2425-07 a

RACKENFORD & CREACOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

BANK RECONCILIATION

As at 31st March 2024

FUNDS HELD IN BANK ACCOUNTS		£
Lloyd Classic Account Balance		-
Lloyds Business Account Balance		28,897.13
		28,897.13
Less Unpresented Cheques	£	
		-
Total Funds less unpresented cheques		**28,897.13**
CASHBOOK BALANCE @ 01.04.2023	39,755.81	
Plus Income Received	19,346.92	
Less payments made	(30,205.60)	
		28,897.13
Unreconciled Balance		-

2425-07a

LLOYDS BANK

22 May 2024

Rackenford Parish Council
14 STATION ROAD
YEOFORD
CREDITON
DEVON
EX17 5HU

Your Account

Sort Code 30-90-89
Account Number 39081463

TREASURERS ACCOUNT

01 March 2024 to 31 March 2024

Money In	£0.00	**Balance on 01 March 2024**	£29,279.39
Money Out	£382.26	**Balance on 31 March 2024**	£28,897.13

Your Transactions

Date	Description	Type	Money In (£)	Money Out (£)	Balance (£)
20 Mar 24	RJ MARTIN 100000001310842475 SALARY	FPO		305.86	28,973.53
20 Mar 24	HMRC - ACCOUNTS OF 500000001314211373	FPO		76.40	28,897.13

Transaction types

BGC	Bank Giro Credit	**BP**	Bill Payments	**CHG**	Charge	**CHQ**	Cheque
COR	Correction	**CPT**	Cashpoint	**DD**	Direct Debit	**DEB**	Debit Card
DEP	Deposit	**FEE**	Fixed Service	**FPI**	Faster Payment In	**FPO**	Faster Payment Out
MPI	Mobile Payment In	**MPO**	Mobile Payment Out	**PAY**	Payment	**SO**	Standing Order
TFR	Transfer						

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2425-07 b

RACKENFORD PARISH COUNCIL
FINAL ACCOUNTS 2023/2024

Receipts & Payments Account

2022/2023 Outturn £		2023/2024 Outturn £
	RECEIPTS	
13,300.00	Precept	15,000.00
3,135.00	Grants	-
-	DAA Lighting Donations	-
-	Community Building Donations	-
4,600.00	Jubilee/Coronation Events Income	1,897.00
-	PROW Grant	-
950.00	Interest & Other Income	400.00
1,099.80	VAT Refund	2,049.92
23,084.80	**TOTAL RECEIPTS**	**19,346.92**
	PAYMENTS	
3,225.00	Common Maintenance	-
-	Grass Mowing	-
101.85	Playground Inspection	78.50
810.00	Common Playground Project	-
-	Sports Equipment	1,055.76
-	Hard Court maintenance	12,000.00
405.00	Salt spreading / snow ploughing	900.00
175.00	Trinity Well	-
382.87	Audit fees	225.00
4,301.65	Clerk Salary	4,587.82
208.65	Clerk Expenses	180.00
42.96	Website & IT services	1,106.00
888.56	Insurance	937.98
-	School Room hire	-
163.99	Memberships/subscriptions	202.00
-	Air Ambulance Landing Lights	-
	Election	-
2,412.10	Jubilee/Coronation Expenditure	967.10
500.83	PROW Expenditues	-
	Defibrillator	1,800.00
	Gazebo & Barbecue	1,775.60
358.33	Non Section 137 Grants & Other	395.00
-	S137 grants & other	-
1,173.77	VAT Expenditure	3,994.84
15,150.56	**TOTAL PAYMENTS**	**30,205.60**
	RESERVES	
31,821.57	**Balance 1st April**	**39,755.81**
23,084.80	Plus Receipts	19,346.92
(15,150.56)	Less Payments	(30,205.60)
39,755.81	**Balance 31st March**	**28,897.13**

2425 - 07 b

Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council Budget Monitor 2023/2024

