



SANDBACH
Town Council

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Agenda for the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 12th June 2024** at **7.00pm** in **Sandbach Town Hall**. The meeting will be Clerked by the Chief Officer.

Apologies should be made to the Chief Officer prior to
5pm on the day of the meeting.

Opening Reflections

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To provide an opportunity for members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in relation to any item on the agenda.

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Action:

To consider that under the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and accredited representatives of newspaper be excluded from the meeting for any items of business on this agenda on grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. MAYOR'S COMMENTS

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Town Mayor will adjourn the meeting to allow questions from members of the public relating to items on this agenda. After the questions the Town Mayor will reconvene the Town Council Meeting.

If a member of the public wishes to speak to an item which is NOT on the agenda, we request that written confirmation of the question to be raised is received by the Chief Officer three working days prior to the meeting, via chiefofficer@sandbach.gov.uk

5. **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15 MAY 2024 [ATTACHED].**

6. **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING, CONSULTATION & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 JUNE.**

[Link: Minutes of the Meeting held on the 3rd of June:

<https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PCC-Minutes-240603.pdf>]



7. **STC 2023-24 FINAL ACCOUNTS OVERVIEW**

[Attached: Chief Officer Report]

[Link: All documents relating to item 7 can be viewed online at:

<https://sandbach.gov.uk/2023-24-final-accounts-overview-documents/>]



Lead: Chief Officer

Actions: to:-

- i. *To note the Council's 2023-24 financial position;*
- ii. *To approve the transfer of £50,000 from General Reserves to the Town Hall Maintained Earmarked Reserve*

8. **AGAR and ANNUAL AUDIT 2023-24**

Lead: Chief Officer / RFO

8.1 Internal Audit & Management Response

[Attached: Internal Audit]

Action: *To receive the Internal Audit, Management Response and note comments*

8.2 External Audit – Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023-24 (AGAR)

[Attached: AGAR]

Actions: to:-

- i. *Complete Section 1 of the Annual Governance statement and approve the return.*
- ii. *Approve Section 2 of the Annual Governance Return based on the supporting documents and final accounts.*

9. CONFIDENTIAL STAFFING UPDATE AND PROPOSALS

Circulated via email – Chief Officer Report
Lead: Chief Officer

10. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting is the taking place on Wednesday 17th July 2024 at 7pm in Sandbach Town Hall

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SANDBACH
Town Council

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

For the **Fiftieth Annual Meeting** of Sandbach Town Council
and
Mayor Making Ceremony
held on **Wednesday, 15th May 2024**
in the **Ballroom, Sandbach Town Hall**, commencing at **7pm**.

Present:

Councillors: L Crane; A Nevitt, J Arnold, D Poole, G Price Jones, J Beddows, K Flavell, M Mitchell, R Gray, T Wheatcroft, S Broad, S Corcoran, N Cook, S Richards, D Hegarty, G Lindop;

Officers: Chief Officer C Lloyd clerked the meeting, assisted by Deputy Chief Officer K Pepper.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs K England, M Hough, and M Muldoon. Cllr L MacGregor was absent without apology.

2. The retiring Town Mayor's remarks

Cllr Laura Crane spoke in support of the new Council she had lead over the past year and how much strength and energy there now was in the Council. She had attended over 80 events, despite being poorly for the later part of the Mayoral year. She thanked Cllr Flavell for her unstinting support and the Chief Officer and the Council team for the progress they are making to deliver the policies of the Council after a previous period of disruption. Cllr Crane also paid tribute to the incredible volunteers who do so much for the community and was pleased to have reintroduced the volunteer award event which had been an enormous success.

3. Election of the Town Mayor for the year 2024/25

Resolved: *Cllr Ann Nevitt was unanimously elected as Town Mayor.*

4. **The Clerk will call upon the new Deputy Town Mayor to read and sign their declaration accepting the office of Deputy Town Mayor**

The Town Mayor read and signed their declaration accepting the office of Sandbach Town Mayor.

5. **Election of the Deputy Town Mayor for the year 2024/25**

Resolved: Cllr John Arnold was unanimously elected as Deputy Town Mayor.

6. **The Clerk will call upon the new Deputy Town Mayor to read and sign their declaration accepting the office of Deputy Town Mayor**

The Deputy Town Mayor read and signed their declaration accepting the office of Sandbach Deputy Town Mayor.

