Lambourn Parish Council

www.lambourn-pc.gov.uk

Year-end
Internal Audit Report
2025-26 financial year

Claire Lingard-McKay

Working the Greener Way - Online

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1. The role of Internal audit

The requirement for an internal audit function in local government is detailed within the Accounts and Audit (England & Wales) Regulations 2015, which states that a relevant body must:

'Undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector and internal auditing standards and guidance'.

The standards for 'proper practices' in relation to internal audit are laid down in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards April 2017 [the Standards].

The role of internal audit is best summarised through its definition within the Standards, as an:

'Independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.'

The Council is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate risk management processes, control systems, accounting records and governance arrangements. Internal audit plays a vital role in advising the Council that these arrangements are in place and operating effectively.

The Council's response to internal audit activity should lead to the strengthening of the control environment and, therefore, contribute to the achievement of the Council's objectives.

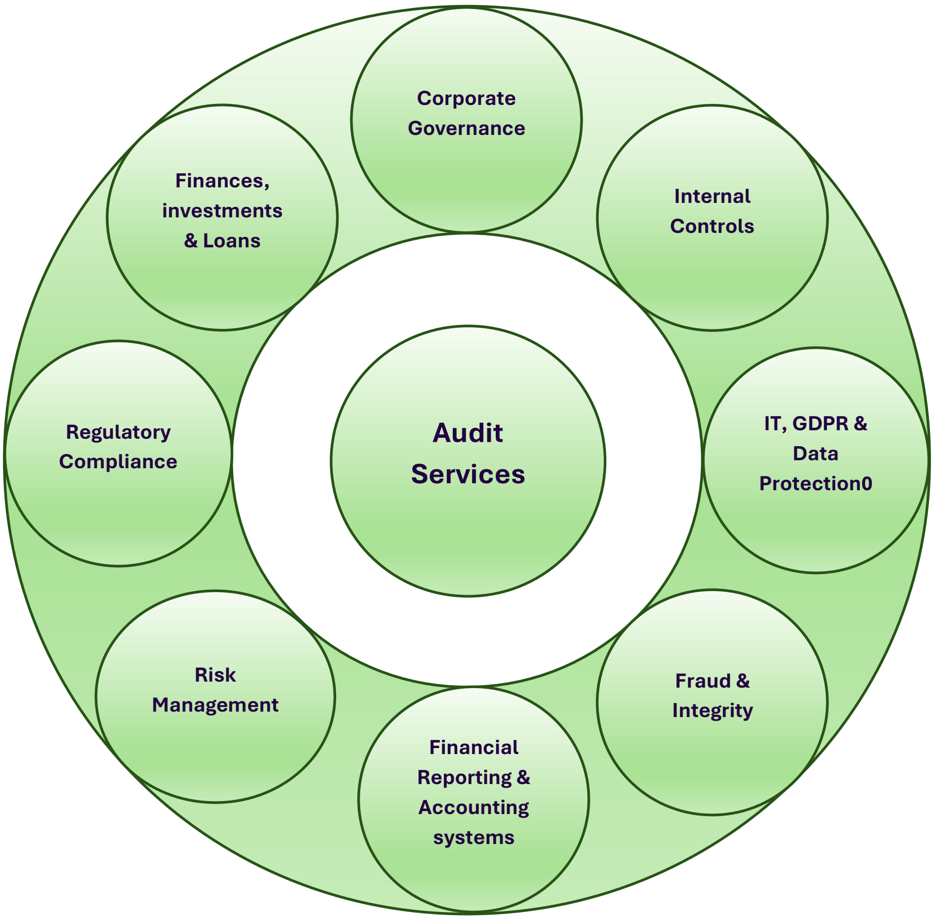
2. Internal audit approach

The risks inherent in the Council's internal control methods

To enable effective outcomes, our internal audit approach provides a combination of assurance review and consulting activities. Assurance reviews involve assessing how well systems and processes are designed and working, with consulting activities available to improve those systems and processes where necessary.

A full range of internal audit assurance reviews are performed in forming the year-end opinion with the approach to each area of review determined by:

- The level of assurance required to meet statutory requirements;
- The Council's short, medium, and long term objectives;
- The level of confidence in the policies and procedures; and,
- The risks inherent in the Council's internal control methods.

