

Staunton on Wye Group Parish Council
Annual Governance and Accountability Return FY24/25 – Internal Review Report

To whom it may concern:

In line with the letter of engagement dated 14 April 2025, I have undertaken the internal review according to the latest AGAR guidance and my findings are as shown below:

AGAR certificate reference	Findings	Recommendations, if any
A – Book-keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening and closing bank balance and cashbook values reconcile for start and end of financial year • Sampled income/expenditure transactions recorded correctly • Refunds relating to 2 duplicate payments identified in FY 23/24 not recovered (total £64): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ £16.00 to Staunton on Wye Village Hall inv 2023/27 for room hire ○ £48.00 to Parish Online inv 194-002 • No records found in financial records or minutes to confirm approval total of £1,234.70 spend related to elections (April 2024) • No records found confirming details of two receipts from HCC totalling £2,160 in May 2024 • Invoices relating to monthly £7.19 payment for the VoIP Plan do not correctly match cashbook records and bank statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ one invoice has incorrect cashbook entry showing payment was made by Parish Council but £7.19 should have been paid to S Marsh's estate (error missed when VoIP account being passed over to Parish Council) ○ invoices for November 2024 through to March 2025 are missing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries in cashbook should be matched against bank statement each month and supporting record/documentation given reference number for ease of audit • Meeting minutes should include outline of discussions and subsequent decisions made relating to income and expenditure to rationale is evidenced alongside financial records and budget statements for greater transparency and improved accountability • Records of minutes and relevant supporting papers (e.g. budget statement) to be made available on the website as soon as possible after the relevant meeting • £7.19 owed to S Marsh estate should be refunded as soon as possible

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No information provided to confirm £792 expenditure regarding Lengthsman activity (income received in March 2024) • No cheques raised before end of financial year that are either not recorded in cashbook or pending presentation for payment at bank 	
B – Payment controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of requirement for formal tenders • Segregation exists between payment and approvals • No VAT claims made in this FY • No debit/credit cards in use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VAT claim should be made as soon as possible to the end of the FY to which it relates
C – Internal controls & risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Risk Register available • Insurance cover in place • Records show monitoring taking place of play areas and sports pitches by external inspectors, but no evidence in minutes of issues raised/potential risks and actions being taken/planned in meeting minutes • The meeting minutes are not published in a timely manner to show that the findings from external advisors are discussed in meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As advised for FY23/24, strongly recommend development of Risk Register (e.g. to consider the key strategic, operational, financial and legal risks) in order to inform discussion and decision making regarding budget planning and parish priorities
D – Budget controls and reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget information for FY24/25 not available for review, but minutes show that the budget was set in time for the new financial year • Limited budget monitoring took place during FY24/25 (December 2024 only) • No reserves policy in place – account held around £9k during much of the financial year • Annual precept considered and approved in line with HCC timetable • Precept receipts match expected amounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget information to be include with minutes and financial records for information/ reference • As recommended for last FY, a more detailed budget review could be undertaken showing total spend against budget at end of FY for transparency and to better inform planning/ prioritisation of expenditure and longer term financial decision making

E – Income controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit trail for some income was incomplete, otherwise records relating to income were properly recorded • The AGAR listed income streams (for aged debt, allotments, burials, hall hire and/or leases) are not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the full audit trail is available to review for all income
F – Petty cash procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable – no petty cash system used 	
G – Payroll controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable – no employed staff on payroll 	
H – Asset controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited asset register records are available but inventory value has been reviewed/ updated at end of Financial Year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater detail is required for assets on register (e.g. locations, date item added, depreciation rate, date of last valuation, etc). Recommend that this be developed during the coming year and made available at EOY for review and reconciliation to AGAR submission data.
I – Bank reconciliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of periodic bank reconciliations/sign off by Chair or other PC members during financial year • Year-end reconciliation matches AGAR disclosure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange regular (e.g. monthly or quarterly) reconciliation of cash book records to bank statements. Whilst there are few transactions during the year and it is relatively low risk, had this approach been adopted, it would have identified where invoice and cashbook records do not match prior to external review.
J – Accounting statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records match 	
K – Exemption criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemption certificate correctly declared (receipts and payments each totalled less than £25k) • Required information has not been published on website 	
L – Website compliance with transparency code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information required by the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities has not been published in this period: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further website development work and/or regular site administration is required to ensure full compliance is achieved and maintained

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no agendas or meeting minutes are available to view on or download from the website between September 2023 (draft minutes published) and 3 March 2025. • Expenditure over £100 has not been detailed for financial year 2024/25 	
M – Public Rights notice & dates		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Public Notice” identifying the statutory 30 day period when the records are available for public inspection should be clearer on website/ noticeboards and in meeting minutes – this recommendation was made last year but has not yet been adopted
N – Publication of previous AGAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory publication requirements have not been met - the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 (which includes the internal audit report) has not been published on the Parish Council website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FY23/24 AGAR and Annual Governance Statement should be made available on the website urgently
O – Status of Trusts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable 	

Please let me know if you would like to discuss any of the findings further.

Author: Lindsay Allen
Date: 30/4/25