The Mayoral Party withdrew from the Ballroom whilst they were invested with their Civic chains and then re-entered to applause from all participants of the public meeting.

7. **Tribute by the new Town Mayor to the retiring Town Mayor.**

The new Town Mayor, Cllr Ann Nevitt paid tribute to the contribution of the retiring Mayor, Cllr L Crane and reflected also on the scale of her activities during her mayoral year. She fully endorsed the notable legacy that she had been the first (and probably last) town Mayor who had lead a Mayoral Procession during the pride event dressed as a pink flamingo! She hoped to carry on the great work which had been done and was looking forward to working together across the Council to deliver value for money and to ensure that as far as possible political differences would not get in the way. She noted that her and the new deputy were wearing purple to emphasise this point.

8. **Appointment by the new Town Mayor of honorary Chaplains, the announcement of the dates of Civic Events, the charities to be supported and plans for year of office**

The new Town Mayor's charities are Foden's Band and the Friends of Sandbach Cemetery. The civic events are currently being arranged and will be announced in due course.

9. **Committee Appointments [See attached summary for details]**

Resolved:

- i. Committee appointment were approved.

ii. *Committee Chair and Vice Chair appointments were approved.*

10. **Appointments to Outside Bodies [See attached summary for details]**

Resolved: *Representation on outside bodies was approved.*

11. **Calendar of Meetings and Activities**

Resolved: *the 2024-25 Calendar of Meetings and Council activities was approved.*

12. **General Power of Competence (GPoC) and Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS)**

[Attached: Chief Officer Report and GPoC criteria]

The Town Mayor congratulated the Chief Officer on her recent acquisition of CiLCA, required for the Council to adopt the Power of Competence, per the Localism Act 2011.

Resolved:

- i. *the General Power of Competence with immediate effect was adopted.*
- ii. *the aspiration to achieve LCAS at Quality level by the end of this year was endorsed.*

13. **Internal Auditor**

Resolved: *JDH Business Services as internal auditor 2024/25 was approved.*

14. **Outside Support 2024/25**

Resolved

- i. *Worknest for Health, Safety and Employment support was approved;*
- ii. *John Greenall & Co. Ltd for payroll and pension services was approved;*
- iii. *Dixon Rigby Keogh, Sandbach, for Legal Support was approved;*
- iv. *John Greenall & Co for Financial guidance and VAT return was approved;*
- v. *Prism Computers for IT Support was approved.*

15. **Constitution Document review**

Council have agreed to review committee terms of reference at the AGM of election year, and all policies once every 4 years.

Resolved:

- i. *The Council's [Financial Regulations](https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Financial-Regulations-2020.pdf) (link: <https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Financial-Regulations-2020.pdf>) were approved;*
- ii. *The Council's [Standing Orders](https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Sandbach-Town-Council-Standing-Orders-2022.pdf) (link: <https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Sandbach-Town-Council-Standing-Orders-2022.pdf>) last approved 22 November 2023; item not considered – previous approval stands.*

16. Hosting Cheshire East 'Star Awards' Event at Sandbach Town Hall

This is a wonderful annual event aimed at recognising cared for children and care leavers. Around 150 children and young people attended this event last year with their carers. Over 50 members of staff volunteered their time. (Cllr A Nevitt declared a non pecuniary interest and withdrew from the vote)

Resolved:-

- i) *Free use of the Sandbach Town Hall for the CEC Cared for Event on Sunday 24 November 2024 was approved.*

17. Date, Time and Place of next Meeting

The next meeting of the Town Council is a business meeting scheduled for Wednesday 12 June 2024 at 7.00pm in the Ballroom, Sandbach Town Hall.

Meeting Closed at 8.05pm
Mayor, Cllr A Nevitt / CL

Sandbach Town Council 12 June 2024**Sandbach Town Council Year End Accounts 2023-24 Overview Report****Background**

The Council's financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March. The Council's accounts, financial and governance procedures are subject to 3 internal audits per year (2 interim and 1 final), which are conducted by an external accounting organisation for transparency and objectivity. The internal audits are published in full and reported to Council. The 2023-24 final internal audit and management response are shown on this agenda and demonstrate that very few issues have been raised during this financial year, despite some one-off corporate / finance staff absence. The Council is also subject to a final external audit carried out by nationally appointed external audit and must complete and publish the Annual Governance and Accounting Return (AGAR) within a legally defined timescale, also on this agenda.

