Brancaster Parish Council

Internal Audit Report
Financial Year 2025/2026

Including explanatory notes for Annual Return

(where a no has been marked)

Prepared by Tina Cunnell BSc Hons CiLCA

09 June 26

Background

Brancaster is a parish council on the North Norfolk Coast which consists of three villages Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe and Burnham Deepdale within the district of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk. The Council consists of 10 councillors and is currently administrated by a locum clerk

The council has a precept of £24,020 and provides and pays for the following services:

- Street lighting
- Grants

The council currently has an experienced locum clerk, following the departure of the previous clerk.

Clerk	Doreen Joy (Locum)
Chair	Cllr Tom de Winton
Total Receipts	£107,585.28
Total Payments	£91.607.35
Reserves	£206,974.92
Website	https://brancaster-pc.gov.uk
Clerks email	clerk@brancaster-pc.gov.uk

I have completed an internal audit of the accounts for Brancaster Parish Council for the year ending Mar 2026.

My findings are detailed below using the tests provided in the Governance and Accountability (England) 2021.

I would like to thank the Locum Clerk/RFO and Cllr Dovey for providing me with all the information required for the Internal Audit.

Internal Audit Tests

A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.
No
Ther are financial documents missing that mean a full picture of the in-year finances is not available for scrutiny and accounts were tracked on a spreadsheet. The financial reports expected to presented to council such as bank reconciliations were not produced or presented to council. There is now an accounting software system Advantagedge in place, and the locum clerk is learning how to use it. I have seen the new processes for recording and producing reports for councillors now implemented which addresses some issues highlighted in this year's internal audit report.
B. This authority has complied with its financial regulation, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.
No
Financial Regulations have not been correctly reviewed or updated and so do not contain latest procurement guidelines. When tenders and quotes have been sought there is no

evidence of the process followed or how quotes were compared and scored leading to a lack of transparency in the decision making. I cannot evidence that all expenditure was approved prior to spend, for example a payment to an IT company was made but not previously approved in minutes, and not all payments and receipts (May & June) have been approved in the minutes. The pay scale increase also seems to have increased before the increase was actually approved.
C. The authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.
No
There is no employment handbook for staff. Financial Risk Assessment has not been reviewed since 2024 and although many policies were adopted without review on the premise a review would take place throughout the year this never happened so all policies out of date, and without expected scrutiny leaving the council potentially vulnerable. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations have not been updated and are missing latest procurement information this should be done at least annually as should the publication scheme which is also out of date. No evidence of signed hard copy minutes for the year, but am assured they were signed in the meetings, however to date not available for inspection. S137 information not available, so cannot determine cap.
D. The Precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget was monitored and reserves were appropriate.
No
There is no evidence in minutes or on website how budget was prepared for council. No reports throughout the year against budget and no presentation or evidence of the precept calculation or submission of precept request.
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.
Yes
F. Petty Cash payments were properly supported by receipts all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.
Brancaster do not operate petty cash system
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authorities approval and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied**.**
Yes
Pension re-declaration is not recorded
H. Asset and investment registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.
No
No up-to-date asset register on website current one is 2024 and this must be reviewed and agreed each year.
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.
No
No evidence of bank reconciliations being presented to councillors until March when whole year was presented after back engineering of the accounts to complete year end. In preparation for new IYM in new bank account.
No evidence of internal controls in place**.**
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cashbook, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and, where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.
No as there is no adequate audit trails as documents are missing

K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in the prior year, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt
Not applicable
L. Verify that the Council has published, for the prior financial year, all the information as required by the Transparency Code as set out in Annex A of the code.
No
Key financial documents are missing from the website and members of public refer to documentation not being available such as agendas and supporting papers.
M. The authority, during the previous year, correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
Yes
N. The authority complied with the publication requirements for the prior year AGAR.
Yes
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.
No, appropriate Assertation 10 policies not in place no evidence of website accessibility checks**.**

Summary

I am aware of the hard work that the locum clerk and members are doing to find the appropriate paperwork and figures and to bring the governance of the council to be fully complaint, but there are some concerning gaps in correct procedure and evidence of fiscal due diligence, which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Looking back over the last few years it is noticeable that since Dec 2024 there has been a decline in the quality of governance of the council.

Since the taking on of the clerk role, initially by Cllr Dovey in February 26, and later supported by locum clerk, the correct procedures for minutes invoices and general governance started to be followed, and new processes are being implemented to address some of the following issues.

Recommendations

1. All polices must be reviewed and updated appropriately in particular Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as a priority.
2. Internal financial controls must be instigated
3. A process for producing tender and quote briefings, communications, comparisons and weighted marking must be implemented
4. Bank reconciliations to be presented to council on at least a quarterly basis (best practice monthly)
5. and signed by Chair/RFO
6. Information about in year management of budget to be reported in a timely fashion.
7. Logic and considerations for production of budget and calculation of precept to be presented to council and published on website.
8. Asset register to be produced, updated and put on website.

9. Locum to ensure council fulfilling requirements of Assertation 10
10. Council must publish all documents required in the Transparency Code Annex A.