Auditor that the amount of the 2025/26 Precept agreed by the Council was £26,001.65). The amount of the Precept agreed by the Council should in future be clearly shown in the Minutes of the Council's meeting to ensure that both the decision and amount become a formal and legal record and full transparency is secured in advising local taxpayers of the total amount that is to be charged.

7.3. The Council prepared detailed estimates of the annual budget and of receipts and payments for the years 2024/25 and 2025/26.

7.4 The Council's Overall Reserves as at 31 March 2025 totalled £64,607.41 and consisted as the following:

Village Improvements/Projects:	£14,150.00
Community Transport:	£3,500.00
Traffic Measures:	£2,090.00
CIL Funds (restricted)	£31,267.50
General Fund:	£3,429.77
General Reserves:	£10,170.14

7.5 The Council's General Reserves (Overall Reserves less Earmarked/Restricted Reserves) at the year-end 31 March 2025 totalled £10,170.14 (39% or 4.7 months' equivalent of the 2025/26 Precept) and were in line with the generally accepted best practice position of between 3 to 12 months equivalent of net revenue expenditure/precept (the JPAG Proper Practices Guide, Item 5.34 refers). The Council maintains sufficient Overall Reserves and contingency sums to meet, within reason, any unforeseen items of expense that may occur.

8. Income Controls (regarding sums received from Precept, Grants, Loans and other income including credit control mechanisms).

8.1 Receipts are reported to Council and Minuted as a matter of routine. Receipts recorded in the Cashbook totalled £44,398.93 and consisted of Precept (£25,252.16), Grant Income (£500), CIL Funds (£16,565.52), VAT repaid by HMRC (£911.11) and Bank Interest (£1,170.14).

9. Petty Cash (Associated books and established system in place).

9.1 A Petty Cash system is not in use. An expenses system is in place, with online payments being made for expenses incurred and approved.

10. Payroll Controls (*PAYE and NIC in place; compliant with HMRC procedures; records relating to contracts of employment*).

10.1 Payroll Services are being operated by SALC on behalf of the Council in accordance with HMRC requirements.

10.2 The Council resolved at its meeting on 1 September 2022 to appoint Alison Spouncer to the permanent post of Redgrave Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer from that date. The Council approved the terms and conditions of her employment (NALC/NJC Pay Scale 27 for 7 hours per week, plus SCC Pension Fund contributions (should this be taken up by the employee) and other Terms and Conditions in accordance with the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services (the 'Green Book') and the relevant UK employment legislation).

10.3 With regard to the legislation relating to workplace pensions, the Clerk/RFO confirmed that the necessary re-declaration of compliance had been made to the Pensions Regulator under the Pensions Act 2008. (The re-declaration of compliance confirms to the Pensions Regulator that the Council complies with its duties as an employer and has to be completed every three years).

11. Assets Controls (*Inspection of asset register and checks on existence of assets; recording of fixed asset valuations; cross checking on insurance cover*).

11.1 An Asset Register is in place and is periodically reviewed and agreed by the Council. The Asset Register presented to the Internal Auditor displayed a total valuation of £50,521 as at 31 March 2025, a net decrease of £8,229 from the value of £58,750 at the end of the previous year, 31 March 2024. The Clerk/RFO confirmed that the net decrease was due to the write off of £10,000 for the final equipment taken down from the previous children's playground which was now in an unusable state and the addition of a newly purchased lawn mower valued at £500, two benches valued at £830 and one new dog bin at £441.

11.2 The Council noted the updated Asset Register at the meeting on 8 May 2025.

11.3 The assets are valued at purchase value or at a nominal (community) value of £1 where appropriate to ensure that the Council's ownership and responsibility are recognised and not lost or forgotten. The Register also has a column displaying Insured Value and indicates any assets which are not insured.

11.4 The Register complies with the current requirements which provide that each asset should be displayed at a consistent value, year-on-year. The value has been entered into Box 9 of Section 2 of the AGAR.

12. Internal Financial Controls, Payments Controls and Audit Procedures (Confirmation that the Council has satisfactory internal financial controls in place for making payments with adequate documentation to support/evidence payments made. Any previous audit recommendations implemented).

12.1 The Council has appropriate internal financial controls in place. The Clerk/RFO provides financial reports to Council meetings, including the Account balance and details of any receipts. Details of the accounts paid between meetings and the accounts requiring approval for payment are presented to the Council. Councillors are provided with information to enable them to make informed decisions.

12.2 Online banking is in operation. The Clerk/RFO confirmed that the procedure in place provides for the Clerk/RFO to initiate the payment which is then authorised electronically by one Councillor (the Council has given sign-off authority to two Councillors).

12.3 Receipts and payments are listed in the Council's Minutes as part of the overall financial control framework.

12.4 The Annual Internal Audit Report for the previous year, 2023/24, was received and accepted by the Council at its meeting on 6 June 2024. The Report put forward the recommendation that the Council should ensure that in future all relevant documents are published in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. This issue had been successfully addressed for the year 2024/25.

12.5 The Internal Auditor for the year 2024/25 was appointed by the Council at its meeting on 6 February 2025 (Minute 14 refers).

13. External Audit (Recommendations put forward/comments made following the annual review).

13.1 The Report and Certificate by the External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP, was dated 23 September 2024 and were received and noted by the Council at its meeting on 3 October 2024.

13.2 For the year 2024/25 the Council is again required to receive an External Audit (a Limited Assurance Review under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015) as the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 in the year of account.

14. Publication Requirements.

14.1 Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 authorities must publish each year the following information on a publicly accessible website (by 1 July each year):

*Notice of the period for the exercise of Public Rights
AGAR - Sections 1 and 2.*

14.2 Following the completion of the External Audit and by 30 September each year:

Notice of Conclusion of Audit

AGAR - Section 3

AGAR - Sections 1 and 2 (including any amendments as a result of the Limited Assurance Review).

14.3 The Internal Auditor was able to confirm that the above documents had been published on the Council's website <http://redgrave.onesuffolk.net/> in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

15. Additional Comments.

15.1 I would like to record my appreciation to the Chair of the Council and to the Clerk to the Council for their assistance during the course of the audit work.

Trevor Brown

Trevor Brown, CPFA

Internal Auditor

6 June 2025