

Area	Matter arising	Suggested action	Town Council actions	Action by	Target completion	Progress
1	Payment approval It remains a legal requirement that payments are authorised by two councillors.	It is not required for councillors to initial invoices, but all payment listings should have evidence of being checked. Any mobile phone used for authorisation codes must belong to the Council and be kept in the office. Any account that allows an officer to make payments without additional authorisation by members should not be used.	Review Financial Policy, suggest retain current Councillor initialling for correctness and for BACS New Unity Bank A/C has more secure control so issue should not reoccur. Consider whether potential staffing issue may have to be addressed	Finance Committee	June	Existing policy to remain Add J. Page as bank signatory <b>COMPLETE</b>  New account is more secure. No personal phones used for authorisation <b>COMPLETE</b> New system in use and understood by staff and Councillor signatories <b>COMPLETE</b> Staffing issues to be reviewed
2	Bank authorisation The now closed Nat West account were operated by the RFO from a personal mobile phone. This is entirely inappropriate and left the council outside the terms of its fidelity insurance.	All forms should be published as PDF with editing copies provided on request.	Upload editable pdf grant/donation form (after review)	Office	End-January	
3	Grant application The grant application form, and several others, are published on the website as word rather than PDF leading to security warnings to electors.	Adopting policies and then not following them – for example payment approvals and assessing of quotes – leaves the council exposed to risk in a way that it totally avoidable.	Review Financial Policy vs the 2024 Regulations and amend payment approvals and assessing of quotes if required to ensure greater compliance by the Council	Office	April/ May	Report from Clerk on Review April/ May Full Council
4	Financial regulations The council has adopted the 2024 model regulations and is starting to follow them. The council routinely did not follow its former regulations.	The minutes should contain all payment listings, bank reconciliations, approved accounts and budgets, policies and agreements. Minutes do not need to be bound. Retaining agenda packs with the signed minutes is good practice.	Ensure supporting information is included in future Minutes and review standing orders to provide for such supporting information. Add to previous Minutes from May 23 onwards	Office	Immediate  End March	
5	Minutes The minutes of the council are the master legal record and must be able to stand alone in future years without reference to any website. The minute book of the council has not complied with this requirement for many, many years.	Councils cannot make decisions outside of meetings for which proper agendas and minutes are kept.	Include all applications in Full Council Agenda	Office	Immediate	
6	Planning comments It would appear that 'the council' has been submitting comments on planning notices based on email discussions rather than properly convened meetings or					

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	an appropriate scheme of delegation to the proper officer.	Please ensure that proper practices are instituted without delay.				
7	Officer presence at meetings On several occasions during 2023, no officers were present at meetings of the council. This is not good practice.	The council has sufficient office staff that cover should always be provided and if necessary locums hired from neighbouring towns.				Council has well staffed office now. Officer available for all meetings <b>COMPLETE</b>
8	GPC The council has GPC until the next election date. The level of councillor resignations and co options currently blocks the council from renewing it.	Members and officers should work together to ensure that all parts of the GPC requirements are in place by May 2027	Encourage residents to stand for 2026 elections			GPC will be renewed at 2028 elections following Councillor elections <b>NO ACTION UNTIL THEN</b>
9	External auditor requirements The External auditor requires that all variances over 15% are explained and that responses are consistent between the council and the IA. For the 2023/24 AGAR the RFO had not prepared the appropriate spreadsheet and the then IA had ticked the wrong boxes.	In advance of the 2024/25 year end, the officers should work with the IA to ensure that all EA requirements are correctly	Ensure that RFO includes explanations in 24/25 report. All 23/24 actions have been completed	Office	Next audit	
10	Internal auditor report The former internal auditor appears not to have correctly reviewed any of the processes and systems of the council.	The council should have noticed that the IA reports referred to the Audit Commission which was abolished many years ago.				New auditor is providing more thorough reports <b>COMPLETE</b>
11	New Internal Auditor For the current financial year the council is using a new Internal Auditor whose September interim report has been received.	The work done by the new IA is comprehensive and clear. The council should actively seek to address all matters arising .	The Council recognises that sufficient oversight did not take place in this area and this is expected to change with the appointment of a new auditor' Finance Committee review and action IA recommendations	Office		Actions carried out <b>COMPLETE</b>
12	VAT Surcharge During 2023 the Council did not file all of its VAT returns on time and was put onto penalty points by HMRC. This was not brought to the attention of members.	The RFO should ensure that all tax obligations are complied with and that any errors are notified to members in a timely manner. Appropriate training for the RFO may be required.	Recommendation accepted  Consider whether potential staffing issue may have to be addressed	Office  Finance committee	June	Submission dates displayed in office and returns reported to each Finance Committee <b>COMPLETED</b>  Staffing issues to be reviewed

