Internal Audit Report for

Orford and Gedgrave Parish Council

for the period ending 31 March 2026

Clerk	Marie Backhouse
RFO (if different)	-
Chairperson	Anne Macro
Precept	£39,850.00
Income	£63,526.00
Expenditure	£98,111.00
General reserves	£54,138.14
Earmarked reserves	£37,686.24
Audit type	Annual **non-exempt authority**
Auditor name	**Kim Puttock**

Introduction

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council. To achieve this SALC adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity, and corruption

- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts, and data

Methodology

When conducting the audit, the internal auditor may:

- conduct a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year in order to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws, and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being conducted as planned

Section 1 – Financial Regulation and Standing Orders The internal auditor will check the date the Council conducted its annual review of both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and in particular check if these are based on NALC'S latest model which include legislative changes.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	*Yes*	Council's Standing Orders are based on the latest model published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), April 2025 and are fully tailored to the council. Council approved its Standing Orders at a meeting of full council held on 14 May 2025 (min ref: 13.1) **RECOMMENDATION: Square brackets feature throughout indicating that the Standing Orders have not be tailored to the needs of the council. A model standing order that includes brackets like this '[ ]' and the term 'OR' provides alternative options for a council to choose from when determining standing orders.**
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	*Yes*	Financial Regulations, as seen on the Council's website, are based on the latest model published by NALC, Model Financial Regulations March 2025 with provisions included as outlined under NALC Advice Note – Procurement, 3 February 2026. Council approved its Financial Regulations at a meeting of full council held on 14 May 2025 (min ref: 13.1)
Has the Council properly tailored the Financial Regulations?	*Yes*	The Council's Financial Regulations have been tailored to the Parish Council.
Has the Council appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)?[1]	*Yes*	In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (financial administration), the Council has appointed a person (the Clerk) to be responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the relevant authority. Council's Financial Regulation 1.5 confirms that the Clerk is so appointed.
Additional comments:		

[1] Section 151 Local Government Act 1972

Section 2 – Budgetary controls The internal auditor will seek verification that budgets are properly prepared, agreed and monitored. In particular they will look for evidence of good practice in that the key stages of the budgetary process have been followed		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Verify that budget has been properly prepared and agreed	*Yes*	The budget for the year 2025/26 was approved at the full council meeting on 28 November 2024 (min ref: 9.3). Although there is no clear confirmation within the minutes as to the final budget figure being set, budget papers as seen on the website provide details on the budget, and precept. **RECOMMENDATION: to ensure transparency in the budgetary process Council is advised to include within the boy of the minutes the actual budget being set alongside the reasoning for such a budget.**
Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	*Yes*	The precept was set at £39,850 for 2025/26, as confirmed by full council at the above meeting, with the paperwork demonstrating that this was a nill % increase over that set the previous year. *COMMENT: in accordance with best practice, council has recorded in the minutes the precept being set and the impact that this would have on a Band D Dwelling in percentage terms.*
Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget	*Yes*	The minutes evidence that Council carried out its regular review covering the budget for the current year with a review of income and expenditure against budget along with forecasts for the remainder of the year.
Reserves held – general and earmarked[2]	*Yes*	The Council, as at year-end, had Earmarked Reserves totalling £54,138.14 with the balance being General Reserves of £37,686.24 with overall reserves standing at £91,824.38. *COMMENT: council is advised to note guidance as issued by Proper Practices which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be equal to 3 to 12 months of*

[2] In accordance with proper practices, the generally accepted minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months of Net Revenue Expenditure

		Net Revenue Expenditure. There is no upper limit for earmarked reserves, but they should be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level subject to regular review and justification (at least annually). **RECOMMENDATION: council should seek to adopt a General Reserve Policy which would provide clarity on the reasoning behind the holding of and intended level of general reserves to be maintained to ensure that the council achieves the recommended levels.**
Additional comments: Council has followed the recommended key stages as to the budgetary process for the year: decide the form and level of detail of the budget; review the current year budget and spending; determine the cost of spending plans; assess levels of income; bring together spending and income plans; provide for contingencies and consider the need for reserves; approve the budget; confirm the precept; and review progress against the budget regularly throughout the year.		