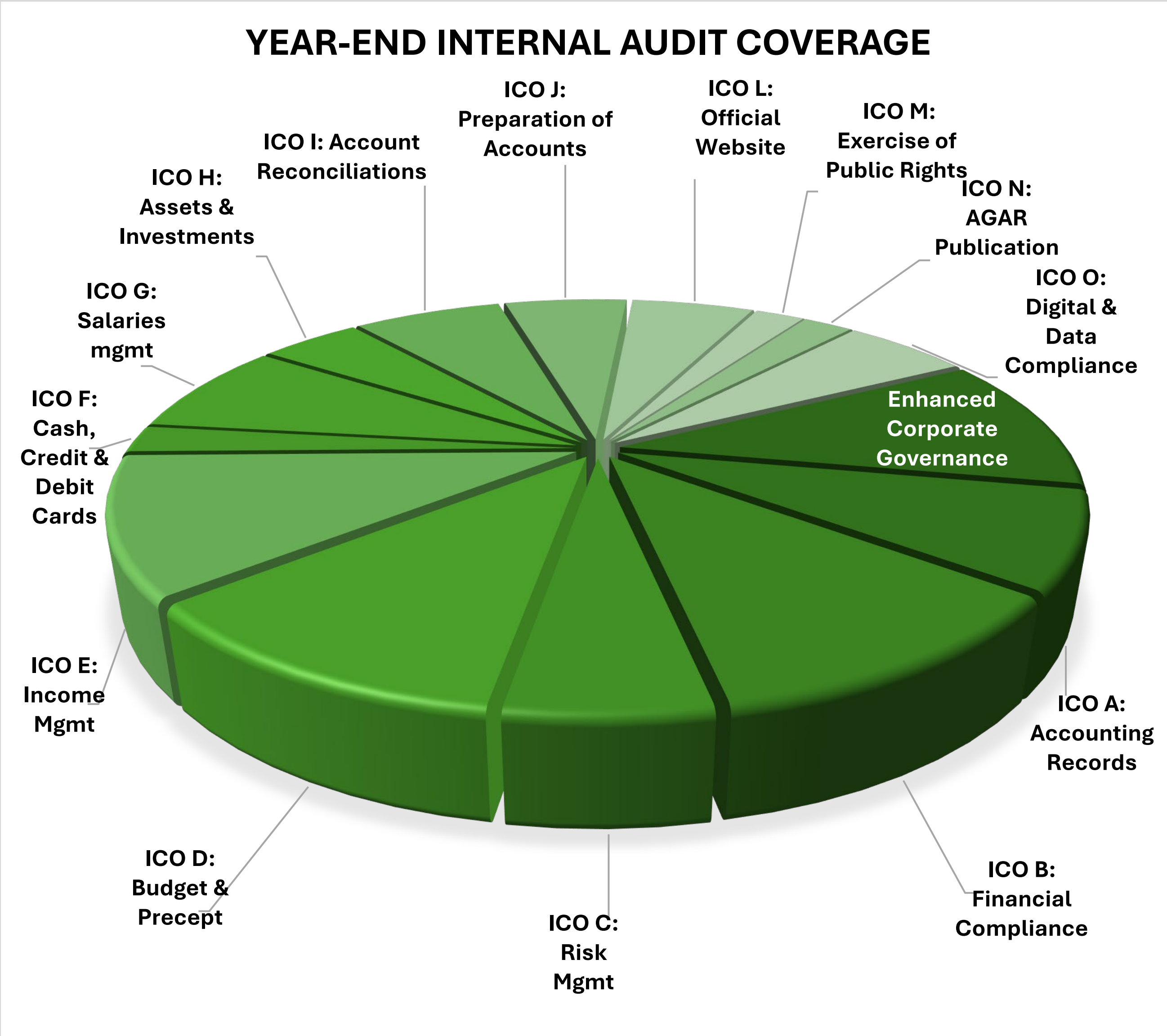


3. Internal audit coverage

The annual Internal Audit plan was prepared to take account of the unique characteristics and relative risks of Lambourn Parish Council's activities and to support the preparation of the Annual Governance and Annual Statement of Accounts contained within the Annual Return.

Assurance reviews in seventeen areas have been planned and performed to obtain sufficient information and explanation considered necessary to give reasonable assurance that the Council's Internal Controls systems are functioning effectively. The Internal Audit plan for the 2025-26 financial year was approved in consultation with the Council's Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and was informed by our own assessment of risk and materiality.

WGW online has provided assurance across seventeen areas of review, which correspond to the sixteen Internal Control objectives contained within the Annual Governance & Accountability Return: Annual Internal Audit Report, and an enhanced review of Corporate Governance during the 2025-26 financial year to the 31st of March 2026.



4. Internal Audit Opinion

The Practice Manager of WGW online is responsible for the delivery of an interim and annual Internal Audit opinion and report that may be used by the Council to inform its Governance and Accounting statements in the Annual Return. The year-end opinion is based on the year-end review which was conducted onsite with the Clerk & RFO in post on the 07th of May 2026, supplemented by the interim review which was conducted onsite on the 12th of November 2025, examined the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and Internal Controls.

In giving this opinion, assurance can never be absolute and therefore, only reasonable assurance may be provided that there are no major weaknesses in the processes reviewed. In assessing the level of assurance to be given, I have based my opinion on:

- The year-end and interim audit work & reporting completed onsite and at our offices;
- The results of the follow up discussions conducted with the Clerk & RFO;
- The responses of the Council to prior year's internal audit report;
- The quality and performance of the Council's administrative function and the extent of compliance with the Standards defined in the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance, Practitioner's Guide; and,
- The proportion of Lambourn Parish Council's audit requirement that has been covered during the year-end review.

Internal audit opinion

I am satisfied that sufficient assurance work has been carried out to allow me to form a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of Lambourn Parish Council's Internal Control Ecosystem.

In my opinion, Lambourn Parish Council's framework of governance, risk management and management control has 'Adequate Assurance' with most internal controls working in practice.

Where weaknesses have been identified and/or Best Practice recommendations for improvement made, these are recorded in Section 9: 'FY2025-26 Action Plan' of this Internal Audit Report.

5. Council profile

Council name:	Lambourn Parish Council
Address:	Memorial Hall, Oxford Street, Lambourn, Berkshire RG17 8XP
Unitary authority:	West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury Berkshire RG14 5LD
Proper officer:	Mr Gary Wyatt-Hawkins
Clerk & RFO:	Mr Gary Wyatt-Hawkins
General Power of Competence:	The Proper Officer in post was CiLCA qualified. The Council last reconfirmed its eligibility to employ the General Power of Competence (GPoC) during the Annual Meeting of the Town Council on Sunday the 07th of May 2025
Members:	Fifteen seats
Elected Members:	Seven elected Members
Co-opted Members:	Three co-opted Members (Five vacant seats)
Chairperson:	Councillor Mr Steve Mead
Vice-chairperson:	No Councillor wished to stand for the position of vice-chairperson
Members Register:	A physical Members Register is in place and maintained at the Council's Office. A Hyperlinks to the redacted Member's Register entry is available from the Councillors; profiles page on the Council's official website
Head of Electorate:	3,103 (Three thousand, one-hundred and three) 01.04.25
Current precept:	£182,115 for the 2025-26 financial year.
External Auditor's report:	FY2024-25 External Auditor's opinion was 'Unqualified', report received on the 20th of September 2025
Official website:	The Council maintains a free to access website on a secure server, published at https://www.lambourn-pc.gov.uk

6. Corporate governance

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place, and that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain (as we do not attend Council or Committee meetings) all meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation. To meet the above objectives, we have:

- Noted that the Council's Financial Regulations were last Reviewed and Readopted at the 07th of September 2025 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, under Minute reference 013-05/25;
- Noted that the Council's Standing Orders were last Reviewed and Readopted at the 07th of September 2025 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, under Minute reference 013-05/25;
- Concluded our review of the minutes of Full Council and its Committees (excluding Planning) for FY2025-26 to the 31st of March 2026 ensuring that no issues affecting the Council's financial stability either in the short, medium or long term exist with no matters arising;
- Noted that the Council has adopted Terms of Reference and Delegated Authority for its Committees, and its Working Groups;
- Noted that, the Council received an 'Unqualified' External Auditor's (PKF Littlejohn) Opinion for the 2024-25 financial year;
- Noted that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and the External Auditor's certificate and report is published on the Council's official website at as at the 12th of November 2025;
- Noted that the Council maintains a comprehensive portfolio of policy documents; and,
- We note that the Council maintains a formal Members Register of Interests which is held in the Town Council's offices and available via Councillor's profile details on the official website.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Corporate Governance

Substantial Assurance

7. Annual Independent Internal Audit

Internal control objective 'A'

'Appropriate accounting Records have been properly kept throughout the financial year'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently, and that no anomalous entries appear in the financial ledgers.

Finance systems

The Council maintains its financial records using Rialtas Alpha Accounting Software and has done so since the 2016-27 financial year.

