Bintree Parish Council

Internal Audit Report

For Bintree Parish / Town Council

Financial Year 25/26

Prepared by Clare Morton

Date 30 April 2026

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I have completed an internal audit of the accounts for Bintree Council for the year ending 31st March 2026

My findings are detailed below using the tests provided in the **Governance and Accountability (England) March 2025**

I would like to thank the Clerk/RFO for providing me with all the information required for the Internal Audit.

Internal control	Test	Observations
Proper bookkeeping	Is the cashbook maintained and up to date?	Yes
	Is the cashbook arithmetically correct?	Yes
	Is the cashbook regularly balanced to the bank?	Yes
Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and payment controls	Has the council formally adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations? Do the Financial Regulations comply with the financial details in Standing Orders?	Standing Orders – copy on website is unsigned and undated however minutes Sept 26, P43, item 18 indicates adoption of both. Financial Reg are dated and have review date. The basic procedures for financial control are the same in the two documents
	Date Standing Orders last reviewed	Sept 2026
	Date Financial Regulations last reviewed	Sept 2026
	Has a Responsible Financial Officer been appointed with specific duties? Is this evidenced in a Job Description?	Not specifically appointed for the year. The clerk performs the function.
	Have goods over £5000 been competitively purchased?	None purchased
	Are payments in the cashbook supported by purchase orders, invoices, authorised and minuted?	Yes
	Has VAT on payments been identified, recorded and reclaimed? When was the last reclaim submitted?	VAT has been identified and recorded but not yet reclaimed. June 2024

Internal control	Test	Observations
	Has s137 expenditure been approved and separately recorded and within statutory limits? (where applicable)	Yes
	Has a councillor been appointed as an Internal Control Officer?	None appointed.
Risk management arrangements	Does a review of the minutes identify any unusual financial activity?	No
	Do minutes record the council carrying out an annual risk assessment or review of their risk management scheme?	There is a Financial Controls document dated 31/3/26 which was supplied as paper. No copy available on web site. There is no minuted record of this having been reviewed or adopted. There is no risk register which covers management of the Council's physical assets.
	Does the Scheme detail all potential risk areas?	Financial Controls document seems comprehensive however there is no risk register which covers management of the Council's physical assets.
	Is insurance cover appropriate and adequate?	Not viewed so no assessment of adequacy made.
Budgetary controls	Has the council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept and has this been minuted as being approved?	Budget was not adopted.

Internal control	Test	Observations
	Has the precept been calculated from the budget and been approved?	Precept approved, minute Nov 25, P46 item 8.
	Does the budget include an actual completed year?	Yes
	Is actual expenditure against budget reported to the council during the year as well as at budget time?	Income and expenditure reported every meeting but no reference to against budget.
	Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?	No
Income controls	Is income properly recorded and promptly banked?	Yes
	Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax authority's notification?	Breckland website indicates precept of £7,5000, which is the minuted amount.
	Are security controls over cash and near-cash adequate and effective?	Cash is not handled.
Petty cash procedures (if applicable)	Is all petty cash spent recorded and supported by VAT invoices/receipts?	Not applicable
	Is petty cash expenditure reported to each council meeting?	Not applicable
	Is petty cash reimbursement carried out regularly?	Not applicable
Payroll controls	Do all employees have contracts of employment with clear terms and conditions?	Yes

Internal control	Test	Observations
	Do salaries paid agree with those approved by the council?	Yes
	Are salaries above the National Living Wage/Minimum Wage?	Yes
	Are other payments to employees reasonable and approved by the council?	Yes
	Have PAYE/NIC been properly operated by the council as an employer?	Yes
Asset controls	Does the council maintain a register of all material assets owned or in its care?	Yes Description of land available on website.
	Are the assets and Investments registers up to date? When were these last reviewed?	Yes – website copy dated 31/3/25, paper copy 31/3/26 provided.
	How are asset valuations recorded?	Values at purchase.
Bank reconciliation	Is there a bank reconciliation for each account and is this reported to council?	Yes
	Is a bank reconciliation carried out regularly and in a timely fashion?	Yes
	Are there any unexplained balancing entries in any reconciliation?	No
	Does the end of year bank reconciliation include all cash held? Other than long term investments)	No cash held