Section 3 – Proper bookkeeping The internal auditor will look at the methods and processes used to manage the council's accounts and in particular that it provides clear data for reporting and monitoring purposes. This includes checking information is accurate, kept up to date, referenced and verified.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Is the ledger maintained and up to date?	*Yes*	The council uses an excel spreadsheet to produce reports on a Receipts and Payments basis and ensures that the financial transactions of the parish council are as accurate as reasonably practicable. All transactions are well referenced and provide an effective tool for the basis of the council's internal controls.
Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure? (under Proper Practices, Councils are required to work on an Income & Expenditure basis when their gross income, or gross expenditure, exceeds £200,000 for 3 consecutive years)	*Yes*	Council's gross income and expenditure level is below the threshold of £200,000 and has been for three continuous years. Council's operating under this limit may choose either to report on an income and expenditure basis or on a receipts and payments basis. Council has elected to report its financial matters on a receipts and payments basis/income and expenditure basis.
Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?	*Yes*	The cashbook is reconciled on a regular basis.
Is the arithmetic correct?	*Yes*	A number of spot checks were carried out and the functionality of the cashbook was found to be in order.
Additional comments: Two refunds (£1225.80 and £28.65) have been entered as payments which is incorrect. The refund should be entered as a negative receipt to reverse the income that was received and to reduce income. Entering the refund as payment results in overstated income and expenditure.		

Section 4 – Payment controls The internal auditor will specifically check bank reconciliation including credit/debit cards and management approval processes and evidence that internal Financial Regulations (FO) are being followed. The internal auditor will examine how regular payments are managed and specifically seek evidence that these have been brought back to the Council for verification purposes especially where the actual payment made differs from the amount previously agreed. VAT should be clearly identified including evidence that claims have been correctly managed. The internal auditor will check if the Council has a clear understanding on eligibility in relation to the General Power of Competence and that s.137 has been correctly applied and managed.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Is there supporting paperwork for payments with appropriate authorisation?	*Yes*	A selection of random payments were cross checked against payment authorisation slips, cashbook, bank statement and invoices and all were found to be recorded/ authorised in accordance with Proper Practices. A further spot check of items paid from the Council's Bank Accounts was also cross checked against cashbook, bank statements and invoices. All were found to be in order. A spot check of payments made under contractual terms were further analysed and all were found to be in accordance with agreed schedules and sums approved. A financial statement is submitted with the agenda schedules detailing the payments to be made. For the year under review, there were no tenders or contracts over £30,000 including VAT, for which the council needed to comply with the requirements of the Procurement Legislation regarding the publication of invitations and notices. Nor were there any contracts estimated to exceed £60,000 including VAT, for which the Clerk needed to advertise an open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation. *COMMENT: The Parish Council shows good practice by ensuring that retrospective payments incurred for the month are submitted to and approved by full council in accordance with Council's Own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.*

Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	*Yes*	Internet banking is operated in accordance with the Council's own Financial Regulations and is used for the settlement of the Council's expenditure. The Internal Control Statement detail the procedure to be followed for the making of electronic payments in accordance with council's own Financial Regulations. Council operates with a complex mandate which follows a dual authorisation process.
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	*No*	VAT is identified in the cash book however, as part of the spot check process the internal auditor identified the invoice for Community Action Suffolk, where VAT could have be reclaimed, was not showing the VAT element in the accounts. VAT is identified in the cash book with the reclaim for the period covering the year 1 October 2024 up to and including 31 December 2025 in the sum of £12,461.46 being verified in the cashbook and bank statements. The year-end balance stands at £660.39 which is still to be claimed. **RECOMMENDATION: Council should revisit the accounts to ensure that VAT is being recorded correctly and that appropriate VAT reclaims are being done.**
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly?[3]	*Yes*	Council, having declared that it fulfilled the eligibility criteria to use the general power of competence (at least two-thirds elected members and a qualified Clerk (CiLCA or higher)), resolved at the meeting of 17th May 2023, to use the power until the next relevant Annual Council Meeting (May 2027).
Are payments under s.137[4] separately recorded, minuted and is there evidence of direct benefit to electorate?	*N/A*	Council uses the discretionary power to do anything that an individual can do unless specifically prohibited by law.
Where applicable, are payments of interest and principal sums in respect of loans paid in accordance with agreements?	*N/A*	Council has no such loan.
Additional comments:		

