

Lapford Parish Council

Lapford Parish Council Meeting 16th March 2021

The was a remote meeting of Lapford Parish Council on Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 7.30pm held on Zoom.

Members Present: Cllrs Ian Hemsworth (Chairman); Sue Briant-Evans; David Davenport; Julie Down; Donna Egan; Hilary Hassett; Peter Heal; Alex Shapland

Also Present: County Cllr. Margaret Squires and District Cllr. Clive Egington

In attendance: Rob Martin (Locum Clerk)

Others: Six members of the public – Roy Andrews, John Parsley, Bill Graham; Martin Hayes & Marilyn Davey Pat Gove

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES

21.50 No apologies had been received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)

Personal Interests

21.51 The following personal interests in items on the agenda were declared:

- Item 5; Cllr Briant-Evans declared a personal interest on any discussions relating to the Heart of Lapford Development project as she is a member of the Board of Directors as an individual.
- Item 5; Cllr Hemsworth declared a personal interest on any discussions relating to the Heart of Lapford Development as he is a member of the Board of Directors as a representative of the Parish Council.

Standing Orders will be suspended and the Chairman to declare the meeting closed

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

21.52 Bill Graham said that Robert Gordon the new vicar was soon to be installed. He also stated that a great deal high quality goods had been donated for sale with the proceeds to support the hall and LTP site. Once Covid measures had ceased the hall would be opened for a sale of these goods.

Roy Andrews of the Playing Field Committee stated that at the playing field northern boundary the Parish Council had erected a metal fence some 10ft from the hedgerow boundary and the area in between has become somewhere where Orchard Way residents were dumping rubbish. He asked what the Parish Council was going to do about it. Could the Playing Field Committee work with the Parish Council to find a solution?

The Chairman said that this was a tricky one, as the land was not part of the remit of Parish Council. He had been approached because of debris from the surrounding trees had fallen onto this land, and the responsibility for it needed to be sorted out. Cllr. Briant-Evans believed that the Playing Field Committee erected the fence. Cllr. Heal believed that the money for the fencing came from the sale of the tennis

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court, and that it was needed because the now filled-in ditch would be a hazard.

It was agreed that Roy would look at the deeds, and pass on any information he gained from that and that the matter would be on the agenda at next PC meeting. The Clerk would gather all the available information and write a report for that meeting.

Dr. John Parsley expressed concern that the concept of Lower Town Place providing a space for both children & dogs did not comply with the position quoted by ROSPA that playing fields & dogs don't mix. He believed that £75,000 of council taxpayers money had been spent on an ill thought out scheme without regard for safety. What was the Parish Council going to do about it?

The Chairman confirmed that he was the Parish Council representative on the HOLD Board for the Parish Council and that he agreed with the sentiments expressed and that he will attempt to seek a resolution to consider restricting dogs on the site, in a timely manner.

4. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

21.53 To receive a verbal report for information.

4.1 Devon County Council

County Cllr. Squires did not have much to report except that the waste recycling centres were working during summer opening hours early due to the current demand. The Chairman added that Punchbowl Recycling Centre was to close from 16th to 24th March 2021 inclusive so that maintenance work could be carried out.

4.2 Mid Devon District Council

District Cllr. Egington reported on the conclusions of the MDDC budget meeting at which it was decided to add the maximum £5 per band D property, equating to a 2.39% increase. The normal maximum increase was only 1.99%, but smaller districts could add £5 to their requirement if that was a greater percentage. He also compared Council tax band D charges for nearby Towns and parishes with Lapford at £53.59, Chawleigh at £52.84, Crediton at £121.59 and Tiverton at £62.94. He believed the differences were interesting.

He also announced that the Independent cabinet Leader had reduced the size of the cabinet from 8 to 7 members.

