**BRUNDALL PARISH COUNCIL**

**6 Monthly (Mid Term) Internal Audit Report**

**(as required by section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972)**

**Financial Year 2020/21**

I have in the (virtual) presence of Mrs. Claudia Dickson (Deputy Clerk) inspected the parish council documents as appropriate, and line with, the scope of the interim audit requested. Claudia also acts as the Responsible Finance Officer for the council. I would like to thank the Deputy Clerk and Sharon Smyth (the Parish Clerk) for providing me with all the information required to carry out the audit.

Brundall lies seven miles east of the city of Norwich. It is a busy boating centre on the River Yare opposite Surlingham Broad. Likewise, Brundall Parish Council is clearly a very busy council serving around 4,000 people. The council controls several key assets such as the Cucumber Lane Cemetery, the Memorial Hall Playground and the Meadow View Play Area.

There was one recommendation made in the last annual internal audit report. This was a suggestion that a review of internal controls be carried out each year to help improve efficiency. This recommendation has not yet been enacted but will be considered on a future agenda.

I consider the council's website to be of a high standard. On the day (in mid January 2021) that I perused the website, all the relevant agendas and minutes had been posted. The information provided is wide ranging and readily navigable and all the policies and documents are easy to access.

The Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders are of a high standard and are reviewed regularly.I would suggest that financial regulations and standing orders are reviewed every 2/3 years and the risk assessment policy annually. The “de minimus” amount before which competitive tendering/estimates are required is set at £500. For a council of this size I consider this setting to be reasonable. An Assets Register is kept and is comprehensive and well maintained. I would suggest that items such as grit bins and noticeboards (with a purchase value of less than £500, say) do not need to be carried forward (after accounting for the initial expenditure). Payroll is self administered. There are no petty cash transactions.

Salaries (including those of the Parish Clerk and Deputy Clerk) are paid in accordance with members approval and the appropriate pay scales.

Meetings are being held remotely during the prevailing COVID crisis. Despite the inevitable problems caused by the pandemic, the council is on course to deliver its budget and propose its precept for the coming year. Full council and other meetings have continued through the pandemic period (albeit by virtual means). The budget was agreed and confirmed atthe December 2020 meeting of the council.

Although ultimately a matter to be determined by members, many councils aim to retain a general reserve equivalent to around 50% of its agreed precept.In this respect, the council's general reserve appears to be somewhat low. I note the £12,000 accrual for assets included in the latest budget which I consider to be prudent. The proposed precept for 2020/21 is £125,500, equating to an increase of around £6.17 per Band D property. The annual return is prepared using the income and expenditure method. The bank is reconciled and reported on a quarterly basis.

I would suggest that cemetery fees are reviewed each council cycle (ie. every four years). It might be helpful to make comparisons with other cemeteries/councils prior to setting the fees.

I would commend this report to members and would make no formal recommendations for change or improvement at this time.

In conclusion, I am satisfied that this parish council is continuing to function well, amidst the many challenges of the pandemic, and is fully discharging its legal and statutory responsibilities. I would thank members for appointing me for internal audit duties in 2021 and look forward to attending your offices in the late Spring (subject to prevailing restrictions) for the full audit.

**ROBIN GOREHAM**

(Internal Auditor) January 2021