[3] Localism Act
[4] *Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure. The basic power is for a local council to spend money (subject to the statutory limit – of £11.10 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.*

Section 5 – Income controls The internal auditor will seek evidence to ensure income is correct managed – recorded, banked, and reported and test mechanisms used to achieve this.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	*Yes*	Income is recorded in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. A number of items of income were cross checked against cash book and bank statement and found to be in order and recorded in accordance with Proper Practices. In accordance with proper practices, the RFO has ensured that the accounting records contain all day-to-day entries of all sums of money received.
Is income reported to full council?	*Yes*	Income received is reported to full council within the financial reports submitted to full council in accordance with council's financial regulations.
Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?	*Yes*	Council received precept in the sum of £39,850 from East Suffolk District Council for the period under review as reported to full council within its Financial Reports at its meetings in (April and October). Evidence was provided showing a full audit trail from Precept being discussed and approved to being served on the Charging Authority to remittance advice showing the Precept to be paid and receipt of same in the Council's Bank Account.
If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?[5]	*Yes*	During the year under review, Council received CIL receipts totalling £2,923.30. The RFO has created an Earmarked Reserve for retained CIL balances.
Is CIL income reported to the council?	*Yes*	The RFO provided the Council with details of the CIL payments received within financial reports submitted to full council at the meeting on 14 May 2025 (min ref: 11.1) and 12 November 2025 (min ref: 9.1).
Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?	*Yes*	The CIL annual report for 2025/2026 shows that there is a retained balance of £17,761.24 which has been transferred into an Earmarked Reserve specifically allocated, in accordance with the Regulations.

[5] Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Has an annual report been produced?	*Yes*	The council has complied with its duty to produce annual reports that detail the amount of CIL funds received and spent and has demonstrated it understands the requirements to comply with its duty to produce and publish the annual report.
Has it been published on the authority's website?	*Yes*	The annual report for the year ending 2025/26 showing income received and retained balances was verified by the internal auditor and the report has been uploaded to the council's website.
Additional comments:		

Section 6 – Petty cash The Internal Auditor will seek evidence that the Council has followed its own policies, procedures, and verification processes and that these are up to date.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is petty cash in operation?	*No*	Council does not operate a petty cash system.
If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?	*N/A*	
Additional comments:		

Section 7 – Bank reconciliation The internal auditor will seek to establish that the Council understands and can evidence good practice and internal control mechanisms in relation to bank reconciliation.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?	*Yes*	A number of samples were tested. There is evidence of good financial practice, and the Council has implemented a system whereby bank reconciliation is correctly verified by the Council. This not only safeguards the Responsible Financial Officer but also fulfils an internal control objective.
Do bank balances agree with bank statements?	*Yes*	Bank balances agree with period end statements and, as at year end (31st March 2026) the balance across the council's accounts stood at £91,824.38 as recorded in the Draft Statement of Accounts and on the Year-end Bank Reconciliation.
Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?	*Yes*	Balances across the Council's accounts are reported quarterly to full council. The minutes of Full Council meetings, demonstrate that a review of the bank reconciliation versus the bank statements has been undertaken. This is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the RFO and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives. The bank reconciliation is a key tool for management as it assists with the regular monitoring of cash flows and therefore aids decision-making.

