

Community and Town Councils in Wales

Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Accounting statements 2023-24 for:

Name of body: St. Brides Community Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 (£)	31 March 2024 (£)	
Statement of income and expenditure/receipts and payments Please round all figures to nearest £. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or nil balances. All figures must agree to the underlying financial records for the relevant year.			
1. Balances brought forward	33,582	40,112	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Must agree to line 7 of the previous year.
2. (+) Income from local taxation/levy	26,920	30,530	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	37	8,262	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	3,000	4,228	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, taxable allowances, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and termination costs. Exclude reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments			Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on external borrowing (if any).
6. (-) Total other payments	17,427	44,115	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook minus staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	40,112	30,561	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).
Statement of balances			
8. (+) Debtors			Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of debts owed to the body at the year-end.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	40,112	30,561	All accounts: The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and investments held at 31 March. This must agree with the reconciled cashbook balance as per the bank reconciliation.
10. (-) Creditors			Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of monies owed by the body (except borrowing) at the year-end.
11. (=) Balances carried forward	40,112	30,561	Total balances should equal line 7 above: Enter the total of (8+9-10).
12. Total fixed assets and long-term assets			The asset and investment register value of all fixed assets and any other long-term assets held as at 31 March.
13. Total borrowing			The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

Annual Governance Statement

We acknowledge as the members of the Council, our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed?		'YES' means that the Council:	PG Ref	
	Yes	No*			
1. We have put in place arrangements for: • effective financial management during the year; and • the preparation and approval of the accounting statements.	✓		Properly sets its budget and manages its money and prepares and approves its accounting statements as prescribed by law.	6, 12	
2. We have maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption, and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		Made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.	6, 7	
3. We have taken all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the Council to conduct its business or on its finances.	✓		Has only done things that it has the legal power to do and has conformed to codes of practice and standards in the way it has done so.	6	
4. We have provided proper opportunity for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.	✓		Has given all persons interested the opportunity to inspect the body's accounts as set out in the notice of audit.	6, 23	
5. We have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the Council and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		Considered the financial and other risks it faces in the operation of the body and has dealt with them properly.	6, 9	
6. We have maintained an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems throughout the year and have received a report from the internal auditor.	✓		Arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether these meet the needs of the body.	6, 8	
7. We have considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the Council and, where appropriate, have included them on the accounting statements.	✓		Disclosed everything it should have about its business during the year including events taking place after the year-end if relevant.	6	
8. We have taken appropriate action on all matters raised in previous reports from internal and external audit.	✓		Considered and taken appropriate action to address issues/weaknesses brought to its attention by both the internal and external auditors.	6, 8, 23	
9. Trust funds – The Council acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing trust fund(s)/assets. We exclude transactions related to these trusts from the Accounting Statement. In our capacity as trustee, we have discharged our responsibility in relation to the accountability for the fund(s) including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	Has met all of its responsibilities where it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.	3, 6

* Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'no' response given; and describe what action is being taken to address the weaknesses identified.

Additional disclosure notes*

The following information is provided to assist the reader to understand the accounting statement and/or the Annual Governance Statement

1. Expenditure under S137 Local Government Act 1972 and S2 Local Government Act 2000

Section 137(1) of the 1972 Act permits the Council to spend on activities for which it has no other specific powers if the Council considers that the expenditure is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, the area or any part of it, or all or some of its inhabitants, providing that the benefit is commensurate with the expenditure. Section 137(3) also permits the Council to incur expenditure for certain charitable and other purposes. The maximum expenditure that can be incurred under both section 137(1) and (3) for the financial year 2023-24 was £9.93 per elector.

In 2023-24, the Council made payments totalling £_____ under section 137. These payments are included within 'Other payments' in the Accounting Statement.

2.

3.

* Include here any additional disclosures the Council considers necessary to aid the reader's understanding of the accounting statement and/or the annual governance statement.

Council/Committee approval and certification

The Council is responsible for the preparation of the accounting statements and the annual governance statement in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the Act) and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Certification by the RFO I certify that the accounting statements contained in this Annual Return present fairly the financial position of the Council, and its income and expenditure, or properly present receipts and payments, as the case may be, for the year ended 31 March 2024.	Approval by the Council I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Council under minute reference:
RFO signature: 	Minute ref: 5.8.24 2.1
Name: BARRY LEWIS	Chair signature: 
Date: 25/7/2024	Name: A MORGAN
	Date: 5.8.24

Auditor General's report and audit opinion

I certify that I have completed the audit of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2024 of **St Brides Major Community Council**. My audit has been conducted on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales and in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and guidance issued by the Auditor General for Wales.

Audit opinion: Qualified

Except for the matters reported below in my Basis for Qualification, on the basis of my audit, in my opinion no matters have come to my attention to give cause for concern that, in any material respect, the information reported in this Annual Return:

- has not been prepared in accordance with proper practices;
- that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements have not been met;
- is not consistent with the Council's governance arrangements; and
- that the Council does not have proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Basis of Qualification

Accounting Statement

I am unable to conclude whether or not the Accounting Statement properly/fairly presents the Council's receipts and payments/income and expenditure and financial position:

- The Council has not provided a complete explanation for significant variances within the year.
- The Council has included income other than its precept within line 2. The Council's precept income totalled £22,944.
- The Council has not provided a properly completed bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024. The provided reconciliation does not reconcile to the reported figure within the accounting statement.
- The Council has provided an asset register that has not valuation information, the assets held by the Council include 13 bus shelters, benches and equipment. Therefore line 12 is understated.
- The Council has not provided accounting records to support its burial income.
- The Council has not kept adequate accounting records for all expenditure incurred.
- The Council's accounting statements did not reconcile to the annual report. The Council appears to have included internal transfers between bank accounts within its accounting statement. Additionally, there is £50 unaccounted for between the Council's accounting records and bank statements. =
- We have identified during the audit that the following lines should be amended:
 - Line 2 should be reported as £23,444
 - Line 3 should be reported as £2,847
 - Line 4 should be reported as £5,313
 - Line 6 should be reported as £30,079. This includes the £50 unaccounted that wasn't included within the cashbook.

