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NOTICE

You are Summoned to the Meeting of Southwold Town Council which will be held on Tuesday 24th June 2025 at 6.30pm at the Town Hall

Signed

L. J. Beavan

Dated 16th June 2025

AGENDA

1. **Apologies:** To receive and approve apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a) To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests regarding the agenda.
 - b) To receive Declarations of Other Registerable Interests regarding the agenda.
 - c) To receive Declarations of Non-Registerable Interests regarding the agenda.
 - d) To note the decision of the Town Clerk regarding requests for dispensations relating to this agenda.
 - e) To note that the Register of Interests of all Members is to be updated with changes as they occur.
3. **Minutes:** To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 27th May 2025.
4. **Public Forum** (*15 minutes will be allocated overall for this section- subject to Town Mayor discretion*).
 - a) To receive a report from East Suffolk Ward Councillor D Beavan
ESC Cllr Beavan will then take questions from Councillors and electors.
 - b) To receive a report from Suffolk CC Ward Councillor M Ladd.
Cllr Ladd will then take questions from Councillors and electors.
 - c) To receive comments from Southwold electors on matters on the agenda.
5. **To receive reports from Committees and Working Groups:**
 - a) To receive the report of the meeting of the Planning and Development Committee meetings – to receive reports from meetings held 3rd and 17th June 2025. *Cllr Temple*
 - b) Landlords Cttee – to receive report and recommendations from meeting held 12th June 2025. See recommendations with regards to land etc. *Cllr Goldsmith*
 - c) Leisure and Environment Cttee - No meeting held.
 - d) Roads Cttee – To receive report and recommendations from meeting held 4th June 2025. *Cllr Beavan*
 - e) Communication working group – date to be arranged.
 - f) Employment working group – date to be arranged.

6. **To receive reports from the Town Council representatives on other bodies/organisations, of meetings attended:**

Reports to be provided in written format and circulated to members prior to the meeting unless time allows for a verbal report to be given, subject to the Chairs discretion.

- a) **NSIP working Group - National Energy Projects** – Lionlink/Sizewell/Anglia One/Eurolink/ and North Falls Offshore Wind Farm, Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm Project -.

Registration for Sealink DCO - Cllr Davy

7. **LGR** – to receive updates. *Cllr Jarvis*

8. **Financial Matters - Audit And Governance**

a) **Financial Officer:** to re-appoint the Clerk as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer for 2025/26.

b) **Internal Auditor**

- i. To receive and note the SALC internal audit report for 2024.2025 and the Annual Internal Audit Report page on the AGAR.
- ii. To note that no Action Plan is required arising from the internal audit report – Finance Cttee to review individual advisory notes and report back to Full Council.
- iii. To receive Internal Control Statement and to confirm that Internal Controls are appropriate and effective for Council purposes as per the Internal audit report for 2024/25 and the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 page on the AGAR.
- iv. To confirm that SALC are an effective, competent, independent internal auditor for Town Council audit requirements.
- v. To appoint SALC as the internal auditor for 2025/26.
- vi. To confirm that the Finance and Gov cttee has delegated authority to review and sign off the SALC Letter of Engagement for internal audit 2025.2026.

c) **Risk Assessment:** To receive Risk Assessment for 2025/26 – *Finance Cttee to review as a working document.*

d) **Accounts 2024/25:**

i) To receive and if approved, confirm Section 1, the Annual Governance Statement, of the Annual Return to the Audit Commission, for the year ended 31st March 2025 and provide permission for signature as required. (*Note: (i) In signing the Annual Governance Statement the Town Council is obliged under Schedule 12, para 41(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to record and note the yes/no answers in Section 1) and provide permission for the Chairman of this meeting to sign these accordingly.*

ii) *To consider and approve Section 2, the Statement of Accounts, of the Annual Return to the Audit Commission for the year ended 31st March 2025 and provide permission for the Chairman of this meeting to sign these accordingly.*

iii) *To confirm that the date for the Public Rights will be as follows; date of announcement – 25th June 2025. Documents will be available from 26th June 2025 – 6th August 2025.*

e) *To Resolve to re-adopt the Reserves Policy together with confirmation of the earmarked reserves as detailed at 31st March 2025.*

- f) *Accounts for Payment* - To receive and confirm the Accounts for Payment for June 2025 (*circulated to members*).
- g) *To receive report and recommendations of Finance and Governance Cttee* – No meeting held.
- h) *Cil report* - To receive and if agreed, approve the CIL statement report for 2024.2025.
- i) NALC Practitioners Guide 2025 – new requirements to be considered by Finance and Gov cttee and reported back to full council.

9. **Town Mayor updates including.**

Charter Fair and Charter Lunch
 Civic Sunday – 22nd June 2025
 Suffolk Day – Saturday 21st June 2025
 Street Festival – Saturday 21st June 2025
 Armed Forces Day – Saturday 28th June 2025
 Harbour Event – Saturday 28th June 2025

10. **Date of next Town Council Meeting:**

Tuesday 29th July 2025 at 6.30pm

Some items from this agenda might need to be considered within a confidential session as below.

11. **Exclusion of Public and Press if required during discussions:** *Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodied (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it might need to be resolved, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, for the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following.*
- Any matters, including those above as required.
 Strickland Place property update.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS. THE TOWN COUNCIL ABIDES BY THE PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT 2012.

SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council of Southwold, held in the Council Chamber at 6.30pm on Tuesday 27th May 2025.

PRESENT:	Councillor	S Flunder – Town Mayor
	“	D Beavan
	“	P Davy
	“	P Goldsmith
	“	C Hurr
	“	R Jarvis
	“	M Palmer
	“	J Miller
	“	R Temple
	“	M Wells

Also present: SCC Cllr Ladd and the Town Clerk.

1. a) **Apologies:**
To note/approve apologies for absence. Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Gladwell and Redington. The High Steward also provided apologies.
2. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a) *To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests regarding the agenda.* Nil.
 - b) *To receive Declarations of Other Registerable Interests / Non registrable interest regarding the agenda.* Nil.
 - c) *To receive Declarations of Non-Registerable Interests regarding the agenda.*
 - d) *To note the decision of the Town Clerk regarding requests for dispensations relating to this agenda.* Nil.
 - e) *To note that the Register of Interests of all Members is to be completed within 28 days of the election and updated thereafter with changes as they occur.* Noted.
3. **Minutes:** (i) To approve and sign the Minutes of the Town Council meetings held on Tuesday 22nd April 2025, and the Annual Meeting of the Town Council held on Tuesday 6th May 2025.
Approval of Minutes of 22nd April 2025 - Proposed by Cllr Wells, seconded by Cllr Goldsmith. Agreed by all.
Approval of Minutes of 6th May 2025 – Proposed by Cllr Goldsmith, seconded by Cllr Miller. Agreed by all.
4. **Public Forum** (15 minutes will be allocated overall for this section- subject to Town Mayor discretion).
 - a) *To receive a report from East Suffolk Ward Councillor D Beavan*
ESC Cllr Beavan will then take questions from Councillors and electors.
Harbour plans are moving on. The plan is to use the caravan site 2025/2026 and then upgrade in 2026/2027, after which the rents will rise.
ICB has had funding cuts – skeleton staff left. Suffolk and North East Essex are integrating with Norfolk.

The Policy for parking exemptions in limited waiting bays was abolished by ESC a few weeks ago but is hopefully being reinstated in September 2025. Freeport East met today, and the project is now on ice.

Cllr Jarvis advised that he was present at the Harbour meeting and advised members that the amount of time the project will take is disappointing. Cllr Jarvis – at the harbour meeting it was noted that comms needed to be strong.

Cllr Flunder advised that he had observed the Cabinet meeting and that ESC Cllr Beavan and ESC Cllr Ashdown put over a very strong case. It was mentioned had been very good getting councillors out to visit the harbour. Queries from members included; where is the money coming from and how will it be ensured that it gets sorted within timescales.

b) To receive report from Suffolk County Councillor M Ladd

SCC Cllr Ladd will then take questions from Councillors and electors. See SCC annual report attached.

SCC Cllr Ladd advised as follows;

Good to see Mill Lane resurfacing has been completed. Keith Sampson advises 20mph report is next on his list to review.

SCC Task & Finish Group Scrutiny met re TROs etc. Met to discuss length of time and costs involved.

Environment Agency have agreed to spend additional monies on Kessingland/Benacre Scheme to ensure Kessingland Dam is protected.

Weeds – SCC Highways have started the clearance.

Electric chargers – more being introduced across Suffolk.

Infrastructure – SCC have concerns re the new Planning Bill. section 94-96 cover public consultations and these have been removed from the draft bill.

Fire Service have more fire rescue response equipment.

“Goldfish” motion is to ban giving animals as prizes on events on SCC land.

SCC have produced a resident summary of the LGR process.

Members responded as follows;

SCC response re Sealink – seems to suggest that it has been accepted that it is going ahead and that SCC IS looking at mitigation rather than objecting. SCC Cllr Ladd replied that SCC is having major issues getting along with discussions re UK grid. Sizewell monies for the Kessingland infrastructure - why can't Southwold have more monies. SCC Cllr Ladd replied that this is different funding and is connected to the Sizewell decision to locate some employees at Pontins.

LGR – what is the process and consultation process. SCC Cllr Ladd responded that the Business Plan has to be submitted by September. SCC Cllr Richard Rout is contacting all councils about visiting them. Not sure if Central Government is doing a consultation. All of the Suffolk district councils have joined together and are carrying out a consultation which is out now.

c) To receive comments from Southwold electors on matters on the agenda. Nil

5. To receive reports from Committees and Working Groups:

- a) To receive the report of the meeting of the Planning and Development Committee meetings held 6th May 2025 *No recommendations.* Cllr Flunder commented that the

Coach House planning decision has now been appealed, and the Inspector is dealing with it. The Neighbourhood Plan needs to be considered by the Inspector.

- b) Landlords Cttee – To receive the report of the meeting of the Landlords Committee meeting held 24th April 2025 *No recommendations.*

Gable Hurren Terrace – tender has been awarded to Mixbrow.

Station Yard retention statement is being calculated by the Project Team.

Major projects outstanding include Town Hall, Water Tower and Red Cross Hut.

- c) Leisure and Environment Cttee – *No meeting held.*

V E Day 8th May 2025 – Cllr Goldsmith advised members that there had been very positive feedback and that the day was a great success.

Spruce Up Southwold 18th May 2025– Cllr Davy advised that not as many volunteers as hoped. ESC has a person who is working every Saturday/Sunday to help weed along North Parade. It is suggested that another Spruce Up Southwold be held again in the autumn.

SCC Cllr Ladd left the meeting at 7pm.

- d) Roads Cttee – *No meeting held.* Await SCC report reading the request for a 20mph limit in the High Street.

- e) Comms Working Group – *no meeting held.*

- f) NSIP working group – To receive verbal report from NSIP working group meeting of 21ST May 2025; to include update from East Suffolk Communities Energy

Full report had been circulated by Cllr Davy prior to the meeting. Cllr Davy advised that each council will have differing issues to address. There is no holistic joined up thinking about all the various projects – an offshore network would be a possible solution.

Suggested response to the DCO had been circulated to all members. It was confirmed that STC has until 23rd June 2025 to make representation. Councillors were asked to advise Cllr Davy of any additions/changes so that the response from STC can be sent off as soon as possible. It was noted that the 23rd June is prior to the next Town Council meeting. **It was Proposed by Cllr Wells, seconded by Cllr Jarvis and agreed by all that Cllr Davy have delegated authority to finalise the response from STC and arrange for it to be submitted by 23rd June 2025**

Members discussed how residents could also be made aware of the STC response and how to encourage them to register themselves by the deadline. Usual channels of communication will be used and in addition councillors discussed having an information stall on the market.

6. **Model Code of Conduct:**

To confirm the re-adoption of the LGA Model Code of Conduct. **Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Miller. All agreed.**

7. **To confirm Town Council Representatives on Committees, Task and Finish Groups, and outside bodies for 2024/25**

- a) To confirm Town Council Representatives on Committees, Task and Finish groups and outside bodies for 2025/26 – see attached.

Committees

Finance & Governance Cttee is one member short.

Roads Committee is one member short. **It was agreed by all to co opt Cllr Hurr onto the Roads cttee.**

Task & Finish Groups

It was agreed by all to merge the Harbour/HRO groups.

It was agreed by all to add Cllr Hurr to the Beach working group.

With regards to the Fire Station Site – Cllr Beavan advised that Hastoe has mentioned that Homes England has reversed their funding decision and that any deal with SCC should now be financially viable again.

- b) To consider whether the Terms of Reference of the above are still appropriate or need updating.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference of the Committees/ sub cttees and Task and Finish Groups are still appropriate **Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Miller. All agreed.**

- c) To consider whether any new Committees/ Task and Finish Groups are required and if so to consider their Terms of Reference.

Regarding Martyns Law – discussion as to whether this should stay within the remit of the Finance & Governance cttee or whether a separate working group is required. **Agreed by all to keep Martyns Law subject under the remit of Finance & Governance Cttee at present.**

8. **Financial Matters - Audit and Governance**

- a) Financial Officer: to re-appoint the Clerk as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer for 2025/26.

Proposed by Cllr Davy, seconded by Cllr Goldsmith. and agreed by all to re-appoint the Clerk as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer for 2025/26.

- b) To confirm and adopt the General Power of Competence for Southwold Town Council.

It was resolved that the Council meets the conditions of eligibility set out in the Schedule to The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, thereby enabling it to use the General Power of Competence. This will remain valid until the annual meeting following the next ordinary election in May 2027. Southwold Town Council confirms that it meets the criteria for eligibility relating to the electoral mandate and relevant training of the clerk.

Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple. All agreed.

- c) To confirm Model Publication Scheme 2025. **Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple. All agreed to confirm the Model Publication Scheme for 2025.**
- d) To confirm Investment Strategy 2025.2026. **Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple. All agreed to confirm the Investment Strategy document as an appropriate Strategy for 2025.2026.**

9. **Financial Matters**

- a) *Accounts for Payment* - To receive and confirm the Accounts for Payment for May 2025 (*circulated to members*).
On the proposal of Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple it was agreed by all to approve the Accounts for Payment for May 2025. All agreed.
- b) *To receive report and recommendations of Finance and Governance Cttee Meeting* held on 22nd May 2025. See Financial and Policy recommendations including year-end accounts, reserves, electric vehicle charging contracts. To also confirm minutes of meeting held 22nd April 2025.