2022/2023	2023/2024 - March 2024				
Outturn £	Description	Budget £	Actual £	Pecentage %	Remaining £
13,300.00	Precept	15,000	15,000.00	100%	-
3,135.00	Grants	-	-	0%	-
-	DAA Lighting Donations	-	-	0%	-
-	Community Building Donations	-	-	0%	-
4,600.00	Jubilee/Coronation Event Income	1,897	1,897.00	100%	-
-	PROW P3 Grant	-	-	0%	-
950.00	Interest & Other Income	400	400.00	100%	-
21,985.00	**Budgeted Receipts**	**17,297**	**17,297.00**	**100%**	-
1,099.80	VAT Refund	6,850	2,049.92	30%	4,800.08
23,084.80	**Total Receipts**	**24,147**	**19,346.92**	**80%**	**4,800.08**
3,225.00	Common Maintenance	4,000	-	0%	4,000.00
-	Grass Mowing	300	-	0%	300.00
101.85	Playground Inspection	120	78.50	65%	41.50
810.00	Common Playground Project	-	-	0%	-
-	Sports Equipment	1,056	1,055.76	100%	0.24
-	Hard Court maintenance	24,000	12,000.00	50%	12,000.00
405.00	Salt spreading / snow ploughing	2,000	900.00	45%	1,100.00
175.00	Trinity Well	-	-	0%	-
382.87	Audit fees	225	225.00	100%	-
4,301.65	Clerk Salary	4,585	4,587.82	100%	(2.82)
208.65	Clerk Expenses	180	180.00	100%	-
42.96	Website & IT services	746	1,106.00	148%	(360.00)
888.56	Insurance	938	937.98	100%	0.02
-	School Room hire	100	-	0%	100.00
163.99	Memberships/subscriptions	202	202.00	100%	-
-	Air Ambulance Landing Lights	100	-	0%	100.00
-	Election	300	-	0%	300.00
2,412.10	Jubilee/Coronation Event Expenditure	967	967.10	100%	(0.10)
500.83	PROW Expenditure	-	-	0%	-
-	Defibrillator	1,800	1,800.00	100%	-
-	Gazebo & Barbecue	1,776	1,775.60	100%	0.40
358.33	Non Section 137 Grants & Other	395	395.00	100%	-
-	S137 grants & other	-	-	0%	-
13,976.79	**Budgeted Payments**	**43,790**	**26,210.76**	**60%**	**17,579.24**
1,173.77	VAT Expenditure	6,800	3,994.84	59%	2,805.16
15,150.56		**50,590**	**30,205.60**	**60%**	**20,384.40**
(7,934.24)	**Total Net Payments/(Receipts)**	**26,443**	**10,858.68**		
31,821.57	Balance 1st April	39,367	39,755.81		
23,084.80	Plus Receipts	24,147	19,346.92		
(15,150.56)	Less Payments	(50,590)	(30,205.60)		
39,755.81	Balance	12,924	28,897.13		

Z425-07c

RACKENFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Reserves Balances
As at 31st March 2024

Description	Balance 31st March 2023 £	Budget Transfer £	Income £	Expenditure £	Balance 31st March 2024 £
Earmarked Reserves					
Hard Court	**10,133.56**	-	-	10,133.56	-
Computer Replacement	-	-	-	-	-
Defibrillator	**1,400.00**	-	-	1,400.00	-
DAA Grant	-				-
DAA Donations	-	-			-
DCF grant	**2,435.00**	-	-	2,435.00	-
Winter Maintenance	**1,595.00**	-	2,000.00	900.00	**2,695.00**
Community Events	**929.90**		1,897.00	967.10	**1,859.80**
Community Building	**5,000.00**	-	-	-	**5,000.00**
General Reserve	**18,262.35**	-	-	-	**19,342.33**
Total Reserves	**39,755.81**	**-**	**15,449.92**	**14,369.94**	**28,897.13**

2425-08

MULBERRY
LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES LTD
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Surrey, GU9 7UD
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e office@mulberrylas.co.uk
w www.mulberrylas.co.uk

Mr R Martin
Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council
14 Station Road
Yeoford
Crediton
Devon
EX17 5HU

3 May 2024

Dear Rob

Re: Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council
Internal Audit Year Ended 31 March 2024 – Year-End Audit report

Executive summary
Following completion of our year-end internal audit on 3 May 2024 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published AGAR. The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of this is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not. Where appropriate **recommendations for action are shown in bold text and are summarised in the table at the end of the report.**

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council are well established and followed.

Regulation
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to "undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance."

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit's function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all Members to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement.

