

Community and Town Councils in Wales Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Accounting statements 2023-24 for:

Name of body: Laleston Community Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 (£)	31 March 2024 (£)	
Statement of income and expenditure/receipts and payments			
1. Balances brought forward	197716	199685	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	218342	262000	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	32476	45891	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	89212	94944	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	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on external borrowing (if any).
6. (-) Total other payments	159637	223375	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	199685	189256	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).
Statement of balances			
8. (+) Debtors	20960	24552	Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of debts owed to the body at the year-end.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	182509	193054	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	3784	28350	Income and expenditure accounts only: Enter the value of monies owed by the body (except borrowing) at the year-end.
11. (=) Balances carried forward	199685	189256	Total balances should equal line 7 above: Enter the total of (8+9-10).
12. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	374397	405690	The asset and investment register value of all fixed assets and any other long-term assets held as at 31 March.
13. Total borrowing	0	0	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective financial management during the year; and the preparation and approval of the accounting statements. 	X		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.	X		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.	X		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.	X		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.	X		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.	X		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.	X		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.	X		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	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 £ 5400.00 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 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.

<p>Certification by the RFO</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Approval by the Council</p> <p>I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Council under minute reference:</p> <p>Minute ref: 20 June 2024 16. 19.1485</p>
<p>RFO signature:</p> 	<p>Chair signature:</p> 
<p>Name: Gail Jewell</p>	<p>Name: Clair Webster</p>
<p>Date: 20 June 2024</p>	<p>Date: 20 June 2024</p>

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 **Laleston 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

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 2: Adequate system of internal control**
The Council's proper arrangements for making payments require that all payments over £5,000 are approved by the Council before the payment is made, and that the authority to spend can be delegated to a committee of the Council for items over £500 but less than £5,000. My audit identified several instances of payments in excess of £5,000 that appear to have been made prior to full Council approval.

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 Council.

Cut off assertion

Audit testing identified one material payment of £12,480 being included in Line 6 (payments) and as a debtor on Line 8. Accounting records provided support the payment is a prepayment that relates to the 2024-25 financial year, and therefore has been correctly recorded as a debtor, however it should not be included within the

2023-24 Line 6 payments in the annual return, as the Council operates on an income and expenditure basis.

Finance section of the Council's website

Section 50 of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013 requires the Council to publish its audited accounts online. Regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 requires the Council to publish the Annual Governance Statement alongside the accounts. Regulation 15 of the 2014 Regulations requires the Council to publish along with the accounts, any certificate, opinion, or report issued, given or made by the Auditor General.

Published notices of electors' rights can be located on the Council's website, however the sub-sections of the 'finance' area of the Council's website that relate to each audit year do not contain hyperlinks to the required documents. It appears the only way they can currently be accessed is through using the search function on the website. This appears to be an IT issue with how the website is operating.

We recommend that the Council reviews its publication arrangements on its website, to ensure that all relevant documents are published as intended by the Council, and are accessible by the public.

Payment of members allowances

Testing the payment of members allowances identified one cheque payment where there was no supporting evidence in the accounting records the cheque had cleared.

We recommend the Council ensure the payment of all members allowances are appropriately recorded in the Council's accounting records.

Petty cash float

The Council's financial regulations stipulate the RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of £200. Inspection of accounting records does not suggest the Council hold £200 in petty cash at 31 March 2024.

Annual return not signed by Internal Auditor

The 2023-24 annual return includes in the Internal Audit Report section a requirement to be signed and dated by the internal auditor. The signature section of this page of the return has been left blank. The dated internal audit report has been provided by the Council in the course of the audit, so we are confident the Internal Audit Report was approved by the internal auditor.

We recommend in future years arrangements are made to enable the internal auditor to sign / e-sign the annual return.

Immaterial errors identified

During the course of the audit some immaterial errors in the Council's accounting records were identified. These differences are immaterial in size, both individually and in aggregate:

- One payment for professional fees was identified where no VAT number was recorded.
- Agreement of the Council's fixed asset register to the total fixed assets on the annual return identified an immaterial difference between the two.

We recommend that the Council be alert to these immaterial errors that arose in 2023-24, so as to be able to continue to improve its system of internal control.

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: 28/01/2026
--	-------------------------

Annual internal audit report to:

Name of body:

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.	x				Internal Audit report presented separately.
2. Financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	x				
3. The body assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	x				
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.	x				
5. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	x				
6. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	x				
7. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	x				
8. Asset and investment registers were complete, accurate, and properly maintained.	x				

	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.	x				
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.	x				
11. Trust funds (including charitable trusts). The Council has met its responsibilities as a trustee.			x		

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 20 June 2024.

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: Helen Harbord

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit:

Date: 20 June 2024