Section 8 – Payroll controls		
The Internal Auditor will check salaries were approved in accordance with PAYE, NI, Pension and that there is a clear understanding that the clerk is not self-employed. The Internal Auditor will also review how payroll is managed including evidence of approval of payslips.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Do all employees have contracts of employment?	*Yes*	Council had 2 employees on its payroll at the period end of 31 March 2026. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit but the Clerk to the Council has confirmed that all staff have a Contract of Employment in place.
Has the Council approved salary paid?	*Yes*	All salary payments are presented to full council for approval and payment is made via internet banking in accordance with Council's own Financial Regulations.
Are all employees paid at least the minimum wage?	*Yes*	Employees are paid at least the national minimum wage.
Are arrangements in place for authorising of the payroll and payments to the council? Does this include a verification process for agreeing rates of pay to be applied?	*Yes*	There are suitable payroll arrangements in place utilising the SALC Payroll service which ensures the accuracy and legitimacy of payments of salaries and wages, and associated liabilities and as such the council has complied with its duties under legislation.
Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?	*Yes*	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines and outsourced to Suffolk Association of Local Councils. Cross-checks were completed on three payments covering salary and PAYE were found to be in order. Deductions paid to HM Revenue and Customs during the year under review were made in accordance with timescales as set out in the regulations.
Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?[6]	*Yes*	It is noted that Council is aware of its pension responsibilities and that no pension provision was required by the current members of staff.
Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out	*Yes*	From paperwork seen, the council completed its re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator in March 2026.

[6] The Pension Regulator – [website click here]

Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?	*Yes*	There is a satisfactory expense system in place and all expenses claimed are approved by full council with supporting paperwork in place and reimbursed in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. *COMMENT: Council might want to ensure that there are sufficient bank signatories on their bank account to ensure that recipients are not required to authorise their own payments.*
Additional comments:		

Section 9 – Year End procedures		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	*Yes*	Accounts are produced on a receipts and payments basis and all found to be in good order.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	*Yes*	The end of year accounts and supporting documentation were well presented for the internal auditor review. There is a full audit trail from records to presented accounts.
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR[7] documents been completed?	*Yes*	The Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000, it will be required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 3.
Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?	*N/A*	As the Parish Council had gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it was not able to declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review.
During the period in question did the small authority demonstrate that it correctly provided for the exercise of public right as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015?	*Yes*	During the review of the publication requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it is noted that, for the year 2024- 2025, the Council correctly provided for the exercise of elector's rights during Summer 2025. The RFO had set the dates for the inspection of the Council's accounts and associated documents as 3rd June 2025 to 14th July 2025 with the date of the notice being 3rd June 2025. *COMMENT: within the Annual Internal Audit Report, internal control objective test M requires the internal auditor to establish whether the parish council correctly provided for the exercise of elector's rights and published a copy of the required "Public Notice" by ensuring that it clearly identified the statutory 30 working day period when the Authority's records are available for public inspection. This is evidenced by the notice on the website which contains the period for the exercise of public right; details of the manner in which the documents can be inspected; the name and*

[7] Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

		address of the external auditor and the provisions as contained under section 25 and section 27 of the Act.
Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?[8]	*Yes*	In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, as a smaller authority with either income or expenditure exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £6.5 million, it is confirmed that the Council did comply with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for the year ending 31st March 20** as it published the following on its website (those in bold are missing from the website): • Annual Internal Audit • Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement • Section 2 - Accounting Statements • Section 3 - The External Auditor Report and Certificate • Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15(2) Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. *Comment: Council might wish to note that there is a requirement to ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 are published and remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.*
Additional comments:		

