

Internal Control Policy & Statement

At its meeting in March 2021, following advice of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC), the Parish Council adopted both:

- a) a Financial Reserves, and
- b) an Internal Control Statement (**Appendix A**) (**Min. 21.03.10.6.1 refers**) which have both been subsequently reviewed and adopted at the parish council's annual meeting in May '25 (**Min. 25.05.07 refers**).

Regular review of the parish council's financial management using the adopted Internal Control policy and reporting is now undertaken, to ensure that that its financial management is adequate and effective.

I have reviewed the systems in place against the updated Internal Control Report (**Appendix B**) and am satisfied that the systems in place are adequate subject to the actions identified in the notes section.

Wickhambrook Parish Council

INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2026

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Wickhambrook Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The council is responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. THE INTERNAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

The Council:

The council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January meeting. The January meeting of the council approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The Clerk reports to the Council progress against objectives and position against the adopted budget in accordance with the Council's financial regulations. A Councillor is appointed with a portfolio to review, financial systems and procedures, budgetary control, bank reconciliation checks and carry out regular reviews of financial matters. A bank reconciliation is reported to the council at least bi-monthly and is recorded in the minutes.

The full council meets seven times each year and monitors progress against its aims and objectives at each meeting by receiving relevant reports from the parish clerk.

The council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems and procedures. See attached Report.

Clerk to the Council/Responsible Finance Officer:

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for advising on the day to day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing risks. The Clerk also provides advice to help the Council ensure that its procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to.

Payments:

All payments are reported to the council for approval. Two members of the council must:

- authorise each BACS payment made through internet banking, and/or
- sign every cheque for payment.

For each cheque signed, the signatories should consider each payment against the relevant invoice, sign the invoice and initial the cheque counterfoil. All authorised cheque signatories are members of the Council. Where delegation permits, as per s.101(1)(a) of the Local Government Act of 1972 and the Council’s Financial Regulations, a report will be provided to the next full Council.

The parish council, in setting up its internet banking arrangements, has followed the advice provided by Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC).

Income:

All income is received and banked in the council’s name in a timely manner and reported to the council.

Risk Assessments/Risk Management:

The council reviews its risk assessment annually in April, and regularly reviews its systems and controls.

Internal Audit:

The council appoints an independent and competent internal auditor who reports to the council on an annual basis on the adequacy of it’s:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations • Risk management

External Audit:

The council’s external auditors, submit an annual certificate of audit which is presented to the Council.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

The council has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control, which should include a review of the effectiveness of internal audit. The results of that review must be considered by the Council, which should also approve the Statement of Internal Control.

Chairman

RFO/Clerk

Model Internal Control Statement and Report to Council. This document should be tailored to meet the needs of your Council particularly where [] are shown.

INTERNAL CONTROL REPORT

The Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 aims to strengthen governance and accountability through requirements related to internal control and internal audit.

Whilst the Parish Council has reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit (independence, competence, proportionate and scope), it has a requirement levied on it to ensure that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control: -

'The regulations require active participation by members in providing positive assurance to the electors of their stewardship of public money. The framework of accountability is risk-based i.e. level of control and management must be appropriate to the risk involved. The Council must determine the most appropriate method of internal control.... care should be taken to ensure that internal control tests are proportionate and relevant and that they are neither seen as, nor intended as, undue interference in the RFO's day to day management of financial affairs.'

As part of its internal control procedures, the Wickhambrook Parish Council has appointed a Councillor who is not an authorised signatory to carry out a review of the internal control system. This review should be done at least once a year or more often, depending on the size of the council using the following checks. A written report of any findings must be submitted to the Council and formally recorded in the minutes.

CONTROL TEST	TEST DONE YES/NO	COMMENTS check documents and initial
Adoption of Financial Regulations and Standing Orders Ensuring Financial Regulations and Standing Orders are reviewed and kept up to date whenever changes are made to the model documents	Yes	Reviewed May '25 – Min ref 25.04.07 Next Review May '26
Adoption of Codes of Conduct for Members	Yes	revised code of conduct adopted May '24
Declaration of Acceptance of Office	Yes	
Procedures in place to record and monitor Members' Interests and, where applicable, Gifts and Hospitality	Yes	Links on Website to West Suffolk Council's publication of Member's interests Members declarations of interests and gifts and hospitality where applicable recorded at the start of each meeting
Council has reviewed the internal audit report and, where applicable, the external audit report, and has addressed any recommendations, comments, or required actions		Yes Minute WPC.25.04.11 (Internal Audit) Minute WPC.25.09.09.1