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Andy Beams of Mulberry & Co, who has over 30 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 13 years specialising in local government.

Your auditor is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

Engagement Letter

An engagement letter was previously issued to the council covering the 2023/24 internal audit assignment. Copies of this document are available on request.

Planning and inherent risk assessment

The scope and plan of works including fee structure was issued to the council under separate cover. Copies of this document are available on request. In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR.

It is our opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be "walk through testing" on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

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A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Internal audit requirement

Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.

Audit findings

The year-end audit was conducted remotely with the Clerk, who also acts as the council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Clerk had prepared the information advised in advance of the visit and forwarded to me for review in advance of a scheduled telephone conversation. I have the impression that accounting records are neatly maintained and easily accessible. Other information was reviewed through discussion with the Clerk and a review of the council website www.rackenford-devon.co.uk/parish-council

The council uses Excel for recording the day-to-day financial transactions of the council. This is a suitable method for a council of this size, and a review of the Excel spreadsheets shows that the Clerk has developed an effective system for recording transactional information and producing management reports for review at council meetings.

B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Check the publication and minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit

The council declared itself exempt from a limited assurance review last year and therefore does not receive an External Auditor's Report. The Certificate of Exemption is published on the council website.

I note the council received and considered the internal auditor's report at the council meeting held on 23 May 2023 (minute ref 2324-12) and I am pleased to see that positive action was recorded as being taken against the recommended actions. Testing of progress against these actions is contained within this report.

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms

I confirmed by sample testing that councillors sign "Acceptance of Office" forms. The council website provides details of councillors and includes a link to the North Devon Council website where the individual Register of Members' Interests Forms are published.

Confirm that the council is compliant with the relevant transparency code

As the council's income and expenditure for the current financial year exceeds £25,000, it is not a statutory requirement to follow the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code, although it is recommended best practice to do so.

Confirm that the council is compliant with GDPR

The council is fully aware of GDPR and has undergone training. It was noted the council has established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's Guide (March 2023) contains updated guidance on the matter as below:

The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK

5.205. All authorities except parish meetings must now have an official website. To comply with GDPR, councils should provide official email accounts for their councillors as well as for their clerk and other officers.

5.206. When choosing a domain name for the council's website and emails, many local council websites are appropriately making use of the official GOV.UK domain (for example, ourparishcouncil.gov.uk), with email addresses being linked to that domain.

5.207. Using a GOV.UK domain for your council website and email accounts demonstrates the council's official local government status. Members of the public are increasingly cyber security awareness, so a GOV.UK domain can also help to build trust, and credibility and visibly demonstrates authenticity. Many people will now reasonably expect a local council to have a GOV.UK domain name.

5.208. For the purposes of user management, councils should ensure that the proper officer can add and remove member and staff email accounts. Commercial 'dashboard' email and web systems offer centralised searching of all data contained within the system for effective compliance with GDPR Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests.

The council has a Privacy Notice and Accessibility Statement on its website, and it is clear the council has made every effort to comply with the website requirements.

Confirm that the council meets regularly throughout the year

A schedule of meetings is published on the council website along with historic agendas and minutes.

Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice

I was able to confirm that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. Whilst we have not tested every single committee and council meeting there was no evidence of non-compliance in giving three clear days' notice of the meeting.

I note that the council also published non-confidential supporting documentation on the website in accordance with the requirements of the Information Commissioner's Office.

Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website

Draft minutes are uploaded to the council website and clearly annotated as draft.

Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months

The Standing Orders are based on the current NALC model and were most recently reviewed and adopted by council in March 2024 (minute ref 2324-121a).

Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations

Financial Regulations are based on the current NALC model and were last reviewed and adopted by council in March 2024 (minute ref 2324-121b). The regulations contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council.

Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed

The council has thresholds in place at which authorisations to spend must be obtained as below:

FR 4.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:

- *the council for all items over £1,000, or*
- *the Clerk, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below £1,000.*

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman. Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

FR 4.2. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the council, or duly delegated committee. During the budget year and with the approval of council having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate ('virement').

FR 4.5. In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of council services, the clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the council which in the clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £1,000. The Clerk shall report such action to the chairman as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.

Based on the level of financial activity of the council, these authorisation thresholds appear appropriate, and I note the increase in the Clerk threshold in accordance with the recommendation of last year's internal audit report.

