Policy and Resources Committee Report

1. External audit follow-up: public right to inspect accounting records 2025/26

2. Income and Expenditure to 30th September 2026 explanations

3. Mulberry Internal Audit

4. 2027-28 Budget workings

External audit follow-up: public right to inspect accounting records 2025/26

Update on AGAR

Please see my most recent update from Mazars.

'I am getting in touch with you regarding the status of the limited assurance review of your Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 31 March 2026. As you will be aware, we have been unable to complete our work by the end of September 2026 as we have received correspondence from a member(s) of the public that will require us to perform some work above and beyond what would normally be completed as part of a limited assurance review.

I am on annual leave between Wednesday 07 October 2026 and will return to work on Monday 19 October 2026. I will be in touch again on my return about next steps involved with the matters brought to our attention.

I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding while we complete our work.'

Income and Expenditure to 30th September 2026 explanations

NOMINAL	COST CODE	HEADING	PERCENTAGE	EXPLANATION
1750	230	Guildhall Weddings	-22.2%	Guildhall Wedding cancellation refunds.
4000	200	Annual Meeting & Civic Services	109.9%	Need to look at increasing the budget next year to cover inflation costs.
4030	200	Honorary Freeman	390.7%	Budget set at £200 (3x Freedom scrolls £373.50/Picture Framing £407.97).
4235	220	Printing & Advertising	91.4%	Budget set at £500 (Annual report £245.00/Confidential Waste-Shredding £189.54).
4245	220	Meetings	85%	Coffee Machine bought for Guildhall
4215	230	Telephone/Alarm Lines	124.8%	Need to look at increasing the budget next year to cover inflation costs.
4325	230	Guildhall Lift Maintenance	158.3%	Maintenance charges increased compared to budget made.

4318	235	Town Warehouse	314.2%	Grant to cover this.
4319	235	Pump House	81.3%	Grant to cover this.
4205	240	Electricity	62.1%	Need to look at increasing the budget next year to cover inflation costs.
4210	240	Water	94.1%	Need to look at increasing the budget next year to cover inflation costs.
4170	245	Vehicles	103.1%	Mechanical works to GL18XMP pushed us over budget.
4175	245	Vehicle Fuel	82.9%	Need to look at increasing the budget next year to cover inflation costs and van usage.
4256	245	Health & Safety	109.8%	Plastic barrier had to be purchased as per H&S regulations
4260	245	Facilities Manager Equipment	106%	
4145	256	Insurances	107.1%	Bus insurance costings slightly higher than budgeted. We also must pay insurance costs on hire buses when ours is out of service/action.
4170	256	Vehicles	186.4%	Relates to the annual leasing costs for the first bus. There is a strong possibility that a call on reserves will be necessary later in the year.
4175	256	Vehicle Fuel	95.5%	Need to look at increasing the budget next year to cover inflation costs and bus usage.
4865	270	Floral Displays & Panter	90.6%	Budget already nearly spent and we are having issues with plants being stolen from our displays. We don't have enough budget to keep replacing these stolen items?
4274	275	Active Travel Month + Event	99.9%	£900 in this budget has been spent out of Active Travel EMR. Bike Hanger call out to fix lock. May need to factor costings of callout charges if needed throughout the year.
4826	280	Ham Marshes	182.8%	We have EMR to cover overspend on budget.
4210	290	Water	122%	Usage and inflation costs.
4215	290	Electricity	62.1%	Usage and inflation costs.

Mulberry Internal Audit

Please find attached our report from Andy who carried out our internal audit on behalf of Mulberry Local Authority Services Limited.

The RFO and Town Clerk will be working through any suggestions from Mulberry LAS to have in place before our next audit (Year End) with them.

2027-28 Budget workings

BUDGET NOTES 2027-2028

We need to consider ways of saving money or increasing our budget.

Suggestions on ways to save money or decrease our spending.

- Reducing staff
- Reducing grants
- Reducing environment costs
- Reducing committee budgets
- Removal of committee group
- Removal of the Community Bus
- Reducing events

These are all extremely difficult decisions to make, but we really need to factor in that we are spending more and we aren't well equipped for unexpected costs if they arise.

If we feel we cannot agree on any of the above for reducing costs, then we really do need to seriously consider increasing our precept.

On our recent Audit visit, we were told that we need to increase our General Reserve as realistically this needs to be around £250,000, currently it's £160,000. The Practitioners Guide recommends that councils general reserve is equivalent to three months of annual expenditure.