It was agreed by all to approve the Minutes of the Finance and Governance Cttee meeting held 22nd April 2025

Notes of the meeting of 22nd May 2025 had been circulated in advance – these were agreed by all.

Recommendation re E V Chargers – having considered the offers from Plug in Suffolk and Anglia Car Charging for East Green – propose go ahead with a new 30kw charger at East Green to replace the existing 2 x 7kw units. Anglia Car charging will install the new one, take the income/ pay electricity for this unit for a 10-year agreement, and pay STC income of £1500 pa for using the land as a bay for the charging. STC therefore will incur no costs – but have asked to ensure that the price to charge customers is no greater than the average for these units.

Gardner Road – will continue with Anglia Car Chargers for the present ones there – on a operation and maintenance contract for 5 years. Approx £1400 PA

The recommendations above were Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Wells. All agreed.

- c) *To confirm delegated budget of £32800* for Leisure and Environment Committee for 2025/26 as per Town Council Budget.
Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple. All agreed for the delegated budget of £32,800 be allocated to Leisure and Environment Committee for 2025/26 as per Town Council Budget

10. **Standing Orders:**

To re-confirm the Town Council's Standing Orders for 2025/2026 (as updated) and to re-confirm the Financial Standing Orders for 2025/26 (as updated). Circulated at all.

To re-confirm the Town Council's Standing Orders for 2025/2026 (as updated) - proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple. Agreed by all.

To re-confirm the Financial Standing Orders for 2025/26 (as updated) proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Wells. All agreed

11. **Sealing of Documents 25/26:** to authorise the Clerk to seal legal and civic documents. **Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple. All agreed to authorise the Clerk to seal legal and civic documents.**
12. **GDPR** – to confirm that Council and Councillors are aware of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to collecting, using and protecting personal information in accordance with provisions of GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

To consider and approve the GDPR risk assessment as reviewed.

Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Temple. All agreed to approve the GDPR risk assessment as reviewed.

Cllr Jarvis also advised that Government will be overhauling audit arrangements for councils and this is likely to include town and parish councils.

13. **Other Updates.**

- Meeting with CEO Adnams – Cllr Flunder advised that Cllr Flunder, Cllr Davy and the Town Clerk met with Adnams CEO at Reydon – see shareholders update. Reducing debt is the main theme including selling pubs in Orford and Saxmundham. Blyth Hotel has not yet been sold. The head office on Church Green is no longer used. The Adnams 2 principle initiatives are “Destination Southwold” and “Ghost Ship”.
- Community Police attendance in Southwold, including visit by Police and Crime Commissioner.
The Police & Crime Commissioner was in attendance in Southwold with the police on Monday. There is a greater police community presence now in Southwold. The Police Station is being kept for use for Sizewell. PC Rich Moore will make the station open when possible. Police & Crime Commissioner has offered to attend an STC meeting.
- Seawall repairs – update has been circulated – the project is on track for the repairs to be completed by the beginning of summer .
- Local Government Review – It was suggested that a one unitary in both Norfolk and Suffolk might be detrimental to rural communities. ESC Ward Cllr Beavan advised that there is no Government decision yet. SCC & NCC want 1 unitary each. District Councils are split on their thoughts of how many unitaries would be the most appropriate.

14. **Event updates including.**

- a) *Town mayor - Events attended and upcoming;*
Rotary Club 65th Charter Night – 26th April 2025

Southwold Lions Charter Lunch – 27th April 2025
 Southwold Town Mayors Charity Concert - 2nd May 2025 – raised £4,500 for music for Southwold School.
 Alfred Corry Presentation – 3rd May 2025
 Sole Bay Bowls Club official opening of outdoor green – 4th May 2025
 Woodbridge Mayor's Brunch – 10th May 2025
 Charter Money to Primary School – 23rd May 2025
 Lions Fete Opening – 25th May 2025
 Rotary event – 26th May 2025

b) *Upcoming events for councillors*

Opening of Charter Fair – 11.45am. Thursday 29th May 2025
 Charter Lunch – Thursday 29th May 2025
 Civic Parade/Service/reception– Sunday 22nd June 2025

c) *Other events – June 2025*

Suffolk Day – Saturday 21st June 2025
 Street Festival – Saturday 21st June 2025
 Armed Forces Day – Saturday 28th June 2025
 Harbour Event – 28th June 2025

It was suggested that a Beating of the Bounds event take place during summer holiday on a Sunday morning, or an evening after work, finishing at the Harbour Inn. L and E cttee to consider further.

- d) *Town Mayor* - to advise members of the chosen themes for their Mayoral Year. The Town Mayor advised that his support for the Music Society would continue along with the promotion of volunteering in organisations in the town.

15. **Date of next Town Council Meeting:**

Tuesday 24th June 2025 at 6.30pm.

***Some items from this agenda might need to be considered within a confidential session as below.*

16. **Exclusion of Public and Press if required during discussions:** *Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it might need to be resolved, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, for the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following.*

Any matters, including those above as required.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Signed

Dated



SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on **Tuesday 3rd June 2025 at 6pm.**

Present; Cllrs; Temple, Flunder, Gladwell, Goldsmith, Hurr, Wells. Also, the Town Clerk and 2 members of the public.

1 - Apologies:

To receive and approve apologies for absence – Apologies were received from Cllr Palmer.

2 - Declarations of interest:

- a. To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest regarding the agenda. Nil
- b. To receive any declarations of Other Registerable Interests regarding the agenda. Cllr Goldsmith re 21 Church Street.
- c. To receive any declarations of Non-Registerable Interest. Nil.
- d. To receive any request for dispensations regarding the agenda. Nil.
- e. To receive details of any lobbying to members. Nil

3. To approve minutes of meeting of 6th May 2025. Approved by all.

4 - To receive comments from the public on matters on the agenda

(each will be allowed a maximum of 3 minutes – to a total maximum of 10 minutes).

See 21 Church Street as below.

5- Planning Matters:

- a. To determine the Town Council response to the following applications:

DC/25/1864/FUL – 21 Church Street. Work has started on previous application. This is a conversion not a new dwelling. 1 parking space is being made available when guidelines require 2.

Query raised with applicant regarding the roof style windows. What are they? What will they look like? Applicant advised that these are Velux conservation windows and will not be seen from the road. Applicant advised that height of roof will not be changing. Applicant advised that the conservation roof lights are made for Conservation Areas.

The cttee had no objection to the application - All agreed.

DC/25/0849/FUL – Boating Lakes & Kiosk. STC will not be responding to this application.

DC/25/1977/LBC – 5 Church Street. There were no objections to the application. Agreed by all.

- b. **ESC decisions** – Noted.

Museum application has presently been refused. The museum will be approaching the Planning Officer to see if there is any alternative to going to appeal.

c. Applications to ESC Committee. Nil

d. Any Planning Inspectorate Appeals Lodged.

Coach House, Park Lane. No further comment from STC. STC has made sure that the appropriate ESC Minutes have been sent to the Inspector, including details about the site visit. ESC has also been requested to amend the questionnaire from the inspector to reflect that a site visit should be undertaken.

e. Any licence applications/decisions to consider;

Nil

f. Any consultations to consider. Nil.

Pre-app – Woodleys, The Common. Cllr Flunder advised that Plaice Architects attended to present pre app plans. Full planning application is being submitted which will be for a total demolition and rebuild. STC will consider response on full application when available.

Enforcement 32 East Street – work started on the Listed Building without permission. ESC has taken this up with the owner.

DC/25/1150/FUL - 4 Foster Close. No more information has been submitted so there is no alteration to the STC response.

6 - Date of next Planning and Development Committee Meeting:

Tuesday 17th June 2025 at 6pm - Cllrs Flunder and Wells have provided apologies for this meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.30pm

Signed Dated



SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on **Tuesday 17th June 2025 at 6pm.**

Present; Cllrs; Temple, Goldsmith, Hurr. (not quorate) Also, the Town Clerk.

1 - Apologies:

To receive and approve apologies for absence – Apologies were received from Cllrs Flunder, Gladwell, Palmer and Wells.

2 - Declarations of interest:

- a. To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest regarding the agenda. Nil
- b. To receive any declarations of Other Registerable Interests regarding the agenda. Cllr Goldsmith re 5 South Green. Cllr Hurr re 38 Victoria Street.
- c. To receive any declarations of Non-Registerable Interest. Nil.
- d. To receive any request for dispensations regarding the agenda. Nil.
- e. To receive details of any lobbying to members. Nil

3. To approve minutes of meeting of 3rd June 2025. Approved by all.

4 - To receive comments from the public on matters on the agenda

(each will be allowed a maximum of 3 minutes – to a total maximum of 10 minutes).

Nil.

5- Planning Matters:

- a. To determine the Town Council response to the following applications:

DC/25/0863/FUL – Anfield House, 2 Strickland Place – No comments.

DC/25/1867/FUL – Woodleys, The Common – withdrawn from this meeting.

DC/25/2045/FUL – Westbury House, 5 South Green – Members advised that they had no objections to the application as timber windows were included as it is in the Conservation Area.

DC/25/1974/FUL – 32 East Street – Members advised that there should be a request for it to be painted in 'lime-based masonry paint'.

DC/25/2183/FUL – 6 Pinkney's Lane – There were no objections to this application.

DC/25/1270/FUL – 38 Victoria Street – There were no objection to this application.

DC/25/2218/FUL – 37 Fieldstile Road. No Design & Access statement has been supplied. There is a request for UPVC windows – members would prefer timber.

b. **ESC decisions** – Noted.

c. **Applications to ESC Committee.** Nil

d. **Any Planning Inspectorate Appeals Lodged.**

AP/25/0018/REFUSE – The Coach House, Park Lane. Coach House, Park Lane is still in appeal.

e. **Any licence applications/decisions to consider.**

Jacks Burgers, Market Place – Application received for an alcohol licence for Monday – Sunday 10am – 10.30pm. Premises do not open very often and there has been no 10am opening noted this year to date. Members advised that the alcohol licence should reflect the actual opening hours starting at earliest Midday – and finishing as per closing times.

Marks Fish & Chips – Change of signage - new front signage has been installed for which it would seem that planning permission will be required. It also seems to be illuminated.

f. **Any consultations to consider.** Nil.

6 - Date of next Planning and Development Committee Meeting:

Tuesday 8th July 2025 at 6pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.17pm

Signed Dated

Draft Minutes of Southwold Town Council Landlords Committee meeting held 12th June 2025 at 9.30am at Town Hall Southwold.

Rep LL 04.25

Present – Cllrs Gladwell (Chair), Goldsmith, Miller, Redington.
The Town Clerk was also present.

1. **Apologies:** To receive apologies for absence. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M Wells and Cllr S Flunder.
2. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a. *To receive any declarations of Non registerable Interest regarding the agenda.* Nil
 - b. *To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest/ Other Registrable Interests regarding the agenda.* Nil
 - c. *To receive any request for dispensations regarding the agenda.* Nil
3. **To receive comments from public.**
Nil
4. **Minutes/ notes of the previous meeting** – Minutes of meetings held April 2025 had been approved by all.
5. **Update on repairs and planned works 2024.2025 including tenants' maintenance requests for consideration including; *** See landlords summary update June 2025 for full details.**
6. **Tenders**
The tender for the Gable end works at Hurren Terrace has been completed and Mixbrow has been appointed.
7. **Condition surveys** – Nil
8. **Landlord's responsibilities** – see full spreadsheet re fire risk assessments etc.
9. **Insurers visit and insurance valuation update** – The insurers agents visited to consider the risk on our empty properties. A few recommendations received which are incorporated within the full spreadsheet attached.
Insurers have also asked for some of the valuations within the portfolio which are for insurance purposes, be updated. Quotes received from various agencies. Agreed to ask NPS Services to undertake the insurance valuations as required.
10. **Grant availability for insulation/ property repairs.** Insulation received for 11 Station Road from the SCC Grant scheme. C and D need to increase the width of the loft hatch and strengthen the loft flooring before the insulation can be laid.
11. **Quote for works to consider.**
11 Station Road - increase loft hatch and board out – Quote £2500 C and D – approve
1 Strickland place garden/ Red Cross Hut – gardens to be tidied - £20 per hour - approve
Flat 21a Market Place – Painting of front door – C and D £252 plus vat – approve
Unit 9a H Terrace – internal works in office/ stock room – C and D £1459 plus vat – approve

Under arch Hurren Terrace – old commercial gas meter – Cadent to remove £400 – approve

12. **Strategic considerations –**

Town Hall – professional team – additional quote being obtained.

Water Tower – variety of repair work required as listed on schedule. Option analysis / business plan being formulated for council to consider options. NPS assessing rental rates for each option.

Red Cross Hut – clerk has resent the community facility data to the planning officer and asked for a response.

13. **Landlords Association** – newsletter updates circulated to cttee members.

14. **Other matters**

Following various discussions over a period of time the Allotment Association advise that they would be willing to provide the Town Council the parking spaces required as part of the planning conditions for the Hub.

Presently these are provided on an annual licence from Millenium Trust – licence expires June 2025. Millenium Trust would like the 10 spaces back for public parking.