[8] Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Section 10 – Risk management The internal auditor will expect to find evidence of the management of risks from identification of what those are for each individual Council through to how these will be managed and the controls in place to mitigate these and that these have been approved by the Council.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Is there evidence of risk assessment documentation?	*Yes*	The risk assessment documentation as reviewed provides details of the risks associated with the functioning of a smaller authority and the measures that the Council will undertake to mitigate such risks. The Risk Register for the year under review was considered and adopted by full council at its meeting on 14 January 2026 (min ref: 11).
Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?	*Yes*	Council is aware that the risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets, and particularly its money. There is evidence that overall, the parish council has taken action to identify and assess those risks and has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to avoid financial or reputational consequences. *COMMENT: Council has in place monitoring documents which identify the risks involved and the potential for improvements to its arrangements to protect public money. It provides the opportunity for reviews of operational as well as financial and governance reviews by members to ensure that it has mitigation measures in place to address the risks associated with the council's day to day operations.*
Does the Council have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place for employment, public liability and fidelity guarantee ***and*** *has been reviewed on an annual basis?*	*Yes*	Council has insurance in place under a specialist policy for local councils with Ansvar Insurance which shows core cover for the following: • Public/Products Liability: £10,00,000 • Employers' Liability: £10,000,000 and • Fidelity Guarantee of £50,000 At renewal, Council entered into a 12-month agreement (expiry 31 May 2026) with Ansvar Insurance.

		RECOMMENDTION: council should seek to review the level of Fidelity Guarantee as the sum currently held, £50,000, is not in accordance with recommended guidance which states that a council's Fidelity Cover should be equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April/May and/or during the year upon receipt of grants.
Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed[9]	*Yes*	At the meeting on 11 March 2026 (min ref: 9.3), Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, confirmed that the financial and management systems of the council were sound and adequate and internal control arrangements were efficient and effective to address the risks associated with the management of public finances.
Evidence that a review of the effectiveness of internal audit was conducted during the year, including consideration of the independence and competence of the internal auditor prior to their appointment[10]	*Yes*	In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Parish Council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements at the full council meeting on 11 June 2025 (min ref: 9.2).
Additional comments:		

[9] Accounts and Audit Regulations
[10] Practitioners Guide

Section 11 – Asset control The Internal Audit will be seeking to establish if there is a list of assets in accordance with proper practices including the date of acquisition, location, and value. This extends to checking policies (with evidence of review) and that the Council has applied the documented approach in practice. The Internal Auditor will check not only valuation processes but the existence of reserve budgets for depreciation and adequacy of insurance. A clear audit trail should be available when items are purchased including minutes to evidence approval.		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?[11]	*Yes*	The Asset Register, as viewed on the Council's website, and as approved at the meeting of 11 March 2026 (min ref: 9.2), was reviewed during the year and reflects those items listed under insurance and within the Parish Council's remit for maintenance and ownership.
Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)	*Yes*	It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2026) is £133,860.00 which reflects overall movement in the asset register covering acquisitions and disposals. For comparison, the declared value of the asset register as at 31.03.2025 was £90,073.29. *Comment: Council is mindful of the guidance within the Practitioner's Guide 2025 on the valuation of its assets and has ensured that where the acquisition value of the asset at the time of first recording is used, that method of valuation has been consistently applied.*
Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?	*N/A*	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit which was carried out via remote means.
Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?	*N/A*	Council has not declared that it does not have any assets located on third party property.
Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?	*Yes*	The asset register was reviewed in the year under review with the values submitted on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) showing an asset value of £133,860.00 which agrees with that detailed in the Asset Register.
Cross checking of insurance cover	*Yes*	Council has insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under the headings on the insurance schedule.
Additional comments:		

[11] Practitioners Guide

Section 12 – Assertion 10 The internal auditor will be checking that the council complies to the new assertion 10 introduced in the Practitioners' Guide 2025.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?[12]	*Yes*	The Council is correctly registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation.
Is there an adopted council publication scheme and is it reviewed regularly?	*Yes*	It is noted that Council last reviewed its Model Publication Scheme detailing the type of information the Council holds and how it will make it available to the public at the full council meeting on 14 January 2026 (min ref: 11). *COMMENT: Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, public authorities must provide access to information held which must be published proactively. The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme and to publish information covered by the scheme. Council should seek to review the information it holds under its scheme and ensure that it is up to date and ensure that it is available to view on its website.*
Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?[13] *Councils must:* • *Comply with their legal & statutory obligations under UK GDPR & The Data Protection Act 2018* • *Process personal data lawfully, fairly and in line with the prescribed data protection principles* • *Recognise their role as both data controller and data processor*	*Yes*	Council has taken active steps to ensure compliance with the GDPR requirements, evidenced below and has adopted a number of GDPR Policies during the year that provides clear responsibilities and obligations of the Council in respect of the collecting, using and protecting of personal information in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR. The following are in place and were reviewed and adopted on the dates shown below: ● Privacy notices (11 June 2025, min ref: 11.) ● Data Protection Policy (11 June 2025, min ref: 11.1) ● Data Protection & Information Management Policy (10 September 2025, min ref: 11.1)