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13 Risk assessment	The risk assessment on the website does not include the changed bank accounts.	The internal auditor will review the adequacy of the document at year end. All matters raised should be actioned without delay.	Update bank details on website	Office	End Jan	
14 Fidelity Insurance	The IA has noted that the council's fidelity cover is insufficient.	As it will be many months until projects are completed, this should be rectified with the insurers.	Discuss with insurers	Office	End Jan	
15 Nominal code structure	The nominal coding and thus reporting structure of the council is very unusual and appears designed to obscure activity areas rather than explain them.	With the support of the Scribe software team a more standard coding structure should be implemented before 1st April 2025	Concern over reporting structure accepted and Finance Committee to agree remedial action plan More detailed coding will enable in-depth assessment of costs for all locations and activities	Office	Mid April	
16 Budget setting	The budget has been produced on a spreadsheet rather than within the accounting software, increasing the risk of errors.	As soon as the new coding structure is in place, the 2025/26 budget should be mapped onto it and all future reports produced from Scribe.	Finance Committee to oversee implementation of recommendation	Office	End April	
17 Budget monitoring	There is no evidence that members have been provided with timely, accurate and clear budget monitoring reports.	Appropriate reports should be made available to every quarterly finance meeting and published with the agenda.	Ensure Scribe reports are set up and provided monthly to Finance Committee and Full Council Office to agree report content/format with Finance Committee	Office	End March	
18 General reserve	For a council the size of NWTc the general reserve should be of the order of 4 months of revenue expenditure.	The reserve has been consistently higher than this due to projects being delayed.	Accepted general reserve too high and Council/ Committees need to have a programme of expenditure to use general reserve.	Finance	End April	
19 Earmarked reserves	The earmarked reserves of the council do not meet the criteria set out in the Practitioners Guide.	All should be rolled back into general reserves and then allocated on current and future projects that will benefit residents and taxpayers. It may be beneficial to carry out a survey (online) to find out what residents would like the council to focus upon.	Finance Committee to review current Reserve Statement to ensure compliance. Further action as set out in above comment Committees to produce projects wish list, and an online survey with residents	Committee Chairs	End March	
20 Receipts from sale of assets	In 2019 the council sold a building to a member of staff but there is no clear record of	Capital receipts are subject to strict restrictions. Clear reserves should be set up whenever this	As a priority trace balance and have a capital reserve	Office	End Jan	

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21	<p>what happened to those ring-fenced reserves. It has been asserted that £45,000 of the funds went on a grounds compound, the rest is unidentified</p> <p>There is no evidence that members of the council have ever carried out proper internal control checks over the petty cash tin balance.</p>	<p>happens and equally clear records and minutes of how the funds are spent.</p> <p>The balance of the £118,000 should be traced and then appropriately spent.</p> <p>Now that the council has a multipay card it may be worth abolishing petty cash, but proper internal controls are essential.</p>	<p>Transfer the balance of the £118,000 to reserve, dedicated to Cemetery capital projects</p> <p>Petty cash no longer used.</p> <p>Purchase card used for local sundries</p>			<b>COMPLETED</b>
22	<p>The contracts issued to the current staff imply that they are NJC when they are not.</p> <p>The contract terms for some staff are significantly better (guaranteed increment pay rises regardless of performance) than others, in a manner that is a likely breach of the Equality Act</p> <p>The HR advisers are currently updating all contracts.</p>	<p>All employees must be given comparable employment terms.</p> <p>The new NALC / SLCC model contract should be applied and employment rights preserved for current employees.</p> <p>Forcing employees to sign contracts without time to read them is extremely poor practice and must cease.</p>	<p>Continue contracts review with Croner</p>	Office/ Mayor	End March	
23	<p>As a result of certain staff getting automatic increments regardless of performance, their pay bands are higher than would be expected for the roles.</p>	<p>When the updated contracts are issued, benchmarking of roles may be beneficial.</p>	<p>Recommendation Accepted</p>		End March	
24	<p>It would appear that in previous years the RFO incorrectly calculated LGPS pension contributions such that some staff paid too little into the fund.</p> <p>It is unclear why this was not picked up in the end of year returns.</p>	<p>The RFO was not in the office at the time of this visit so no conclusion can be drawn, but going forward all payroll processing should be by properly competent and independent individuals.</p>	<p>Consider outsourcing wage processing</p> <p>Consider a reserve sum to cover back payments</p>	Council	End March	Jan FC to consider external review of liability and nominate a reserve sum to cover back payments
25	<p>Wages have been processed in the office by the RFO but it appears on at least one</p>	<p>Wages processing should be outsourced to an experienced bureau such as Livepay which will</p>	<p>Consider outsourcing wage processing and review whether</p>	Council	March	