5. LOCAL ORGANISATIONS' REPORTS

21.54 Reports from:

5.1 Lapford Church Green Trustees

Cllr. Briant-Evans had circulated the following report:

- The Trustees met via Zoom on 2nd March 2021
- It was hoped that work to refurbish the bank between the Green and Lower Town Place could begin towards the end of March or beginning of April. It was hoped that fundraising to support this work would begin in the near future.
- Work to refurbish the telephone kiosk would begin soon with the object of making it suitable as an exchange point for people to use in place of the Melissa Lake shelter which would be tidied up and a notice posted to explain the position.
- It was resolved to advertise the grass-cutting contract for 2021/22
- It was agreed to revise the list of bank account signatories.

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- A report was received about children entering the school grounds after hours and leaving portable goal posts on the area of the field dedicated as the night landing site for the Devon Air Ambulance. Action to be taken to alert the Chulmleigh Academy Trust.

5.2 Heart for Lapford Strategy Group

Cllr. Hassett explained that The Roadmap compiled by H4L was published in the March issue of the Lookout and set out the aims going forward for Lower Town Place. It is hoped that there will be responses from residents which can then be collated along with previous feedback. A copy of this Roadmap has also been placed on the Village Notice Board and Website as well as being added to the websites of some of the organisations which make up H4L. There will be several reports from constituent groups of H4L in the April Lookout.

Hedging has been planted along the border between the Orchard Way car park and Lower Town Place and apple cordons are planned for the road side border. It is hoped that it will be possible to hold some events on Lower Town Place this summer, but that is dependent upon further lifting of Covid restrictions.

5.3 Heart of Lapford Development Board

The Chairman reported that the development looks to be proceeding according to plan. He highlighted that the car park fence had been removed and replaced which improved things considerably. Work still had to be done on the Lower Town Place/Church Green entrance.

The expenditure so far had been £37,000, with VAT to be claimed back. There were works still to be done such as the containers. They were on target to meet the 2-year period for the project.

5.4 Wallingbrook Patient Participation Group

Bill Graham reported that the Covid vaccination programme had gone well commenting that the Crediton station had worked well.

The Chairman to reconvene the meeting in line with Standing Orders

6. MINUTES

21.55 On a proposal by Cllr. Heal seconded by Cllr. Down the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th February 2021 were **Approved**.

Cllr. Hassett had not voted as she had not attended that meeting.

Action Grid – Julie

1. Writing to Steve Tucker at County Highways was ongoing, so far with nil response. Cllr. Squires suggested setting up a Zoom meeting with him to go through the list with photographs explaining what they want.
2. Telephone Kiosk – shelving etc – Cllr. Heal explained that the door was swollen and would not shut. He planned to take door off and adjust it. He also said that the repainting offer by Mr. Wilkie was still valid who had also offer to revamp the Melissa Lake Shelter. Roger Lake back in hospital and he had said to do whatever needed doing. Cllr Heal offered to talk to Ian Wilkie and would report back to next meeting.
3. The quotations for signs for the car park were still ongoing