[12] Data Protection Act 2018
[13] UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

		• Data Protection Risk Assessment (15 October 2025, min ref: 11.1) • Data Protection Statement (15 October 2025, min ref: 11.1) • Subject Access Policy (15 October 2025, min ref: 11.1) • Subject Access Request (15 October 2025, min ref: 11.1) • Data breach policy (9 July 2025, min ref: 11.1) *COMMENT: The Privacy Policy on the Parish Council's website covers the framework that the public can expect for dealing with requests from individuals who have the right to know what data is held on them, why the data is being processed and whether it will be given to any third party.*
Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?	*Yes*	Whilst the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 applies to local authorities, including parish councils with annual income or expenditure (whichever is the higher) over £200,000, Smaller Authorities with total turnover or expenditure greater than £25,000 but under £200,000, should as best practice comply with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015; the government believes that in principle all data held and managed by local authorities should be made available to the public unless there are specific sensitivities to doing so, as per the Practitioners' Guide 5.127. *COMMENT: Council might wish to review its provisions and consider whether it might be able to work towards ensuring compliance with the requirements of publishing the following data on its website in accordance with the required timescales:* *Publish quarterly:* • *Individual items of expenditure that exceed £500 (currently published on an annual basis);* • *Government Procurement Card transactions; Invitations to tender for contracts over £5,000;* • *Details of contracts that exceed £5,000.* *Publish annually:* • *Details of all land and building assets;* • *Grants to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations;* • *Organisational Chart.*

Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?[14]	*Yes*	Council has published a website accessibility statement on their website however it is not clear from the minutes when the statement was reviewed and adopted at a full council meeting. *COMMENT: Council may wish to review and formally adopt the website accessibility statement at the next available full council meeting following the accessibility check that was completed in April 2026.*
Has website accessibility been tested, at least annually?	*Yes*	The website was last tested against WCAG2.2AA in April 2026.
Does the council have, as a minimum, a single generic email address on an authority owned domain, for correspondence?[15] *For example clerk@abccouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abccouncil.org.uk*	*Yes*	Council operates with a .gov.uk email address for the Clerk and Councillors *COMMENT: this ensures that sensitive information is handled in a controlled environment with appropriate security measures. This aligns with GDPR principles such as data minimisation, integrity and confidentiality. Authority-owned email accounts provide a clear record of communications, which is essential for transparency and accountability. This helps in maintaining an audit trail and ensures all council-related communications are accessible for review if needed and makes Data Subject Access and Freedom of Information Requests easier to manage.*
Does the council have an IT policy that is tailored to the council? [16]	*Yes*	The council has adopted an IT policy that has been personalised for the specific use of the council. This policy was approved at the full council meeting of 11 March 2026 (min ref: 9.2)
Additional comments:		

[14] Website Accessibility Regulations 2018
[15] Practitioners Guide
[16] Practitioners Guide

