



Lighthorne Parish Council

Statement supporting 2022-23 Financial Return

Lighthorne Parish Council (LPC) is required to publish its annual return in the form of an Annual Governance and Accountability (AGAR) document and, where certain declarations cannot be made in the affirmative, provide an explanation.

This statement represents my last formal duty following my standing down from LPC last May. It has coincided with a change of external auditor from PKF Littlejohn to Moore UK, a decision taken at a higher level of local government. We retained the services of Trevor Gill as internal auditor who as expected was helpful and thorough in equal measure.

As in previous years LPC prepared its accounts for internal audit immediately on completion of the financial year ending 31st March 2023. Trevor Gill's familiarity with LPC ensured a prompt passing of internal audit, but then things went a little off the rails. Our documents were submitted to Moore UK very promptly but then we heard nothing until they notified us that an additional charge would be applied for failing to submit our return. This was quickly resolved when they were shown evidence of our prompt submission, but then we had to navigate a series of questions that seemed opaque in what was required.

In a nutshell they were seeking explanation for variations in categories of income and expenditure as compared to the previous year. A deviation over a certain threshold triggers this. All the information is there in our financial spreadsheets, but the standard forms do not invite that level of details and so for a while we were second guessing what they needed to know. This is reflected in the external auditor's comments.

A parish council that does nothing but cut grass and repair street lamps will never have much year on year variation, but LPC is the exact opposite of this with numerous substantive projects, for some of which generous grants have been secured. Year on year variation is built in to a proactive and vigorous parish council, but having navigated the audit process this year LPC will be well prepared next year.

LPC is accountable to residents of the parish, and if residents are not satisfied with this annual return and this report, or simply have questions, then they are invited to contact the clerk for further information.

Andy Smith, Former Chairman, Lighthorne Parish Council – 19th September 2023