To meet the above objectives of this area of review, we have: -

- Noted that that the Clerk & RFO performed the year-end close down for the 2024-25 financial year with the assistance of Rialtas consultants;
- Noted that the closing balance for the 2024-25 financial year had been amended with the assistance of Rialtas technical support. Our Interim Review recommendation R.1 refers. However, the correct closing balance for the Newbury Building Society as at the 31st of March 2025 had been amended to reflect the incorrect opening balance on the 1st of April 2025. This error occurred due to the Tax Year Interest Statement balance as at the 05th of April 2025 being used to correct the closing balance as at the 31st of March 2025. This situation was corrected by Rialtas on behalf of the Council. Resultantly, Box 3: Total other receipts for FY2024-25 has been restated as £30,387 and Box 7: Balances carried forward for FY2024-25 has been restated as £204,363 in accordance with the removal of the Interest which had been incorrectly applied during the 2024-25 financial year on the 2025-26 financial year AGAR Accounting Statements;
- Noted that the quality of data entry into Rialtas Alpha during the 2025-26 financial year continued to be exemplary;
- Noted that VAT has been properly recorded in all cases examined;
- Noted that the Council is not required to be registered VAT and submits VAT returns on a s.126 basis. We note that no VAT reclaim has been made during the 2025-26 financial year to the 31st of March 2026;
- Noted that Awards of Grant Aid for the period of the 01st of April to the 31st of March 2026 were made using the General Power of Competence;
- Noted that no formal segregation of duties are in place regarding the operation of the Rialtas Alpha system as the position of the Clerk & RFO was held by the same person; and,
- Checked and verified all transactions recorded in the Rialtas Alpha Cashbook 1: Barclays Bank current account and Cashbook 7: Barclays Bank Savings account for the months of April, June, September and December 2025, and March 2026 with no matters arising; and,
- Noted that there was an error on the year-end close-down procedure, which was conducted after the Clerk & RFO in post during the 2025-26 financial year had left the employ of the

Council, in that an accrual in the amount of £76,183.22 in respect of Street Light expenditure against nominal code 3230 and cost centre 302 which had been made during the 2025-26 financial year, had been carried forward into 2026-27. We have contacted Rialtas concerning this and have requested that they contact the Council's office to make the appropriate correction by journal.

Bank and building society accounts

The Council retains a single Building Society Account with the Newbury Building Society; which is utilised to retain the Council's earmarked reserves, CIL and S106 funds. The account is a passbook account and has an appropriate number of Council Members as authorising signatories to ensure continuity of service.

We have noted that it is always a challenge to obtain a proper year end figure and note that once again, the passbook was not updated as at the 31st of March 2026. The letter confirming the balance of interest received during the financial year, which has been used for the year-end closedown was for the period of the Tax Year ending the 05th of April 2026. We have made a formal recommendation concerning this matter.

Investments and Loans

The Clerk & RFO has certified that during the 2025-26 financial year from the 01st of April 2025 to the 31st of March 2026 the Council held no loans owed either by it or two it.

Credit & Debit cards

We note that the Council has a single debit card in place, issued on the Barclays bank account. All expenditure via the debit card is treated to the same standard of scrutiny as other payment documents. The card is issued in the Clerk & RFO's name, is held in a locked and secure location and may only be used by the Clerk & RFO for incidental expenditure.

A deposit only card is used to make cash and cheque deposits directly at the Lambourn Post Office on the day of receipt, e.g. Market rent is banked on the same day as it is received by the Council.

Year-end Conclusion & Recommendation

FY2024-25: During the Interim Audit we noted that the Closing Balance FY2024-25 did not match the Opening Balance FY2025-26. This was due to the balance on the Newbury Building Society as at the 05th of April 2025 being incorrectly recorded as the Opening Balance for that account on the 1st of April 2025. When the correction was made, the balance as at the 05th of April 2025 was recorded as the closing balance on the 31st of March 2025 which was incorrect.

The Council failed to obtain the proper balance on the Newbury Building Society as at the 31st of March, (advice has been given previously in this matter), the Statement of Interest for the 2024-25 financial year must be used as the Statement date and that is recorded as the 05th of April 2025. The Interest payment should correctly have been recorded as an Accrual.

The same issue arose again during the year-end closedown for FY2025-26 with the Newbury Building Society account: The Council had failed to obtain a proper balance on the Newbury Building Society Account as at the 31st of March 2026. The Interest Statement provided by the Building Society records the interest paid as at the Statement Date of the 5th of April 2026, the end of the Tax Year and not the end of the Council's Financial year as at the 31st of March 2026.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Council's year-end is the 31st of March 2026, and the Council is required to obtain the balance recorded on the Newbury Building Society on that date, and that is the balance which **MUST** be recorded in the corresponding Cashbook. If the Council fails to obtain a 31st of March statement, then it must treat the Interest payment as an Accrual and record the date of receipt as the 5th of April in accordance with the Tax Interest Statement.

We have contacted Rialtas Technical support on behalf of the Council and they have now made the necessary corrections to both the opening and closing balances and the accruals prior to the year-end reports being recreated. We have therefore recorded a positive assertion against Internal Control Objective 'A'. **CORRECTED BY RIALTAS**

R.3 The new Clerk & RFO in post, when appointed, must ensure that in future the Newbury Building Society cashbook is either made up-to-date as at the 31st of March 2026. This may be fulfilled by:

A) Attending a branch of the Building Society and having the passbook made up today so that this may be presented for audit; or,
B) Writing to the Newbury Building Society and requesting the Balance of the Account on the 31st of March 2026 expediently to ensure that this balance is obtained.

If the Council is unable to undertake either of the above procedures then it is the prior year balance that must be recorded as the year-end balance and the receipt of interest recorded as being the 5th of April annually, as recorded on the standard Tax Year Interest Received letter which has been produced for the purposes of this year-end audit. **PROCESS CHANGE IMPLEMENTED**

Interim Conclusion & Recommendation

We were unable to verify that the closing balance for the 2024-25 had been correctly brought forward as the opening balance of the 2025-26 financial year with reference the Closing Trial balance recorded on Rialtas in our retained year-end reports for the 2024-25 financial year. The Opening Trial Balance for the Newbury Building Society account is different from the closing balance on our retained records.

R.1 The Clerk & RFO should check Opening Trial Balance for the 2024-25 financial year and verify this as there may have been adjustments applied subsequent to the year-end audit having been conducted. If so, the correct year-end backup file should be supplied to be retained on our permanent audit file. **IMPLEMENTED INCORRECTLY AND NOTED IN R.3**

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'A'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'B'

'This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that Council resources are released in accordance with the Council's adopted Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, budgets and other approved procedures, that payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available, that correct analysis codes have been applied to invoices when processed, and that VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery. To meet the above objectives, we have: -

- Noted that the Council was not required to undertake any formal Tenders during the 2024-25 financial year to the 31st of March 2026;
- Checked and verified that all quotations undertaken during the period of the 1st of April to the 31st of March 2026 in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations;
- Noted that no Purchase Order system is in place. Significant purchases are confirmed to the supplier by the Clerk & RFO, via email, at the instruction of the Council;
- Concluded our payment document testing process for the 2025-26 financial year, to ensure compliance with the above criteria. We selected a sample of high value (non-payroll related) payments individually in excess of £1,000.00, together with a more random sample of every 20th cashbook transaction irrespective of value for the financial year to 31st of March 2026. The annual test sample comprised forty-two (42) payment documents, totalling £173,828.40, and equating to 71% of all non-pay related payments. All payment documents in our test sample complied with the testing criteria;
- Checked and verified that all payment documents, which have been validated by the Clerk & RFO, are presented to Members of the Full Council for Scrutiny and Approval;
- Checked and verified that all payment authorisations are recorded in the Council's published Minutes;
- Checked and verified the Council's VAT control account noting that the Q4 2024-25 financial year reclaim, in the amount of £2,545.04, was received to bank on the 08th of April 2025; and,
- Noted that the Council submitted a Q1 s.126 VAT reclaim in the amount of £15,973.29, a Q2 s.126 VAT reclaim in the amount of £3,892.25 and a combined Q3 & Q4 s.126 VAT reclaim in the amount of £8,062.27 to the 31st of March 2026.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'B'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'C'

