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North Stainley with Sleningford Parish Council
Mrs Iona Taylor

Re Internal Audit 2015

I have undertaken the internal audit of the accounts and documents for North Stainley with Sleningford Parish Council and am satisfied that the Responsible Financial Officer has carried out the work throughout the year in a satisfactory manner. In fact, I would commend her for her concise and detailed work, particularly regarding the regular bank reconciliations and the interim reports presented to council.

Below are my comments and recommendations:

Returned Cheque

It was noted in the Minutes of 1st July 2014 that following the return of a cheque marked 'Drawer Deceased', causing payment to be refused to a contractor, a goodwill payment of £70 had been offered by Santander. There is no reference in the accounts to this payment having been received.

Unless the offer was rescinded, the RFO should take action to obtain this money for the Council.

Comments made by Internal and External Auditors for 2013/14

It is noted that these have been acted on appropriately.

Staffing costs have been listed separately from admin expense in the accounts and on the Annual Return. Local Council Tax Grant has been correctly noted.

Proper authorisation of payments

It is noted that all payments are approved at Council meetings and appear in the minutes. However, it is good practice to authorise payments by the 2 Councillors signing each cheque also signing the cheque stub and invoice. This would provide evidence that the Councillors had checked that the invoice was correct and that it matched the cheque amount.

It is recommended that this procedure is adopted

Statutory Matters

Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessment need to be kept updated in light of legislation. There have been various changes to law recently, and these need to be reflected in these documents. Examples include the granting of dispensations by the Council itself, the right of anyone to film Council meetings with or without permission, the ability to pay without using a cheque signed by 2 councillors. Also the Transparency Code for Smaller Councils which means that all transactions over £100, as well as many other documents must now be posted on the Council website. A current website now becomes essential, so loss of this becomes a risk.

It is recommended that these key documents be reviewed, checking with YLCA regarding latest model policies and recent legal changes

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It is noted that the Financial Regulations have been reviewed and will be approved at a forthcoming meeting. It may be necessary to include reference to the Transparency Code if so advised by YLCA at a later date

I trust that the above recommendations are helpful to the Council
I am happy to discuss any matters further with the Responsible Financial Officer

Kind regards

Susan Welch BSc