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4. Weed spraying in the car parks had been parked until spring. Quotations were now required for the work.
5. The trees along boundary of playing field and Orchard Way had been discussed earlier, the outcome of the research undertaken by the Playing Field Committee would hopefully answer the questions.
6. The extension of highway gritting to the school had met with resistance, but was still ongoing.
7. Dog Signs – District Cllr. Egington had 15 with him that he would deliver to the Chairman for display.
8. Application for £500 from the Locality Fund for repairs to the Church Clock would be processed by the Locum Clerk.
9. The 30mph speed limit for top of village – Cllr. Squires reported she confirm that this will be progressed.
10. 2019/2020 Audit/Annual Accounts – The Locum Clerk reported that there were inconsistencies in the records. The forms are ready to be sent, and he had to go back to 2017/2018 to be able reconstruct accounts. The VAT claims for three years had to be sent. Ongoing, to be ready for next meeting.
11. Request for change in websites. The Chairman stated that Parish Council agendas & minutes were already on the village website, but the transfer was taking time. The intention was that all Lapford PC matters would be transferred to the village website. The Locum Clerk mentioned that the BT hosting service was finishing in May 2021 so something had to be done by then.
12. Lapford Parish Council By-Elections were on 6th May 2021 – adverts would be in the Lapford Lookout (April). It is still not certain how many vacancies there would be to fill.
13. LEAP Committee – The Committee has not met since the last Parish Council meeting but will meet again via Zoom on April 6th.
Agreed information plus a plea for volunteers for the Road Warden scheme were published in the March Lookout. Two volunteers have come forward. The LERT initiative continues to provide a service to the village.
14. Local Plan – The MDDC 'call for sites'. The Regeneration Committee had considered this, but concluded it was not for them to do it, as they were uncomfortable putting sites forward without having information on Lapford Housing Needs.
It was agreed that it was not appropriate for the Parish Council to put forward any suggestions by 22nd March 2021. District Cllr. Egington said that this activity was not necessarily for the PC to take part in, but they should take the chance to comment on the land that had been put forward by others when the opportunity came.
15. Bank signatory changes – still ongoing
16. LYPFT insurance to be paid. The Chairman would notify the Trust of this.
17. Footpaths P3 grant to be applied for - Ongoing
18. Footpaths – gates required instead of stiles - Ongoing Ian/Alex
19. Website – dealt with elsewhere
20. Flowerbed – will be done in future
21. Interim Clerk to be appointed – this was completed

7. COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUPS

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21.56 To receive updates of the following advisory group meetings and resolve whether to adopt recommendations therefrom:

7.1 Lapford Emergency Action Plan Committee

Already dealt with under the Action Grid

7.2 Regeneration Working Group

Already dealt with under the Action Grid

8. PLANNING MATTERS

21.58

8.1 APPLICATIONS NOTIFIED

To consider the following Planning Applications and to agree comments:

Reference	Location	Proposal
21/00289/HOUSE	2 Hillside Cottages Lapford Crediton Devon EX17 6QL	Creation of parking space, remove section of garden wall, reduce garden level by 225mm, erection of new dwarf garden wall and installation of timber gates Decision: Cllr. Heal would look at the application and contact other councillors for their thoughts.

8.2 APPLICATIONS AFTER THE AGENDA WAS ISSUED

There were no further applications.

8.3 MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL DECISIONS

There were no decisions notified affecting the parish since the last meeting.

9. BANK RECONCILIATION

21.59 The Bank Reconciliation was **Approved**.

10. RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS TO DATE COMPARED TO BUDGET

21.60 The Receipts and Payments compared to Budgets statement for the period from 1st April 2020 to 28th February 2021 was **Noted**.

11. RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

21.61 The following list of payments were **Approved**.

PAYMENTS

Payment to	Services	Amount £	Payment No.
2020/2021			

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S Hemsworth	Orchard Centre Cleaning	52.00	Standing Order
Various	LERT Payments	243.01	Online
1&1 Internet	Website Hosting	2.40	Direct Debit

RECEIPTS

Receipt from	Services	Amount £	Method
2020/2021			
None			

12. **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2019/20**
21.62 This was deferred to the next meeting.
13. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2019/20**
21.63 This was deferred to the next meeting.
14. **INTERNAL AUDIT**
21.64 On a proposal by Cllr. Heal, seconded by Cllr. Briant-Evans, it was **Resolved** to appoint Mel Bickell as Internal Auditor, to carry out audit inspections and provide reports for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.
15. **DEVELOPMENT SITE ALLOCATION**
21.65 This was already discussed in the Action Grid section.
16. **GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT**
21.66 It was **Agreed** that both the Church Green and Parish Council grass-cutting contracts for 2021/2022 would be advertised in the April 2021 Lapford Lookout.
17. **COUNCILLOR VACANCIES**
21.67 It was **Agreed** that an advertisement should be placed in the April 2021 Lapford Lookout encouraging local residents to stand for the 6 May 2021 parish council by-election.
18. **PARISH ONLINE**
21.68 On a proposal by Cllr. Briant-Evans it was **Resolved** that the Parish Council buy access to the Parish Online mapping service.
19. **VETERINARY SURGERY**
21.69 Concern was expressed that the veterinary surgery was no longer offering a small pet service, and appeared to be concentrating on equine care exclusively. This meant that people with small pets had to travel to Witheridge or further to get care for their animals.

