



Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council

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Clerk/PO Mrs Alex Jack, and RFO Mrs Helen Symmons

To Committee Members, you are summoned to attend the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting starting at **7:30pm** to be held on **Tuesday 10th June 2025 at St Helen's House, Cliffe, ME3 7QP**

F&GP AGENDA

1 Election of Chair for 2025/2026

The F&GP Committee Chair is elected annually at the first meeting following the Annual Parish Council Meeting where his/her is the first business on the Agenda. He/she holds office until his/her successor is elected.

All Committee Councillors are eligible to stand as Chair – please consider in advance of the meeting whether you would like to do so. (A vote will be taken if there is more than one candidate).

2 Election of Vice Chair for 2025/2026

All Committee Councillors are eligible to stand as Vice Chair – please consider in advance of the meeting whether you would like to do so. (A vote will be taken if there is more than one candidate).

3 Apologies for Absence

4 Declarations of Interest: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests under the Code of Conduct for Parish Councils.

A councillor declaring a pecuniary interest may not participate in discussion or vote on the matter. If an interest is not declared at the outset of the meeting, it should be disclosed as soon as the interest becomes apparent. Dispensation may be requested in writing to the Clerk (Proper Officer) who under certain circumstances will allow a councillor to speak and vote on the matter.

5 Public Representation: Members of the public can put questions and raise issues to the Committee in relation to business on the agenda. Maximum 10 minutes per person, total maximum adjournment of 30 minutes.

6 Approval of Minutes of Meeting held on 6th May 2025

7 Finance and General Purposes

a. Month End Reports

April 2025 Bank Reconciliation

b. Payments for Approval

To review payments yet to be made

c. PAYE Payments for Authorisation

To review PAYE payments & authorise payment

d. Other Financial Matters

i) Receipts and Payments May 2025.

ii) Quote for laptop for Assistant Clerk

iii) Internal Audit Report 2024/25 – Appendix 1 pending a response from IA

iv) System of Internal Control – document to evidence that Council can provide 'yes' answers to the Annual Governance Statement – Appendix 2

- 8 Advisory Matters for Council to note**
- i) Cliffe Woods car park solar lighting installation
 - ii) Tree survey - work undertaken
 - iii) Cliffe Rec bin & installation

In view of the confidential nature of Personnel Matters, any attending members of the public and press may be excluded from the meeting for the duration, or part thereof, of the following item.

- 9 Personnel Matters**
- i) Assistant Clerk vacancy update

All Councillors are welcome to attend, however only committee members may vote.

Alex Jack, Clerk/PO, 02/06/2025

Appendix 1

I am pleased to report to Members of the Parish Council that I have completed my internal audit of the Parish Council's records for 2024-25 and have been able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report (AIAR) for the 2024-25 Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

Members should be aware that the audit tests that I undertook during the audit cannot be relied on to identify the occasional omission or insignificant error, nor to disclose breaches of trust or statute, neglect or fraud which may have taken place and which it is the responsibility of the Members of the Council to guard against through the Parish Council's internal control procedures.

As a result of my audit and my discussion with your Clerk I was able to answer 'YES' to the relevant questions contained in the AIAR for 2024-25.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank your Clerk and RFO for the assistance given to me in the conduct of the audit that took place on remotely on 17 May and in person on 21 May 2025.

PREVIOUS AUDITS:

External Audit 2023-24:

Mazars' certificate for 2023-24 issued on 8 September 2024 was unqualified but included other comments for high levels of reserves, no review of financial Regulations and a note on public rights relating to the previous year. Their covering letter had a "minor scope for improvement" item in respect of the cashbook figures not reconciling to the bank.

The council accepted the report of the auditor at its meeting on 19 September 2024. This is insufficient. Each of the matters raised by the auditor (including the minor scope item) needs to be addressed and appropriate action agreed. Failure to do so should trigger a "no" answer to Governance Statement Assertion 7 "We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit."

Internal Audit 2023-24:

I note that internal control and risk were reviewed in January 2025.

The budget for 2025-26 has spending and income elements as required by s49A Local Government Finance Act 1992. Reserves are listed but the calculation for use of or contributions to reserves is absent. Lastly the sum of the spend and income figures (£91,119) differs from the approved precept (£91,202). This is contrary to s41 of the 1992 Act which states that the precept is the sum calculated, or last calculated, under s49A.

FINDINGS THIS VISIT:

During the audit I carried out sufficient work to enable me to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report. I concentrated on the trail from the annual accounting statement back to the receipts & payments A/c and bank statements while testing transactions to invoices or other supporting documentation. I have also reviewed the Council's minutes for compliance with legal obligations, its general functioning and for mutual consistency with the accounts.

I found the financial records to be accurate and up to date. I found nothing in the minutes to indicate any issues around legal obligations (except as noted above), the council's actions or its general functioning.

I have nothing further to report.

Lionel Robbins
Independent Internal Auditor
26 May 2025

RFO RESPONSE

External Audit 2023/24

The following report is being submitted to Mazars at their request in their Guidance Notes for the AGAR 2024/25. This report was with all the AGAR information presented to the Internal Auditor so was apparent that the Council had undertaken action in respect of the matters they raised. Additionally the 'minor scope for improvement' was actioned in the Bank Reconciliation for 2024/25 again included in the AGAR pack presented to the Internal Auditor.

AGAR 2024/25**CLIFFE AND CLIFFE WOODS PARISH COUNCIL****Details of action taken in respect of all recommendations made by your external auditor in 2023/24**

1. General reserves as at 31/3/24 were £99,556. Council created an Earmarked reserve in 2024/25 for Car Park refurbishment works, transferring £70,000 from the General Reserve. The General Reserve as at 31/3/25 is £40,848. The precept received in 2024/45 was £87,513
2. For the financial year 2024/25, Council reviewed the Financial Regulations 20th June 2024 (minutes 22 cii). A further review was undertaken in April 2025 with the Financial Regulations amended to recognise the change in legislation relating to procurement.
3. Council did not meet the requirements in 2023/24 in providing electors with a period of 30 working days to inspect the 2022/23 accounts but in 2024/25, the correct notice period was provided for electors to inspect the 2023/24 accounts – namely Monday 24th June to Friday 2nd August. This included the first 10 working days of July.

2024/25 Internal Auditor separate year-end report

1. Question M on the AIAR received an answer 'No' with the explanation that the 30 day rights period notified to electors for the 2022-23 AGAR was dated 23 June 2023 and stated 30 June to 11 August, which was one day too long. This was corrected in 2024 with publication of the Notice for Public rights on 21st June 2024 stating the dates as Monday 24th June to Friday 2nd August.

The council has undertaken appropriate action and therefore is eligible to respond positively to assertion 7.

Internal Audit – Budget comments

At the time of the Internal Audit visit, I offered to show the Internal Auditor how I had calculated the precept figure and why this was different from the budget amount. This was declined.

The reason for the difference is the maintenance of a General Reserve at the year end 2025/26 to the level of £30,000 as evidenced by the calculation below that was available to be viewed:

PRECEPT				Budget 2025/26
Total Income				£ 6,500.00
Total Expenditure				£ 97,619.00
Net Position				-£ 91,119.00
Mid year EMR creation				-£ 70,000.00
General Reserves 31/03/24				£ 99,917.00
				£ 29,917.00
GROSS SHORTFALL				-£ 61,202.00
RECOMMENDED RESERVE				£ 30,000.00
BUDGET FUNDING FIGURE				-£ 91,202.00

Appendix 2

CLIFFE AND CLIFFE WOODS PARISH COUNCIL

June 2025

System of Internal Control to support Annual Governance Statement

Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council (the Council) is a local authority funded by public money and is responsible for ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, used economically, efficiently and effectively.

In meeting this responsibility assurance is required that there is a sound system of internal control and that the Council's accountability framework is 'risk' based; proportionate to that risk and to the amounts of public money involved and to the stakeholders' need for assurance

The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to ensure that risks are managed to a reasonable and acceptable level forming part of an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the authority's policies, aims and objectives and to evaluate and manage those risks accordingly.

The Internal Control Environment

The Council:

- appoints a Chairman to be responsible for the smooth running of meetings and for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful with the clerk's advice.
- reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January meeting. This meeting also approves the level of precept for the following financial year.
- meets at least 4 times each year and monitors progress against its aims and objectives.

The Clerk to the Council and the Responsible Financial Officer:

- are appointed by the Council to act as the Council's advisors and administrators
- are responsible for the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing risks
- ensures that the council's procedures, control system and policies are adhered to.

The Responsible Financial Officer:

- is responsible for administering the council's finances

Payroll Controls:

- staff have a contract of employment with clear terms and conditions.
- Salary paid is to agree with that approved by the Council.
- PAYE is being properly operated by the Council as an employer and monthly submissions are made to HMRC under Real Time.

Payments:

- are reported to the Council for approval
- are authorised by two bank signatories
- are made via internet bank transfer

Income: is banked in the Council's name in a timely manner and reported to the Council

Risk Assessments (Risk Management) - assessments are carried out in respect of actions, systems and controls are regularly reviewed.

The Internal Audit - is carried out by an independent Internal Auditor who reports to the Council on the adequacy of its records, procedures, systems, internal controls, regulations and risk management reviews.

Standing Orders - the Council has adopted the Model Standing Orders.

Financial Regulations - the Council has adopted the Model Financial Regulations and reviews updates as necessary each year.

V.A.T. - V.A.T. payments are identified, recorded and reclaimed.

Asset Register - the Council maintains a register of all material assets owned or in its care. The RFO to update as and when necessary and to be approved annually.

Insurance - The Council's insurance provision is reviewed annually and at the end of each contract period both in relation to its schedule of cover and also its value for money.

Code of Conduct:

- Each member must sign an Acceptance of the Code and complete a Register of Interest form. Members to consider every item on the agenda and ensure that any interest is declared at the beginning of the meeting or before the matter is discussed.
- an item 'Declarations of Interest' will be placed on every agenda.