

## **Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24**

### ***Accessibility Regulations***

Information received from MAZARS:

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

**Please be advised that considering the above guidance, the following documents are scanned and therefore not fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.**

Glynis Farthing (Clerk/RFO)

# Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

## GUSTON PARISH COUNCIL

ENTER PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE ADDRESS <https://guston-pc.gov.uk>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

| Internal control objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Yes | No* | Not covered**  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----------------|
| A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | ✓   |     |                |
| B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.                                                                                                                                                                                                | ✓   |     |                |
| C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | ✓   |     |                |
| D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | ✓   |     |                |
| E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | ✓   |     |                |
| F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     |     | ✓              |
| G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | ✓   |     |                |
| H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | ✓   |     |                |
| I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | ✓   |     |                |
| J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.                                                         | ✓   |     |                |
| K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>                                                                                                       |     |     | ✓              |
| L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.                                                                                                                                                                                                   | ✓   |     |                |
| M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> . |     | ✓   |                |
| N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | ✓   |     |                |
| <b>O. (For local councils only)</b><br>Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Yes | No  | Not applicable |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |     |     | ✓              |

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

09/04/2024

DD/MM/YYYY

DD/MM/YYYY

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

ANTHONY JOHN KILBEE INTERNAL AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

09/04/2024

\*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

\*\*Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

### GUSTON PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Agreed |     | 'Yes' means that this authority:                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Yes    | No* |                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.                                                                                                                                                  | ✓      |     | prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.                                                                                               |
| 2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.                                                                                                                                  | ✓      |     | made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.                                                                     |
| 3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances. | ✓      |     | has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.                                                                                     |
| 4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.                                                                                                                               |        | ✓   | during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.                                                               |
| 5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.                                                                            | ✓      |     | considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.                                                                                          |
| 6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.                                                                                                                                                          | ✓      |     | arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority. |
| 7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.                                                                                                                                                                                                | ✓      |     | responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.                                                                                                           |
| 8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.                                  | ✓      |     | disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.                                           |
| 9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.                         | Yes    | No  | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |        |     | ✓                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**\*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

16/04/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

4499

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

*G. Reed*

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

*Glynis Farthing*

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLICLY <https://guston-pc.gov.uk> WEBSITE ADDRESS

## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

### GUSTON PARISH COUNCIL

|                                                                    | Year ending           |                       | Notes and guidance                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                    | 31 March<br>2023<br>£ | 31 March<br>2024<br>£ |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>1.</b> Balances brought forward                                 | 63,908                | 70,222                | Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.                                                              |
| <b>2.</b> (+) Precept or Rates and Levies                          | 43,773                | 43,773                | Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.                                                                                 |
| <b>3.</b> (+) Total other receipts                                 | 5,439                 | 4,510                 | Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.                                                                   |
| <b>4.</b> (-) Staff costs                                          | 13,179                | 13,822                | Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments. |
| <b>5.</b> (-) Loan interest/capital repayments                     | 0                     | 0                     | Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).                                                                                      |
| <b>6.</b> (-) All other payments                                   | 29,719                | 31,083                | Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).                                                                      |
| <b>7.</b> (=) Balances carried forward                             | 70,222                | 73,600                | Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).                                                                                                                       |
| <b>8.</b> Total value of cash and short term investments           | 70,222                | 73,600                | The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – <b>To agree with bank reconciliation.</b>                                              |
| <b>9.</b> Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets | 101,365               | 106,122               | The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.                                                                      |
| <b>10.</b> Total borrowings                                        | 0                     | 0                     | The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).                                                                                                        |

| For Local Councils Only                                           | Yes | No | N/A |                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>11a.</b> Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable) |     | ✓  |     | The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets. |
| <b>11b.</b> Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable) |     |    | ✓   | The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.                                |

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

**Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval**

*Glynis Furlley*

Date

14/04/2024

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

16/04/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

4500

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

*[Signature]*

## Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

### GUSTON PARISH COUNCIL

I can confirm that the internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage.

In respect of Boxes **A-E, G-J, L** and **N** , I am satisfied that the Clerk/RFO and Parish Council have applied the necessary and relevant procedures to ensure that the accounting records and controls are compliant with the statutory regulations and have seen evidence to support these findings. Records are accurate, detailed and all income and expenditure properly recorded and accounted for.

In respect of Box **F** – this is not covered as the Parish Council and officers do not use petty cash.

In respect of Box **K** – this authority is required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 as it meets the criteria for completion of Form 3. They were not certified as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23 and have not been certified as such previously.

I have noted the comments raised by Mazars in respect of the 2022/23 return:

*Minor scope for improvement in 2023/24*

*In undertaking the review of the 2022/23 Annual Governance and Accountability Return it came to our attention that in 2023 the Council has not met the requirements of the 2015 Accounts and Audit Regulations to start the period of 30 working days for the public to inspect the accounts as soon as possible after it was approved. The Council should ensure that in 2023/24 they comply with the Regulations and respond no to the relevant assertion in its Annual Governance Statement.*

In accordance with these remarks I have therefore answered **NO** in Box **M** and recommend that the Parish Council fully complies with the correct guidance on the period for the exercise of public rights of inspection. Although the correct time was allocated to the public for inspection of the accounts, these should have been available earlier. Last year the council signed off the AGAR on the 9 May 2023, however, they did not start the elector's rights period until Monday 12 June. You should have started the elector's rights on the 5 June.

After discussion with the Clerk I am satisfied that the Parish Council are fully aware of this previous error and that it will be rectified this year.

Signed:



Date: 9/4/2024

## **Details of action taken in respect of recommendations made by the external auditor in 2022/23**

### **Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**

Minor scope for improvement in 2023/24

In undertaking the review of the 2022/23 Annual Governance and Accountability Return it came to our attention that in 2023 the Council has not met the requirements of the 2015 Accounts and Audit Regulations to start the period of 30 working days for the public to inspect the accounts as soon as possible after it was approved. The Council should ensure that in 2023/24 they comply with the Regulations and respond no to the relevant assertion in its Annual Governance Statement.

The annual accounts were approved at the meeting of 09/05/2023 Minute No 4376, however the notification for the exercise of public rights of inspection was advertised as commencing on Monday 12/06/2023.

This notification was therefore incorrect and has been noted and duly amended for 2023/24 and correctly advertised for inspection.

Consequently Box 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/20234has been ticked NO as advised.

The internal control objective (K), 'if the Authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt', was ticked 'yes' by the internal auditor when the Council was not exempt in 2021/22. The box should have been ticked 'not covered'. In future, the Council should ensure the annual return is accurate and complete.

The Internal Auditor responded as follows:

In respect of Box K – this authority is required to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 as it meets the criteria for completion of Form 3. They were not certified as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23 and have not been certified as such previously.

I have noted the comments raised by Mazars in respect of the 2022/23 return:

Glynis Farthing (CLERK/RFO)