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It was **Agreed** that the Locum Clerk would write to the surgery requesting information on whether this was the case, and asking why there had been no notification of it.

20. **PARISH COUNCIL AGM AND ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

21.70 The council considered when and how to hold these meetings, taking into consideration the gradual move away from COVID lockdown and the need to hold meetings in public from 7th May 2021.

It was **Agreed** to leave setting a date/venue until next the meeting, by which time there will be more certainty.

21. **CORRESPONDENCE AND NOTICES RECEIVED**

21.71 There had been no further correspondence or notices.

22. **MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR**

21.72 The Chairman had already raised the matter of the fallen tree in a previous item.

23. **COUNCILLORS' REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

21.73 Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision-making.

Cllr. Heal brought up a caravan which was actually in Morchard Bishop. This would be reported. He also thought the Parish Online system would be good for the council.

24. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 13th April 2021 at 7:30 pm via Zoom. The deadline for agenda items is midday on the Friday two weeks preceding the meeting.

25. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

On a proposal by Cllr. Briant-Evans, seconded by the Chairman, it was **Resolved** to exclude the public and press from the meeting on the basis that the matters to be discussed were confidential.

26. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The public meeting closed at 9.30pm

27. **CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

The confidential section of the meeting dealt with:

- a) The agreement between the Parish Council and HOLD
- b) Matters relating to a former clerk
- c) Potential Illegal Development
- d) Illegal Bonfire
- e) Parish Council Inter-Relationships

FAO: The Members of Lapford Parish Council

Mr Martin
Lapford Parish Council

Our ref DV0222
SAAA ref SB05057

Email sba@pkf-l.com

31 March 2021

Dear Members

Lapford Parish Council

Public Interest Report: Failure to submit an Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 31 March 2020

As appointed auditors, we have a duty to consider whether to issue a public interest report when a matter comes to our attention which we believe the authority should consider or about which the public should be made aware.

This letter constitutes a public interest report under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act) about the authority's failure to prepare an AGAR for the year ended 31 March 2020 as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/404) and associated guidance¹⁷.

The authority is responsible for the use of funds raised by local taxation and should properly account for how it has used and protected those funds. Lapford Parish Council is required by law to prepare an AGAR:

- summarising its financial position; and
- giving assurances that it has adequate governance arrangements to protect public funds.

Smaller authorities which meet certain conditions for a given reporting year (including gross income or expenditure which does not exceed £25,000) are eligible to claim exemption from the limited assurance regime and are therefore not required to submit the AGAR to their external auditor. It is possible that Lapford Parish Council has certified itself exempt, but has failed to submit a copy of the Certificate of Exemption to us. To be exempt from review, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 require that a smaller authority certifies itself exempt, but also notifies the 'specified person' that they have done so (Regulation 9(6)). The specified person, currently Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA), has contractually agreed that instead of SAAA being notified, the appointed auditors will be responsible for receiving notification

¹⁷ Proper practices are set out in *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England*, which is approved by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published jointly by the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), and the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA).

by way of a completed Certificate of Exemption. As we have not yet received a Certificate of Exemption, we are required to proceed on the basis that Lapford Parish Council is not exempt and therefore must submit to us an AGAR and supporting documentation for the year ended 31 March 2020.

