

# Community and Town Councils in Wales

## Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

### Accounting statements 2023-24 for:

Name of body:

ABERPORTH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 (£)	31 March 2024 (£)	
<b>Statement of income and expenditure/receipts and payments</b>			
1. Balances brought forward	103005	81285	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	41088	41088	Total amount of income received/receivable in the year from local taxation (precept) or levy/contribution from principal bodies.
3. (+) Total other receipts	13577	499	Total income or receipts recorded in the cashbook minus amounts included in line 2. Includes support, discretionary and revenue grants.
4. (-) Staff costs	10467	10828	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	65918	30590	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	81285	81454	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6).
<b>Statement of balances</b>			
8. (+) Debtors	0	0	<b>Income and expenditure accounts only:</b> Enter the value of debts owed to the body at the year-end.
9. (+) Total cash and investments	81285	81454	<b>All accounts:</b> 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	0	0	<b>Income and expenditure accounts only:</b> Enter the value of monies owed by the body (except borrowing) at the year-end.
11. (=) Balances carried forward	81285	81454	<b>Total balances should equal line 7 above:</b> Enter the total of (8+9-10).
12. Total fixed assets and long-term assets	61994	64494	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		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"> <li>effective financial management during the year; and</li> <li>the preparation and approval of the accounting statements.</li> </ul>	✓		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	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.


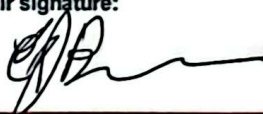
2.

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.

<b>Certification by the RFO</b> 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.	<b>Approval by the Council</b> I confirm that these accounting statements and Annual Governance Statement were approved by the Council under minute reference:
<b>RFO signature:</b> 	<b>Minute ref:</b>
<b>Chair signature:</b> 	
<b>Name:</b> VANESSA OWENS	<b>Name:</b> JACKIE BROWN
<b>Date:</b> 1/9/2024	<b>Date:</b> 1/9/2024



## 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 **Aberporth 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 presents the Council's receipts and payments and financial position:

- The Council has not provided an explanation for the significant variance in other receipts (line 3) from 2022-23 to 2023-24.
- The Council has misreported its precept and other receipts. The precept for 2023-24 was £41,100. The Council's cashbook records precept receipts totalling £40,930. Therefore, the Accounting Statement is inconsistent with the underlying accounting records

#### 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: The Council did not approve its accounts by 30 June 2024 as required by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.
- Assertion 1: The Chair has signed the annual return identifying that the Council approved the annual return on 1 September 2024. However, there was no Council meeting on 1 September 2024 and my review of the Council's minutes did not identify any Council resolution to approve the accounts.

- Assertion 3: The Council does not publish on its website the information it is required to publish electronically by the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

### **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.

### **Failure to comply with statutory duties**

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (the 2014 Regulations) require the Council to make up its accounts to 31 March each year and to submit the accounts to the Auditor General.

In November 2021, we issued to the Council a report setting out the Council's inadequate governance and financial management arrangements we had identified for the 2016-17 to 2018-29 financial years. This report included a series of 12 statutory recommendations that the Council accepted in January 2022.

Since 2019-20, the Council has consistently failed to comply with its statutory duty to make up its accounts to 31 March each year. I note that from 2019-20 to 2023-24, the Council raised £205,440 from its council tax payers.

I draw attention to the fact that notwithstanding that it has failed to approve the accounts in accordance with the 2004 Act and the 2014 Regulations, the Council has consistently asserted in its Annual Governance Statements that it put in place proper arrangements for the preparation and approval of the accounts.

I draw attention to the fact that the Council has also failed to make arrangements for public inspection of accounts for 2019-20 to 2023-24. The requirement for public inspection of accounts is set out in the 2004 Act and the 2014 Regulations.

Each year, we issue to the Council via its Clerk, a notice of audit. This notice sets out the timetable for the annual audit and provides details of the information we require for the audit. The Council has consistently disregarded this notice for the 2019-20 to 2023-24 financial years and failed to submit the accounts for audit.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 provides the Auditor General with rights of access to information and provides that he may require a person whom he believes to hold information relevant to the audit, to attend the audit in person.

The Council's clerk has repeatedly failed to provide information when requested to do so. When required to attend the audit in person, she failed to attend. A serving councillor (and a former Chair) of the Council refused to attend the audit.

Failure to comply with a requirement imposed by the Auditor General is a serious matter. Under the 2004 Act a person commits an offence if they fail to comply.

These individuals avoided further enforcement action because the Clerk submitted some of the required information in November 2024.

This means that the Council is continually failing to meet the most basic requirement for accountability for the money it obtains from council tax payers in Aberporth.

The ongoing failure to comply with requests for information has significantly increased the audit fee for each of the 2019-20 to 2023-24 audits. The 2004 Act states that the Council must pay the fees raised in respect of the audit.

### **Recommendations**

The Council has a history of poor governance and was previously issued with statutory recommendations in November 2021. It is clear that despite assurances that it had put in place proper arrangements from January 2022, this was not in fact the case. The Council has continued to disregard the recommendations made in November 2021.

We recommend that the Council carefully examines the matters reported above and the report issued in November 2021 and ensures that these are addressed in full before the audit of the 2024-25 accounts.

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

 <b>Richard Harries, Director, Audit Wales</b> <b>For and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales</b>	<b>Date: 15/04/2025</b>
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## Annual internal audit report to:

Name of body: **ABERPORTH 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.	✓				
2. Financial regulations have been met, payments were supported by invoices, expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓				
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.	✓				
6. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✓		
7. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with minuted approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓				
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					
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					
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 31/8/24.] \* 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:	SINA RAPTHEL
Signature of person who carried out the internal audit:	<i>[Signature]</i>
Date:	31/08/2024