It is therefore recommended that;

- a) **the licence to the Millennium Trust is not renewed so that the Trust can have the spaces for public parking and**
- b) **that the car parking spaces required are made available on the parking area offered by the Allotment Assoc. Instead of an annual fee/ donation being made, a one-off donation of £5k be provided to the Allotment Association - (which will help them complete the purchase of the compostable toilets that they are wishing to install).**

15. **Date of next meeting –** TBC

*****Note: Discussions above may need to be considered as confidential as appropriate and dealt with in the agenda item below.**

16. **Exclusion of Public and Press:** *Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodied (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is proposed that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following.*

Legal Advice

Tender for works

Insurers have also asked for some of the valuations within the portfolio which are for insurance purposes, be updated. Quotes received from various agencies. **Ask NPS Services to undertake the insurance valuations as required.**

Quotes to consider

11 Station Road - increase loft hatch and board out – Quote £2500 C and D – approve

1 Strickland place garden/ Red Cross Hut – gardens to be tidied - £20 per hour - approve

Flat 21a Market Place – Painting of front door – C and D £252 plus vat – approve

Unit 9a H Terrace – internal works in office/ stock room – C and D £1459 plus vat – approve

Under arch Hurren Terrace – old commercial gas meter – Cadent to remove £400 – approve

Hub parking - It is recommended that;

- a) **the licence to the Millennium Trust is not renewed so that the Trust can have the spaces for public parking and**
- b) **that the car parking spaces required are made available on the parking area offered by the Allotment Assoc. Instead of an annual fee/ donation being made, a one-off donation of £5k be provided to the Allotment Association - (which will help them complete the purchase of the compostable toilets that they are wishing to install).**

Jun-25		Action
Residential		
Hurren Terrace Flats		
No 1	Insurers have visited this empty property	Turn off all services
	Repairs / damp works to complete	consider way forward
	Other fire reg improvements	To be costed/ actioned
	Thumb lock turn on inside front door	To be costed/ actioned
No 3	Fire Reg works	to be costed/ actioned
No 7	Tenant advised us of damp patches	Likely to be ventilation - C and D visited - Could need drone survey of chimney
	Tenant advised unstable floor area where wash machine is	action ?
	Fire reg works	To be costed/ actioned
No 9	Fire reg works	to be costed/ actioned
Station Road		
11	Loft insulation awaiting installation	to be installed by SH
	Increase loft hatch and board out	Quote £2500 c and D
	Fire risk works	to be costed / actioned
13	Fire risk works	to be costed/ actioned
Strickland Place		
1	Insurers have visited this empty property	Turn off all services
	back garden needs clearing	
2	Planning app in re rear	With ESC
	North and Hawkins ascertaining payment of retention for Lexden works	With North and Hawkins
4	Need works update from tenant	Appt to be made with tenant
Market Place		
Flat 21a	Water split off	cancelled due to cost
	Fire risk assessment	with Jed Gerrell
	tenant queries re doing some courtyard works	painting of shed/ fence agreed with tenant
	Painting of front door - outside	£252 plus vat
Flat above shop Station Rd	defects/ cracking etc noted	Allman woodcock dealing on our behalf

Business		
Units Hurren Terrace		
3	see Fire Risk assess urgent action	being actioned
3a	Fire assess needed ??	
5	Fire assess needed ??	
7	Fire assess needed ??	
9a	internal works in office/ stock room	C and D quote £1459 plus Vat to consider
	See Fire risk ass urgent actions	being actioned
Rear Meter Boxes		Replaced
Rear - old gas meter	Police/ cadent involved due to anti social activity	requested Cadent to remove - cost approx £1k
Gable End Works	Mixbrow undertaking visit this week to confirm timescales / work schedule	
	Party wall notices being sent out	
Underpass works	with Mibrow to complete with the above.	
Shop	lease completed	being fitted out
Hub	retention due to be paid June 2025	Project team assessing amount to be paid
		Project team considering heating of rear units
Hub - rear courtyard	Landscaping etc	with Project manager as some of courtyard in need of maintenance

Market Place		
21		
23	works as detailed by Ch of L/I	some with tenant some with STC
	Drain pipes for Mills and Colleen and Clair both rickety and in need of sorting.	Quotes to obtain
	Drain cover bends when stood on and also concrete around it is a trip hazard. Rear path all very uneven.	Quotes to obtain
	two sizeable rectangular holes in the fabric of Colleen and Clairs' building (behind the commercial bins) These need some sort of cover/vent as it's an obvious entry point for vermin.	Quotes to obtain
25		nil
Red Cross Hut	Insurers have visited this empty property	Water to be turned off
		Shed to be cleared and locked
		premises to be cleared
		Garden needs clearing
	Future Use	Community facilities documented and sent to LPA
Water Tower	Insurers have visited this empty property	Nil
	Rental valuation to be updated	NPS
	<i>works as detailed by Chair and Bob G</i>	
	Heating	everywhere dried out - heating off 6th June
	Secondary glazing	leave a jar - done
	Second Floor heating	get a heater installed
	Paint	QUOTE TO scrape off areas where paint is peeling - after one month apply a breathable sealer to prevent deterioration
	Rear entrance	QUOTE TO scrape off areas where paint is peeling - after one month apply a breathable sealer followed by a breathable membrane. Install a 25mm thermal board to tidy the area up

	Chimney	Does it have a vent still ?
	Coving top floor	to consider
		see quotes previously received from C and D
	Drainage soakaway crates	how to find out load they can take?
Kilcock Toilets	Survey carried out - cracking appeared walls and outside flooring by steps	consider way forward
	QR code notices to be created for donations (cost to have open and cleaned and locked/ unlocked = £36.51/day for min June - Sept = £4500 plus services plus rates plus maintenance	Being actioned
Allotment parking	swap Millenium car park spaces with same number at allotment site	consider an offer to allot holders
		Give one months notice to M Trust
Casino	tenant leaving 16th June	Landlords checks to be done
	Rental valuation to be updated	NPS
	Windows	survey by C and D prior to new windows being ordered
40A High Street	See fire risk assess urgent actions	to be actioned
All properties	Valuations on some for insurance purposes	quotes being obtained to value for insurance update
Town Hall	Professionals - see more quotes	Who to approach?
	Ensure that new architect can take over Paul B plans	to do
	See Fire risk assess urgent actions	being actioned
Workshop Ferry Road	Need to rack out - improve as storage facility	Consider
Putting Green		nil at present

Boating Lake		nil at present
Marshes	Letter from Defra - dated 4th June	consider implications re Nitrate Vulnerable Zone
Land along Blyth Road	licences to be updated	
	any land spare after new licences??	consider when known

Notes of the Roads Committee meeting held Wednesday 4th June 2025 at 10.30am at the Town Hall.

Roads Rep 3.2025

Present Cllrs Beavan, Davy, Palmer, Hurr and Jarvis.

Also present, Town Mayor Cllr Flunder (SF) (ex officio) and Town Clerk (LB).

Also, SCC Officer Jo Kerridge (JK), and SCC Ward Cllr Ladd (ML)

Notes

1. **To receive apologies for absence** – Nil
2. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a. To receive any declarations of Non-Registrable Interest regarding the agenda. Nil
 - b. To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest/ Other Registrable Interest regarding the agenda. Nil.
3. **Public section** - *for members to speak on matters relating to the agenda items under consideration. Max of 30 minutes will be given to this section. Discussions at the discretion of the Chair of the Cttee.* Nil.
4. **Update from SCC Ward Cllr Ladd** and Jo Kerridge re local Highways matters, including;
 - *High Street 20mph Application*
20MPH Application response is being drafted by SCC who are awaiting comments from the police. Once the police have commented, both SCC Ward Cllr and STC will be asked to include comments before the report is finalised.
If agreed the speed limit will then take 18 months to 2 years to implement.

Action

JK to advise whether there will be any cost to STC.

ML and JK to keep this moving at SCC.

- *£54K for parking scheme*
SCC has confirmed via ML that the £54k will be retained by them to be used towards the High Street scheme. This would include the courtesy crossings and/ or 20mph scheme.
- *2 Courtesy Crossings – Victoria Street and Queen Street*
The previous quote for the cost was £52k, so the SCC monies above would cover this.
Updated costs being obtained by JK.

Action

JK to provide a description of the process with approx. timescales.

JK to advise STC of the updated costs – these should be with STC by 24TH JUNE 2025

ML and JK to keep this moving at SCC.

- *Dropped Kerb request for outside lighthouse* – Costs from SCC are in region of £10k
Adnams advise that it is not their intention to fund the request. No further action.

- *Mill Lane resurfacing and lining.* Completed – no further action.
- *TRO list and matters from walk round with Highways Officer March 2025*
 Quotes received from SCC to achieve TRO on Mill Lane, East Green, Salisbury Road, and High Street – cost £9k - £11k. Cllr Ladd only has a small budget for the year and will only be able to assist to a max of £2500. Remainder of cost will need to be funded by STC. (see overall budget for the roads project).
 Subsequent to meeting updated costs are going to be sent, as the project will now cost more as there is not going to be a 50/50 split between STC and SCC Ward Cllr.

ACTION

Await final costs and STC to then consider the costs within the overall Roads Budget.

- *Post along Pinkney's Lane outside shop front.*
 SCC Cllr Ladd advised that the post will be moved to its original location on 4th July.
- *Speeding along Pier Avenue.* A resident has complained about speeding along Pier Avenue.

Action

SCC will carry out a speed survey in August 2025.

5. Update from ESC Ward Cllr Beavan including;

- *Weight limit on North Parade parking spaces.* This would now seem to be a possibility if required. However there have not been any issues so far this year. Felixstowe are having restrictions placed on their seafront parking to deter/ prevent camper vans.

Action

Clerk to contact ESC Parking services to find out how the restrictions at Felixstowe are being implemented and what they are.

- *ESC Trade parking permits.* This matter has been raised as there have been concerns about a permit provided by ESC to builders working on the corner of Barnaby Green. They should be parked for a max of 3 hours, and be considerate with their parking, but neither seem to be the case. ESC parking enforcement looks when they are in town, but they are not in town for 3 hours at a time, so this matter is difficult to enforce. However, the parking is causing issues around in the area.

Action

An approach to be made direct to the builders when necessary.

DB will liase with ESC parking to see if there is any opportunity for STC to have some kind of discretion on the provision of parking permits.

- *Resident Parking Permissions*

Some Southwold residents rely on the parking dispensations. ESC is reviewing the whole policy regarding dispensations.

6. Other matters including;

- Gardner Road car park – signage improvements, donation boxes, Electric vehicle charges. First stage of the signage improvements has been completed. Donation boxes have been installed. Electric vehicle chargers – Anglia Car Charging is the chosen supplier for the Church Green EVC, and 'Plug in Suffolk' is the chosen supplier for the new chargers at Gardner Rd car park.
- Lining works - Bus area outside old Kings Head to be reconfigured. This has been signed off by SCC. Works are being ordered by SCC who will also liaise with the bus companies.
- Lining works outside Town Hall - the removal of the pedestrian people markings within the Market Place is to be organised by STC.
- Bins from Holiday lets being left on pavements – DB advised that he is trying to get something sorted through ESC.
- Table and Chairs on pavements = ESC Licensing
- A Boards on pavements = ESC Planning.
- Suffolk Bus Enhancement and franchising update – Cllr Jarvis advised that this would unravel through the Devolution process.
- Station Road area

Bus stop outside shop on Station Road – sign for the bus stop is no longer in situ – but actually it is not a good place for a bus stop – better place would be outside Millenium Car Park. Clerk to contact SCC to request that the stop is moved.

Blyth Hotel hedge – ESC to cut this back to improve sight line.

It was suggested that a Pedestrian sign be placed near hedge so that motorists are aware of people crossing – JK to take this up with SCC.

Danger of turning left from Pier Ave – ML suggested that the area be looked at by the SCC Road Safety Team – ML/JK to take this up with SCC.

Crossing Station Rd from Blyth Hotel – This area seems to be in need of a pedestrian crossing. Either this side of the mini roundabout or other side by Millenium car park. ML advised that if permitted cost could be in region of £150k.

- Skip/ Rubbish on highway outside Red Cross Hut – from a neighbouring property – To be reported on SCC Reporting tool.

- Potters Bridge – MP is meeting with stakeholders and agencies this week although SCC, ESC, STC have not been invited.

7. **Date of next meeting** – 23rd July 2025 at 10.30am at Town Hall.

Internal Audit Report for Southwold Town Council

for the year ending 31 March 2025

Clerk	Lesley Beevor
RFO (if different)	-
Chairperson	Councillor Simon Flunder
Precept	£ 118,551
Income	£ 535,713
Expenditure	£1,220,664
General reserves	£ 150,819
Earmarked reserves	£1,176,842
Audit type	Annual – non-exempt authority
Auditor name	Victoria Waples

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 2024/25 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 – 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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Is the ledger maintained and up to date?</i>	Yes	The council continues with it's of the Omega Financial Software accounting package which produces a suite of tools to allow for reporting on an Income and Expenditure basis. The software is cloud based allowing for the software to be accessed via a browser with centrally managed back-ups and upgrades thereby adding an extra layer of encryption and security measures. The financial software used by the Council allows the automation of many of its transactions involving income and expenditure and employee payroll, as well as reports and financial statements.
<i>Is the ledger on the correct basis in relation to the gross income/expenditure?</i>	Yes	Council operates on an Income and Expenditure accounting processes and understands that the accounting statements will include all of the transactions for the year where the council has received economic benefits or given other economic benefits irrespective of the year in which they are paid.
<i>Is the cash book up to date and regularly verified?</i>	Yes	The cashbook is reconciled on a monthly basis, regularly verified against bank statements and contains entries from day to day of all sums of money received and expended by the council along with matters to which the income and expenditure relates. In accordance with good practice, the accounting records also contain a record of income and expenditure in relation to claims made for contribution, grant or subsidies from a government department or other public body.
<i>Is the arithmetic correct?</i>	Yes	Spot checks were made and were found to be correct. Journal entries between cost codes for the year under review were seen and verified with supporting documentation reviewed. All payments and receipts are clearly referenced with a description as to the expenditure and income being incurred along with supporting documentation thereby ensuring the integrity of the data being input and processed.
Additional comments:		