We issued a statutory recommendation to the authority on 27 November 2020 that it should submit an approved AGAR or Certificate of Exemption (if appropriate) within 42 days of that letter.

As of 31 March 2021 no such return has been submitted to us. As a result, Lapford Parish Council has failed in its statutory duties to account to its taxpayers for the use and safeguarding of their money.

We have now exhausted all options open to us to obtain an AGAR, and therefore have no option but to move towards certifying completion and bringing to an end our responsibilities as auditor for the year ended 31 March 2020. We have taken this decision reluctantly, as once completion is certified, public rights (such as the rights to inspect the accounting records and associated documents and to ask questions or make objections to the auditor) can no longer be exercised.

The Act requires the authority to consider this public interest report at a public meeting within one month of the date of this letter. The requirements of Schedule 7 are attached, and the authority should ensure that it complies with all requirements regarding publicity of the report, consideration at a meeting and publicity of decisions taken at that meeting.

Unless an approved AGAR is received, it is our intention to certify completion and bring our responsibilities to an end in 42 days from the date of this letter, when we will issue our final invoice. This letter gives rise to an additional fee of £200 plus VAT payable by Lapford Parish Council on conclusion of the review process, for the additional work involved in repeatedly chasing for the required documentation and the production of this report.

If an approved AGAR and associated documentation are received before we have certified completion, we will carry out a limited assurance review of the AGAR at a further cost of £200 plus VAT.

Lapford Parish Council should also note that, as a result of receiving this public interest report, it will not be eligible to certify itself as exempt from limited assurance review in 2020/21 (if it would otherwise be eligible), as it will have failed one of the qualifying requirements set out in Regulation 9(3) of The Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015.

We have a duty to send a copy of this report to the Secretary of State and the power to send a copy to anybody we think appropriate.

Yours faithfully



PKF Littlejohn LLP

cc Clerk - Lapford Parish Council, Secretary of State, National Audit Office, Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd, Monitoring Officer of local authority (local councils only)

Extracts of Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014:

Public interest reports

- 1 (1) A local auditor of the accounts of a relevant authority must consider whether, in the public interest, the auditor should make a report on any matter coming to the auditor's notice during the audit and relating to the authority or an entity connected with the authority, so it can be considered in accordance with this Schedule or brought to the public's attention.
- (2) A report under sub-paragraph (1) is referred to in this Act as a public interest report.
- (3) A public interest report may be made during or after the end of an audit.
- (4) A local auditor must notify a relevant authority's auditor panel (if it has one) as soon as is reasonably practicable after making a public interest report relating to the authority or an entity connected with it.
- (5) A local auditor may recover from a relevant authority—
- (a) the reasonable costs of determining whether to make a public interest report relating to the authority or an entity connected with it, and
 - (b) the reasonable costs of making a public interest report relating to the authority or an entity connected with it.
- (6) Sub-paragraph (5)(a) applies regardless of whether the report is in fact made.

Supply of public interest reports

- 3 (1) If a local auditor makes a public interest report arising out of the audit of the accounts of a relevant authority, the auditor must send the report to—
- (a) the authority, and
 - (b) where the report relates to an entity connected with the authority, to that entity and to any other relevant authority with which the entity is connected.
- (2) The local auditor must also send the report—
- (a) to the Secretary of State,
 - (b) where the relevant authority is itself a connected entity, to its related authority or authorities,
- ...
- (3) A report required to be sent under sub-paragraph (1) or (2) must be sent as soon as is reasonably practicable after it is made.
- ...
- (5) If paragraph 5 applies to a relevant authority to which a report is sent under this paragraph, it must, if required by that paragraph to do so, take the report into consideration in accordance with that paragraph.
- ...