'The authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature. We also aim to ensure that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

To meet the above objectives, we have: -

Health & Safety & Business Risk

- Noted that the Council maintains both a Risk Management Policy and Health & Safety and Business Risk Assessments which are created and maintained with input from each of the Council's standing committees;
- Noted that the Council's Risk Management Policy was last Adopted at the 07th of May 2025 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council under Minute reference 13;
- Noted that the Council's FY2025-26 Risk Registers were last reviewed and formally adopted during the 07th of May 2025 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, under Minute reference 015.

Insurance

- Examined the Council's insurance policy to ensure that appropriate cover is in place. The Council's General Cover is provided by Zurich Municipal under a Select for Local Councils policy, number YLL-2720841233 with the period of cover running from the 01st of October 2025 on the 30th of September 2025.

Key features include:

Public & Products Liability	£12,000,000
Employees Liability	£10,000,000
Hirers' Liability	£2,000,000
Personal Accident (Per incident)	£2,000,000
Libel & Slander	£250,000
Fidelity Guarantee	£250,000
Legal Expenses	£200,000
Business Interruption	£10,000

It is our opinion that this level of cover is adequate for Council's Current and ongoing insurance requirements. However, we draw the Clerk & RFO's attention to the Statement of Fact on page 2 of the Insurance Schedule and ask that these requirements are noted.

Playground & Recreation areas

- Noted that the Council has three playgrounds under its management: The Old Cricket Field (Skate Park), Eastbury playground and Mill Lane. The Council readopted its Playground Management Policy during the 07th May 2025 Annual Meeting of the Full Council under Minute reference 13;

- Noted that both the Clerk & RFO and the Deputy Clerk undertake the regular visual inspections of the Council's playgrounds and recreation areas and that neither has attended a playground inspectors' course and is not a qualified playground inspector';
- Noted that the Clerk & RFO, or the Deputy Clerk, (dependent upon who is conducting the inspection), completes a playground inspection report/form to identify any defects or concerns;
- Noted that the Deputy Clerk's playground inspection reports are submitted for scrutiny to the BOSA Committee for action. We are advised by the Clerk & RFO that these reports are retained for the statutory required period of eighteen plus three years (twenty one years) by the Council; and,
- Noted that the RoSPA accredited Play Inspection Company undertakes the biannual independent playground & recreation are inspections on behalf of the council. Minutes confirm the reports are subject to scrutiny at both Committee and Full Council as appropriate.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation. However, we take this opportunity to make the following observation concerning Martyn's Law:

Martyn's Law, officially the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, received Royal Assent on 03rd of April 2025. It mandates improved security and preparedness at public venues and events in the UK. Named after Martyn Hett, a victim of the 2017 Manchester Arena attack, the legislation requires those responsible for qualifying premises and events to take reasonably practicable steps to protect the public from terrorist attacks. The law is regulated by the Security Industry Authority (SIA) and is not yet fully in force; a minimum 24-month implementation period allows for preparation before legal duties become enforceable, likely around April 2027.

For Councils in England, particularly parish and town councils, the law impacts spaces such as town halls, community centres, parks, markets, and sports facilities. The legislation applies a two-tier system based on expected capacity, including staff:

- Standard Tier (200–799 capacity): Requires basic security measures, including staff training on threat indicators and emergency procedures, and notification to the SIA.
- Enhanced Tier (800+ capacity): Requires more detailed risk assessments, documented protective security measures, and the appointment of a senior individual to oversee compliance.

Councils are advised to use the transition period to review their venues and events for scope, conduct risk assessments, and develop clear emergency response plans. While the law aims to be proportionate, councils should engage with local authorities and police to ensure their contingency plans meet the new statutory guidance. Martyn's Law will affect the way in which the Council engages with external organisations which utilise its land and premises, such at the Circus which uses the recreation grounds.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'C'
Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'D'

'The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process: progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council has determined its annual budget based on sound assumptions of intended spending, that reasonable and proportionate funding is available to meet future spending plans, and that Members are kept aware of actual budgetary performance during the course of the financial year. We also seek to assess the adequacy of retained reserves, be they in respect of specific earmarked funds or the General Fund.

To meet the above objectives, we have:

- Noted from our review of the Council's Minutes that Members receive a Budget Vs Actual statement, both at Full Council and Committee level, on a monthly basis. A full Budget vs Actual report is presented to the Finance Committee on the 10th day of each month following the previous quarter end;
- Noted that the Council was in the process of undertaking a formal budget setting and Precept determination process, during November and December 2025 to determine the Council's projected expenditure requirements for the 2026-27 financial year;
- The Clerk & RFO produces the budget/forecast report from Rialtas and breaks this down into committee reports in Excel. Each committee completes their own budget and gives their feedback to the Finance Committee which reviews this and submits a revised budget to the Full Council for Members' consideration;
- Noted that the Budget and Precept for the 2026-27 financial year were Established during the 14th of January 2026 meeting of the Parish Council, both in the amount of £187,692, representing an increase of 3.06% over the prior year Precept, under Minute reference 187;
- Note the year-end outturn as at the 31st of March 2026 as follows:

Total Cash at Bank	
Barclays Bank Current Acc	£12,774.06
Newbury Building Society	85,006.84
Barclays Bank Savings Acc	£127,391.42
TOTAL	**£225,172.32**
Earmarked Reserves	£105,704.30
General Reserve (GR)	**£119,468.02**
Less current liabilities	£1,200.00
Plus current assets	£8,062.27
Level of Retained GR	£126,330.29
Total expenditure FY25-26	£178,615
Avg monthly spend (AMS)	**£14,884.5833**
GR / AMS	**8.4873 months**

The level of Retained General Reserve, sitting at approximately eight months average monthly expenditure sits above the generally accepted Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance to retain a reserve of between three and six months based on the average prior year monthly expenditure at all times. We ask the Council to keep this in mind when embarking on the 2027-28 Budget setting and precept determination process; and,

- Noted that there were no variances in excess of +/- 15% recorded in the 2025-26 Annual Return Accounting Statements.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'D'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'E'

'Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council maintains appropriate records to ensure that all income due to the Council is identified, invoiced accordingly, and recovered within an appropriate time scale.