Section 2 – 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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
Have Standing Orders been adopted, up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	The Standing Orders, as seen on the Parish Council's website show an adopted date of 27 th May 2025 and are based on the latest model published by the National Association of Local Councils (2025) with appropriate amendments. Council shows awareness of the requirement to ensure that its Standing Orders are fully tailored to the council and that in accordance with proper practices they are regularly reviewed, fit for purpose and adhered to. <i>Comment: council has ensured that the updated Standing Orders reflect the amendments made to section 18 to comply with new procurement legislation and ensure consistency with the NALC Model Financial Regulations. Amendments to section 14 to better reflect Code of Conduct requirements have also been applied along with changes to the language in the document to gender-neutral terms to align with NALC's policy and the Civility and Respect Project.</i>
Are Financial Regulations up to date and reviewed annually?	Yes	Council's Financial Regulations were also reviewed and amended at the annual meeting of 27 th May 2025 and reflect changes to the Model Financial Orders as produced by NALC in March of this year relating to changes necessitated by the Procurement Act 2023.
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	The Council, in accordance with proper practices and with reference to section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, has employed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) who is responsible for the financial administration of the authority (Minutes from the meeting of 28 th May and 25 th June 2024 refer).
<i>Additional comments: In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 s14(3) and with reference to council's own standing orders, at the meeting of 28th May 2024, council granted authorisation to the clerk to seal legal and civic documents.</i>		

¹ Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 (d)

Section 3 – 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	<p>In accordance with its own Financial Regulations covering procurement, expenditure is presented to Council on a monthly basis for review and authorisation for payment is made by resolution. A review of the procedures followed for receipt of invoices, agreement of invoice detail and confirmation of goods or services delivery along with approval for payments was undertaken on a selection of individual payments and it is confirmed that Council is operating within its own Financial Regulations and has resilient measures in place covering the manner in which the council's payments are made. The system currently used by the council continues to demonstrate that there is an effective measurable arrangement for the safeguarding of public money and ensures that there is a robust system of control covering how it orders goods and services and incurs and manages its liabilities with clear lines of segregation in relation to authorisation, custody and record-keeping roles to prevent fraud and errors.</p> <p>A further spot check of items paid via the Direct Debit system from the council's accounts were 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.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with Financial Regulation 6.6, for each financial year the RFO has drawn up a list of due payments which arise on a regular basis as the result of a continuing contract, statutory duty, or obligation (such as but not exclusively) Salaries, PAYE and NI, Superannuation Fund and regular maintenance contracts and the like for which the Finance Committee</i></p>

		<p><i>may authorise payment for the year provided that the requirements of regulation 4 (Budget and Precept) are adhered to, provided also that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council for noting.</i></p> <p>For the year under review, there were no significant contracts awarded. Council continues to be mindful of guidance covering the procedures for the management of capital projects which are covered by council's Standing Orders, and which require payments against certified completions under a planned and approved programme of works governed by a properly negotiated contract supervised by a named authority officer. The RFO has ensured that, where relevant, it has complied with its own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in terms of procurement and where those regulations require an open invitation and a formal tender process, it has followed them.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that where the legislation applies, as a contracting authority, it must, in general, meet their contractual requirements for goods, works and services by means of an advertised competitive contract award process that is based on objective, relevant and proportionate criteria. Council has also noted that if it invites specific firms to tender, it should ensure that the reasons for such an action is recorded in accordance with guidance and where the opportunity was not advertised, it must still publish the awarding of the contract (over £30,000 thereafter) on the Contracts Finder within a reasonable time limit.</i></p>
Where applicable, are internet banking transactions properly recorded and approved?	Yes	<p>Council continues with its procedure, in accordance with Council's Financial Regulation 6.2, of retaining a two-tier security system for payments which are settled by the BACS system. In the case of BACS payments, the Service Administrator may set up transactions online for approval in advance, once the accounts for payment are approved by the Council, two bank signatories shall authorise the transactions online using their own unique ID. The system ensures that the instructions for each payment are signed by two authorised bank signatories.</p> <p><i>Comment: the system in place not only protects the RFO and fulfils an internal control objective to ensure the safeguarding of public money, but it also allows the council to have in place specific control procedures for payments by bank transfer or other electronic means and a process and</i></p>

		<i>mitigating action to protect the council against payment of invoices which may show fraudulent bank account details.</i>
Is VAT correctly identified, recorded, and claimed within time limits?	Yes	<p>VAT is identified in the cash book and reclaimed on a monthly basis. The VAT Assessment File as produced by the accounting package operated by the RFO was reviewed and verified. The year-end VAT figure of £1,091.11 owing at 31st March 2025 was seen and interrogated and reflects that which is shown on the Trial Balance.</p> <p>Sample tests were undertaken by the Internal Auditor to ensure that the VAT element within payments is being clearly identified and appropriately accounted for within the accounting system. For the period under review, the RFO has ensured that VAT has been appropriately identified in relation and correctly coded according to the council's business and non-business activities within the financial records of the software used thereby confirming that robust arrangements are in place for managing its responsibilities regarding VAT.</p> <p><i>Comment: for the year 2024-2025 VAT has been appropriately identified in relation and correctly coded according to the Council's business and non-business activities within the financial records of the software used by council and the Council has robust arrangements in place for managing its responsibilities regarding VAT.</i></p>
Has the Council adopted the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and is there evidence this is being applied correctly? ²	Yes	<p>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 30th May 2023, to use the power until the next relevant Annual Council Meeting (May 2027). At the meeting of 28th May 2024, council reconfirmed its eligibility and resolved to continue to use the power until the next relevant Annual Council Meeting.</p> <p>Council continues to ensure that the Grant Scheme offered by the Council has clear evidence supporting requests and payments made. Payments incurred under this category totalled £15,667 for annual grants and £6,144 for occasional donations as offered. The website contains a running total of grants awarded to non-profit making organisations, charitable groups and voluntary community groups that will benefit residents of Southwold. The</p>

² Localism Act

		<p>donations summary for 2024-2025 is still to be uploaded to the council's website.</p> <p><i>Comment: The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 requires all Parish Councils to publish data if they have a gross annual income or expenditure exceeding £200,000. The Code specifies how frequently data is to be published, be it quarterly, annually or once only, but in many cases encourages more frequent publication. Section 42 provides clarity on the manner in which this information should be produced whilst section 43 details the information that must be published as a minimum: date the grant was awarded; time period for which the grant has been given; local authority department which awarded the grant; beneficiary; beneficiary's registration number (if applicable) summary of the purpose of the grant, and amount.</i></p>
Are payments under s.137 ³ 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?	Yes	The council has one Public Works Board Loan (PW506406). The balance outstanding as at 31st March 2025 was £75,000. Repayments for the period ending 31 st March 2025 totalled £31,000 in accordance with the instalment repayment schedule as issued. The loan type is fixed, and the repayment method is via an annuity with repayments due the nearest working day to 19 th September and 19 th March.
Additional comments:		

³ 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 £10.81 per elector) on purposes for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.

Section 4 – 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	<p>At the meeting of 25th June 2024, full council formally reviewed and approved its Risk Management Document and Procedure for the year 2024 – 2025. Council is aware that its risk assessment needs to focus on the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money, it needs to demonstrate on an annual basis that it has taken actions to identify and assess those risks and that it has considered what actions or decisions it needs to take during the year to manage in order to avoid financial or reputational consequences. The register showed no material amendments and provided an assessment of the risks and management thereof in relation to Property (rent; liabilities under legislation and risks to and use of play equipment); Finances (security of monies; security of cash; security of petty cash; risk of litigation and project financial exposure and grant funding conditions) and Personnel (injury; loss due to employee error; risk to members; risk of abuse and / or harassment).</p> <p><i>Comment: Council continues to ensure that it acts within the sphere of the controls as set out in the Risk Register and has demonstrated that in accordance with Proper Practices and with reference to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it has in place safe and efficient arrangements to safeguard public money and that a regular review of the safety of the parish council's assets and in particular its money, is part of the methodical manner in which Council addresses the risks associated with the activities and services it provides.</i></p>
Is there evidence that risks are being identified and managed?	Yes	<p>A review of the Council's financial risk assessment documentation shows that there are in place specific control procedures for payments made by direct bank transfer, which, if reviewed on a regular basis, will provide reassurance that the Council has taken steps to identify, assess and record risks associated with actions and decisions it has taken or considered taking during the year that could have financial or reputational consequences. In</p>

		<p>accordance with its own internal control document, council has implemented a system whereby a member of the Finance and Governance Committee undertakes quarterly reviews, via control tests, of the effectiveness of its system of internal control to ensure that the mitigation measures in place to address the risks associated with the management of public finances are managed and appropriate to the council's requirements. Council's internal control document confirms that all minutes of all committees are circulated to all members of the council and full council monitors progress by receiving relevant reports from committees and the clerk.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council has noted that in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it should conduct a formal review of its system of internal control and should have in place monitoring documents which would identify the risks involved with and the potential for improvements to its arrangements to protect public money.</i></p>
<p><i>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?</i></p>	Yes	<p>At year-end (and as confirmed at the meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee in February 2025), Council has insurance in place under a Commercial Combined Insurance policy with Aviva Insurance which shows core cover for the following: Public liability:£10million; Products Liability:£10million; Employers Liability: £10million; Commercial Crime (Internal) £2million; Business Interruption (on five premises) £100thousand and Management Liability of £250thousand; Management liability (based on turnover) which has a limit of £250,000 for any one claim and Fidelity Guarantee of £2million.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that best practice states that Fidelity Cover should be sufficient to provide cover that was 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 thereby reducing the council's exposure to the risks associated with the handling of money, securities and property.</i></p> <p>Insurance cover is also in place for fourteen premises as identified within the schedule with cover for one being the operational assets including EV charging units located within the confines of Southwold. Business interruption is identified for all identified premises.</p> <p>During the year, being aware that it is the responsibility of the Council as a whole to satisfy itself that insurances are adequate and that all steps have been taken to mitigate and manage identified risks with appropriate</p>

		<p>insurance, annual reviews of the council's insurance were undertaken prior to renewal. The minutes of full council of 28th January 2025 provide confirmation that prior to renewal council's arrangements for insurance cover in respect of amendments to provide clarity in the mitigation / actions required and the manner in which any identified risks would be addressed along with the actions needed to remove or minimise the identified risk had begun. The minutes of 25th February 2025 confirm that all risks had been identified, and adjustments made. Approval was given to renew the insurance with the current provider. At renewal council was in the last year of a three-year long-term understanding.</p> <p>The Clerk provided the meeting of 25th March 2025 with an update following a recent cyber risk assessment which had resulted in an assessment classified as very good.</p> <p><i>Comment: council is able to demonstrate that it has reviewed the risks facing the council in transacting its business and has taken out appropriate insurance to manage and reduce the risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things), and has satisfied itself that there are no materials facts which might influence the acceptance or assessment of the risks covered by the policy.</i></p>
<i>Evidence that internal controls are documented and regularly reviewed⁴</i>	Yes	<p>Confirming that the council is operating within its own internal control, formal evidence (via a minute reference) was given at the meeting of full council on 25th June 2024 that council had formally reviewed the effectiveness of its review as outlined in its Statement of Internal Control for the year ending 31st March 2025. It is confirmed that council's document covers the purpose of the system of internal control; the personnel involved with the internal control regime, internal and external audit remit, review of effectiveness of internal control along with an action plan to address issues raised within the internal control process. Council has also been mindful to ensure that all payments are carried out with reference to its own Financial Regulations 6, and that reference to online banking for the use of the settlement of accounts is included within the Council's overall Risk Assessment Documentation.</p>

⁴ Accounts and Audit Regulations

		<p>A scan of the minutes did not give rise to any unusual financial activity and there were no actions of a potentially unlawful nature being considered.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, council has understood the requirement to undertake a formal review of its internal controls to enable it to demonstrate that it has taken steps to identify, assess and record the control mechanisms in place to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to safeguard and protect public finances.</i></p>
<p><i>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 appointment⁵</i></p>	Yes	<p>In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the council formally reviewed the scope and effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements, as well as the competence and independence of those conducting the internal audit review, within the internal control statement as adopted in June 024 and at the meeting at which the appointment of the internal auditor was approved.</p> <p><i>Comment: the review of the terms of reference and effectiveness of internal audit are demonstration that Council has understood that the role of internal audit is to evaluate and report on the adequacy of the system on internal control.</i></p>
<p>Additional comments:</p>		

⁵ Practitioners Guide

Section 5 – 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	<p>The revenue budget for the year 2024 - 2025 in the sum of £215,531 was approved at the council meeting of 9th January 2024 with members noting that whilst there was the possibility of balancing the budget with a nil increase to the precept due to interest being earned on present balances, this should not be regarded as a long-term solution.</p> <p>The revenue budget for the year 2025 - 2026 was approved at the Council meeting of 28th January 2025 and was set at £227,450 with the minutes and background papers demonstrating the reasoning for variations to both the budget, known income levels, precept and the use of reserves which could not be sustained long-term.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with proper practices, council continues to evidence, within the minutes, the actual budget being set alongside the reasoning for such a budget thereby ensuring transparency in the budgetary process followed by the council.</i></p>
Verify that the precept amount has been agreed in full Council and clearly minuted	Yes	<p>The precept for the year 2024 – 2025 was discussed and approved at the meeting of 9th January 2024 and set at £118,551.17. The minutes show that, taking into account movement in the tax base, this would represent 0% (zero) change to the Band D Council Tax dwelling over that set for the previous year and would be sufficient to cover the revenue budget.</p> <p>The precept for the year 2025 – 2026 was set at the meeting of 28th January 2025 £176,651.41 with the minutes confirming that, once the variations to local taxes including the second home levy were taken into account, would represent a 0% (zero) increase on a Band D Council Tax.</p>
Regular reporting of expenditure and variances from budget	Yes	<p>The minutes evidence that the Finance & Governance Committee conducted reviews covering the budget for the current year with a review of income and expenditure against budget at relevant periods throughout the year. Monitoring statements produced include breakdown of all receipts and payments balance against the bank.</p>

		<p><i>Comment: Council in accordance with its own standing order 17c produces regular statements showing evidence of comparisons between budgeted and actual income and expenditure to form the basis of approval for virements in accordance with council's own Standing Orders and Terms of Reference.</i></p> <p>Council continues with the practice of ensuring that virements between budgets are considered by the Finance and Governance Committee and recommended for approval to the Town Council as and when they arise, subject to Financial Regulation 5.17 which states that "No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the council, or duly delegated committee acting within its Terms of Reference except in an emergency."</p> <p>A scan of the minutes did not give rise to any unusual financial activity and there were no actions of a potentially unlawful nature being considered.</p> <p>Council's Financial Regulations as adopted by full council details under Financial Regulation 5.15 the expenditure on revenue items that may be authorised by the clerk on behalf of the council which in the clerk's judgement it is necessary to conduct. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £5,000.00. The Clerk shall report such action to the chair of the council as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council follows best practice by ensuring that such an action is evidenced by a minute as authorisation.</i></p>
<i>Reserves held – general and earmarked⁶</i>	Yes	<p>The Council, as at year-end, had Earmarked Reserves totalling £91,176,842 and General Reserves of £150,819</p> <p>Council has, within its own Reserve Policy, (as reviewed and adopted by the Finance & Governance Committee in June 2024) set a limit to be held for its general reserve which will be based upon a risk assessment carried out by</p>