Publicity for public interest reports

- 4 (1) This paragraph applies to a relevant authority if a local auditor has made a public interest report relating to the authority or an entity connected with it.
- (2) As soon as is practicable after receiving the report, the relevant authority must publish the report and a notice that—
- (a) identifies the subject matter of the report, and
 - (b) unless the authority is a health service body, states that any member of the public may inspect the report and make a copy of it or any part of it between the times and at the place or places specified in the notice.
- (3) As soon as is practicable after receiving the report, the relevant authority must supply a copy of the report to—
- (a) each of its members (if it has members), and
 - (b) its auditor panel (if it has one).
- (4) Sub-paragraph (3)(a) does not apply in relation to a parish meeting.
- (5) From the time when the report is received, the relevant authority, unless it is a health service body, must ensure that any member of the public may—
- (a) inspect the report at all reasonable times without payment,
 - (b) make a copy of it, or any part of it, and
 - (c) be supplied with a copy of it, or any part of it, on payment of a reasonable sum.

(6) The local auditor may—

- (a) notify any person the auditor thinks fit of the fact that the auditor has made the report, and
- (b) supply a copy of it or any part of it to any person the auditor thinks fit.

(7) A notice or report required to be published under this paragraph must be published—

- (a) if the authority has a website, on its website;
- (b) otherwise, in accordance with sub-paragraph (8).

(8) A relevant authority publishes a notice or report in accordance with this subparagraph if—

- (a) in the case of an authority other than a health service body, it publishes the notice or report in such manner as it thinks is likely to bring the notice or report to the attention of persons who live in its area;

...

(9) Nothing in this paragraph affects the operation of paragraph 9.

Consideration of report or recommendation

5 (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (4), this paragraph applies to a relevant authority if—

- (a) a local auditor has made a public interest report relating to the authority or an entity connected with it, or
- (b) a local auditor has made a recommendation relating to the authority or an entity connected with it.

...

(5) The relevant authority must consider the report or recommendation at a meeting held before the end of the period of one month beginning with the day on which it was sent to the authority.

(6) At that meeting the relevant authority must decide—

- (a) whether the report requires the authority to take any action or whether the recommendation is to be accepted, and
- (b) what, if any, action to take in response to the report or recommendation.

...

(8) If the local auditor is satisfied that it is reasonable to allow more time for the relevant authority to comply with sub-paragraph (5) or (7), the auditor may extend or further extend the period of one month mentioned in that subparagraph.

(9) This paragraph does not affect any duties (so far as they relate to the subject matter of a report or recommendation sent to a relevant authority) which are imposed by or under—

- (a) this Act,
- (b) sections 114 to 116 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (functions and reports of finance officers),
- (c) section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (functions of monitoring officers), or
- (d) any other enactment.

(10) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for this paragraph to apply with modifications in relation to a relevant authority specified, or of a description specified, in the regulations.

(11) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for any provisions of the following that do not otherwise apply to a meeting of a relevant authority under this paragraph to apply (with or without modifications) to such a meeting—

- (a) the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960;
- (b) Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 (access to meetings and documents);
- (c) Schedule 12 to that Act (meetings and proceedings of local authorities).

...

Bar on delegation of functions relating to meetings

7 ... (2) If a relevant authority is a local authority within the meaning of section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 (arrangements for discharge of functions), that section does not apply to its functions under paragraph 5.

(3) The functions of a parish meeting under paragraph 5 are to be exercised by the parish meeting itself (and not by its chairman on behalf of the parish meeting).

...

Publicity for meetings

8 (1) If a relevant authority is required to hold a meeting under paragraph 5, it must publish a notice in compliance with sub-paragraphs (2) to (4).

(2) The notice must be published—

(a) if the relevant authority has a website, on its website;
 (b) otherwise, in such manner as the authority thinks is likely to bring the notice to the attention of persons who live in its area.

(3) The notice must—

(a) state the time and place of the meeting,
 (b) indicate that the meeting is to be held to consider a local auditor's report or recommendation (as the case may be),
 (c) if the meeting is to be held to consider a report, describe the subject matter of the report, and
 (d) if the meeting is to be held to consider a recommendation, set out the recommendation or, where this is not reasonably practicable, describe its subject matter.