- Line 7 and 9 should be reported as £30,511

Annual Governance Statement

In my opinion, the Annual Governance Statement is not consistent with the Council's internal controls and governance arrangements for the year:

- Assertion 1 and 4. The Council did not approve the accounts in line with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Council did not advertise the audit and make proper arrangements for the public inspection of accounts as required by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014).
- Assertion 1: The Council has not maintained proper accounting records as required by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Council's cashbook does not contain sufficient information such as including relevant VAT details and appears to be inaccurate. We recommend the Council improved its cashbook to be in line with One Voice Wales' practitioners' guidance. Additionally, the Council has not reclaimed any VAT.
- The Council's internal auditor has raised a number of issues in their annual return highlighting a number of issues. The report is materially inconsistent with the Council's Annual Governance Statement.
- Assertion 3: The Council does not publish on its website the information it is required to publish electronically by the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. At the time of the audit, the Council did not have a functioning website.
- Assertion 3: The Council has not provided evidence that a budget has been set in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and that the precept has been set in line with the budget. The Act requires the Council to take into account its expected income when setting its budget requirement. We recommend that the Council sets a budget in accordance with the relevant regulations and codes of practice.

Other matters and recommendations

I draw the Council's attention to the following matters and recommendations which do not affect my audit opinion but should be addressed by the body.

Late preparation and submission of accounts for audit

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 require the Council to make up its annual accounts to 31 March each year and to approve the accounts by 30 June immediately following the year end.

Each year in March we issue the Council with an audit notice. This specifies the date by which the accounts should be submitted for audit and sets out our information requirements for the audit.

The Council has failed to comply with the requirements set out in the audit notice for several years:

Financial year	Date of approval by the Council
2019-20	Not approved
2020-21	22 April 2024
2021-22	22 April 2024
2022-23	22 April 2024
2023-24	25 July 2024

Although the primary responsibility for this failure for the 2019-20 to 2022-23 financial year lies with the former Clerk, the Council itself took no steps until late 2023 to address the omission.

We recommend that the annual accounts are placed on the agenda for each June meeting as a standing item and if the accounts are available, the position is followed up at each subsequent meeting.

Information not provided for audit

In our audit notice we specify what information the Council must provide for audit. To avoid additional audit fees, it is essential that the Council provides all information requested with its initial submission rather than supplying only the annual return and asking us to notify the Council if we need further information. We inform the Council of our core information needs in advance.

Council's accounting records

The Council's cashbook does not include sufficient information as suggested by the One Voice Wales practitioners' guidance. We recommend that the Council updates its records on a timely basis and ensure that the information documented complies with the practitioners' guidance.

Trust Fund Annual Governance Statement Disclosure

The Council has not fully completed its Annual Governance Statement and has left assertion 9 blank.

There are no further matters I wish to draw to the Council's attention.

 Richard Harries, Director, Audit Wales For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales	Date: 05/03/2025
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Annual internal audit report to:

Name of body: St. Brides Community Council

The Council's internal audit, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, has included carrying out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year ending 31 March 2024.

The internal audit has been carried out in accordance with the Council's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the following control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
1. Appropriate books of account have been properly kept throughout the year.	✓				Clients cash book checked against bank statements
2. Financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.		✓			Not all purchase invoices have been checked against bank statements. 19% of purchase invoices were not available to verify.
3. The body assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.				✓	
4. The annual precept/levy/resource demand requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process, progress against the budget was regularly monitored, and reserves were appropriate.				✓	
5. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓				Income reconciled to bank statements
6. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.		✓			No petty cash provided
7. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓				minutes of clerks Salary agreed to client records and bank statements
8. Asset and investment registers were complete, accurate, and properly maintained.				✓	

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
9. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.	✓				Bank reconciliations prepared and agreed to bank statements
10. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments/income and expenditure), agreed with the cashbook, were supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records, and where appropriate, debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓				Please note 19% of purchase invoices were not made available to verify this year
11. Trust funds (including charitable trusts). The Council has met its responsibilities as a trustee.	✓				

For any risk areas identified by the Council (list any other risk areas below or on separate sheets if needed) adequate controls existed:

	Agreed?				Outline of work undertaken as part of the internal audit (NB not required if detailed internal audit report presented to body)
	Yes	No*	N/A	Not covered**	
12.					
13.					
14.					

* If the response is 'no', please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

** If the response is 'not covered', please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or if coverage is not required, internal audit must explain why not.

[My detailed findings and recommendations which I draw to the attention of the Council are included in my detailed report to the Council dated _____.] * Delete if no report prepared.

Internal audit confirmation

I/we confirm that as the Council's internal auditor, I/we have not been involved in a management or administrative role within the body (including preparation of the accounts) or as a member of the body during the financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24. I also confirm that there are no conflicts of interest surrounding my appointment.

Name of person who carried out the internal audit:

STEPHEN A. GRIFFITHS

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit:

SAG:fl

Date:

18.07.2024