⁶ 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

	<p>the RFO on an annual basis and used to form the basis for the budget for the forthcoming year. Council is aware that this will be subject to further reviews to include cash flow requirements, inflationary and interest rates, diversification of funds to spread risk and optimize interest returns prior to year-end adjustments to maintain the prescribed level. The adopted policy shows that a level of general reserves to be maintained will be equivalent of one year's non capital related expenditure. In addition the policy also states that the council will build sufficient cash reserves to service property liabilities to the equivalent of 5% of the property book valuation and to build up sufficient reserves for longer term projects.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware of the guidance as issued by Proper Practices (March 2023) which states that it is regarded as acceptable for a council's general (non-earmarked revenue) reserves to be maintained at between three and twelve months of Net Revenue Expenditure and that it should ensure that the level of general reserves adopted is in accordance with its general reserve policy. It is still generally held that councils with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards three months equivalent general reserve and that those councils with self-generated income, should take into account situations that may lead to a loss of revenue as well as increased costs.</i></p> <p>Whilst there is no upper or lower limit to EMRs save only that they must be held for genuine and identifiable purposes and projects, and their level should be subject to regular review and justification (at least annually and at budget setting) Council has ensure that they are separately identified and enumerated and that they are held for genuine and intended purposes and their level is subject to regular review and justification.</p>
<p>Additional comments:</p>	

Section 6 – 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	<p>During the year under review, Council received income from a number of identified sources all of which was banked intact with the transactions identified within the accounting system operated by the RFO.</p> <p>In accordance with Financial Regulation 13.2, Council understands that it should review all fees and charges annually, with increases as deemed appropriate, following a report as submitted by the Responsible Financial Officer. For the year under review there were no rent reviews of fee reviews but the Clerk to the Council has confirmed that this exercise has commenced for the coming year. The internal audit report for the year ending 31st March 2024, confirms that during 2023-2024, council carried out the rent reviews of the leases and tenancies associated with the council's property portfolio. Reviews and recommendations into the fees and charges for market rents and other assets not part of the built portfolio were also reviewed within the remit of the relevant committee's terms of reference. Council's minutes highlighted the reviews that have been undertaken and recommendations approved by the council in terms of fees, rents and terms and conditions to be applied.</p> <p><i>Comment: council is aware that fee reviews are essential to ensure that the council's income module remains competitive as well as ensuring profitability is maintained. This will ensure that the council's revenue streams are fully optimized allowing for adjustments where necessary.</i></p> <p>A sample review of the control rents for market income, allotments, venue hire, leases, rents and licenses along with associated documentation was undertaken during the internal audit visit and all expected income was found to be based on the correct price, properly recorded and promptly banked with VAT (where appropriate) accounted for.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with proper practices, Council has ensured that there are appropriate control procedures in place along with documentation</i></p>

		<p><i>to provide a clear audit trail through to invoicing and recovery of all such income.</i></p> <p>Further spot checks during the internal audit visit on further items paid under BACS / Direct Credit into the Council's Accounts were cross checked against cashbook, bank statements and invoices raised by the Council.</p>
<i>Is income reported to full council?</i>	Yes	<p>A review of the financial transaction reports was undertaken to ensure income was coded to the appropriate nominal income code and all were found to be in order with appropriate control procedures and documentation to provide a clear underlying audit trail through to invoicing and recovery of all such income.</p> <p>Overall income is recorded in accordance with Financial Regulations and reported to Full Council within the monthly Income and Expenditure reports. The outstanding sales ledger invoices for the period ending 31st March 2025 was reviewed and verified. The Clerk has advised that there are no irrecoverable accounts for consideration as bad debts.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that Proper Guidance states that uncollectible amounts, including bad debts, should only be written off with the approval of members, or under delegated authority by the Responsible Financial Officer and that such approval should be shown in the accounting records.</i></p> <p>During the year under review, council adopted a Bad Debt / Recovery Policy (for debts not covered under a lease or tenancy agreement) and Policy for Tenancy with Rent Arrears. The latter balances the need for effective debt management with a tenant-centred approach that is able to offer support and flexibility where possible.</p>
<i>Does the precept recorded agree to the Council Tax Authority's notification?</i>	Yes	<p>Council received precept in the sum of £118,551 from East Suffolk Council for the period under review in April and September 2024 as reported within the Income and Expenditure Reports for the months of May and September. 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.</p>

<i>If appropriate, are CIL reporting schedules in accordance with the Regulations?⁷</i>	Yes	For the period under review Council received CIL Receipts in the sum of £2,793.56 (April) and £3,352.21 (October). CIL receipts are reported to full Council as part of its overall Income and Expenditure Reports.
<i>Is CIL income reported to the council?</i>	Yes	CIL receipts received are reported within the financial reports submitted to the Finance & Governance Committee, the minutes of such meeting being reported to full council, with further analysis within the CIL Project Lists detailing progress against committee funds.
<i>Does unspent CIL income form part of earmarked reserves?</i>	Yes	The CIL financial overview report for 2024-2025 shows an anticipated year-end balance of £17,323.19 which is retained in Earmarked Reserves specifically allocated, in accordance with the Regulations.
<i>Has an annual report been produced?</i>	Yes	The Annual CIL Statement for 2024-2025 has still to be presented to full Council for formal approval, signature and onward submission.
<i>Has it been published on the authority's website?</i>	In progress	The statement for the year ending 31 st March 2024 was confirmed as being present on the council's website and reflects the sums incurred, expended and retained by the council. <i>Comment: council is aware that the Regulations provide clarity on the timing of the reports, and by which date they should be brought into the public domain.</i>
Additional comments:		

⁷ Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Section 7 – 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
<i>Is petty cash in operation?</i>	N/A	A petty cash is not operated by the council.
<i>If appropriate, is there an adequate control system in place?</i>	N/A	
Additional comments:		

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
<i>Do all employees have contracts of employment?</i>	Yes	Council had 4 employees on its payroll at the period end of 31 st March 2025. Employment contracts were not reviewed during the internal audit visit for the year ending 31 st March 2025, but the Clerk has confirmed that all staff have an employment contract.
<i>Has the Council approved salary paid?</i>	Yes	All salary payments are presented to full Council for approval and payment is made in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. From the paperwork seen, the National Salary Award 2024 applicable from 1 st April 2024 was applied effective January 2025 with backpay payable from 1 st April 2024 as approved by full council at its meeting of 27 th January 2025. Salaries are paid in accordance with contracted hours worked. Payroll records including variations to contracts with approval dates of such revisions are accurately maintained and held securely by the Clerk to the council. <i>Comment: Council has ensured that there are suitable payroll arrangements in place 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.</i>
<i>Minimum wage paid?</i>	No	No member of staff is paid the minimum wage.
<i>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?</i>	Yes	There are suitable payroll arrangements in place 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.
<i>Do salary payments include deductions for PAYE/NIC? Is PAYE/NIC paid promptly to HMRC?</i>	Yes	The payroll function for the year under review is operated in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs guidelines. Cross-checks were completed on 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.

<i>Is there evidence that the Council is aware of its pension responsibilities? Are pension payments in operation?⁸</i>	Yes	<p>Council is aware of its pension responsibilities and payments are made in accordance with timescales agreed with the Council's Pension Provider for two members of staff who have been enrolled into the council provided pension scheme.</p> <p>It is unclear as to whether all members of the Council's Staff are eligible to join the council administered Pension Schemes (Local Government Pension Scheme) if such a request is submitted.</p> <p>Council should note that any employee may transfer an existing pension with another provider into the council appointed pension provider, usually within a given time frame. Council should ensure that there is clarity on how this will be managed beyond the specified timeframe.</p> <p><i>Comment: Under the LGPS Regulations 2013 effective from 1 April 2014, all employers participating in the LGPS are required to prepare and publish a written statement on how it will exercise the various discretions provided by LGPS 2013, LGPS 2008, LGPS 1997, Compensation and Injury Allowances Regulations. Council is advised to adopt such a policy during the coming year.</i></p>
<i>Have pension re-declaration duties been carried out</i>	Yes	<p>Council's re-declaration of compliance with regards to re-enrolment was confirmed as having been submitted by the Clerk who in turn had confirmed that all members of staff had been reassessed for pension auto-enrolment, and that the council was currently compliant with all staff members meeting the threshold and eligibility criteria for auto-enrolment having been enrolled in a qualifying pension scheme. (Minutes of Finance and Governance Committee of 17th February 2025 refer).</p>
<i>Are there any other payments (e.g.: expenses) and are these reasonable and approved by the Council?</i>	Yes	<p>There is a satisfactory expense system in place and all staff expenses claimed are approved in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations.</p> <p>Within the annual budget set for 2024 – 2025 is the sum of £1,000 a sum for the Mayor's Allowance. Expenditure incurred totalled £1,213 for the year under review.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that section 15(5) of the LGA 1972 provides that Parish (and Town) Councils may for its Mayor "for the purpose of enabling</i></p>

⁸ The Pension Regulator – [website click here](#)

		<i>them to meet the expenses of their office such allowance as the council think reasonable”.</i>
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Section 9 – 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
<i>Does the Council maintain a register of material assets it owns and manage this in accordance with proper practices?⁹</i>	Yes	The Asset Register covers those items listed under insurance and within the parish council's remit for maintenance and ownership. Council's asset policy defines fixed assets as items of machinery and equipment which have a useful life of more than one year. The Asset Register currently stands at £9,730,605 and shows overall movement to that declared at the year-end of 31 st March 2024 (£330,339.10) taking into account acquisitions and disposals during the year under review. The copy of the Asset Register was reviewed by the Internal Auditor to allow the spot check to be conducted.
<i>Is the value of the assets included? (Note value for insurance purposes may differ)</i>	Yes	The RFO has ensured that the council has a formal asset register which is routinely updated to record new assets at historic cost price, net of VAT along with removal of any assets disposed of / no longer serviceable. Where assets have been gifted or where there is no known value, assets have been given the proxy value of £1. This value has also been applied to community assets, which, in accordance with guidance, are treated in the same manner as gifted assets. <i>Comment: This current valuation for assets commonly known as community assets is in line with requirements for smaller authorities to record each asset at its original purchase cost or where the original purchase cost is unknown at the time of first recording on the asset register, a current value is recorded, which acts as a proxy value to the original cost and will remain unchanged until disposal.</i>
<i>Are records of deeds, articles, land registry title number available?</i>	N/A	Records of deeds, articles, land registry title number were not reviewed during the internal audit review.

⁹ Practitioners Guide

<i>Are copies of licences or leases available for assets sited at third party property?</i>	<i>N/A</i>	Council has declared that it does not have any assets located on third party property.
<i>Is the asset register up to date and reviewed annually?</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<p>The asset register is still to be signed off by the council but the values on the Asset Register seen on the website equal that detailed at Line 9 on the DRAFT Accounting Statements of the AGAR. The council continues to use the preferred value for exiting assets as the original acquisition cost and has ensured that the fixed asset value for any individual item will not usually be altered from year to year (unless a material enhancement has taken place). As such the change in the total value for fixed assets (in box 9 of the Council's accounting statements) indicates the acquisition of new assets of significance.</p> <p><i>Comment: council has previously noted that it may be necessary to review the threshold value for fixed assets (currently £500) annually to ensure the value continues to include the types of items currently listed as fixed assets. Such a review will require the revaluation of both the current and previous years' asset registers to give a consistent basis for comparison.</i></p> <p>There are appropriate measures in place to allow for the tracking of additions and disposals from the previous year to the current year.</p> <p><i>Comment: in accordance with proper practices, council has recognised that it is not expected that the basis for the valuation of its assets will not change more than once or twice in the lifetime of that asset.</i></p>
<i>Cross checking of insurance cover</i>	<i>Yes</i>	The Asset Register was reviewed during the Internal Audit Visit and a spot check of assets against the insurance schedule was undertaken to ensure that all assets are recorded appropriately and under insurance. Council has insurance under all risks cover for its assets as specified under the headings on the insurance schedule including furniture, fixtures and fittings at four premises listed on the insurance schedule.
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Section 10 – 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
<i>Is bank reconciliation regularly completed and reconciled with the cash book and cover every account?</i>	Yes	<p>Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis and reconcile with the cash sheets. Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted to both full council and the Finance and Governance Committee.</p> <p>A review of sample of transactions from the cashbooks from the months of April 2024 to March 2025 across the accounts held by the council was undertaken to verify the detail held within the cashbooks to that shown on the bank statement. There were no matters arising from the review which suggested that there were errors in the entries and there was no identification of signs of fraud or duplicate entries (for which explanations or corrections were not forthcoming).</p> <p><i>Comment: The reconciliations conducted allow for the process of comparing internal records against statements from financial institutions and other external sources to ensure money that exits in an account matches money spent.</i></p>
<i>Do bank balances agree with bank statements?</i>	Yes	<p>Bank balances as of 31st March 2025 agree with the year-end bank statements and at year end stood at £1,304,780 across the accounts held in the town council's name. At each meeting, the Finance and Governance Committee receive management reports monitoring the budget, balance sheet, income and expenditure along with movement within the earmarked reserves. The investment accounts are reviewed at the same time with approval given for transfers in accordance with the council's investment strategy.</p> <p>Southwold Town Council currently holds investments within the Public Sector Deposit Fund and Lloyds Band (32 Day Notice) in addition to the Instant and Saver accounts with its current bankers.</p> <p>Council's adopted investment policy (as reviewed in May 2024) defines the council's investment objectives in relation to specified and non-specified</p>