(4) The notice must be published before the beginning of the period of 8 days ending with the day of the meeting.

(5) The agenda supplied to the members of the relevant authority for the meeting must be accompanied by a copy of the report or recommendation (as the case may be).

(6) Sub-paragraph (5) does not apply in relation to a parish meeting.

...

(9) This paragraph applies in addition to any provision made in relation to the relevant authority in question by or under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972 or any other enactment.

Access to meetings and documents

9 (1) Where a public interest report or a recommendation is to be considered under paragraph 5 by a relevant authority to which the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 applies, the report or recommendation is not to be excluded from the matter supplied under section 1(4)(b) of that Act (supply of agenda etc to newspapers).

...

(3) Sub-paragraphs (4) to (6) apply in relation to the consideration under paragraph 5 or 6 of a public interest report or a recommendation by a relevant authority to which Part 5A (access to meetings and documents) of the Local Government Act 1972 applies.

(4) Information contained in the report or recommendation is not to be treated as exempt information for the purposes of that Part.

(5) The report or recommendation is not to be excluded—

(a) from the documents open to inspection under section 100B(1) of that Act (public access to agenda and reports before meetings), or

(b) from the matter supplied under section 100B(7) of that Act (supply of agenda etc to newspapers).

(6) Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 has effect in relation to the report or recommendation as if section 100C(1)(d) of that Act (public access to copies of reports for six years after meeting) were not limited to so much of the report or recommendation as relates to an item during which the meeting was open to the public.

(7) Information contained in a public interest report or a recommendation is not to be treated as exempt information for the purposes of any Act or instrument made under an Act that applies in relation to exempt information within the meaning of Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(8) References in this paragraph to a public interest report or a recommendation include any report on the report or recommendation.

Publicity for decisions under paragraph 5 or 6

10 (1) As soon as is practicable after making decisions under paragraph 5(6) or (7) or 6(6), a relevant authority must—

(a) notify the authority's local auditor of those decisions, and

(b) publish a notice containing a summary of those decisions which has been approved by the auditor.

(2) The notice under sub-paragraph (1)(b) must be published—

(a) if the relevant authority has a website, on its website;

(b) otherwise, in such manner as the authority thinks is likely to bring the notice to the attention of persons who live in its area.

(3) The notice required by sub-paragraph (1)(b) in relation to a meeting need not summarise any decision made while the public were excluded from the meeting—

(a) as the result of a resolution under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (protection of public interest),

(b) under section 100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (confidential matters), or

(c) as the result of a resolution under section 100A(4) of that Act (exempt information).

(4) If sections 100C and 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 (availability for inspection after meetings of minutes etc) apply in relation to a meeting under paragraph 5 or 6, the notice required by sub-paragraph (1)(b) must indicate the documents in relation to the meeting that are open for inspection in accordance with those paragraphs.

(5) This paragraph applies in addition to any provision made in relation to the relevant authority by or under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972 or any other enactment.

REPORT BY THE PARISH CLERK

Meeting Date: 20th April 2021

2019-2020 PUBLIC INTEREST REPORT (PIR) FROM PKF LITTLEJOHN

Introduction

1. Lapford Parish Council has received the attached PIR for the financial year ended 31st March 2020, resulting from its inability to keep to the deadlines set out for the Annual Returns for that year. This report explains some of the background to this, alongside what has to be done and what the Parish Council can decide to do about it.
2. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) system is designed to ensure that the 8,000+ parish councils in England and Wales account for their finances in a robust and consistent way. The AGAR for a Parish Council such as Lapford would normally be a relatively simple process, which is clearly laid down by legislation and regulation.