The audit was conducted remotely, so I was unable to conduct any extensive testing of invoices. However, I was able to compare the payment lists approved by council to the accounting records and match entries to the bank statements, and I am satisfied that the council is properly approving expenditure.

Confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines and does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £9.93 per elector
The council confirmed its eligibility and adopted the General Power of Competence (GPC) and the section 137 threshold does not apply.

Check receipt of VAT refund matches last submitted VAT return
The council submits its VAT return on a six monthly basis. I reviewed the submission for the period ending 30 September 2023 which showed a refund amount due of £1,337.27 and I was able to confirm receipt of this amount to the council's bank account on 18 October 2023. The submission for the period ending 31 March 2024 shows a refund amount due of £2,657.57. The council is up to date with its VAT submissions.

Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor
The system noted above details internal review takes place and I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE

Internal audit requirement

This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

Audit findings

The council has a risk assessment process in place, which was last reviewed and approved by council in March 2024 (minute ref 2324-12). I reviewed the risk assessment record, which identifies specific risks within different areas of the council's operations, assesses each risk as high/medium/low, details the management controls in place and any review processes.

This is a suitable approach and includes analysis of all risks typically associated with a council of this size.

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Avia Insurance, arranged through BHIB Insurance Brokers, which covers the year under review. The policy includes Public Liability and Employers Liability cover of £10 million each and a Fidelity Guarantee level of £100,000 which is sufficient for a council of this size.

We discussed assertion 8 on the Annual Governance Statement and whether this had any impact on the council.

"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."

The Clerk confirmed that they were not aware of any event having a financial impact that was not included in the accounting statements.

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

Audit findings

The council set a precept of £15,000 for 2023/24. With a tax base of 150.5, this equates to a band D equivalent of £99.67 (compared to the average in England of £79.35).

I was able to confirm that the council agreed the budget and precept for 2024/25 at the council meeting held on 24 January 2024 (minute ref 2324-106).

There is evidence within the minutes of meetings that reviews of financial performance take place during the year, including receiving budget reports and bank reconciliations, which allows councillors to make informed financial decisions.

The year-end budget reports records total receipts as 100% of budget and total payments as 60% of budget, suggesting that the budget has been accurately set and carefully monitored throughout the year.

The council holds circa £9,555 in earmarked reserves and a further circa £19,342 in the general reserve at the end of the financial year.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's guide states *'the generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure'* (para 5.33).

The general reserve balance is higher than the recommended range and the council should keep this level under review.

E. INCOME

Internal audit requirement

Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Apart from the precept, the council receives minimal other income. From a review of the accounting records, income appears to be recorded with sufficient narrative detail to identify the source and allocated to the most appropriate budget line.

F. PETTY CASH

Internal audit requirement

Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

The council has no petty cash.

G. PAYROLL

Internal audit requirement

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied

Audit findings

The Clerk is the only employee. The council processes payroll using the HMRC PAYE Online tools. I reviewed the payslips provided for review and payroll deductions appear correct.

There are no councillor allowances.

I reviewed the total figure being included within box 4 (staff costs) on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and was able to confirm from the accounting software that this includes only salary payments, HMRC payments and pension contributions.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Internal audit requirement

Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

Audit findings

The council has a fixed asset register in place which includes details of asset location, date of acquisition, cost or proxy cost, present use and insurance cover details Assets are correctly listed at cost/proxy cost, or where gifted/donated, given a nominal £1 value for the purpose of the asset register.

I confirmed the asset register total matches that included in box 9 (total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets) on the AGAR and was able to trace the changes to the previous year's total against the asset register.

The council has no borrowing nor long-term investments.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.

Audit findings

Financial Regulation 2.2 states *'On a regular basis, at least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chairman [or a cheque signatory] shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification. This activity shall on conclusion be reported, including any exceptions, to and noted by the council.'*

Bank reconciliations are completed and presented to council for review, which is evidenced within the minutes of meetings. I reviewed the March 2024 bank reconciliation and was able to confirm the year-end balances to the bank statements and that the total balances match the figure included in box 8 of the AGAR.

Year-end balances are within the £85,000 protection limit offered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

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.