To meet the above objectives, we have: -

- Noted that the Council reviewed Approved its fees and charges for the 2025-26 financial year during the budget setting and precept determination process held in December 2024;
- Noted that in addition to the Precept the Council receives supplementary income from a relatively limited variety of areas including: Hall hire, Burial fees, Market fees, Paddock rental, VAT reclaims, CIL and S106 funds, occasional grants and donations and Bank interest; and,
- Commenced our Review of Income for the 2025-26 financial year by reviewing the income sources below. Checking and verifying the invoicing to receipt process and the Council's approach to Credit Control with no matters arising.

Sources of Income

Precept FY2025-26

The Council received a Precept in the amount of £182,115 for the 2025-26 financial year.

Burial fees

The Council has received Burial fees in the amount of £8,759.50 to the 31st of March 2026.

Market fees

The Council has received Market fees in the amount of £3,927.50 to the 31st of March 2026.

CIL fees

The Council has received CIL in the amount of £3,185.12 to the 31st of March 2026.

Hall Hire fees

The Council has received Hall Hire fees in the amount of £6,731.10 to the 31st of March 2026.

Bank Interest

The Council received interest payments on its Barclays Bank Savings Account and its Newbury Building Society Account in the amount of £5,298.08 to the 31st of March 2026.

Paddock fees

The Council has received Burial fees in the amount of £1,109.00 to the 31st of March 2026.

s.126 VAT reclaims

The Council has received s.126 VAT reclaims in the amount of £22,410.58

- Noted that the Council provides no services requiring the application of VAT;
- Noted that the Council has no leases in place for any third party;
- Noted that the Council holds no saleable stock; and,

- Noted that there is clear evidence of robust and proportionate Credit Control management Internal Controls in place. There is no significant Day Sales Overdue debt as at the 31st of March 2026.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation**.**

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'E'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'F'

'Petty Cash Payments were properly supported by receipts; all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council manages its Petty Cash system(s) in accordance with its adopted Financial Regulations, that items purchased are suitable for the Council's use, transactions are correctly recorded in the Council's cashbooks, that VAT is identified for recovery where appropriate and that the Petty Cash account is reconciled on an appropriate basis.

The Council does not operate a Petty Cash System, with all incidental payments being made via the Council's issued Debit Card.

The Council does not hold any other Cash Float System, with any amounts of cash received being banked as soon as is reasonably practicable given the paucity of banking facilities in the local area.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'F'

Not Applicable

Internal control objective 'G'

'Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council is appropriately observing legislation with regard to the Employee Rights Act 1998 and the requirements of HMRC legislation as regards the deduction and payment of income tax and NI contributions, together with meeting the requirements of the Council's Pension Scheme.

To meet the above objectives, we have: -

- Noted that the Council has five employees: The Clerk & RFO, Deputy Clerk, Caretaker, Relief Caretaker and Litter Picker;
- Checked and verified the Establishment list provided by the Clerk & RFO;
- Noted that the Clerk & RFO and Deputy Clerk are in receipt of employment contracts based upon HALC model documents;
- Noted the payroll production process remains outsourced to DCK Payroll Solutions;
- Checked and verified the Payroll and Pensions reports from the 01st of April 2025 to the 31st of March 2026;
- Checked and verified the gross salaries paid to individuals in September 2024 with reference to the approved Establishment List of staff salaries for 2025-26;
- Verified the detail of the net salary and third-party payments of PAYE, NI and Nest Pension contributions by reference to payslips and payroll summary reports and the subsequent payments issued;
- Checked and verified the year-end payroll reports with no matters arising; and,
- Checked & verified that only direct salary costs and corresponding deductions appear in Box 4 'Staff Costs' of the 2025-26 financial year Annual Return.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'G' **Substantial Assurance**

Internal control objective ‘H’

‘Assets and Investments Registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.’

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council has prepared and maintains a register of its stock of land, buildings, vehicles, furniture and equipment as required by the Smaller Authorities’ Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioners’ Guide.

The Council maintains its Fixed Asset Register in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is compliant with the requirements of the SAPPP Practitioners Guide 2025 and its predecessor the JPAG Practitioners Guide 2024.

Without conducting a physical examination of the Council’s Assets, we are reliant on the Clerk & RFO’s assertion as to the accuracy of information contained on the Register, which declares a Fixed Asset Value of £433,583 *(Prior year £419,363)* in accordance with in-year acquisitions.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective ‘H’

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'I'

'Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council conducts regular reconciliations of the bank, building society and other investment accounts in which it maintains the public funds raised by taxation. That these reconciliations along with the corresponding account statements are presented to Members for their scrutiny and approval with that being recorded in the Minutes of the Full Council or its Committees.

To meet the above objectives, we have:

- Noted that there is clear evidence recorded in the Council's Approved and Published Minutes and in the Council's Rialtas Accounting system that the Clerk & RFO reconciles both of the Council's cashbooks: CB1 Barclays Bank Current Account and CB7 Barclays Bank Savings Account on a monthly basis;
- The Council's Newbury Building Society Account is reconciled once annually when the passbook is updated. This should only be undertaken on the 31st of March, annually. We have made comment on the corrections which need to be undertaken prior to the AGAR and Accounting Statements being submitted to the External Auditor;
- Checked and verified the Bank Reconciliations on the Council's two Barclays Bank Accounts and the Cash & Investment reconciliation as at the 30th of April, the 30th of June, and the 30th of September and 31st of December 2025, and the 31st of March 2026 with no matters arising; and,
- Noted that the reconciliations and corresponding bank statements are subject to scrutiny by a nominated Council Member who reviews the financial accounts on behalf of the Council.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'I'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'J'

'Accounting Statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (Receipts and Payments or Income and Expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments), agreed to the cashbook, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.'

To meet the above objectives, we have:

Noted that the Council's accounts are managed in Rialtas Alpha Accounting software, a sector specific product designed for Town, Parish and Community Councils, with both Sales and Purchase Ledger Modules installed.

We have checked and verified the contents of the Council's Rialtas Alpha cashbooks, Sales and Purchase Day Books, Nominal Ledger and Trial balance as at the 31st of March 2026, and consider that the half-years transactions to the 31st of March 2026 have been accurately and properly recorded, except in the items already noted which require correction and rectification prior to the AGAR being submitted to the External Auditor.

Rialtas Alpha has been used to manage the following working records, which have all been checked and verified from the 01st of April 2025 to the 31st of March 2026 with reference to prime documentation:

Rialtas Alpha Accounting system FY2025-26

- Cashbooks 1, 5 & 7
- Monthly Bank Reconciliation reports
- Income & Expenditure Account
- Earmarked Reserves report
- VAT s.126 reports
- Nominal Ledger report
- Statutory Balance Sheet
- Statutory I&E report
- Cash & Investment reconciliation
- Reserves reconciliation report
- Trial Balance report
- Annual Return with variance report

Further, we have checked and verified the transactions contained on Cashbooks 1 and 7; the Barclays Bank current and savings accounts for the period of the 01st to the 30th of April 2025, the 01st to the 30th of June 2025, the 01st to the 30th of September 2025 and the 01st to the 31st of December 2025, and the 01st to the 31st of March 2026 the with reference to supporting prime documentation.