		<p>investments to be placed with banks, building societies, local authorities or other public authorities or other recognised funds specifically targeted at the Public Sector along with reporting strategies and review periods.</p> <p><i>Comment: council is aware that in accordance with proper practices it is required to review its Investment Policy & Strategy annually. The existing policy, as amended and adopted (details above) reflects the statutory guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd Edition) issued under Section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003.</i></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 21st March 2024 provided clarity on the authority for investing and withdrawing funds as appropriate. CCLA funds are noted at all Finance and Governance committee meetings with assessments ongoing as to whether the CCLA fund is an appropriate investment for the majority of the council's funds. The Finance and Governance Committee meeting in February 2025 provided clarity of the manner in which council's investments were held with the meeting noting that CCLA is still AAA rated, and the risk has been considered and negated as far as possible. The CCLA rating will be considered on a regular basis as part of the overall risk review and / or analysis.</p>
<i>Is there regular reporting of bank balances at Council meetings?</i>	Yes	<p>Overall there is regular reporting of bank balances within the detailed financial reports submitted to the Finance and Governance Committee and full Council. Council continues with the system whereby the monthly reconciled bank accounts are presented to the council appointed Internal Controller ensuring that there is access to not only the reconciliation of the cash book to bank statements but also the underlying background evidence upon which the reconciliation is based.</p> <p><i>Comment: Approval of the bank reconciliation by the authority or an authority nominee is not only good practice but is also a safeguard for the Responsible Financial Officer and fulfils one of the authority's internal control objectives.</i></p>

Section 11 – year end procedures		
Evidence		Internal auditor commentary
Are appropriate accounting procedures used?	Yes	The Internal Auditor confirms that having reviewed the year-end files, there is a full underlying financial trail from financial records to the accounts produced.
Financial trail from records to presented accounts	Yes	<p>The RFO has ensured that the Council's accounting software contains and records details on its assets and liabilities including the asset and investment register and other debts. The accuracy of the year-end bank reconciliation detail is verified along with the correct disclosure of the combined cash and bank balances in the AGAR, section 2, line 8.</p> <p>Year-end balances agree with cash book and bank reconciliations:</p> <p>Debtors: £19,712 Other Debtors: £9,786 Prepayments: £34,570 Bank Accounts: £1,304,780 less Creditors: £12,583 VAT: £1,091 Accruals: £27,512 Represented by: Total Reserves: £1,327,661</p>
Has the appropriate end of year AGAR ¹⁰ documents been completed?	Yes	<p>As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 it will be required to complete Part 3 of the AGAR. Section 2 - Accounting Statements of the AGAR were completed and signed by the RFO at the time of Internal Audit.</p> <p>It should be noted that given its level of income, the Council meets the requirement for an intermediate level review. Details of the additional submission requirements for those meeting this level of review can be found within the Detailed Instructions Update for the year ending 31st March 2025.</p>

¹⁰ Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

<i>Did the Council meet the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt?</i>	N/A	As the Council was a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 during the year 2023-2024, it was not able to certify itself as an exempt authority.
<i>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?</i>	Yes	<p>The internal auditor is able to confirm that the notice of the public rights was seen on the website and can confirm that the dates set were 28th June to 8th August 2024. 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 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 has been 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 address of the external auditor and the provisions as contained under section 25 and section 27 of the Act.</p> <p><i>Comment: Council is aware that evidence of the proper provision for the exercise of the public rights is usually by means of publication of the supplied form on the Council's website as well as a minute reference at the meeting at which the RFO confirms the dates set. Proper practices indicates that effective March 2025, Internal Auditors may check whether authorities have minuted the relevant dates at the same time as approving the AGAR. The Clerk has confirmed that this practise will be actioned from June 2025 onwards.</i></p>
<i>Have the publication requirements been met in accordance with the Regulations?¹¹</i>	Yes	<p>The Internal Auditor is able to confirm that the Council has complied with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for smaller authorities with income and expenditure exceeding £25,000 and published the following for the year 2023/24 on a public website:</p> <p>Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the AGAR 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. Notice of Conclusion of Audit</p>

¹¹ Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

		Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR as audited.
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Section 12 – 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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Has the Council considered the previous internal audit report?</i>	Yes	The interim Internal Audit Report for the year ending 31 st March 2025 was considered at a meeting of full Council on 25 th June 2024 with council resolving to formally adopt the report as written.
<i>Has appropriate action been taken regarding the recommendations raised?</i>	Yes	Members received the interim internal audit report and noted that there were no formal recommendations to be considered that required the completion of an action plan to address weaknesses identified. However the Finance and Governance Committee were tasked with reviewing the advisory comments contained within the report and to report back to the council with formal recommendations / adaptations where necessary. <i>Comment: Council has followed guidance which confirms that, in accordance with Proper Practices, the annual review of internal audit should be received and recorded as such by the Council (or delegated committee). Any actions planned from the outcomes of the tests undertaken along with the narrative reports from the Internal Auditors should be the subject of an audit plan detailing actions to be undertaken, members or officers responsible for delivering improvement and deadlines for the completion of the actions.</i>
<i>Has the Council confirmed the appointment of an internal auditor?</i>	Yes	At the meeting in June 2024, full council, having reviewed the effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements with full regard to the statutory requirements for internal audit in terms of size, scope and current financial arrangements, resolved to appoint SALC as its internal auditor for the year 2024-25.
<i>Has the letter of engagement been approved by full council?</i>	Yes	The letter of engagement was formally approved at the meeting of 25 th February 2025 following a recommendation and review by the Finance and Governance Committee. <i>Comment: by approving the letter of engagement, Council will be following Proper Practices by ensuring it has clarity on the provision of internal audit including the roles and responsibilities, audit planning and timing of visits,</i>

		<i>reporting requirements, rights to access to information, members and officers, period of engagement and remuneration.</i>
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

Section 13 – 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? ¹²	Yes	The External Audit Report and Certificate for the year ending 31 st March 2024 having been received by the Council in September 2024 was submitted to and noted by Full Council with formal adoption at the meeting of 29 th October 2024.
Has appropriate action been taken regarding the comments raised?	N/A	There were no matters which came to the attention of the external auditor that gave cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements that have not been met. <i>Comment: Council has noted Regulation 20 (in part) which states that the annual audit letter received from the auditor must be considered by the authority and published (including publication on the authority's website) and to permit copies to be purchased.</i> The Internal Auditor is able to verify that the external auditor report and certificate along with the conclusion of the external audit have been published on the Council's website. Details as to how copies may be purchased have also been included.
Additional comments: in order to comply with the Regulation 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Council has demonstrated that it is aware that, as soon as it is reasonably practical after the conclusion of the audit, it should publish a statement saying that the audit has been concluded, giving the details of the public's rights of inspection under section 25 of the 2014 Act (Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014) and saying where and when those rights may be exercised.		

¹² 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 14 – 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		<i>Internal auditor commentary</i>
<i>Was the annual meeting held in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹³	Yes	Council held its Annual Meeting of the council at which the Chair (Mayor) and other Officers were elected on 7 th May 2024 in accordance with legislation in place at that time.
<i>Is there evidence that Minutes are administered in accordance with legislation?</i> ¹⁴	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. At the meeting of 28 th May 2024 Council resolved to re-adopt the Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 for the purposes of discharging its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within its area.
<i>Is there a list of members' interests held?</i>	Yes	Evidence was seen on the District Authority's website of the Register of Interests for the majority of the councillors with access gained as a direct link from the council's own website. <i>Comment: council might wish to review the list of register of interests against serving councillors.</i>
<i>Does the Council have any Trustee responsibilities and if so, are these clearly identified in a Trust Document?</i>	None held	Council does not have any Trustee Responsibilities.
<i>Has the Transparency Code been correctly applied, and information published in accordance with current legislation?</i>	Yes	Council continues to ensure compliancy with the minimum datasets that should be published on a quarterly basis as per the requirements as set out in the Local Government Transparency Code (2015), with a range of documents relating to the current year being able to view on the Council's website. is working towards ensuring compliancy with the minimum datasets that should be published on a quarterly basis as per the requirements as set out in the Local Government Transparency Code (2015), with a range of

¹³ The Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, paragraph 7 (2) and Schedule 15 (2)

¹⁴ Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Local Government Act 1972, and the Localism Act 2011

		<p>documents relating to the current year being able to view on the Council's website.</p> <p>For Southwold Town Council, the transparency code requirements include the publication of quarterly reporting of spending transactions valued over £500; quarterly reporting of invitation to tender for contracts over £5,000; quarterly publication of details of every transaction on a government procurement card; the annual reporting of organisational charts; annual reporting of all grants made to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and the annual reporting of the location of public land and assets.</p> <p><i>Comment: Appendix A of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (published February 2015) provides further details of all information to be published along with relevant timescales.</i></p> <p><i>A link to the guide can be found at: Transparency Code 2015</i></p>
<i>Has the Council registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)?¹⁵</i>	Yes	<p>The Council is correctly registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation.</p> <p>The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), and to publish information covered by this scheme. Council has such a scheme, which sets out the Council's commitment to make certain classes of information routinely available, such as policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, annual reports and financial information and is available to view on the council's website. The scheme is annually updated by the Finance & Governance Committee with recommendations for amendment submitted to and approved by full council at its Annual Council Meeting (minutes of 28th May 2024 refer).</p>
<i>Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?</i>	Yes	<p>Council has taken active steps to ensure compliancy with the GDPR requirements and has reviewed its GDPR Policies during the year ensuring that at all times it is able to provide 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. Appropriate Data Protection policies and procedures are in place along with the lawful basis</p>

¹⁵ Data Protection Act 2018

		for the processing of data covered by the regulations as well as policies that deal with the effective management of its records thereby demonstrating that the Council has acted in compliance with its legal and regulatory obligations. <i>Comment: the meeting of 28th May 2024, confirmation was given that the council and councillors were aware of their responsibilities and obligation in relation to the collection, use and protection of personal information in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.</i>
<i>Has the Council published a website accessibility statement on their website in line with Regulations?¹⁶</i>	Yes	The Regulations of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 was enacted on 23rd September 2018. The regulations aim to ensure public sector websites and mobile apps are accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities. Council's Accessibility Statement details how information will be produced on a website and how to gain access to content that is readily accessible to view as well as detailing the technical information of the website along with the methods used for testing the website; the steps being taken to improve accessibility and how the site is being improved to ensure that content meets the WCAG 2.1 Standard under Regulation 8 of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
<i>Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?¹⁷</i>	Yes	Council has a .com domain for its council website which also supports a secure and digitally managed email system. Council is aware of the importance of ensuring that it uses a secure e-mail system with a gov.uk address thereby identifying that it has local government status and demonstrating authenticity when building trust and credibility with the public. <i>Comment: in accordance with guidance issued, the Clerk / RFO has ensured that they are able to add and remove member and staff email accounts via the Council's nominated IT company. The centralised system will provide effective compliance with GDPR subject access requests and freedom of information requests.</i>
<i>Is there evidence that electronic files are backed up?</i>	Yes	Council's day to day records are automatically back-up daily to a cloud-based secure system.

¹⁶ Website Accessibility Regulations 2018

¹⁷ Practitioners Guide

<i>Do terms of reference exist for all committees and is there evidence these are regularly reviewed?</i>	Yes	Council reviewed the Terms of Reference for its committees at the council meeting held on 28 th May 2024, details of which, including areas of responsibility and delegated authority are published on the website.
Additional comments:		
<p>The Internal Auditor offers her appreciation for the assistance given by the Town Clerk staff in completing this audit. The year-end files were extremely well presented for review and council's staff are to be commended.</p> <p>It is reconfirmed that overall Council has demonstrated effective governance arrangements and can show evidence of strong governance and good financial practice. The internal audit review, undertaken on the documentation provided during both visits to the council's offices, has provided evidence of the overall adequacy of the financial arrangements in place within the council.</p> <p>The examination of the year-end accounts and supporting documentation has further confirmed that the Responsible Financial Officer has satisfactorily undertaken the administration of the Council's financial affairs and produced satisfactory financial management information to enable the council to make well-informed decisions.</p> <p>Recommendations made and/or commentary provided are to enhance the systems in place as opposed to detract from the positive assurance that can be given as to the manner in which the Council's finances are managed.</p> <p>For further information and for the year effective 1st April 2025 please refer to Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England - A Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices to be applied in the preparation of statutory annual accounts and governance statements - March 2025.</p>		

Signed: **V S Waples**

Date of Internal Audit Visit: 10.06.2025

Date of Internal Audit Report: 13.06.2025

On behalf of Suffolk Association of Local Councils

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:
 - The Annual Internal Audit Report must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - Sections 1 and 2 must be completed and approved by the authority.
 - Section 3 is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage before 1 July 2025.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2025. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2025
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2025 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2025 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2025.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2024) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2025).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2025**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes been completed?		
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?		
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2025 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

**Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices*, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY *Southwold Town Council*

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS *www.southwoldtown.com*

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, 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 2024/25 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 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
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 (during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		

O. (For local councils only)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

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

10/06/2025 DD/MM/YYYY

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

V. NARLES (on behalf of SAC)

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

[Signature] SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

10/06/2025

*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 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

Southern Wold Town 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 2025, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
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.			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
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.			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
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.			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.			<i>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.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
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.			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
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
			<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>

***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:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

Chair

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY
Southwold Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	2355463	2012612	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.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	120573	118551	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	2136517	417162	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	111974	123759	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.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	32257	31726	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	2455710	1065179	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	2012612	1327661	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	2249079	1304780	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	5378375	9730605	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.
10. Total borrowings	1050000	750000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. 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.
11b. 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 2025 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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

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

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Southwold Town Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02 as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2024/25

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

Southwold Town Council

Internal Control Arrangements

Agreed June 2024 - reviewed and agreed June 2025

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The system of internal control is designed to manage risk as far as reasonably practicable rather than totally eliminate all risk of failure to deliver policies, aims and objectives. The systems objectives are to identify the risks to the Council's, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised, the impact they should have if realised, to report to Council and to manage them.
- 1.2 The system adopted by Southwold Town Council accords with "The Governance & Accountability for Local Councils Practitioners Guide".

