

## **FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW PARISH COUNCIL**

### **INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2025**

#### **1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Farnham with Stratford St Andrew Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

The Council is responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

#### **2. THE PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL**

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can, therefore, provide reasonable, and not absolute assurance, of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.

#### **3. THE INTERNAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT**

##### **The Council:**

The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January meeting. The January meeting of the Council approves the level of precept demand for the following financial year.

Councillors are appointed to have responsibility for bank reconciliation checks. These are undertaken at each meeting of the Parish Council.

The full Council meets at least ten times each year and monitors progress against its aims and objectives at each meeting by receiving relevant reports from the Parish Clerk.

The Council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems, and procedures. *See attached Report.*

##### **Clerk to the Council/Responsible Finance Officer:**

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is also the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for advising on the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing risks. The Clerk also provides advice to help the Council ensure that its procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to.

**Payments:**

All payments are reported to the Council for approval. Where payments are made by online internet banking, two members of the Council consider each payment against the relevant invoice and sign the approvals sheet. At the following meeting of the Council, the members check each online payment against the relevant bank statement and sign the approvals sheet and the bank statement to show the reconciliation. All authorised signatories are members of the Council.

Where delegation permits, as per s.101(1)(a) of the Local Government Act of 1972 and the Council's Financial Regulations, a report will be provided to the next full Council.

**Income:**

All income is received and banked in the Council's name in a timely manner and reported to the Council.

**Risk Assessments/Risk Management:**

The Council reviews its risk assessments, including financial risk assessments, annually and regularly reviews its systems and controls.

**Internal Audit:**

The Council appoints an independent and competent internal auditor who reports to the Council on an annual basis on the adequacy of it's:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management

**External Audit:**

The Council's external auditors submit an annual certificate of audit which is presented to the Council.

**4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS**

The Council has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control, which should include a review of the effectiveness of internal audit. The results of that review must be considered by the Council, which should also approve the Statement of Internal Control.

SIGNED

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Chairman

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RFO/Clerk

Approved and adopted by Farnham with Stratford St Andrew Parish Council

Meeting date: 11 November 2024

## FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW PARISH COUNCIL

### INTERNAL CONTROL REPORT

The Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 aims to strengthen governance and accountability through requirements related to internal control and internal audit.

Whilst the Parish Council has reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit (independence, competence, proportionate and scope), it has a requirement levied on it to ensure that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control:-

*'The regulations require active participation by members in providing positive assurance to the electors of their stewardship of public money. The framework of accountability is risk-based i.e. level of control and management must be appropriate to the risk involved. The Council must determine the most appropriate method of internal control.... care should be taken to ensure that internal control tests are proportionate and relevant and that they are neither seen as, nor intended as, undue interference in the RFO's day to day management of financial affairs.'*

As part of its internal control the Parish Council will conduct a review of the system of internal control via the following tests at least annually, and as otherwise required, with its resolution of approval being minuted.

| CONTROL TEST                                                                      | TEST<br>DONE<br><br>Y/N | DATE               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Ensuring an up-to-date Register of Assets                                         | YES                     | 11 November 2024   |
| Regular maintenance arrangement for physical assets                               | YES                     | July 2024          |
| Annual review of risk and the adequacy of Insurance cover                         | YES                     | 11 November 2024   |
| Annual review of financial risk                                                   | YES                     | 11 November 2024   |
| Awareness of Standing Orders and Financial regulations                            | YES                     | 14 October 2024    |
| Adoption of Financial and Standing Orders                                         | YES                     | 14 October 2024    |
| Regular bank reconciliation, independently reviewed                               | YES                     | Monthly, quarterly |
| Regular scrutiny of financial records and proper arrangements for the approval of | YES                     | Monthly            |

|                                                                                                                                                                                     |     |                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| expenditure                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                       |
| Recording in the minutes or appendices of the minutes the precise powers under which expenditure is being approved                                                                  | YES | Monthly               |
| Payments supported by invoices, authorised and minuted                                                                                                                              | YES | Monthly               |
| Regular scrutiny of income records to ensure income is correctly received, recorded, and banked                                                                                     | YES | Quarterly             |
| Scrutiny to ensure precept recorded in the accounts agrees to District Council notification                                                                                         | YES | Annually              |
| Contracts of employment for staff                                                                                                                                                   | YES | December each year    |
| Contract annually reviewed                                                                                                                                                          | YES |                       |
| Updating records to record changes in relevant legislation                                                                                                                          | YES |                       |
| PAYE/NIC properly operated by the Council as an employer                                                                                                                            | YES |                       |
| VAT correctly accounted for VAT payments identified, recorded and reclaimed                                                                                                         | YES | Annually              |
| Regular financial reporting to Parish Council                                                                                                                                       | YES | Monthly and Quarterly |
| Regular budget monitoring statements as reported to Parish Council                                                                                                                  | YES | Quarterly             |
| Compliance with DCLG Guide <i>Open &amp; Accountable Local Government</i> 2014, Part 4: Officer Decision Reports                                                                    | YES |                       |
| Compliance with Local Transparency Code of 2014:<br>Items of expenditure incurred over £500                                                                                         | YES |                       |
| Verifying that the Council is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements                                                                                    | YES |                       |
| Are the following in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit / Impact Assessment</li> <li>• Privacy Notices</li> <li>• Procedures for dealing with Subject</li> </ul> |     |                       |

|                                                                                                                                                              |     |                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| Access Requests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure for dealing with Data breaches</li> <li>• Data Retention and Disposal Policies</li> </ul> |     |                          |
| Minutes properly numbered and paginated with a master copy kept for safe-keeping                                                                             | YES | Monthly                  |
| Procedures in place for recording and monitoring Members' Interests and Gifts or Hospitality                                                                 | YES | Via ESC website          |
| Adoption of Codes of Conduct for Members                                                                                                                     | YES | 9 December 2024          |
| Declaration of Acceptance of Office                                                                                                                          | YES | On election or co-option |

Approved by the Parish Council 11 November 2024