We have noted that the reconciliation of Cashbook 5 is in accurate and requires correction by Rialtas technical support, as detailed earlier in this report.

We have checked and verified the Closing Trial Balance as at the 31st of March 2026 noting the requirement for correction and rectification as recorded earlier in this report.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'J'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'K'

'If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024-25 AGAR tick "not covered")*.'

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council is to ensure that where a council has certified itself as exempt from a limited review in the prior financial year, it met with the exemption criteria to do so.

Lambourn Parish Council has a turnover in excess of £25,000.00 and as such it does not meet the exemption criteria. The Council was subject a limited assurance review of its 2024-25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) as required by statute.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'K'

Not Applicable

Internal control objective 'L'

'The Authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation."

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council publishes information on a free to access website, hosted on a secure server, and compliant with the Transparency Code (where applicable), prevailing Accessibility Legislation and the General Data Protection Legislation (GDPR) and has appropriate Data Protection policies in place.

To meet the above objectives:

- Noted that the Council maintains its official website is hosted on a JSEC Compliant server, which is required of all public authorities utilising government specific domains, published under the domain https://lambourn-pc.gov.uk/. The servers and hosting service is provided by CyberHive;
- Noted that the website contains a wide array of easily identified information;
- Noted that as far as can be reasonably ascertained the Council's official website is only semi-compliant with current WCAG 2.2AA Accessibility Legislation, a mandatory requirement of the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel Practitioners Guide 2025. However, the accessibility statement which is published on the website brings this into compliance with legislative requirements;
- Noted that the Council's currently adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations on its website;
- Noted that the Council publishes its adopted Policies and Procedures on its website;
- Noted that the Council publishes the Agenda and Minutes of its Full Council and Standing Committee meetings on its website;
- Noted that the Council publishes an archive of the prior year Minutes & Agenda on its website;
- Noted that the Council publishes its audited prior year accounts with the corresponding Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) containing the External Auditor's opinion, corresponding Internal Audit reports and Notice of Conclusion of Audit announcements on its website;
- Noted that the Council has published the diary of meetings for the 2025-26 Municipal Year on its website; and,
- Noted that website contains contact information for a variety of service requirements.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'L'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'M'

'The authority, during the previous year (2024-25) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).'*

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council has met its statutory requirements to publish the Notice for the Exercise of Public Rights meeting the following criteria: The notice must be published, at least one day after the formal announcement has been made at a meeting of the Full Council or its committees as recorded in the Council's minutes for a period of exactly 30 working days, to include the first ten working days in July. The notice is required to be published on the Council's website and prominently on its noticeboards.

To meet the above objectives, we have:

- Checked and verified the Council's minutes to confirm that the Resolution to publish the Notice of Exercise of Public Rights for the 2024-25 financial year AGAR submission was made during the 18th of June 2025 meeting of the Town Council, under Minute reference 50(e);
- The date of the Announcement is recorded as the 19th of June 2025;
- The Commencement of the Period for Exercise of Public Rights is recorded as the 23rd of June 2025;
- The Conclusion of the Period for Exercise of Public Rights is recorded as the 23rd of July 2025;
- The Period for the Notice of Exercise of Public Rights was exactly twenty-three working days, and not the statutorily required thirty working days including the including the first ten working days in July as statutorily required;
- Noted that the Notice of Exercise of Public Rights was not published on the Council's official website as at the 12th of November 2025; and,
- Checked and verified that the Notice of Exercise of Public Rights was displayed, prominently, on the Council's notice boards.

Conclusion & recommendation

The Council did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision for the exercise of public rights in relation to 2024-25 financial year AGAR and accounts as the notice was not published for the statutorily required thirty working days including the first ten working days in July.

1) The Council must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2026-27. **NOTED.**

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'M'

No Assurance

Internal control objective 'N'

'The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024-25 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)*

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council has met its statutory requirements to publish the Notice of Conclusion of Audit, after the Receipt of the External Auditor's certificate and report.

To meet the above objectives, we have:

- Noted that the Council received an 'Unqualified' External Auditor's report and certificate, in respect of the 2024-25 financial year, from PKF Littlejohn LLP dated the 20th of September 2025;
- Noted that the Announcement of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit was made on the 20th of September 2025, by Mr Gary Wyatt-Hawkins the Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer (RFO);
- Noted that the AGAR, External Auditor's Certificate and report and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for the 2024-25 financial year are published on the Council's official website; and,
- Checked and verified with the Clerk & RFO that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for the 2024-25 financial year was published prominently on the Council's Noticeboards.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'N'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective 'O'

The authority has complied with laws, regulations and proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.

The objective in this area of review is to ensure compliance with data protection regulations for, smaller authorities: That the Council has appointed a Data Protection officer to oversee data protection and ensure compliance with GDPR, to conduct regular data audits to identify what personal data is held, how it is used and make sure it is processed lawfully, to implement a Data Protection policy on data handling, storage and sharing, to provide regular training to ensure all staff and members are trained on data protection principles and practices and to ensure that the Council's data is secured using appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect personal data from breaches.

To meet the above objectives, we have conducted a detailed review of the Council's current Information Systems position, subsequent to issuing the draft report to the second Locum Clerk & RFO in post since the resignation of the permanent Proper Officer due to suggestions made directly to the Internal Auditor, by a Lambourn Parish Councillor, that the Council was not compliant with Assertion 10:

We have reviewed the provision of the Council's IT services and identified the following:

The website and email service are maintained with the underlying web hosting and email infrastructure provided by CyberHive Ltd (formerly 100% IT), based in Newbury, Berkshire. CyberHive provides this service to Lambourn Parish Council free of charge as part of its support for local organisations.

CyberHive is a specialist cyber security and secure hosting provider with extensive experience supporting government, defence and other highly regulated sectors. Their services include secure cloud hosting, zero trust networking, encrypted communications and secure infrastructure for sensitive workloads, making them a professional provider of enterprise grade hosting services rather than a volunteer operated arrangement.

The website itself, including its technical design, WordPress configuration, themes and plugins, is supported, free of charge, by Lambourn Junction Community Interest Company under a formal Website Design and Hosting Agreement entered into between Lambourn Parish Council and Lambourn Junction CIC in December 2021.

The agreement sets out, amongst other things, that Lambourn Junction CIC is responsible for:

- designing and maintaining the website structure;
- maintaining the WordPress content management system together with associated plugins and themes;
- providing user accounts and training to Parish Council staff; and

- carrying out weekly website backups.

The agreement also makes clear that the Parish Council is responsible for providing the website content, and authorised Parish Council users have been issued with their own user accounts to manage and update that content directly.

With regard to GDPR and contractual arrangements, the relationship between Lambourn Parish Council and Lambourn Junction CIC is governed by the signed agreement referred to above, which defines the respective responsibilities of each party.

Lambourn Junction CIC is appropriately insured to conduct its business operations. Lambourn Parish Council is appropriately insured as detailed earlier in this report. It is still unusual to see any form of Cyber liability insurance on a standard council's policy unless a council has specifically requested such provision. The consideration of the extent of which a third party's insurance is appropriate is beyond the purview of the internal audit, and a matter of which the Council should satisfy itself prior to entering into any third party agreement.