Internal control	Test	Observations
Year-end procedures	Are year-end accounts prepared using the correct accounting basis (Receipts and Payments or Income and Expenditure)?	Yes
	Do accounts agree with the cash book? Do accounts include a comparison to the previous year?	Yes As part of AGAR
	Have variations (+/- 15%) been detailed numerically and quantitively?	Yes as part of AGAR
	Date AGAR to be considered by Council	28 May 2026
	Where appropriate, have debtors and creditors been properly recorded?	Not applicable
Procedural	Appointment of the IA has been agreed – minute reference	Yes Minutes May 2025, P37, item 11.
	Have points raised on the last Internal Audit report been considered by council and actioned?	Minutes indicate that report was discussed and that clerk would item actions. There are some items which have not been addressed.
Transparency: For smaller councils with turnover under £25,000	Minutes for whole year on website?	Yes
	Agendas for whole year on website?	Yes
	Payments over £100 detailed on website?	All transactions detailed. Greater than £100 not separately itemized.
	Electors' rights advertised on website?	Yes

Internal control	Test	Observations
	Councillors' responsibilities detailed on website?	Yes
	Last financial year's AGAR on website?	Yes
	Land and building assets details on website? (Description, location, owner/leaseholder, date and cost of acquisition and present use)	Yes
Burial Authorities only	Are fees levied in accordance with the Council's approved scale of fees and charges?	Not Applicable
	Have fees for the cemetery been reviewed and agreed by Council?	Not Applicable
	Were comparisons made with other cemeteries prior to setting the fees?	Not Applicable
	Have burial books been kept up to date and are they safely stored?	Not Applicable
Allotments only	Has a list of allotment holders with amounts paid to Council been submitted?	Not Applicable
	Have fees for the allotments been reviewed and agreed by Council?	Not Applicable
	Has a Financial Risk Assessment been undertaken for any larger projects undertaken?	Not Applicable
Box 10 Assertion	Data Protection Policy in place?	No Data Protection policy available on website or supplied on paper. Minutes of Nov 25, P46, item 17 indicate that

Internal control	Test	Observations
	Generic e mail account hosted on an authority owned domain? Accessibility Statement on the website? Council registered with the ICO Website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines? Is there an IT policy?	document was approved at the same time as the IT Policy. Yes Yes Payment made and minuted Mar 2026 item 8 Yes Yes – adopted Nov 25, P46, item 17 however website copy is undated.
	Is there an FOI Publication Scheme? Is it on the website? Is it regularly updated?	No scheme has been provided, It is not on the website No mention in the minutes.

Reasons for any "NO" Boxes on the Internal Auditor's Report:

(Note that if the Council is over £25,000 the information below should be sent to the External Auditor.)

Audit notes

Items in yellow above are areas where I have not been able to fully satisfy the current audit standards. For major items, there is more detail below.

- There is a lack of compliance relating to GDPR and FOI requirements. The legal obligation to publish a wider range of policies comes from the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the ICO's Model Publication Scheme.

- There is no risk assessment relating to the control of physical assets. This should include details of inspection regimes and consider the likelihood of theft, damage etc.

- I note that at the end of the financial year, the council ends up with a very low reserve which would not indicate resilience against unforeseen circumstances (such as a contested election).

- I have noted that you have not claimed VAT within the past year.

- I have verified that you have insurance but have not checked its adequacy..

Notes / recommendations for 26/27:

Significant work will be required to make the Council comply with the GDPR and Freedom of Information requirements. I have signed off the AGAR for the current year despite the lack of compliance as the clerk has the required work in hand.

As recommended last year, I would recommend that Council reviews its Internal Controls / Risk Assessment, with particular reference to having its own smart phone going forward. Whilst I note that the Council does not do on-line banking, the personal number has to be given out to parishioners and businesses wanting to contact the Council by phone. If the Clerk was to leave her role, taking her phone number with her, your business continuity would be severely impacted as a result.

Clare

Clare Morton
Internal auditor