Audit findings

The council, at its meeting to sign off the year-end accounts, must discuss Section 1 of the AGAR (Annual Governance Statement) and record this activity in the minutes of the meeting. **COUNCIL IS REMINDED THAT THIS MUST BE A SEPARATE AGENDA ITEM PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF SECTION 2 OF THE AGAR (ANNUAL ACCOUNTS).**

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

Based on the internal audit finding I recommend using the table below as the basis for that discussion.

	Annual Governance Statement	*'Yes', means that this authority*	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	*prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*	**YES** – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	*made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.*	**YES** – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.
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.	*has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.*	**YES** – the Clerk advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
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.	*during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.*	**YES** – the requirements and timescales for 2022/23 year-end were followed.
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.	*considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.*	**YES** – the council has a risk management scheme and appropriate external insurance.
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	*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.*	**YES** – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor.
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	*responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.*	**YES** – matters raised in internal and external audit reports have been addressed.
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	*disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.*	**YES** – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.

	authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.		
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	*has met all its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.*	**N/A** – the council has no trusts

Section 2 – Accounting Statements

AGAR box number		2022/23	2023/24	Internal Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	31,822	29,756	Agrees to 2022/23 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	13,300	15,000	Figure confirmed to central precept record
3	Total other receipts	9,785	4,347	Agrees to underlying accounting records
4	Staff costs	4,302	4,588	Agrees to underlying accounting records. Includes only expenditure allowed as staff costs (see section G)
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Confirmed to PWLB documents
6	All other payments	10,849	25,618	Agrees to underlying accounting records
7	Balances carried forward	39,756	28,897	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet
8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	39,756	28,897	Agrees to bank reconciliation for all accounts
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	123,542	126,420	Matches asset register total and changes from previous year have been traced
10	Total borrowings	0	0	Confirmed to PWLB documents
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	NO	NO	No – the council is not a sole trustee
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)	N/A	N/A	N/A – the council is not a sole trustee

Audit findings

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on a receipts and payments basis with no requirement to complete the box 7 and 8 reconciliation.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2022/23 and published on the council website.

The variance analysis has been completed to explain the variances exceeding 15% where required, and in my opinion, contains sufficient narrative and quantitative information for the External Auditor.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW

Internal audit requirement

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")

Audit findings

The council correctly declared itself exempt in 2022/23 as both its income and expenditure were below £25,000. The council has breached the threshold for this year and must submit for a limited assurance review.

L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

Internal audit requirement

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

Audit findings

For councils with a turnover over £25,000, it is recommended best practice to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, but not a statutory requirement and therefore not subject to verification during the internal audit.

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

13(1) An authority must publish (which must include publication on that authority's website)

(a) the Statement of Accounts together with any certificate or opinion entered by the local auditor in accordance with section 20(2) of the Act; and

(b) the Annual Governance Statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(3)

13(2) Where documents are published under paragraph (1), the authority must

(a) keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and

(b) ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

I was able to confirm that pages 4 (Annual Governance Statement), 5 (Accounting Statements) and 6 (External Auditor's Report and Certificate) of the AGAR are available for review on the council website for financial years 2018/19 to 2022/23 inclusive.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2023 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Proposed
Date AGAR signed by council	23 May 2023	28 May 2024
Date inspection notice issued	1 June 2023	29 May 2023
Inspection period begins	5 June 2023	3 June 2024
Inspection period ends	14 July 2023	12 July 2024
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes	Yes

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2022/23, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement can therefore be signed off by the council. I was able to confirm that the proposed dates for 2023/24 meet the statutory requirements.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Internal audit requirement

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Before 1 July 2023 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 2022/23, approved and signed, page 4*
- *Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2022/23, approved and signed, page 5*

Not later than 30 September 2023 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.

Audit findings

I was able to confirm that the Notice of Public Rights is published on the council website along with the Notice of Conclusion of audit and External Auditor Report and I was able to confirm that the publication requirements for 2022/23 have been met.

O. TRUSTEESHIP

Internal audit requirement

Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

Audit findings

The council has no trusts.

Achievement of control assertions at year-end audit date

Based on the tests conducted during the year-end audit, our conclusions on the achievement of the internal control objectives are summarised in the table below and are reflected in the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report within the AGAR.