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	occasion errors were made on total payments.	also remove the need for the 'wages' bank account which has operated in a non compliant, non transparent manner.	any Officer responsibility remains over payment error			
26	It would appear that councillors who are not appropriately trained have carried out appraisals and reviews leading to conflict, grievance and instability in the council.	Quotes should be sought from the HR team at one of the neighbouring District Councils (not North Norfolk) to support and advise appraisals for all staff.	Investigate externalising appraisals. Consider outsourcing for initial two years	Office	March	
27	The proper officer has L1 AAT and has nearly completed CiLCA. It is not clear what qualifications other members of the finance team hold. It is not clear whether all of the grounds team are up to date on Health and Safety training.	All officers should ensure that they are appropriately trained for their current role – ideally using evidenced external trainers. Grounds team compliance with Health and Safety is essential for Public Liability Insurance.	Review training for all staff Update skills matrix	Office		
28	At the time of visit the RFO and Head groundsman were both off sick. It is understood that there are several grievances between officers and members.	To ensure that disagreements within the council are defused, appropriate external mediation support, eg from Council HR should be sought.	Recommendation to be considered once current grievances concluded			
29	The council has not reported or minuted the balances in each bank account on a regular basis. There is no evidence that members are checking the Scribe balance summary back to the actual statement.	Every member of the council in rotation should check the reconciliation to the physical bank statements - for every account - each month.	Include reconciliation information in monthly reports to Finance Committee and Full Council	Office	April	
30	As identified by the Chair of Finance, the council was not getting an adequate return on reserves awaiting updated projects.	The council is too large for the FSCS guarantee so should focus on maximising return in advance of spending excess reserves.	Already moving funds to investment accounts	Office		
31	As the council holds more than £100,000 in its accounts	A good practice policy such as this should be adapted and adopted.	Finance Committee draft an Investment Policy	Office	Feb	Draft awaiting Full Council approval

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32	<p>it is required to adopt an investment policy.</p> <p>The Scribe software produces clear income and expenditure, debtor and creditor reports. These have not been used for transparently reporting to members or taxpayers.</p>	<p>Members of the council need to ensure that they are properly informed about the actions for which they are responsible. Accurate, complete, timely accounting reports are key.</p>	<p>Finance Committee to define as a priority reporting to itself and Council Finance also to receive Internal Scrutineers Reports Update Standing Orders/ Financial Regulations to ensure compliance</p>	Finance Office	April/ May	
33	<p>A full GDPR and FOI review of the website should be carried out, removing all superseded personal information along with excess detail that does not aid transparency and accountability.</p>	<p>Former employees, former members and street names should be removed. AGAR records should be extended – as highlighted by the Internal auditor</p>	<p>Arrange review of website to remove personal data, consider updating website or replacing</p>	Office	February	
34	<p>The council has a history of grievances and disputes and settlements to former staff that arises from a lack of proper governance and controls.</p>	<p>The membership of all committees should be reappointed by full council to try to avoid conflicts of interest.</p>	<p>Full Council review membership of committees in May</p>	Council	May	
35	<p>It does not appear that members of the council have attended any external training on finance, planning, governance or roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>It is essential for rebuilding the harmony and reputation of the council that all members clearly understand their rights, responsibilities and tasks.</p>	<p>Investigate advanced Councillor training. The normal new Councillor training is not detailed enough Consider mandatory training for Personnel and Finance committee members</p>	Office  Council	Feb	
36	<p>The council is the sole trustee of the War Memorial Park Charity. It would appear that the charity does not have its own bank account and that all of its income and expenditure has in fact been put through the council records. The sums have then been additionally reported as if they had gone through the Charity's own account. This double counting distorts the income applicable to the</p>	<p>The council should look to set up an MOU with the Charity so that all activities on the Park are accounted for in the council (including VAT which has been incorrectly allocated) systems and the Charity return reflects the reality of zero transactions. [this differs from the IA comment but resolves the points they raise more effectively] The annual return should also be brought up to date – as highlighted by the Internal Auditor.</p>	<p>This is a historical issue. Town Clerk has begun the unravelling of the accounts. More work to be done to complete the proper separation of Council and Charity</p>	Office	End March	

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37	<p>space and is a breach of Charity law and Parish legislation. The returns of the charity are also not up to date.</p> <p>The Scribe accounting system allows PDF invoices or extracts of reports to be attached to every item (including salaries and pensions)</p>	<p>Every payment or receipt should be supported by appropriate documentation. If an invoice has multiple pages all should be attached</p>	<p>Every payment or receipt will be attached to the transaction in Scribe</p>	<p>Office</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	

