Stanton St John Parish Council

Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Internal Auditor: Lisa Wilkinson

Stanton St John Parish Council

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This internal audit was undertaken in accordance with the scope and requirements set out in the *Practitioners' Guide 2025: Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England*. The audit is based on a review of documentation provided by the Clerk, responses to the Internal Audit Questionnaire 2025/26, sample testing where appropriate, and the auditor's professional judgement.

Overall Conclusion

On the basis of the work carried out, it is my opinion that Stanton St John Parish Council has a sound and effective system of internal control in place. The Council is operating largely in accordance with proper practices and relevant legislation. Where minor improvements have been identified, these are set out as recommendations within this report.

Internal Audit Objectives and Findings

A. Proper accounting records were kept throughout the year

Accounting records are maintained using Excel spreadsheets. Records reviewed were consistent with bank statements and supporting documentation.

Response: Yes

B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, approved and minuted

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are in place and were reviewed and approved by Council on 19 May 2025 (minute 16/25).

Payments sampled were supported by invoices and authorised in accordance with Council procedures.

Response: Yes

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

A Risk Assessment for the year is maintained and reviewed by Council. Insurance cover is in place and considered appropriate for the size and activities of the Council. A Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control was approved and minuted in February 2026.

Response: Yes (with recommendation)

Recommendations:
For best practice the Risk Assessment should be reviewed early in the financial year so that it acts as a working control document for the year.

For best practice, the Council should consider completing and retaining a short, written Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control annually.

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

The Council prepares a budget to support the setting of the precept. The 2025/26 budget was approved on 17 November 2024 (minute 87/24) and the resulting precept was £29,000.

Budget monitoring reports are presented to Council during the year.

Response: Yes

E. Expected income was fully received, properly recorded and promptly banked; VAT was appropriately accounted for

Income streams reviewed were properly recorded and banked. VAT is reclaimed through the Section 33 VAT reclaim scheme, with the latest reclaim submitted up to March 2025.

Response: Yes

F. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with authority approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied

Payroll arrangements were reviewed and found to be compliant. PAYE obligations and pension requirements are being met.

Response: Yes

G. Asset register and investments were properly maintained

The Council maintains an Asset Register which is reviewed periodically by Council. The review of the Asset Register was completed and approved at the February 2026 Council meeting. Additions during the year were checked and found to agree to the accounting records and Box 9 of the AGAR.

Response: Yes

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

Bank reconciliations are undertaken regularly, reviewed by councillors and supported by bank statements. The year-end reconciliation was reviewed and found to agree to Box 8 of the AGAR.

Response: Yes

I. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis and agreed to the cashbook

The accounting statements are prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments) and supported by an adequate audit trail.

Response: Yes

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

Response: 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

The Council maintains a website where governance and transparency information is published.

Response: Yes

L2. Members' interests were properly registered and managed

A register of members' interests is maintained and published. Declarations of interest are recorded in meeting minutes where applicable.

Response: Yes

M. In the year covered by this AGAR the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights

The Notice of Public Rights for the prior financial year was published in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Response: Yes

M2. Governance policies

Key governance and operational policies are reviewed and approved including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and data protection policies.

Response: Yes

N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for the prior year's AGAR

The AGAR documentation for the prior year is published on the Council website, including the Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements, Internal Audit Report, External Auditor Report and Certificate, and the Notice of Public Rights.

Response: Yes

N2. Website accessibility and publication compliance

The Council maintains a website operating under HTTPS where governance and transparency information is published. An Accessibility Statement is published in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Response: Yes

N3. Biodiversity duty

The Council has adopted a Biodiversity Policy and is aware of its duty under the Environment Act 2021.

Response: Yes

P. Digital and data governance (Assertion 10)

The Council maintains appropriate digital and data governance arrangements, including council-controlled .gov email addresses, secure cloud-based backup arrangements, segregation of duties within online banking, and relevant data protection policies.

Response: Yes

AGAR Page 3 – Internal Audit Opinion Summary

Based on the work undertaken, the responses to the individual control objectives are set out above and should be reflected accordingly in Section 3 of the AGAR.

Internal audit work was carried out on a sample basis and therefore cannot provide absolute assurance. However, the work completed provides reasonable assurance that the Council's systems of internal control are effective and operating in accordance with proper practices.

Signed:

Date: 15/05/2026