Regarding the concerns expressed regarding a 'breach of GDPR'. It is our opinion that there is no breach of GDPR as the Contract between Lambourn Parish Council and Lambourn Junction CIC contains specific confidentiality provisions requiring confidential information to be protected both during and after the agreement, except where disclosure is required by law.

Any confidentiality arrangements relating to the hosting provider, including administrative access to email systems or hosting infrastructure, would be a matter between Lambourn Parish Council and CyberHive under their own service arrangements.

With regard to website accessibility, the current website is not fully compliant with WCAG 2.2 AA, and this is recognised and commented on in the accessibility statement on the site: https://lambourn-pc.gov.uk/accessibility/

Examples of areas where improvements remain include:

- some images do not yet include appropriate ALT text;
- some historic PDF documents are published in formats that are not fully accessible;
- there are opportunities to improve colour contrast and certain aspects of page presentation.

Many of these improvements, particularly the addition of ALT text and the replacement of inaccessible documents with HTML content where appropriate, are content management tasks which can be undertaken by Parish Council editors.

The website also incorporates the OneTap Accessibility plugin, which provides visitors with a range of accessibility tools including adjustable text size, improved line spacing, readable fonts, high contrast viewing modes, keyboard navigation, link highlighting, larger cursor options, text to speech functionality, dyslexia friendly fonts, colour filters and other accessibility modules.

We take the opportunity to remind all Councillors that the Government's accessibility guidance recognises that full compliance with accessibility standards may not always be immediately achievable. The regulations therefore include a disproportionate burden provision, allowing public bodies to determine that making certain content fully accessible would impose an unreasonable burden when considering factors such as cost, available resources and the benefit to users.

- Noted that the Council is registered as a Data Registrant with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), Registration Reference Z3374753;
- Noted that the Clerk & RFO is the Council's nominated Data Protection Officer;
- Noted that the Council has Adopted and Published a Freedom of Information and Publication scheme;
- Noted that all Members area issued with council e-mail addresses for exclusive use on Council business. Councillor email-addresses are published in the Councillors profile section on the Council's official website;
- Noted that the Council has developed a robust suite of currently adopted GDPR and Data Protection Policies which are published on the Council's official website;
- Noted that the Clerk & RFO conducted Data Impact assessment had been completed during the 2025-26 financial year;
- Noted that the Council was not in receipt of any FOI request during the 2025-26 financial year;
- Noted that the Council has a single computer which is securely located at the Clerk's office;
- Noted that the Council utilises Microsoft Office 365 Software as a Service;
- Noted that the Parish Council has appropriate Anti-Virus software in place; and,
- Noted that the Council's documents are backed up using Microsoft OneDrive.

There is clear evidence that the Clerk & RFO and Members have taken a reasonable and proportionate approach to Information Systems security and management appropriate for a smaller council.

Conclusion

There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective 'O'

Substantial Assurance

Internal control objective ‘P’

FOR LOCAL COUNCILS ONLY: Trust fund (*Including charitable)* - The Council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

The objective in this area of review is to ensure that the Council has met its statutory requirements where it acts as a trustee for any trust fund or charitable trust, including maintaining separate financial and bank accounts and making all required statutory returns to the Charities Commission and/or the HMRC.

- The Clerk & RFO has certified that Lambourn Parish Council is not responsible for any Trust Fund or Charitable Trust and has no responsibilities as a trustee for any organisation.

Conclusion

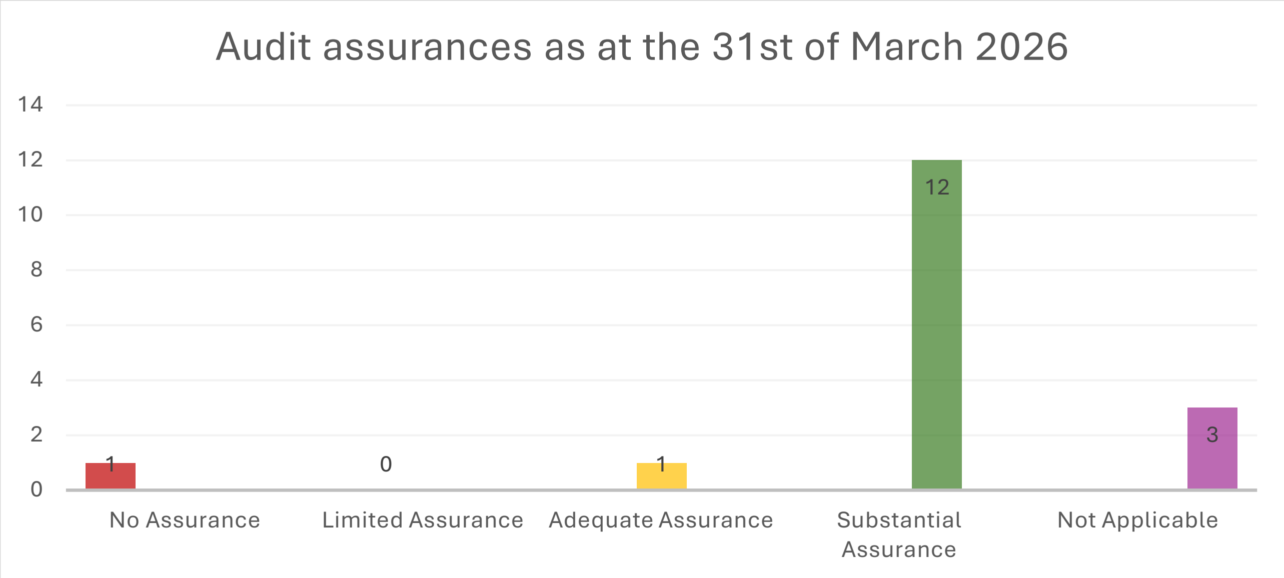
There were no matters arising from this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Outcome - Internal Control Objective ‘P’

Not Applicable

8. Audit Assurance Review

During the interim internal audit for the 2025-26 financial year covering the period of the 01st of April to the 31st of March 2026, we have undertaken 631 separate audit tests, providing assurances in the sixteen areas of review which correspond to an enhanced review of Corporate Governance and the fifteen Internal Control objectives contained within the AGAR: Annual Internal Audit Report as detailed in the chart below.



Substantial: A sound framework of internal control is in place and operating effectively. No risks to the achievement of system objectives have been identified;

Adequate: Basically, a sound framework of internal control with opportunities to improve controls and / or compliance with the control framework. No significant risks to the achievement of system objectives have been identified;

Limited: Significant weakness(es) have been identified in the framework of internal control and / or compliance with the control framework which could place the achievement of system objectives at risk; or

No: Fundamental weaknesses identified in the framework of internal control, or the framework is ineffective or absent with significant risk to the achievement of system objectives.