Final Accounting Documents

The Council's final accounts have been produced and are included in this agenda pack for information and consideration, before Council can sign off and approve the AGAR.

Summary Position

In 2023-24, the Council set a precept of £732,380 which equate to a Council Tax of £84.49 per Band D equivalent. This places the Council relatively low down the table of precepts for large Council's in the area the highest being £124 per band D.

The Council set a budget of £15,910 expenditure over (all) income to be funded from General Reserves. The Council's performance against this budget has been monitored throughout the year by all Committees with budget responsibilities and Council, supported by the RFO and Senior Finance Officer.

The RFO has predicted an underspend throughout the year and this has been factored in future financial scenarios and use of reserves.

The final position returns a total underspend of £160,524 which should be viewed in the context of annual turnover of £1,022,432. The final position is due to a number of factors and the analysis is shown below:

	Budget	Actual	Variance	Notes
	£	£	£	
Council Total	15,913	- 144,611	160,524	Budgeted contribution to reserves exceeded.
Interest	-200	- 34,986	34,786	Rapid rise in interest rates (reflected in 2024-25 budget)
Grants	30,000	14,831	15,169	After use of earmarked reserve
Employee Costs	488,835	453,432	35,403	Post unfilled / acting up for sickness abs all incl / budget redistributed
Town Hall Repairs	10,000	3,836	6,164	Based on reactive maintenance - change of approach (EMR)
Ranger non employee costs	7,500	2,131	5,369	Vehicle costs (for bought in ranger provision 2024-25)

Public Toilets	21,493	15,876	5,617	Cleaning budget underspent
Sale of FLT	-	- 3,883	3,883	For general reserves
Asset Provision	10,000	- 14,204	24,204	technical adjustment not required (check EMR)
Total	-	-	130,595	

Other over / under 29,929 Number of factors - no major overspends on any budget head

The Council has clearly benefitted from its previous investment in the government owned CCLA and the increase in interest rates during the year. There has also been constant review of staffing budgets given the absence of key staff and the constant drive to ensure value for money in provision of high quality services.

The Council is in a healthy financial position and recommendations are made below for the appropriate treatment of this underspend in the current financial climate and in the context of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

Council Reserves

The Council's reserve position as a result of the 2023-24 final outturn is summarised below, with an analysis of earmarked reserves shown in the accounting pack.

<u>1,069,952</u>	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	<u>1,009,801</u>
	Represented By	
440,106	General Reserves	590,531
629,846	Earmarked Reserves	419,270
<u>1,069,952</u>		<u>1,009,801</u>

Clearly the Council is in a robust financial position, which is essential given the extent of its asset portfolio. Earmarked Reserves have significantly reduced due to the successful completion of the Small Common Car Park Refurbishment project. The Council's reserve policy states the following:

'In line with the national guidance (above), the Council will hold a general reserve of between a minimum of 25% and a maximum of 100% of its net revenue expenditure (NRE) - this is the difference between its budgeted income and expenditure.'

It is proposed that £50,000 is transferred from general reserves to the Town Hall Complex Maintenance Reserve which would increase this to £250K and leave £541K in general reserves, well within the maximum under the Council's policy. The Council has many impending financial commitments which will need to be considered and potentially funded such as car parking mitigations, green spaces, specific projects and asset replacement and enhancement. These will need to be included in the Council's budget setting decision making process taking the level of Council reserves into account.

Recommended that;

- i) The Council's 2023-24 financial position is noted and approved;
- ii) £50,000 is transferred from General Reserves to the Town Hall Maintenance Earmarked Reserve.

CL 6.6.24 CO / RFO

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Sandbach Town Council

Internal Audit 2023/24

JDH BUSINESS SERVICES LTD

Registered to carry on audit work by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales



The internal audit of Sandbach Town Council is carried out by undertaking the following tests as specified in the AGAR Annual Return for Local Councils in England:

