GORING-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

Responses to address External auditor's recommendations 2024/25

Council is requested to approve the actions proposed below to address the External auditor's recommendations (which were presented to Council as Appendix S at its October meeting).

The External Auditor's letter drew attention to the following two points:

1. Per the internal auditors report, the Internal Auditor answered 'Not covered' to control objective F which suggests that the council does not operate a petty cash system and so referencing petty cash (even as a nil balance) on the bank reconciliation seems unnecessary. We would suggest the reconciliation schedule is updated to remove it if the council do not operate such a system.
   GPC Note: *The reconciliation schedule is produced by Scribe and Petty Cash cannot be deleted from the pdf.*
   GPC Action: *Next year the petty cash will be edited out of the Excel version and that version printed to pdf.*

2. Although we have been provided with a minute reference as an example of recording a review of a bank reconciliation, it is not clear from wording of the minute that a review took place. Going forwards the council should ensure that the minute is clear on what actions have been completed including information such as who performed the check, what the check entails and whether the reconciliation is approved. It would also be advisable for that person to sign and date the reconciliation to support the minute.
   GPC Note: *A review, and check (an independent sum), always takes place.*
   GPC Action*: The Agenda and Minutes will be more specific and each reconciliation will be physically signed off by the Chair of Finance Committee.*

The 'External auditors limited assurance opinion 2024/5' attached to their letter included the following five points:

1. On review of the information provided by the council and internal auditor it has been brought to our attention that there are errors in the figures on Section 2 of the AGAR for both the current year and comparative year caused by an issue with the accounting software used.
   As a result of this we would have expected a 'no' response to assertion 1.
   When preparing the 2025/26 AGAR the 2025 figures should reflect the corrected amounts, and be marked 'restated' to draw it to attention of the reader.
   GPC Note: *This was the issue we raised about VAT recoverable being wrongly reported due to keying in incorrect VAT codes. We were hoping for an instruction to do as the External asks.*
   GPC Action*: We will do as recommended.*

2. The Internal Auditor has provided a 'yes' response at control objective K on their report. This suggests that the council correctly claimed exemption from audit in the previous (2023/24) year. As the council was not exempt and did not claim exemption, the answer to this control objective should have been 'not covered'.
   GPC Action: *Ensure 'not covered' is entered next year*

3. The Internal Auditor has provided a 'not applicable' response at control objective O on the Annual Internal Audit Report which relates to whether the council met its responsibilities as a trustee.
   We expected this control objective to be covered by the internal auditor and answered 'yes' or 'no' to confirm whether the council met the responsibilities as it is a sole trustee of Recreation Ground (Charity no. 304305), The Goring Recreation Ground or Public Open Space (Charity no. 304306) and Bourdillon Memorial Recreation Ground (Charity no. 304307).
   GPC Note: *Council is a trustee but there were no financial transactions relating to its trusteeship.*
   GPC Action: *Ensure 'yes' is entered next year.*

4. Boxes 1-6 of Section 2 of the AGAR do not arithmetically add down to box 7 by £l when summed.
   When rounding the numbers for the return care should be taken to ensure boxes 1-6 sum to box 7 in accordance with Paragraph 2.19 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024 and that box 7 agrees or reconciles to box 8 as is required per Paragraph 2.23 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024.
   GPC Action: *Check addition of rounding offs to whole £s more carefully next year.*

5. Insufficient information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to significant variances, we were able to obtain the second page from the website. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their annual submission.
   GPC Note: *The problem was a slightly updated pdf (from Word) which had not had its Excel derived pdfs attached to it. An updated version was sent within hours.*
   GPC Action*: Two people to examine each document next year before it is sent.*