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Annual review of council policies and, where applicable, the terms of reference for committees, sub-committees, and working groups	Yes	May '25
Annual review of contracts, as applicable	Yes	Grounds Contract – November '25 Min. 25.11.15 – RH Landscapes and Maintenance
Regular reporting on performance of Contractors (crucial for maintaining accountability, ensuring contract compliance, mitigating risks, and optimising performance)	Yes	1 st walk round with grounds contractor to be completed May Phone & e-mail catch up with contractor
Annual review of risk and the adequacy of Insurance cover	Yes	Insurance – Feb '25 Min. 26.02.10.4 Renewal Questionnaire and Declaration under LTA submitted to insurers. Risk Management Policy and Supporting Risk Assessment – Minute 26.01.8.2
Annual review of all risk assessments, including financial risks	Yes	April '26 for April report WPC.26.04.04
Regular review of financial records and proper procedures for approving expenditure	Yes	
Regular bank reconciliation, independently reviewed	Yes	Monthly
Payments supported by invoices, authorised and minuted	Yes	Pre-authorised payments reported at each meeting and reviewed by view only councillors with copies of invoices for counter-signing. For shop purchases, scan and save receipts as soon as possible after purchase.
Recording in the minutes or appendices the exact powers under which expenditure is approved and ensuring S137 payments are listed separately	Yes	Recorded in report supporting proposal for expenditure. Under new software (scribe) this will be logged for each transaction
Regular inspection of income records to ensure income is correctly received, recorded and banked	Yes	Income reported to each meeting

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Regular checks to ensure the precept and, where applicable, CIL is recorded in the cash-book matches the District Council's notification	Yes	Checked on notification from District Authority that precept paid. CIL does not currently apply
Regular financial reporting to the Parish Council, including Receipts & Payments (or Income & Expenditure) and updates on reserves	Yes	At each meeting
Regular budget monitoring statements presented to the Parish Council	Yes	At each meeting
VAT correctly accounted for: VAT payments identified, recorded and reclaimed in the cash-book and minuted	Yes	Reported to each meeting
Maintaining an up-to-date Asset Register	Yes	See website New items purchased – Consumables, storage. Update of register, including removal of items no longer in use Asset register updated following 2025 Re-build Cost Assessment for Chapel of Rest and War Memorial – insurers updated, no additional premium.
Regular maintenance arrangement for physical assets (play areas, street furniture etc)	Yes	All play equipment, cemetery & churchyard, greens etc inspected regularly by councillors and lay members and play equipment monthly by West Suffolk and actions reviewed at Estates Committee Play inspection training completed in July '24 Replacement play equipment consumables ordered and fitted Installation of replacement grass tiles and new feet for swing set at Bury Road completed June '25
Staffing and Employment compliance: review of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts of employment for staff • Annual performance appraisal • Updating records to record changes in relevant legislation • PAYE/NIC properly operated by the Council as an employer 	Yes Yes Yes	As part of annual increment Payroll carried out by SALC

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pension Regulator re-declaration to be completed every three years 		Yes – June '25 See Minutes 25.07.9.8
<p>Compliance with Local Transparency Code in line with your council's turnover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 Annual Turnover between £25,000 and £200,000 Annual Turnover over £200,000 <p>(NALC advises that all Councils adhere to the Smaller Authorities Transparency Code as a minimum)</p>	Yes	
<p>Compliance with the DCLG 2014 Guide on Open & Accountable Local Government, Part 4: Ensuring officer decisions are properly documented and made transparent</p>	Yes	<p>Payments over £500 reported online Quarterly.</p> <p>See website</p> <p>Q's 1, 2, 3 & 4 25-26 Published Reported to each meeting and minuted.</p>
<p>Verifying that the Council is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements and the following are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered with the ICO Audit / Impact Assessment Privacy Notices Procedures for dealing with Subject Access Requests Procedure for dealing with Data breaches Data Retention & Disposal Policies 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	Re-registered September '25
<p>Minutes are properly numbered and paginated, with a master copy securely filed</p>	Yes	
<p>The Council's website complies with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards</p>		<p>Ongoing checks to establish and update to compliant standards</p> <p>New website compliant</p>
<p>Email management: The council has a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain</p>	Yes	@wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk
<p>IT policy adopted</p>	Yes	Min 25.02.10.13ii

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Date of review of system of Internal Controls 21/04/2026

Review of system of Internal Controls carried out by:

Name Cllr Mike Lavelle Signature

Report submitted to Council (date) 09/01/2026

(minute reference)

Next review of system of Internal Controls due July '26

Additional comments by reviewer