- Checking that books of account have been properly kept throughout the year
- Checking a sample of payments to ensure that the Council's financial regulations have been met, payments are supported by invoices, expenditure is approved, and VAT is correctly accounted for
- Reviewing the Council's risk assessment and ensuring that adequate arrangements are in place to manage all identified risks
- Verifying that the annual precept request is the result of a proper budgetary process; that budget progress has been regularly monitored and that the council's reserves are appropriate
- Checking income records to ensure that the correct price has been charged, income has been received, recorded and promptly banked and VAT is correctly accounted for
- Reviewing petty cash records to ensure payments are supported by receipts, expenditure is approved and VAT is correctly accounted for
- Checking that salaries to employees have been paid in accordance with Council approvals and that PAYE and NI requirements have been properly applied
- Checking the accuracy of the asset and investments registers
- Testing the accuracy and timeliness of periodic and year-end bank account reconciliation(s)
- Review of year-end financial statements
- The authority has complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.
- The authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights for the prior year AGAR
- The authority published required information on a website up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with relevant legislation.

The interim internal audit provides evidence to support the annual internal audit conclusion in the AGAR Annual Return for larger councils.

Conclusion

On the basis of the internal audit work carried out, which was limited to the tests indicated above, in our view the council's system of internal controls is in place, adequate for the purpose intended and effective, subject to the recommendations reported in the action plan overleaf.

J D H Business Services Ltd

ACTION PLAN

ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
2023/24 Year End Internal Audit			
<p>1</p> <p>Year end Accounts review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Balance Sheet contained a total value for deposits held relating to bookings of £17,995. No detailed reconciliation of the nominal ledger account to an independent deposits analysis of bookings details has been carried out but we are informed there is a difference between the liability recorded in the Balance Sheet for deposits held and the actual value due to customers. The primary reason provided for this was that the creditor balance also comprises deposits that are non-refundable due to bookings that were cancelled. - The prepayments analysis provided to support the balance sheet did not agree. The prepayment schedule totalled £2,837 whereas the Balance Sheet records £1,878 for prepayments. 	<p>Year end procedures should include a full reconciliation of the deposits account in the nominal ledger with an independent analysis of booking deposit details. This will enable officers to identify and correct any errors and also to identify deposits held that are non-refundable due to cancelled bookings so that these can be removed from liabilities in the Balance Sheet at the year end and credited to income.</p> <p>The council need to ensure prepayments are correctly stated in the year end accounts and agree to supporting prepayments schedules.</p>		<p>The Council was subject to a shortage of finance resources during the final audit due to circumstances beyond its control.</p> <p>All deposits are identifiable and a reconciliation will be carried out in the current year to satisfy the auditor recommendation.</p> <p>This imbalance will be recommended for write off in the current year.</p>

ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
<p>2</p> <p>The council has disclosed that fidelity cover is currently £1,000,000. Fidelity insurance should aim to cover the maximum projected cash and bank balances which is estimated as the year end cash and bank and short term investments balances of £1,024,299 plus the next precept instalment of £386,091 (50% of 2024/25 precept received in April 2024), which is an estimated maximum projected balance of £1,410,390.</p> <p>Financial Regulations require the following:</p> <p><i>16.5. All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined by the council.</i></p>	<p><i>As part of risk assessment procedures, the council should annually estimate maximum projected cash and bank and short term investment balances as part of annual risk assessment and set the level of fidelity insurance accordingly as required by paragraph 16.5 of the Financial Regulations.</i></p> <p><i>The council need to review the current level of fidelity insurance as it does not cover maximum projected cash and bank balances.</i></p>		<p>This will be updated asap.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Although the risk assessment was reviewed and approved by full council in March 2023, so a risk assessment was in place for 2023/24, the risk assessment was not reviewed and approved by council again in 2023/24. Financial Regulations require the following:</p>	<p>The risk assessment should be reviewed and approved by council in each financial year.</p>		<p>This omission was due to staff absence during the necessary period for the corporate risk assessment documents to be updated. The previous year statements are valid and will be updated by the end of 2024. The Council</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
	<p>17.1. The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk / RFO shall prepare, for approval by the Council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the Council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.</p>			<p>ensures all its activities are individually risk assessed as a matter of course.</p>
<p>2023/24 Second Interim Internal Audit</p>				
	<p>No further internal control issues identified over and above those reported in the first interim internal audit.</p>			<p>No action required.</p>
	<p>The council transparency webpage was also reviewed to ensure information such as contracts in excess of £5000 and payments in excess of £500 are being published.</p>			<p>This demonstrates complete compliance with the Transparency Code 2015.</p>
<p>2023/24 First Interim Internal Audit</p>				
<p>1</p>	<p>Review of member checks undertaken indicates that only general expenditure is sampled.</p>	<p><i>The periodic checks carried out by members should also include:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) <i>Income sampling. The sample items should be agreed to price lists and VAT classification.</i> 2.) <i>Payroll. The monthly payroll should periodically be agreed on a sample</i> 		<p>Quarterly schedule agreed with FPG Chair to check random transaction samples.</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
2	Review of one of our income sample relating to bar receipt dated May 26 th , 2023 identified that the z read till reconciliation had no explanation recorded for the £27.35 difference with Worldpay receipts.	<p><i>basis back to source documentation such as authorised salary increases, timesheets and employment contracts.</i></p> <p><i>All the above member checks should be evidenced by a signature and date.</i></p> <p><i>Z read reconciliation differences should include explanations for overs/unders recorded in the reconciliation sheet.</i></p>		Implemented.
2022/23 Year End Internal Audit				
No further issues arising – a robust set of year end records have been maintained with a comprehensive audit trail to supporting information.				
2022/23 Second Interim Internal Audit				
1	The Informal Group Log than lists the various working groups of the council indicates that one group, the Small Common Refurbishment Project Group, has delegated powers. However, a working group that is not a committee or sub-committee of the council cannot have delegated decision making powers.	<p><i>The council should review the terms of reference of the Small Common Refurbishment Project Group to ensure it is advisory only with no decision making powers.</i></p>	2023/24 follow up – this is acknowledged as an error in the Log document. We are informed that decision making has been	The informal group log is in draft form. All decision making has been delegated by Council 21 September 2022 to the Small Common Sub Committee. No further action required.