Section 13 – Internal audit The internal auditor will revisit weaknesses and recommendations previously identified to see if these have been addressed. They will also check if any changes introduced require further verification to ensure effectiveness of the corrective action taken.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?	*Yes*	The Internal Audit Report for the period ending 31st March 2025 was formally considered at the meeting of full council on 11 June 2025 (min ref: 9.2). The RFO was authorised to conduct necessary actions in accordance with the recommendations and comments raised within the report which was monitored as the year progressed.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?	*No*	The formal recommendations raised within the internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2025 were as follows and those in **bold** are outstanding: • **council should seek to review the level of Fidelity Guarantee as the sum currently held, £50,000, is not in accordance with recommended guidance which states that a council's Fidelity Cover should be equal to at least the sum of the year-end balances plus 50% of the precept/grants to be received in the following April/May and/or during the year upon receipt of grants.** • **as mentioned in the previous year-end report, to ensure transparency in the budgeting process followed by the council, council has been advised to include within the body of the minutes the actual budget being set alongside the reasoning for such a budget.** • **council should consider adopting a Reserve Policy which would provide clarity on the reasoning behind the holding of reserves and the allocation of its reserves held regarding the setting of the budget for the next financial year. The adopted policy should also include an intended level of General Reserves to be maintained to ensure that the council achieves the recommended levels.**

		There are no outstanding formal recommendations from the internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2024. *Comment: in order to warrant a positive response to Assertion 7 of the Annual Governance Statement, council should seek to address the matters brought to its attention by internal (and external) audit.*
Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?[17]	*Yes*	SALC were appointed as the Council's internal auditors for the year ending 31st March 2026 at the full council meeting on 14 January 2026 (min ref: 9.3).
Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?[18]	*Yes*	The clerk to the council has confirmed that the letter of engagement was signed on the 14 January 2026.
Additional comments:		

[17] Practitioners' Guide
[18] Practitioners' Guide

Section 14 – External audit for the period under review The internal auditor will revisit the external audit so that previous weaknesses and recommendations can be considered.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Has the Council considered the previous external audit report?[19]	*Yes*	At the meeting of full council on 10 September 2025 (min ref: 9.1), Council considered the report from the External Auditor for the year ending 31st March 2025.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	*No*	The External Auditor highlighted the requirement to ensure that the missing asset was included in the fixed asset register and valued in accordance with its fixed asset valuation policy. The Council need to ensure that amendments were corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR. *COMMENT: Council should review the figures in Section 1, Box 9 as they do not appear to have been amended.*
Additional comments:		

[19] Regulation 20 Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 – *following completion of an audit the Council should note that it is the Council as a whole (i.e., All members) and not a committee that should receive and consider the audit letter (including Annual Return and Certificate) from the local auditor as soon as reasonably practicable and the minutes should reflect that these have been received.*

Section 15 – Additional information The internal auditor will look for additional evidence of good record keeping, compliance with data protection regulations, freedom of information and website accessibility regulations.		
Evidence		*Internal auditor commentary*
Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation? [20]	Yes	The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council was held on 14 May 2025 and the first item on the agenda was the election of a Chair (min ref: 1).
Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation? [21]	Yes	Council is aware that that under LGA 1972 schedule 12, paragraphs 41(1) and 44 the draft minutes of a meeting should be formally approved (with any necessary amendments) at the next meeting. At each meeting, the Chair is given formal approval to sign the minutes.
Is there a list of members' interests held?	Yes	Evidence was seen on the District Authority's website of the Register of Interests for all current Parish Councillors. *COMMENT: Council may wish to provide a direct link from the Council's own website to the individual records for each Councillor on the East Suffolk District Council website as this will provide a real time view of councillor Register of Interests.*
Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?	Yes	The Parish Council act as sole trustee for the New Orford Town Trust (Registered Charity 1053729). Financial accounts are kept separate from the Council's main accounts. Upon a review of the Charity Commission website, it was confirmed that the accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025 had been filed within the required timescales. The Trustee's Report and Financial Statement are available to download from the website.
Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?	Yes	Council uses a cloud-based system whereby a back-up of the council's data is taken and stored appropriately.

[20] The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)
[21] Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011

Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?	*N/A*	Council does not operate a committee structure.
Additional comments:		

Signed: Kim Puttock

Date of Internal Audit review: 29 May 2026, 30 May 2026 and 3 June 2026 **Date of Internal Audit Report**: 3 June 2026
On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils