

WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL

INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT

Document history	
First adoption	26 July 2021
Last revised	19 April 2026
Revised by	Richard Green (Clerk and RFO)
Adopted on	[DATE]
Next review due	April 2027

1. Scope of responsibility

Westleton Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

Westleton Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. Purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims, and objectives. It can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Parish Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.

3. Internal control environment

a) Parish Council

Westleton Parish Council reviews its obligations and objectives, and approves budgets for the following year normally at a full meeting of the council in November. This meeting also approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

Westleton Parish Council has established a Finance Sub-Committee with the remit of scrutinising and overseeing budget planning and broad financial management. As part of an established process, regular financial reports are submitted to the Parish Council and Members monitor progress against objectives, financial systems, and budgetary control procedures. The Parish Council undertakes annual reviews of its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which are both overarching governance documents.

b) Clerk to the Parish Council and Responsible Financial Officer

The Parish Council has appointed a Clerk who acts as its principal advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Parish Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering its finances. The Clerk is responsible for advising on day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations to which Westleton Parish Council is subject and for managing risks. The Clerk also provides advice to help Westleton Parish Council ensure that it adheres to its procedures, control systems, and policies.

c) Payments

Westleton Parish Council changed banking provider in early 2026, which saw changes in how payments are managed. The Parish Council's Financial Regulations have been revised to reflect these changes. Payments are made from Westleton Parish Council's Current Account with Unity Trust Bank. The Parish Council also holds a separate Instant Access Savings Account from which only internal transfers are made. All payments are reported to Westleton Parish Council.

Payment by cheque is limited wherever possible in favour of online payment by BACS. Two Members of Westleton Parish Council must authorise every payment/sign every cheque. The signatories should consider each payment/cheque against the relevant invoice, which is also listed in a schedule of payments for authorisation, which is circulated to all Members at a meeting of the full council.

d) Income

All income is received and banked in the Parish Council's name in a timely manner and reported to the Parish Council.

e) Risk assessments/Risk management

Westleton Parish Council reviews its risk management policy and risk register annually, and regularly reviews its systems and controls.

f) Internal audit

An independent internal auditor reports to Westleton Parish Council annually on the adequacy of its:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal Control
- Regulations
- Risk Management

g) External audit

The Parish Council must submit an Annual Governance & Accountability Return to the Government-appointed external auditor.

4. Review of effectiveness

Westleton Parish Council (through the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer) has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the systems of internal control, ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective, and that the Parish Council has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of their functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

As part of the annual audits, the following checks are undertaken to ensure that the accounting records are being properly completed:

- cheque amounts/payments agree with invoices
- bank reconciliations are regularly undertaken
- any income due is received
- VAT returns have been completed
- salary payments agree with the amounts approved by the Parish Council
- financial statements produced for the Parish Council agree with accounting records
- the asset register is updated annually
- the risk assessment is updated and reviewed annually
- all income/expenditure is reported to the Parish Council and properly approved

Westleton Parish Council considers these are reasonable controls, however, care should be taken to ensure that internal control checks are proportionate and relevant, and that they are neither seen as, nor intended as, undue interference in the RFO's day-to-day management of financial affairs. Note: Westleton Parish Council **does not** hold petty cash.

Westleton Parish Council reviews its system of internal control on an annual basis and its governance documents are listed and included on its website. All these documents are subject to regular review in line with best practice.