

Stanhope Parish Council

Annual Report on Internal Controls
April 2024

Allen Sykes

Chartered Accountants

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1. Introduction

This report aims to identify the weaknesses in the current accounting system and internal controls at Stanhope Parish Council. It also recommends improvements where weaknesses are identified.

2. Methodology

We have continued to perform checks during the year on the internal control system at Stanhope Parish Council, to ensure that effective controls have been put into place for any previously identified areas of weakness and that certain key controls have been adhered to. At the end of March 2024, all areas of control were reviewed to ensure that they were still operating effectively and to identify any areas in need of improvement.

We will continue to visit Stanhope Parish Council to look at any specific areas as requested and ensure the recommended improvements are working as intended. We will continue to report on an annual basis.

3. Stanhope Parish Council – Current Staffing and Main Issues Faced

3.1 Staffing

There have been no changes to the management structure. Miss J Carrick is the Parish Chairman and Susan Anderson continues to hold the post of Parish Clerk.

3.2 Role of the Councillors

There are 13 Council Members at present. They have meetings to discuss Council issues and decide what activities the Council should carry out. They also give the final authorisation for proposed expenditure and the payment of invoices based on information presented to them by the Parish Clerk.

3.3 Main Issues Faced

The main areas of financial activity within Stanhope Parish Council include maintaining and supporting allotments, burial grounds, lighting, a county highways worker and playgrounds.

Invoices for all expenditure are received and paid via the Clerk's Offices. They also invoice and receive all Council income but not allotment rentals as the clerk gives notice to each allotment when the annual rent becomes due. All computerised records are held on the Parish Council's computer and the Parish Clerk uses a specialised accounting package called Scribe Accounts to accurately maintain the accounting records.

For the year ended 31st March 2024 the Council's total income from services, not including interest received or Precept income, was £55,614. Grant income for the Playgrounds and Allotment rentals made up 62% of this at £34,752. The Council's total expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2024 was £108,617, approximately 41% of which was Playgrounds and Allotments expenditure of £45,130.

4 Weaknesses and Recommendations

We did not find any areas of significant deficiency in any of the areas of internal control subject to our testing during the year.

Conclusion

The Council continues to show a commitment to the adherence of all staff to the systems and control procedures in place. The accounting and internal control systems at Stanhope Parish Council appear to have been operating effectively throughout the 2023/24 period.

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