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
			delegated by Council on 21st September 2022 to the Small Common Sub Committee.	
2	Aged debtor reports are not provided annually to council to provide management information about the age profile of debtor balances.	<i>Management information provided to council could be improved by providing the Rialtas aged debtor report at least annually so council can review income risks in terms of whether the levels of older debtors is significant.</i>	Noted to be presented as part of year end accounts	Implemented - This is presented to Council annually as part of the final accounts.
3	Pay rises are notified to the payroll agent via an email from officers.	<i>The Chair should either email the annual officer pay rise information to the payroll agent or a scanned letter from the Chair should be sent to the agent conforming the annual officer pay rises.</i>	Implemented	This will be implemented with immediate effect. We assume this means the Chair of Finance, Policy and Governance Committee. We assume this is in relation to NJC increment pay rises which the Council have authorised.
4	Although there is some coverage of investments in the Financial Regulations, there is no current adopted Investment Strategy and Treasury Management strategy.	<i>An Investment Strategy and Treasury Management strategy should be established with reference to the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003.</i>	Implemented	Implemented

ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
5	The council is not currently provided with the Fixed Asset Register for review and approval annually.	As part of year end procedures, the council should be provided with the Fixed Asset Register for review and approval annually.	Noted to be presented as part of year end accounts Implemented - The Council reviews the fixed asset annually as part of the AGAR.
2022/23 First Interim Internal Audit			
1	<p>Sample testing of bar income identified the reconciliation of income to z reads was not always being carried out. Where the reconciliation is completed, we identified examples where the information was not comprehensive enough to evidence that income has been completely and accurately recorded as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where the reconciliation records differences between card/cash and z reads, these are simply recorded with no explanation even where the differences are significant. No threshold has been set for explanations to be required for card and cash reconciliation differences. - The bar takings sheets containing the reconciliation template also has a checklist to be completed, This includes confirmation that an ' issues sheet' has been completed. We noted this is 	<p>The reconciliation of bar income must be carried out comprehensively for every event. Where there are significant differences above a specified threshold between the z reads and card/cash income recorded, then these differences must be investigated. The 'issues sheet' must be completed with the reasons for all significant differences.</p> <p>Income and expenditure must be posted gross to the Rialtas ledger. The bar takings sheet should include a section containing the required posting to the ledger for income and expenditure for each event. VAT should be reclaimed on all standard rated purchases paid out of bar cash receipts.</p> <p>Staff involved in the bar events should receive training in the completion of the bar takings sheets, reconciliation with z reads and following up significant differences identified.</p>	<p>Implemented - The council has implemented a bar income spreadsheet which evidences regular reconciliations with explanations required. when a defined threshold is exceeded. Staff responsible for managing bar takings have been trained in required procedures. However, see 2023./24 first</p> <p>Closed.</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
	<p>ticked even when no issues sheet has been completed so there is a need for staff training in the completion of the bar takings reconciliations.</p> <p>- Due to the lack of effective reconciliation process in the bar takings sheets, the purchases made out of bar cash at events are not being quantified in the reconciliation and then posted to expenditure in the Rialtas ledger. Therefore, net income is being posted for bar income to the ledger. The purchase invoices are attached to each reconciliation so the information is available to calculate the postings required.</p>	<p><i>Finance staff should review all bar takings reconciliation and 'issues sheets' to ensure differences are adequately investigated and explained.</i></p>	<p>interim internal audit issue.</p>	
2	<p>Sample testing of markets income identified that the markets spreadsheet developed to predict income for market days and used for reconciliation to actual market takings has been discontinued.</p> <p>Market takings sheets do not always evidence that any reconciliation of markets income took place, for instance the market takings sheet dated 05/08 /2022 not signed as 'checked by'. The review of the market sheets is also important as it helps ensure that market takings are allocated to the correct category for posting to the Rialtas</p>	<p><i>The markets income spreadsheet should be reinstated and used to reconcile market takings sheets with predicted income per the spreadsheet. Reasons for differences should be clearly stated in the reconciliations.</i></p>	<p>Implemented - The council has reinstated the market income spreadsheet and regular reconciliations.</p>	<p>Closed.</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
	<p>ledger and that the correct rate of VAT is applied eg Gazebos.</p> <p>We were informed that markets are being moved to a card payment system only which will reduce the administration of cash reconciliations.</p>			
	2021/22 Year End Internal Audit			
1	<p>The balance for deposits held in the year-end Balance Sheet is £13,326.10, however, the analysis of deposits actually held for events dated post 31/03/2022 is £9815.60.</p> <p>We were informed the £3510.50 difference related to items such as deposits not converted into payments for invoices and deposits for events cancelled by the customer who has then forfeited the non-refundable deposit.</p>	<p><i>The difference between deposits held per the year-end Balance Sheet, and actual deposits relating to 2022/23 onwards should be fully reconciled and a report produced for council including the amount that is proposed for write off.</i></p> <p><i>The report to council should also identify the improvements to internal controls over deposits for implementation including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>a regular reconciliation of the balance of deposits in the ledger with the underlying analysis of deposits held for future events</i> • <i>ensuring officers convert all relevant deposits into invoice payments for</i> 	Implemented	Closed.