	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 Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
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	✓		
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")*	✓		
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	The authority, during the previous year (2022/23) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(evidenced by the notice published 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.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Andy Beams
Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd

Year-End Audit - Points Carried Forward

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
None		

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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.*

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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 have 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**

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Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Rackenford and Creacombe Parish Council

www.rackenford-devon.co.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.

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.	✓		
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.	✓		
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")*	✓		
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)*.	✓		

NO PETTY CASH

O. **(For local councils only)** Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

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

03/05/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Andy Beams, Mulberry LAS Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Abeams

Date 03/05/2024

***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).

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Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

Rackenford and Creacombe Parish Council

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.	✔		*prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✔		*made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.*
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.	✔		*has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.*
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.	✔		*during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.*
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.	✔		*considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.*
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✔		*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.*
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✔		*responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.*
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.	✔		*disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.*

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	*has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.*
			✔	

***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:

and recorded as minute reference:

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Clerk

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

Rackenford and Creacombe Parish Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	*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.*
1. Balances brought forward	31822	39756	*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.*
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	13300	15000	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	9785	4347	*Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.*
4. (-) Staff costs	4302	4588	*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.*
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	10849	25618	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	39756	28897	*Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).*
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	39756	28897	*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.***
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	123542	126420	*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.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

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

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

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

In respect of Rackenford and Creacombe Parish Council

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

External Auditor Signature Date

Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council

Tel: 07768 82951 email: parish.clerk@rackenfordpc.com Website: www.rackenford-devon.co.uk/parish-council

There was a Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 24th January 2024 at 7.30pm held in Rackenford School.

Members Present: Parish Councillors Graham Lamb (Chairman), Sarah Child; Peter Jones; Fred Phillips, Scott Ware, Stewart Warne.

Also Present: No-one

In attendance: Rob Martin, Clerk

Others: One member of the general public

MINUTES

2324-113 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Cllrs. Lucas and Cox.

2324-114 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)

There were no declarations of interest on matters contained within the agenda.

2324-115 MINUTES

On a proposal by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. Warne, it was **Resolved** to approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 24th January 2024

2324-116 CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The clerk reported that there had been a need to pay a subscription to maintain the parish council website. The payment to WIX was £360 plus VAT for a three-year subscription which included a 40% reduction compared with the annual one.

The Scribe accountancy access had been downloaded and would be set up in time for use from 1st April 2024.

The parish council VAT claim would be made as of 31st March 2024 and not before as had been discussed previously.

The clerk had expected an invoice from the school for the use of the hall for the last two years, but this had not yet been received. He would email the school administration office and send a reminder.

The Chairman to suspend the Parish Council meeting to hear presentations, reports from District and County Councillors and take questions from members of the public.

2324-117 PUBLIC AND OTHER BODIES' SESSION

No members of the public had questions for the parish council.

The County Councillor was not present.

As **North Devon Council** representative, Cllr. Jones outlined discussions he had been involved in on the operation of the Batsworthy grant scheme which was causing concerns amongst local District Councillors. He would have further conversations with the fund

managers and look to improve the way the funds were allocated which would involve having a plan for the improvement of local assets.

Cllr. Jones had attended special a meeting at which 150 members of the public turned up to discuss water and pollution, including on rivers & beaches, and there was a lot of public anger on the subject. North Devon Council would be holding a meeting on Thursday to discuss how it was going to respond to this concern particularly within planning.

A lot of Cllr. Jones' time is taken up with Witheridge matters and one he highlighted was a planning application for 150 houses all of which were to be affordable; mixed part ownership, social rented and affordable rented. He highlighted the need to be aware of bits of amenity land within the parish which have no ownership, potentially leading to infill development where it is not acceptable.

The Chairman to reconvene the meeting

2324-118 **THE COMMON**

The chairman confirmed that some outstanding tree work still needed to be done. There were also other trees of concern that would be looked at once the Common had dried out enough to get access.

The clerk requested that Ed Nicholson be asked to submit his invoice before the end of March, so that payment could be made in the current financial year.

Cllr. Jones mentioned the litter-pick which ought to be done before Easter.

2324-119 **MUGA RESURFACING**

Cllr. Ware reported that councillors had a meeting with Stag Construction on site on 4th March 2024 at which it was concluded that the final job will be satisfactorily done. The site was still very wet.

