

TOPLIS ASSOCIATES LTD.

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TEL: 01543-419202

21 April, 2021

The Chairman
Weston with Gayton Parish Council
c/o Mr D Croxford - Clerk
34 Briarsleigh
Wildwood
Stafford
ST17 4QP

Dear Councilor

Conclusion of Internal Audit of your Parish Council For the year ended 31st March 2021

Following the completion of my work for the above year we are writing to inform the Council that having carried out the year-end review I have been able to sign the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Part 3 ("AGAR") without any qualification.

The independent internal examination of the Councils governance, financial affairs and certification of the 2020-21 AGAR to the External Auditor was carried out in accordance with the standards laid out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations, 2015 and embodied in the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide March 2020.

In summary, we covered the following areas in our examination:

- Proper Bookkeeping
- Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Payment Controls
- Risk Management and Insurance arrangements
- Budgetary Controls
- Income Controls
- Payroll Controls
- Asset Control
- Bank Accounts and Reconciliation
- Year End Procedures.

This year we have carried out a review of your web site to evaluate its conformance to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 which is to be viewed as a minimum standard. We confirm your web site meets this requirement.

We carried out two reviews during the fiscal year and were accorded with full co-operation by your Clerk. Any issues which we raised with the Clerk during the conduct of our work have either been satisfactorily rectified or are noted below.

A copy of our Annual Internal Audit certification (page 3 of the AGAR) for 2020-21 is attached.

We would wish to draw your attention to the "Publication Requirements" on page 1 of the AGAR

We would also wish to draw your council's attention to the following matters:

1. We note that your general reserves cover (after the exclusion of properly voted earmarked funds of £12,930) is 0.6 years. We consider this to be a reasonable level of general reserves balance at the year end.
2. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions we have not been able to conduct a physical examination of your supplier's invoices and receipt documents to verify that they have been processed in accordance with your Financial Regulations. This matter will be given priority when we conduct the interim audit later this year.

In respect of the new Council year we make the following additional observations and recommendations for your consideration:

1. We recommend that during the fiscal year your council should review the Risk Assessment to ensure that it still reflects the current environment. Your council should then minute its ratification;
2. During the fiscal year your council should review your Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to ensure that they still reflect the current environment. Your council should then minute that ratification. Please note that it is important that your Financial Regulations meet the standard set by those published by NALC in July 2019. The Model Financial Regulations templates were produced by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in July 2019 and contain a number of important legal changes; Copies of both your current Standing Orders, Finance Regulations and Risk Assessment should be displayed on your councils web site and must show the latest date of revision and ratification;
3. You are reminded that when the council discusses, amends or ratifies significant documents copies should be made available on your web site for members of the public to view. These documents should be either

appendices to published minutes and agenda papers or as separate documents on the web site (preferably with a hypertext link to facilitate ease of searching):

4. You must discuss the appointment of your internal auditor and ratify and minute the appointment during the current financial year. We were pleased to have been your internal auditor during 2020/21 and offer ourselves for re-appointment. You may use either our company name or refer to Alan Toplis & Kim Squires by name in the minutes

It is your Council's responsibility to note these comments and to consider what action should be taken.

Can we take this opportunity to remind you that when the AGAR comes back from the External Auditor you do have a duty to display the accompanying notice of Completion of Audit on each of your usual notice boards and on your council's website.

The complete AGAR and any auditor's comments or qualifications should also be displayed on your web site to allow electors to see the complete card and read the External Auditors comments if they wish to do so.

In accordance with Regulation 13 (of the Audit and Accounts Regulations), after the conclusion of the period for the exercise of public rights), the authority must publish (including on its website) the annual governance statements, statement of accounts, and the external auditor's certificate and report – Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. Authorities must keep copies of these documents for purchase by a person at a reasonable sum and ensure that they remain available for public access for 5 years

Please do remember to retain a copy of the notice on file as proof that you have followed the requirements of the Local Government Act. You should also minute the External Auditors approval of the AGAR and any qualification or comments made and resolve to take action where necessary.

We will make our next visit in October/November but please do not hesitate to contact me should you require advice in the meantime.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Toplis'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.