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
		<p>events held</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring non-refundable deposits that are forfeited are cancelled from the deposits account in the ledger on a timely basis. 		
2	<p>The gross value of debts over 60 days old as at the year end was £4074. This balance represents 39% of the year end trade debtors.</p>	<p>Customer debt must be followed up promptly in accordance with the council incomes policy.</p> <p>Annually the council should carry out a review of the debtors ledger, in advance of the year end, to clear errors/cancelled bookings and identify potential and actual bad debts. A report should be provided to council for identified bad debts for approval for write off. For the total of doubtful debts identified during the review, a provision should be included in the year end accounts.</p>	<p>A review of debtors formed part of year end procedures for 2022/23 including debt provision.</p>	<p>Closed</p>
<p>2021/22 Second Interim Internal Audit</p>				
1	<p>We could not identify any approval in the council minutes for the sample of credit card or petty cash payments we tested.</p>	<p>All credit card and petty cash payments should be presented to council for approval.</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>Closed</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
2	<p>the development of the 2023 annual budget to an accountancy firm.</p> <p>An input error resulted in a supplier payment of £838.80 being made to an incorrect sort code and therefore bank account. The Natwest Payments status report states 'Not possible to verify account details' for this payment and this should have acted as a prompt to check the supplier bank details but the payment was still made. Natwest have implemented the 'Confirmation of payee' control to prevent fraud, and errors of this nature occurring. The amount paid has not been refunded to date.</p>	<p><i>When a bank payment is flagged as 'not possible to verify bank details' the payment should not be made to the supplier at that time - the bank details should be checked to the supplier invoice and the supplier should be contacted to verify the bank details.</i></p>	<p>This was an isolated error - the clerk noted that the Council approved the write off of the whole amount on 30 November 2022.</p>	<p>Closed.</p>
3	<p>The aged debt listing as at the January 20th 2022 comprised £3991.93 of debtors in excess of 60 days old. Discussion with staff indicated there had not been sufficient staff resources to follow up outstanding debtors or issue regular customer statements.</p>	<p><i>Outstanding debtors should be followed up regularly and customers issued with debtor statements as part of standard credit control procedures.</i></p>	<p>See year end internal audit issue 2.)</p>	<p>Closed.</p>
4	<p>We were unable to review reconciliations of bar takings cash-sheets to till z-reads as no z-reads were available due to ongoing issues with the bar till. The lack of reconciliations between bar cash-sheets and till z-reads means this important internal control of over the completeness and accuracy of bar income had not been in place for a significant portion of the financial year.</p>	<p><i>The council should act promptly to resolve key issues that are impacting on the ability to apply internal controls effectively. In this instance the supplier could have been contacted much earlier in the financial year to provide the required software update for the tills.</i></p>	<p>Implemented – Z reads are now produced and attached to bar takings reconciliation sheets</p>	<p>Closed.</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
	<p>We understand finance staff have since contacted the supplier and the bar till has been updated with new software that enables Z-reads to be printed after every event and that these are now available from August 2021 to date.</p>	<p><i>Staff resources should be identified to complete reconciliations of bar takings for events with the z-reads.</i></p>		