A confirmation email would be sent to the company, with a request to keep communications open.

2324-120 **CHURCHYARD GRANT**

On a proposal by Cllr. Phillips, seconded by Cllr. Child, it was **Resolved** to pay the Rackenford PCC a grant of £300 towards the maintenance of the churchyard.

2324-121 **STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

On a proposal by the chairman, seconded by Cllr. Jones the following rewritten documents based on the current NALC models were **Adopted**,

a) Standing Orders
b) Financial Regulations

2324-122 **RISK ASSESSMENT**

It was **Resolved t**o adopt the presented Business Risk Assessment for the 2023/2024 financial year.

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2324-123 **STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL**

It was **Resolved** to adopt the presented Statement of internal Control for the current year.

2324-124 **ASSET REGISTER**

It was **Resolved** to adopt the presented Asset Register which has been updated for the additional assets purchased during 2023/2024.

2324-125 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP UPDATE**

The group had prepared a questionnaire that would be circulated next week with the deadline for return to be 31st March 2024. The aim was to have published the results of the survey in time for the Annua Parish Meeting. It is important to understand that the survey is not focusing just on the provision of a village hall but deals with all community assets.

2324-126 **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

This would be set before the Parish Council AGM which was due to be 28th May 2024. A date had already been earmarked and this would be forwarded to the clerk so that he could publicise it.

2324-127 **ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE – THE STAG**

It had been suggested by Cllr. Jones that The Stag should be re-registered with North Devon Council as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) giving the potential for the community the **Right To Bid** under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. A previous registration had expired in 2019, at the end of its 5 years period.

The potential need to re-register had cropped up because there had been rumours that the current owners were intending to sell the building. Cllr. Child had discussed the current situation with the owners directly and was now convinced that there was no intention to sell in the foreseeable future so questioned whether there was any rush to get the application in.

The conclusion was that the registration of an ACV was just an opportunity for the community to make a bid for the building should the situation change. Waiting until a building was on the market until such an application is made would be too late.

Cllr. Jones would make contact with the appropriate staff at NDC and ask what level of detail was required on the application form so that the application could be made without too much information being required. He would work with the clerk to put an application together and look to gain approval by means of an email exchange.

Rackenford Parish Council would make the application as quickly as possible.

2324-128 **DEVON COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (DCT) MEMBERSHIP**

On a proposal by Cllr. Jones, seconded Cllr. Child, it was **Resolved** to become a member of Devon Communities Together.

2324-129 **BANK RECONCILIATION**

The bank reconciliation as at 28th February 2024, was **noted.**

Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council

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2324-130 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS TO DATE COMPARED TO BUDGET

The statement of Receipts and Payments compared to Budgets for the period from 1st April 2023 to 28th February 2024 was received and **noted.**

2324-131 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

On a proposal by Cllr. Warne, seconded by Cllr. Phillips it was **Resolved** to approve the payment of the invoices on the schedule below for the period since the last meeting:

Payee	Services	Amount £	Payment No.
2023/2024			
RJ Martin	**Salary February 2024**	**305.86**	**2324-26**
HMRC	**Tax Deduction February 2024**	**76.40**	**2324-26**
Starboard Systems t/a Scribe	**Accounting System**	**543.60**	**2324-27**
WIX	**Website Hosting – 3 year licence**	**432.00**	**2324-28**
RJ Martin	**Salary March 2024**	**305.86**	**2324-29**
HMRC	**Tax Deduction March 2024**	**76.40**	**2324-29**

2324-132 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Reference	Location	Proposal
78225	Lower Tidderson Barn Rackenford Tiverton Devon EX16 8DN Grid Ref: 286629; 116879	Retention of an extension to dwelling that provides extra residential accommodation within shell of existing barn. **Decision: No comment**

2324-133 COUNCILLOR REPORTS

a) Chairman's Report

The chairman had nothing further to report.

b) Reports from Other Councillors

Cllr. Child reported that they had received 61 responses to the village shop questionnaire and the results were being analysed.

Cllr. Jones reported that the village fete and flower show would be on Sunday 25 August 2024.

2324-134 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council is on Tuesday 28th May 2024, at 7.30pm in Rackenford School.

2324-135 MEETING CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Rackenford & Creacombe Parish Council

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Chairman's Signature:

Date: