

In-year Internal Audit Report

Name of council:	Higham Ferrers Town Council		
Name of Internal Auditor:	John Marshall	Date of report:	25.01.2019
Year ending:	31 March 2019	Date audit carried out:	24.01.2019

Internal audit is the periodic independent review of a council's internal controls resulting in an assurance report designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities and operating procedures under the council's control. It is important to note that managing the council's internal controls is a day-to-day function of the council through its staff and councillors and it would be incorrect to view internal audit as the detailed inspection of all records and transactions of a council in order to detect error or fraud. This report is based on the evidence made available to me and consequently the report is limited to those matters set out below.

The council is required to take appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit and to respond to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit. Failure to take appropriate action may lead to a qualified audit opinion.

To the Chairman of the Council:

I carried out an in-year audit of Higham Ferrers Town Council on 24 January; I would take this opportunity to thank the Clerk, Sandra Mitcham for her time and assistance.

Last year's audit was the first under the new national audit regime which also included a change of External Auditor from BDO to PKF Littlejohn (PKFL). These were significant changes. The new regime involved a shift in emphasis from the traditional audit to a lighter touch 'limited assurance review' and there were some differences in interpretation and approach between the previous and the new external audit provider; together, these led to some very different outcomes from those expected and seen in previous years. The NCALC Internal Audit Service reviewed the previous year's audit experience with PKFL at a meeting in December and I took the opportunity to share with Sandra the issues discussed at that meeting, especially the 'lessons learned', at least one of which affected Higham Ferrers TC directly. I note that the issue relating to the accounting implications surrounding automatic eg direct debit payments at or near the 31 March year-end has been addressed and resolved and I trust that having knowledge of the other issues identified by PKFL will be helpful when preparing for this year's audit.

Whilst that discussion formed the focus of this in-year visit, I also discussed the importance of adhering to a standardised document naming and identification system for documents placed on your website. Unless the system is rigidly adhered to, even the slightest variation such as a space, a capital letter or a full stop completely disrupts the ordering of the documents displayed that can lead to difficulties for the public (and auditor!) in locating and accessing information. This is important especially in respect of information provided by you as a statutory requirement. Limiting the number of people who place documents onto the site is often the best way of achieving consistency in this respect.

John Marshall
 Internal Auditor to the Council
 07505 139832
wjm.marshall1@gmail.com