5	<p>Review of market takings sheets identified examples of sheets not being checked and signed as 'checked by'. This again was due to lack of staff resources to undertake checks on actual vs expected income and the allocation of income types. The review of the market sheets is also important as it helps ensure that market takings are allocated to the correct category for posting to the Rialtas ledger and that the correct rate of VAT is applied eg Gazebos.</p>	<p><i>Staff resources should be identified to complete checks over the completeness and accuracy of market income in the market takings sheets. These checks should be evidenced by a dated signature.</i></p>	<p>2022/23 second interim follow up - The council has reinstated the market income spreadsheet and regular reconciliations.</p>	<p>Closed.</p>
6	<p>The Finance & Governance Committee is scheduled to approve payments quarterly. From June 2021 onwards, the schedule of payments produced from Rialtas also includes BACs batch totals of payments rather than the underlying payments.</p>	<p><i>All individual payments should be reported to the Finance & Governance Committee for approval.</i></p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>Closed.</p>
7	<p>The system of authorising payments changed during the financial year so that the previous locum clerk authorised online payments rather than two councillors from August 2021 until the date the interim support ceased. Financial Regulations require two councillors to authorise</p>	<p><i>The council should authorise payments as prescribed in the current Financial Regulations.</i></p>	<p>Implemented</p>	<p>Closed</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
	online payments prior to the payments being made.			
8	We could not identify any approval in the council minutes for credit card or petty cash payments made during 2021/22 to the date of the interim internal audit.	<i>All credit card and petty cash payments should be presented to council for approval. The card and petty cash payments made to date should be put to the next relevant meeting for approval.</i>	Implemented	Closed
9	The budgetary control information presented to council did not contain any explanations of material variances as required by the Financial Regulations: <i>4.8. The RFO shall regularly provide the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget. These statements are to be prepared at least at the end of each financial quarter and shall show explanations of material variances. For this purpose "material" shall be in excess of the greater of £500 and 10% of the budget line.</i>	<i>The budgetary control information presented to council should comply with the requirements of the Financial Regulations.</i>	Implemented	Implemented
10	An invoice or voucher could not be located for the card payment on 07/4/21 to Dropbox for £60.48.	<i>Supporting documentation must be retained for all transactions.</i>	Implemented – supporting documentation has now been provided.	Closed
2020/21 Year End Internal Audit				

ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
1	There is an earmarked reserve in the year end accounts for personnel adverts of £1,300, however, this is an annual revenue spend item rather than a medium term scheme/project or a sinking fund.	Earmarked reserves should not be established for annual revenue spend items.	Implemented Closed
2020/21 Second Interim Internal Audit			
1	The council is party to a number of contracts with varying lengths and conditions. Current information in the 'Contract List 2021' is not sufficient to show key contract information such as when contracts end, payment terms and whether extensions are permitted. For instance, the information regarding the West Mercia contract with annual value of circa £27,500.00 indicates uncertainty as to whether the council is still within a fixed term contract.	The council should establish a contracts register which should be regularly reviewed to identify those contracts where the upcoming end date signifies that a tender or quotation process is required, or whether a decision is needed regarding an extension which is provided for in the contract terms.	Implemented Closed
2	The risk assessment does not address the risks of supplier (procurement) fraud.	The risk assessment should be updated to include supplier (procurement) fraud including the adequacy of supplier onboarding controls.	To be followed up at 2023/24 year end internal audit with review of annual risk assessment. 2022/23 follow up - Recommendation

ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
		<p>n Outstanding – the clerk has noted that the updated risk assessment to be adopted March 3rd, 2023 will address supplier fraud risks.</p>	
2020/21 First Interim Internal Audit			
1	<p>A cash deficit on market income bankings was identified on April 20th 2020 relating to March 19th, 2020. The total collected in rent according to takings records was £487, however, on reconciling the receipt books, the actual income was identified as £463.</p> <p>The market takings had been reconciled and the paying in slip completed. However, the paying in book is also missing and the bank has no record of an excess of cash bankings recorded that day. The red ledger book used to record bankings had been completed with the takings total and bank giro reference indicating the cash was ready to be banked, however, the money was never banked.</p>	<p><i>The Cash Handling Procedures document has been updated for approval by the Finance Committee. However, we would expect further controls over access to the safe to be further developed in the updated policy.</i></p> <p><i>All staff involved in cash handling should receive instruction in applying the updated Cash Handling Procedures and these must be complied with for all cash takings and bankings.</i></p> <p><i>Deficits between bankings and records of cash collected should be investigated promptly and reasons for differences recorded on the cash sheets.</i></p>	<p>A revised cash handling policy is in place including additional restrictions for access to the safe.</p>

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
	<p>It is not known whether the money had been stored in the safe prior to banking according to cash handling protocols. An internal investigation has been carried out and a thorough research of the premises but the cash has not been identified, neither has the paying in book been located. In addition, there is still no explanation for the £99 difference between market rent collected and the amount of bankings recorded.</p> <p>The internal investigation conclusion reported to the Finance Committee in August 2020 was that the market cash collected and paying in book were missing and the Cash Handling procedures policy had not been followed on March 19th, 2020.</p> <p>Staff have assessed whether all market rents could be paid by card but it was concluded that a proportion of traders would still wish to pay in cash. Full council will be requested to approve the write off of the cash deficit.</p>			
2	<p>The format of the Market Takings sheet does not account for takings paid by card. Therefore, this information has to be included manually,</p>	<p><i>The format of the market takings sheet should be revised to ensure all required information and analysis is easily completed and presented.</i></p>	<p>Implemented</p>	

	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW UP	STC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
	<p>resulting in a presentation of information that can be difficult to follow.</p>			
3	<p>A cybersecurity checklist has been provided for completion that contains key cybersecurity measures that should be in place.</p>	<p><i>The council should ensure the key cybersecurity measures are all in place.</i></p>	<p>The council has completed the cybersecurity checklist and there are a number of issues that need to be implemented.</p>	

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Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 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 2023/24

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 2024**.
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 2024**. 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 2024
 - 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 2023/24

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 2024 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 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 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) 2023/24

- 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 2024.
- 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 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
- 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 2024**.

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 2024 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 2023/24

Sandbach Town Council

sandbach.gov.uk

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

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

KEY: IA = Internal Audit

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.	✓		except for issues 2.) and 3.) in IA report
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.	✓		except for issue 1.) in IA report
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")	N/A		
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 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 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).

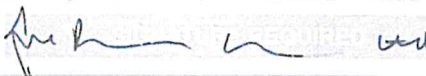
Date(s) internal audit undertaken

08/12/2023 and 04/04/2024 and 04/06/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

JDM BUSINESS SERVICES LTD

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

04/06/2024

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

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

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

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

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.			<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:

BODILY SIGNED

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 2023/24 for

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i>
1. Balances brought forward	959,803	1,069,952	<i>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.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	695,310	732,380	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	215,210	258,303	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	375,549	453,432	<i>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.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	29,605	29,605	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	395,217	573,610	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	1,069,952	1,003,988	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>

8. Total value of cash and short term investments	1,088,179	1,024,299	<i>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.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	568,756	575,323	<i>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.</i>
10. Total borrowings	342,646	327,238	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

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

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

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

Date _____

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

as recorded in minute reference:

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

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

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 2024; 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 2023/24

(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 2023/24

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 2024.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

Date