Not Applicable: The Council does not utilise the process which is audited under this control objective. Therefore, a finding of 'not applicable' will be recorded.

9. FY2025-26 Action Plan Recommendations

Internal Control Objective A - Conclusion & recommendation	
Year-end During the Interim Audit we noted that the Closing Balance FY2024-25 did not match the Opening Balance FY2025-26. This was due to the balance on the Newbury Building Society as at the 05th of April 2025 being incorrectly recorded as the Opening Balance for that account on the 1st of April 2025. When the correction was made, the balance as at the 05th of April 2025 was recorded as the closing balance on the 31st of March 2025 which **was** incorrect. The Council failed to obtain the proper balance on the Newbury Building Society as at the 31st of March, (advice has been given previously in this matter), the Statement of Interest for the 2024-25 financial year must be used as the Statement date and that is recorded as the 05th of April 2025. The Interest payment should correctly have been recorded as an Accrual. The same issue arose again during the year-end closedown for FY2025-26 with the Newbury Building Society account: The Council had failed to obtain a proper balance on the Newbury Building Society Account as at the 31st of March 2026. The Interest Statement provided by the Building Society records the interest paid as at the Statement Date of the 5th of April 2026, the end of the Tax Year and not the end of the Council's Financial year as at the 31st of March 2026. For the avoidance of doubt, the Council's year-end is the 31st of March 2026, and the Council is required to obtain the balance recorded on the Newbury Building Society on that date, and that is the balance which <u>MUST</u> be recorded in the corresponding Cashbook. If the Council fails to obtain a 31st of March statement, then it must treat the Interest payment as an Accrual and record the date of receipt as the 5th of April in accordance with the Tax Interest Statement. We have contacted Rialtas Technical support on behalf of the Council, and they have now made the necessary corrections to both the opening and closing balances and the accruals prior to the year-end reports being recreated. We have therefore recorded a positive assertion against Internal Control Objective 'A'. **CORRECTED BY RIALTAS** R.3 The new Clerk & RFO in post, when appointed, must ensure that in future the Newbury Building Society	**Comments**

cashbook is either made up-to-date as at the 31st of March 2026. This may be fulfilled by: A) Attending a branch of the Building Society and having the passbook made up today so that this may be presented for audit; or, B) Writing to the Newbury Building Society and requesting the Balance of the Account on the 31st of March 2026 expediently to ensure that this balance is obtained. If the Council is unable to undertake either of the above procedures then it is the prior year balance that must be recorded as the year-end balance and the receipt of interest recorded as being the 5th of April annually, as recorded on the standard Tax Year Interest Received letter which has been produced for the purposes of this year-end audit. **PROCESS CHANGE IMPLEMENTED** ***Interim Conclusion & Recommendation*** We were unable to verify that the closing balance for the 2024-25 had been correctly brought forward as the opening balance of the 2025-26 financial year with reference the Closing Trial balance recorded on Rialtas in our retained year-end reports for the 2024-25 financial year. The Opening Trial Balance for the Newbury Building Society account is different from the closing balance on our retained records. R.1 The Clerk & RFO should check Opening Trial Balance for the 2024-25 financial year and verify this as there may have been adjustments applied subsequent to the year-end audit having been conducted. If so, the correct year-end backup file should be supplied to be retained on our permanent audit file. **IMPLEMENTED INCORRECTLY AND NOTED IN R.3**	
Internal Control Objective M - Conclusion & recommendation	
The Council did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision for the exercise of public rights in relation to 2024-25 financial year AGAR and accounts as the notice was not published for the statutorily required thirty working days including the first ten working days in July. R.2 The Council must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26 and ensure that it makes	**Comments**

proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2026-27. **NO ASSURANCE.**	

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10. Confirmation of independence and Quality Assurance

During the 2025-26 financial year to the 31st of March 2026, we confirm that the internal auditor has acted independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation, based upon the internal audit programme, and has obtained appropriate evidence including copies of prime documentation to support our opinions from Lambourn Parish Council.

The year-end internal audit was conducted onsite on the 07th of May 2026 with additional work conducted at our offices on the 25th and 26th of June and the 03rd of July 2026 and supplements the interim internal audit for the 2025-26 financial year, conducted onsite the 12th of November 2025 with additional work conducted at our offices on the 18th and 19th of November and the 5th and 7th of December 2025. Both audits were carried out in accordance with Lambourn Parish Council's needs and planned coverage as reviewed with the Clerk & RFO of the Council, Mr Gary Wyatt-Hawkins.

Based on the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in the main body of this report, which corresponds to the Internal Control Objectives recorded within the FY2025-26 AGAR Annual Independent Internal Audit Report.

11. Internal Audit Performance

The following performance indicators are maintained to monitor effective service delivery & quality:

Annual performance indicators			
Aspect of service	Interim 2025-26 (Actual %)		Year-end 2025-26 (Actual %)
Internal Audit plan delivered	57%	→	100%
Positive customer responses to quality appraisal questionnaire (YE)			
Compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards	Y	↔	100%

12. Acknowledgements

In concluding our review for the year, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their potential for mis-recording or misrepresentation in the AGAR Annual Statement of Accounts. Our Internal Audit programme has been developed to provide assurance that the Council's financial systems are operating effectively, with robust internal controls working in practice, thereby ensuring the integrity of transactions and the reasonable prospect of identifying material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Clerk & RFO of Lambourn Parish Council: Mr Gary Wyatt-Hawkins (who left the Council after the year-end audit in May 2026) for his assistance in performing both the year-end and interim internal audits for the 2025-26 financial year. We are grateful both for the content and quality of the documentation and the responses that have been supplied to our requests for information.

We have made three recommendations as a result of the year-end and interim internal audit for 2025-26. A formal recommendation in relation to the Notice for the Exercise of Public Rights, and two recommendations regarding the incorrect statement of the Closing Trial Balance for the 2024-25 financial year, the incorrect statement of the Opening Balance and Closing Balance for the 2025-26 financial year and the incorrect disclosure of the 2025-26 financial year-end Accruals which we require the Council to resolve prior to the Approval of the AGAR by Council Members and its onward transmission to the External Auditor. These recommendations are contained in the main body of the report and in the appended action plan for the 2025-26 financial year.

Please note that we have had to record an assertion of 'No Assurance' against Internal Control Objective 'M' as the Council failed to set the period for the Notice for the Exercise of Public Rights for the 2024-25 AGAR and Accounts for the correct period of time.

We now ask that the Clerk & RFO, Chairman and the Council Members consider the content of this report and acknowledge, in due course, that the report has been formally reviewed and adopted by the Council.

C Lingard-McKay
Practice Manager
WGW online internal audit practice

NOTE TO REPORT

We confirm that all confidential & sensitive information, supplied for the purposes of this audit including, Personnel Minutes, Payroll and Employment data have been permanently deleted from WGW Online's servers and any printouts made for the purposes of this audit have been destroyed in accordance with the Company's data and document retention policies and with the prevailing General Data Protection Legislation as amended from time to time.