2. Scope of Responsibility

- 2.1 Southwold Town Council as a Local Authority is primarily funded by public money and is not only responsible for ensuring that business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards but also that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 2.2 The scope of the Internal Audit Work includes:
 - Proper book-keeping — receipts and payment books or computer records, regular reconciliation of books and bank statements, supporting invoices and receipts.
 - Financial Regulations — Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, tenders, appropriate payment controls including acting within the legal framework with reference to Council minutes, identifying VAT payments and reclamation, cheque books, paying-in books and other relevant documentation.
 - Risk Assessment — Appropriate procedures of risk assessment in place for the activities of the Council.
 - Budgetary Controls — Verifying the budgetary process with reference to Council and Committee minutes and supporting documentation.
 - Income Controls — Precept and other income control mechanisms.

- Petty Cash Not applicable.
- Payroll Controls — PAYE and NI contributions in place where necessary. Compliance with HMRC procedures. Records relating to contracts of employment and HR policies.
- Asset Control — Inspection of asset register and checks on existing assets. Maintenance inspection and valuation by Quantity Surveyor. Cross checking adequate insurance covers and deeds (where applicable).
- Bank Reconciliation — Regularly completed cash books reconciled with bank statements.
- Year-end procedures — Appropriate accounting procedures are used and can be tracked from working papers to final documentation. Annual External Audit.

3. The Internal Control Environment

- 3.1 The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves a budget for the coming year normally at the December or January meeting. At the same meeting the Council will set the precept for the coming financial year.
- 3.2 The Council has appointed several Committees:
Members of the Committees monitor progress against objectives, procedures, and any agreed budget and carry out reviews of financial matters. The Minutes of meetings of the Committees are circulated to all Members of the Council.
- 3.3 The full Council meets approx. twelve times a year. It monitors progress by receiving relevant reports from the Committees and the Clerk.
- 3.4 The Financial Regulations govern the expenditure and regulate the level of spending allowed before coming to full Council for formal approval.

4. Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer

- 4.1 The Council has appointed the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk provides the advice to help the Council ensure that its procedures, controls and policies are adhered to.

5. Payments and Income

- 5.1 All expenditure must be reported to and authorised by the Council or by Committee in accordance with the Financial Regulations. All items of expenditure are recorded and reported to full Council at its monthly meeting.
- 5.2 Two members sign all cheques and bank transfers. The signatories are expected to check each cheque against the relevant invoice and initial the cheque stub.
- 5.3 Two members sign all BACS payments invoices. The signatories are expected to check each Bacs payment against the relevant invoice and initial the invoice accordingly. The Bacs payments will be input by a member of staff, whilst two members who are signatories will separately authorise the transactions for payment.
- 5.4 Income – all income is received and banked in the councils name in a timely manner.

6. Risk Assessments

- 6.1 The Council's Risk Assessment is reviewed annually along with the level of Fidelity Guarantee Insurance and other insurance cover.

7. Internal Audit

- 7.1 A member of the Finance Cttee completes Internal Control checks on at least a quarterly basis and reports back on any matters requiring attention – *see list of control checks as attached.*
- 7.2 The Council has appointed an Independent Internal Auditor who will audit the accounts on an annual basis and report to the Council on the adequacy of its financial records, procedures and systems and any action plans required.

8. External Audit

- 8.1 The Council's External Auditors submit an annual report which is presented to the Council and action plans agreed.

9 Investments and Reserves

- 9.1 See Separate Policies

Adopted 25th June 2024 - reviewed and agreed June 2025

SOUTHWOLD TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL RISK ASSESSMENT 2025.26

Approved by council 24th June 2025

A. Properties:

1. The following risks have been identified in relation to property:

- (i) a) Risks to the fabric of buildings.
b) Risks of contamination and decontamination remediation at council sites
- (ii) Risks in relation to rent i.e. the Council must ensure that it receives an appropriate rent for its property, that that rent is properly collected, that rent reviews are undertaken at the right time and that appropriate steps are taken when arrears are incurred.
- (iii) Liabilities under legislation.
- (iv) Risks playing equipment.

2. Controls:

- (i) The Town Council sought revaluations from NPS of all its properties in January 2014. As a result of the 2014 review the insurance values have been subsequently index-linked. The Town Council reviewed insurance valuations again in March 2014, and in December 2016 and Dec 2019 the Insurers agents valued all Town Council property for insurance purposes.
One of the Town Council properties is controlled by Fair Rent legislation. This is reviewed as soon as possible i.e. two years after registration.
- (ii) a) Visual inspections of properties are undertaken at rent reviews by a NPS chartered surveyor who reports back to the Council. Schedules of Dilapidations are served if necessary. A Schedule of Condition of each property within the portfolio was undertaken by NPS Property services during 2015 and works on the properties categorised according to urgency, with updates on some properties in 2020. A rolling programme of repairs has commenced in accordance with these schedules. A schedule of condition was undertaken at Flats 1 and 9a Hurren Terrace on lease expiry and schedules of condition will be undertaken at lease expiry on any other properties as they become vacant and remedial works undertaken.
- b) Contamination on sites - Professional advice is sought on those sites where contamination might be considered a risk and a remediation strategy formulated in conjunction with the professional advisers and the EPO. The financial implications of decontamination remediation will be monitored by the Finance cttee in liason with, or as part of, the appropriate strategic project group through the project risk analysis. For the site at Station Road non-intrusive surveys have been undertaken of the area, together with a report on the structure of Hurren Terrace (Chicks reports April / May 2020). Further recommended contamination surveys have been carried out and some are ongoing as required.

- (iii) Rent reviews are conducted by NPS, and in association with the Fair Rent Officer as required.
- (iv) The Landlords working group and the Finance Cttee review receipt of rents monthly. Tenants are requested to set up standing orders in order to pay rent due.
- (v) The Town Council previously employed Richard Jellicoe a chartered surveyor to undertake inspections of its business premises to comply with the Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002. Duncans carried out an asbestos survey of Station Road Garage during 2016. Other asbestos surveys are carried out as required.
- (vi) The Town Council employs appropriately qualified plumbers and heating engineers to inspect annually the gas boilers and other fittings in the domestic properties it lets for which it has a repairing liability, and to undertake any work necessary in order to provide the annual Landlord's Certificate. Hard wire tests are carried out at each property as they fall due in accordance with current legislation. PAT tests are carried out annually. The Council is aware of the updated legislation relating to electrical checks in residential properties. Requirements to comply with the legislation for electrical testing May 2020 was implemented.
- (vii) The Town Hall boiler has been replaced with a modern condensing boiler and re-sited the Committee Room. It is serviced annually and inspected. The disability audit for the Town Hall has been received and the implications for changes in the way the Town Hall is being used will be considered (June 2020).
- (viii) Fire legislation, including Smoke and Carbon monoxide alarms – These have been fitted throughout the Town Council properties as required by current legislation. Tenants have been advised of their responsibilities to check the equipment. The Council is also aware of the updated legislation in relation to fire safety requirements. The Council contracts a fire safety advisor to carry out regular checks on all of its premises and to make recommendations to council.
- (ix) The Town Council is aware of the legislation which came into force during 2017 on Energy Performance certificates and the required EPS checks were carried out during 2016 to ascertain work required. A programme for required improvements has been implemented. The Town Council is a member of the National Landlords Association to ensure that it is regularly updated on landlords' responsibilities as legislation changes.
- (viii) East Suffolk Council undertakes regular inspections of town council play equipment. The skateboarding ramps on the Klondyke play area have been built in accordance with advice from ROSPA who will conduct inspections. A climbing frame with safety surface and basketball post is in place and has been insured as have the skateboard ramps. The play area at Tibbys Green opened in 2011 and was transferred to the Town Council in 2015. New play equipment added in 2018 and 2019.
- (ix) The Town Council has a fire risk assessment of the Town Hall undertaken annually and has improved security as a result of an inspection by the Crime Security Officer. Fire extinguishers have been checked annually by Chubb Fire Ltd and fire and smoke alarms checked regularly by staff and annually by an independent contractor. The smoke alarm

system has recently been extended. Carbon monoxide alarms are fitted where required by current legislation.

- (x) The Council's collection of silver is kept in the vaults of Lloyds Bank. Because it is in regular use the Town Mayor's chain is kept in an appropriate safe at the Town Hall
- (xi) The Town Council had a fire risk assessment undertaken on the residential properties at Station Road and the properties at Strickland Place in 2013. Further fire assessments have been carried out within the property portfolio as required. Works required, as noted in these assessments, has been commissioned.
- (xii) The Town Council had a valuation carried out by Gaze valuers in Jan 2017 on its portfolio of paintings and artefacts. Including silver items and civic regalia. Insurance cover amended as appropriate.
- (xiii) The Town Council uses a solicitor for all of its lease/ rent documentation to ensure that they are legally drawn up. This ensures protection of both tenant and landlord.
- (xiv) The Town Council agreed to redevelop Station Road and received Coastal Community Grant Funding. Confirmation was received that this funding spend profile was extended. As part of the project plan, the strategic project group considered the project in light of Covid 19, including the remaining financing of the project required. Further finance agreements were received to complete the project.

B. Finances:

1. The following risks have been identified:

- (i) Security of banked funds including online banking and pre-paid debit card.
- (ii) Security of cash.
- (iii) Security of Petty Cash.
- (iv) Risk of litigation.
- (v) a) Project financial exposure, and b) respective grant funding being received in line with cashflow expectations.

2. Controls:

- (i) Cheques must be signed by two councillors or if they are signed by one councillor and the Clerk, they must be countersigned by a second councillor. A councillor must also initial invoices to show they have been checked against the cheques. Cheque book stubs are countersigned. Invoices are also approved for payment by the Council and councillors receive a monthly Financial Statement from the account's software. The Council has agreed that payments can be made by BACS. The secretary has been authorised to set up the payments which then need to be approved in line with the requirements of the bank mandate. Separate records of BACs payments are retained in line with internal auditor recommendations.

- (ii) Concern about the financial situation in Ireland led council to close the Bank of Ireland account. The balances of the council accounts are being split between institutions to reduce exposure to one organisation. Deposit to CCLA approved 2019 and increases / withdrawals as minuted.
- (iii) Cash is not kept in the Town Hall longer than four working days. When it is in the Town Hall it is kept in the appropriate safe. Receipts are issued for both cash and cheques. The Council is insured against the loss of money in transit (up to £500), and in locked premises (£250).
The Petty Cash account is no longer used, and all payments are reimbursed by cheque/ Bacs.
- (iv) The Finance working group undertake minimum quarterly inspections of the accounts/ management accounts but strive to undertake this on a monthly basis.
- (v) The Town Council's insurance cover currently includes a Fidelity Guarantee which covers all balances held (up to £2m March 2023).
- (vi) The Council has Public Liability cover of £10,000,000.
- (vii) Pre paid debit card – Specific control procedures will be incorporated into a usage policy (once council obtains a card) to detail the responsibility of the user employees, the expenses that they can incur and the necessary supporting documentation/ approval needed to accurately reflect the Standing Orders and Internal Control Statement as required by the internal auditor.
- (viii) Bacs – online system banking – administrator/ signatory to input payments and second signatory required to authorise again. Usual reconciliation against bank accounts. Note will be made of those carrying out the online inputs on each occasion.
The Financial Standing Orders will reflect the limit of any transfers to be authorised and by whom and these will be reported to the next F and G cttee meeting.
- (ix) a) Each project undertaken by the Council will be subject to its own project plan and risk analysis.

b) Grant funding payable will be drawn in line with approved cashflow / project draw down timescales to ensure that the council cashflow is not adversely affected.

C. Personnel:

1. The Town Council is aware of the provisions of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and workplace regulations and has identified the following specific risks:
 - (i) Risk of injury while employed by the Council.
 - (ii) Risk of loss as a result of employee's error.
 - (iii) Risk to members.
 - (iv) Risk of abuse or harassment from members of the public.

(v) Covid 19 risk assessments for the workplace

2. Controls:

(i) All the above are covered under the insurance policy: employer's liability up to £10,000,000, accident and assault up to £500,000, employees and members up to £20,000.

(ii) The Council's staff is employed on the ground floor where help is more available if needed than it was on the second floor and the risk posed by the flight of stairs obviated.

(iii) Fire alarms and smoke alarms are in place and checked regularly.

(iv) In accordance with the advice of the independent Fire Safety Officer used by the Council the back door is unlocked (although not unbolted) when the building is occupied. All rooms display instructions on fire exits, marshalling points etc.

(v) Gardening and other contractors used by the Town Council are asked to use fluorescent jackets as appropriate.

(vi) Covid 19 risk assessment undertaken for working at the Town Hall and guidance implemented May 2020 for Covid situations ie Town Hall would remain closed to public at such times.

Reserves Policy and Earmarked Reserves Statement

1 Policy

1.1 The Council is required, under statute, to maintain adequate financial reserves in order to meet the needs of the organisation. Section 50 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires that billing and precepting authorities in England and Wales have regard to the level of reserves needed to meet estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. Consideration should also be given to the CIPFA guidance notes on Local Authority Reserves and Balances issued November 2008.

1.2 The Council's policy on the establishment, maintenance and adequacy of reserves and balances will be reviewed annually.

1.3 The Council will hold reserves for these three main purposes:

- a) a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing - this forms part of general reserves;
- b) a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies - this also forms part of general reserves;
- c) a means of building up funds, often referred to as earmarked reserves, to meet known or predicted requirements; earmarked reserves are accounted for separately but remain legally part of the General Fund.

1.4 General Fund Balance

The General Fund Balance, commonly termed the "working balance", is a balance on the Council's revenue account which is not held for any specific purpose other than to cushion the Council's finances against any unexpected short term problems in the council's cash flow.

The General Fund Balance is to be maintained at a level based upon a risk assessment carried out annually by the Responsible Finance Officer when setting the budget for the forthcoming year. Any surplus on the reserve above the required balance may be used to fund capital expenditure, be appropriated to earmarked reserves or used to limit any increase in the precept.

2 Financial Risk Management

2.1 In order to assess the adequacy of the general fund when setting the annual budget, the Responsible Finance Officer will take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the Council. The requirement of the level of the general fund balance for the forthcoming year will therefore be based upon a risk assessment of the Council's main areas of income and expenditure and take into account any provisions and contingencies that may be required. This financial risk assessment will be based upon the following items

The main items to be considered are:

Financial Risk	Analysis of Risk	Risk Control	Risk level after control measure
Pay inflation is greater than budgeted	The cost of living increase is above the level allowed for in the estimates.	RFO considers past performance and current government policy/state of national negotiations when setting budget	Low – Public Sector pay is subject to long negotiations so the likely outcome is known well in advance of setting the annual budget.
Contractual inflation is greater than budgeted	A general assumption is made when estimating the percentage increase on rates & utilities. This may increase above budgeted inflation.	RFO considers general market conditions and negotiates long-term agreements	Low – We know likely costs from market conditions and these costs form a relatively small part of the overall budget
	Professional and other services costs increase above estimate.	RFO negotiates long-term deals	Low – with long-term deals in place we know costs up-front
Treasury management income is not achieved	The actual interest rate realised is below the rate predicted at budget setting.	RFO analyses the market opportunities to maximise income	Low – the budget for income from this source is practically nil, so cannot be underestimated
Market income is lower than budgeted/shortfall in income from fees and charges	That a decrease in revenue is realised from estimate.	RFO analyses past performance to predict future performance. Budgets are set at a low bar to avoid underestimates.	Medium – it is very difficult to make accurate forecasts due to the number of variables, so budget setting is very conservative.
Rental income is lower than budgeted/ shortfall in income from fees and charges	That a decrease in revenue is realised from estimates	RFO analyses rent reviews to predict future performance. Budgets are set at a low bar to avoid underestimates.	Medium – it is very difficult to make accurate forecasts due to the number of variables, so budget setting is very conservative.
Contingent liabilities are realised	That the Council becomes liable to pay contingent liabilities.	RFO review the repairs schedule to ensure major outgoings are covered by earmarked reserves.	Low – There is currently a healthy repair and replacement reserve.
Project costs exceed predictions	Projects to which the Council has committed itself incur costs that were not foreseeable	RFO commissions good quality business planning and financial consultants to cost accurately major projects	Medium – Whilst there are reserves set aside for projects the possibility remains that additional costs are only discoverable during works (e.g. asbestos)

3 General Reserves

3.1 Local Authorities hold reserves to enable day-to-day operations to continue without the need to resort to short-term borrowing. These general reserves are calculated to cover a delay in the precept arriving and are usually considered to be adequate at a level equivalent to six month's net expenditure.

At March 31st 2025 general reserves stood at; £150,819

3.2 The policy of the Council is to build sufficient cash general reserves to the equivalent of one year's non capital related expenditure.

In addition

3.2. i The policy of the Council is to build sufficient cash reserves to service property liabilities to the equivalent of 5% of the property book valuation.

In addition

3.2.ii The policy of the Council is to build up specific reserves for longer term projects.

This policy will be considered annually at the budget setting meeting in Oct/ Nov and the precept considered accordingly.

4 Statutory Reserves

4.1 Local Authorities also hold reserves that arise out of the interaction of legislation and proper accounting practices. At Southwold Town Council this is:

- a) Capital Receipts Reserves - this reserve holds the proceeds from the sale of assets, and can only be used for capital purposes in accordance with regulations.

5 Review of the Adequacy of Balances and Reserves

6.1 In assessing the adequacy of reserves the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the Council will be taken into account. The level of general and earmarked reserves will be reviewed as part of the annual budget preparation.

EARMARKED RESERVES STATEMENT

June 2025

Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked reserves represent amounts that are generally built up over a period of time which are earmarked for specific items of expenditure to meet known or anticipated liabilities or projects. The “setting aside” of funds to meet known future expenditure reduces the impact of meeting the full expenditure in one year. The Council, when establishing an earmarked reserve, will set out:

- a) the reason/purpose of the reserve;
- b) how and when the reserve can be used;
- c) procedures for the management and control of the reserve;
- d) a process and timescale for review of the reserve to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy

The following earmarked reserves are held by the Council 31st March 2025

Current value at March 31 st 2025	Reserve Use	Policy For Use	Management and Control	Review of relevance
£50,000	Staff resources	Fund to cover long term staffing	As per internal audit 2020	Annual Review
£6,500	Election reserve	A sinking fund to smooth the cost to the Town Council of elections	To be used as a balance for Electoral Costs	The fund is not to exceed £8000
£17,324	Cil	A Cil fund to be spent on approved schemes	To be used as for CIL projects.	Annual Review
£71,619.92	Capital Account – Station Road	Monies for the completion of Station Rd build	To be used for construction of Station Road Hub	Annual Review
£13,223	Grants and Pledges	Monies received by Grant/ pledge for specific projects	To be used for the Project under which funding received	Annual Review
£573,175.53	Capital Account	Capital sale proceeds	To be used for capital related expenditure	Annual Review
£43,000	Roads Projects	ESC CIL £23K AND STC reserve £20k	To be used for STC ROADS CTTEE PROJECTS	Annual Review
£2,000	Training/ Courses	Fund to cover additional training for staff and councillors	To be used for Town Clerk change course and other councillor/ staff courses	Annual Review
£150,000	Hurren Terrace gable end project	To fund works contract which has been approved by council	To fund works contract which has been approved by council	Annual Review
£250,000	Long-term maintenance provision of properties and purchase of smaller non built property fixed assets i.e. fingerposts, notice boards	To fund large-scale maintenance projects over and above the maintenance programme and to purchase smaller fixed assets	To be used for works not covered by the main budget or insurance.	Annual Review

June 2025

Annual Budget - By Combined Account Code (Actual YTD Month 1)

		<u>Last Year</u>		<u>Current Year</u>				<u>Next year</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
<u>Budget Income</u>										
1076	Precept	118,551	118,551	0	88,326	176,651	0	0	0	0
1090	Interest Received	92,000	77,857	0	55	40,000	0	0	0	0
1110	Market Income	12,000	13,072	0	785	12,000	0	0	0	0
1130	Fair Site Rents	100	114	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1150	Donations/Grants Received	0	8,158	0	6,600	1,000	0	0	0	0
1154	Kilcock toilets	300	366	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1155	Hire of Committee Room	0	275	0	0	275	0	0	0	0
1156	CIL	2,000	29,146	0	2,500	2,000	0	0	0	0
1159	Car Charging	3,000	24,286	0	-121	3,000	0	0	0	0
1190	Miscellaneous Income	0	8	0	290	0	0	0	0	0
1400	Insurance Contributions	9,000	10,817	0	0	6,000	0	0	0	0
1411	Electricity contributions	0	7,438	0	233	100	0	0	0	0
1500	Rental Income	250,000	245,625	0	17,716	240,000	0	0	0	0
Total Income		486,951	535,713	0	116,385	481,026	0	0	0	0
<u>Direct Expenditure</u>										
4096	loan repayment	31,000	31,726	0	0	31,500	0	0	0	0
Direct Expenditure		31,000	31,726	0	0	31,500	0	0	0	0
<u>Overhead Expenditure</u>										
4000	Salaries (inc. NI)	78,000	102,245	0	2,652	94,000	0	0	0	0
4005	Pensions	24,000	21,514	0	0	22,000	0	0	0	0
4010	Town Hall Running Costs	14,000	14,758	0	729	14,500	0	0	0	0
4016	Grant Expenditure	0	15,667	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Combined Account Code (Actual YTD Month 1)

		<u>Last Year</u>		<u>Current Year</u>				<u>Next year</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4020	Chairman's Allowance	1,000	1,213	0	0	1,100	0	0	0	0
4040	Postage	0	39	0	0	100	0	0	0	0
4045	Stationery	500	2,154	0	154	500	0	0	0	0
4050	Printing	300	1,246	0	0	5,000	0	0	0	0
4060	Subscriptions	700	1,500	0	592	900	0	0	0	0
4065	Travel	500	420	0	0	500	0	0	0	0
4070	Training & Conferences	500	1,365	0	0	1,000	0	0	0	0
4074	Comms & media support	3,000	4,040	0	0	5,500	0	0	0	0
4075	Software & Support	8,000	9,626	0	1,311	10,000	0	0	0	0
4080	Insurance	28,000	36,999	0	34,570	32,000	0	0	0	0
4085	Audit Fees	2,800	3,874	0	-2,495	2,800	0	0	0	0
4090	Legal Fees	15,000	36,112	0	-5,000	20,000	0	0	0	0
4091	Professional fees	15,000	28,193	0	-13,875	17,000	0	0	0	0
4092	Property Governance Management	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4095	Land Registry Fees	5,000	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4097	Prof fee/Surveys etc Stat Road	0	20,568	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4100	Safe Custody Service Charges	300	123	0	9	150	0	0	0	0
4105	Elections	1,000	3,015	0	0	3,000	0	0	0	0
4110	Allowances	400	200	0	0	400	0	0	0	0
4207	Staff Resource	25,000	0	0	0	18,000	0	0	0	0
4210	Annual Events	7,000	5,513	0	18	5,000	0	0	0	0
4219	The Common	0	0	0	0	15,000	0	0	0	0
4220	Donations	8,231	6,144	0	-500	8,600	0	0	0	0
4221	Community Support Services	20,000	0	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	0
4222	Business support	0	0	0	0	4,000	0	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Combined Account Code (Actual YTD Month 1)

		<u>Last Year</u>		<u>Current Year</u>				<u>Next year</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4223	parish support	0	0	0	0	3,000	0	0	0	0
4224	Town Website	0	0	0	0	4,000	0	0	0	0
4245	Highways works/Road Closures	20,000	975	0	0	17,000	0	0	0	0
4246	SCC Feasibility	10,000	750	0	0	7,000	0	0	0	0
4260	Civic Uniform	100	1,200	0	0	100	0	0	0	0
4300	Kilcock Toilets	0	9,644	0	37	12,000	0	0	0	0
4310	Grounds Maintenance	12,700	17,221	0	-320	16,200	0	0	0	0
4315	Workshop	3,000	0	0	40	1,000	0	0	0	0
4410	Market	2,000	1,631	0	562	2,000	0	0	0	0
4420	Klondyke/Tibbys Green	32,000	97,062	0	-586	15,000	0	0	0	0
4425	Car parks/parking/EVC	0	21,501	0	-2,195	0	0	0	0	0
4435	CCTV.wi fi. business	8,500	12,861	0	0	26,000	0	0	0	0
4445	Asset Purchases	5,000	408,885	0	-100	5,000	0	0	0	0
4500	Property/Land Maintenance	130,000	191,800	0	-311	81,600	0	0	0	0
4501	town hall refurb	0	0	0	0	200,000	0	0	0	0
4502	Marshes	0	69	0	71	2,000	0	0	0	0
4505	Inspections/Landlord Fees	1,000	5,080	0	0	2,000	0	0	0	0
4506	station rd refurb project	0	103,716	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4508	water tower	0	0	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	0
4509	hurren terr gable	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	0	0	0
4510	other prop	0	0	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	0
4511	Red Cross Hut	0	0	0	0	15,000	0	0	0	0
Overhead Expenditure		492,531	1,188,938	0	15,363	969,950	0	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Combined Account Code (Actual YTD Month 1)

	<u>Last Year</u>		<u>Current Year</u>				<u>Next year</u>		
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
Total Budget Income	486,951	535,713	0	116,385	481,026	0	0	0	0
Expenditure	523,531	1,220,664	0	15,363	1,001,450	0	0	0	0
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>-36,580</u>	<u>-684,951</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>101,022</u>	<u>-520,424</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
plus Transfer from EMR	0	829,124	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
less Transfer to EMR	0	46,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(36,580)</u>	<u>98,173</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>101,022</u>	<u>(520,424)</u>		<u>0</u>		

Balance Sheet as at 30TH APRIL 2025

31st March 2024

31st March 2025

Current Assets

19,713	Debtors	21,118
9,786	Other Debtors	0
34,570	Prepayments	0
68,296	Current Bank Account	167,080
620	Lloyds Business Account	620
30,986	32 Day Notice	31,041
1,204,878	Public Sector Deposit Fund	1,209,614

1,368,848

1,429,473

1,368,848 **Total Assets**

1,429,473

Current Liabilities

1,091	VAT Control Account	790
12,583	Creditors	0
27,513	Accruals	0

41,187

790

1,327,661 **Total Assets Less Current Liabilities**

1,428,683

Represented By

150,819	General Reserves	251,841
250,000	EM Res - Asset Purchase & Mtnc	250,000
6,500	EM Res - Elections	6,500
50,000	EM Res - Staff Resources	50,000
13,223	EM Res - Grants/Pledges	13,223
17,324	EM Res - CIL reserve fund	17,324
71,620	EM Res - Capital Account	71,620
573,176	EM - Res - capital sale	573,176
43,000	EM Res - Roads	43,000
2,000	EM Res - Course/Training	2,000
150,000	EM Res - Hurren Terrace	150,000

1,327,661

1,428,683

20/05/2025

Southwold Town Council

15:30

Balance Sheet as at 30TH APRIL 2025

31st March 2024

31st March 2025

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 30TH APRIL 2025 and reflects its Income and Expenditure during the year.

Signed :
Chairman

Date : _____

Signed :
Responsible
Financial
Officer

Date : _____

CIL REPORT

Town or Parish Council: Southwold

1 April _2024___ to 31 March ___2025

A	Total CIL income carried over from previous years	£32434.42
B	Total CIL income received (receipts) 24.25	£ 2793.56 April 24 £ 3352.21 Oct 24
	Adjustment to income from previous years	0
	As per ESC Totals	£38580.19
C	Total CIL spent (expenditure)	£ 21257
	Total CIL requested to be repaid in the year	£nil
	Total value of CIL receipts subject to a Repayment Notice served <u>in any year</u> that has not been repaid	£nil
D	Total CIL repaid in the year following a Repayment Notice	£nil
E	Total CIL retained at year end (A+B-C-D)	£ 17,323.19

CIL Expenditure

Items to which CIL has been applied:	Amount spent £
Play area equipment	4944
Public toilets maintenance and upkeep	1841
Public toilet – repairs	4800
CCTV upkeep	1803
New skatepark and landscaping Klondyke	7500
Fingerpost	369
Total spent	£21,257

Signed: _____ Position:

Verified: _____ Position