Lapford Parish Council's AGAR Position

3. In previous years, the parish council would have been able to discharge its external audit liabilities by sending in a **Certificate of Exemption (CoE)** rather than being subject to a **Limited Assurance Review (LAR)**. The distinction between the two levels of requirement is measured by the council's turnover in the year being less than £20,000, which Lapford PC's has usually been.
4. In 2019/2020, however, Lapford Parish Council drew down a loan from the PWLB of £75,000 towards the Lower Town Place project, which increased its turnover to £94,582 for the year, outside of the scope of the certificate of exemption route, meaning that a full set of documentation was required by the auditors.
5. The parish council failed to meet its AGAR obligations, resulting in the Public Interest Report.

The AGAR Requirements

6. The distinction between the two sets of requirements is limited mostly to what has to be sent to the external auditors, rather than what has to be produced. The requirements are mostly the same. The council has to produce, whatever its turnover:-
 - a) Sets of accounts on a **receipts and payments**, or **income and expenditure** basis, with the former being the usual basis for small parishes, and the one traditionally done by Lapford. From this the AGAR requires a basic analysis of the data in its **Financial Statement**.

- b) A **Governance** statement outlining the internal checks and controls operated during the year.
- c) An **Internal Audit** final report for the year to verify that the processes within the parish council are adequate and match the governance statements made.
- 7. In the case of a council having to undertake a limited assurance route, all of this information has to be sent to PKF Littlejohn, for them to carry out the **Limited Assurance Review (LAR)**, which results in a response which either has no comments, or matters that need to be addressed. The review can result in qualification of the accounts at worst.
- 8. During all of this, there is a period of time during which the general public have the opportunity to see and question the auditors on matters of concern. The basis of this has to be seen to be advertised by the parish council.
- 9. The difference between the two routes is that the LAR requires the matters in paragraphs 5a to 5c above all, plus other specified information, have to be sent to the External auditors, whereas for a CoE the parish council is just required to publish the information.

Lapford Parish Council's Background to the PIR

- 10. The situation that Lapford found itself in was unfortunate, because it related to the absence of the previous clerk on long-term sick leave. Parish Clerk's are often the council's only true employee, with little or no back-up if things start to deteriorate. They often take possession of all of the council's bank information, documents, computers, passwords, etc. From a security point of view, this is unsatisfactory and makes for particular problems if illness or grief strike. This is what happened in the case of Lapford.
- 11. The Clerk did not expect to be off sick for a long time, with her last involvement being in February 2020, but she still had possession of the council's laptop and all of its essential data. This was exacerbated by the nature of her illness which meant that she could not face contact with her employers, meaning that the necessary paperwork was locked away with no access for the parish council.
- 12. Repeated attempts to gain access to the information and machinery came to nothing, even with attempts by the police to persuade her to give it all back. Eventually, in late 2020, the laptop was obtained, but none of the paperwork.
- 13. Finding someone to step in at such times is almost impossible, because experienced people are hard to find, so, as here, the councils often find one of the councillors willing to take on the role of 'Clerk' which is generally seen as just minuting the meetings. There is more to the Clerk's job than this, particularly on the financial side.
- 14. From the beginning of the 2020/2021 financial year the council was operating by the seat of its pants, which was unfortunate because the arrangements for the use of the loan finance needed to be organised. This meant that not enough time was available to take more action to rectify the situation that existed, and Locum Clerks were not generally available.
- 15. The disarray caused by the initial absence of the former clerk at the end of one financial year and the beginning of a new one was not fully appreciated by councillors, who were not aware of the work that was necessary at that time. In addition, of course, it should be remembered that councillors did not have the laptop

or the parish council email address, so were not receiving emails from PKF Littlejohn reminding them of their responsibilities.

16. The result of all of this was that none of the necessary paperwork or internal audit was completed.
17. I was brought in during February 2021, approximately a year after the previous clerk's last involvement asking whether I could sort things out. By then, the computer and its passwords had been obtained and councillors had seen the various audit reminder notices, but were unsure what to do about them.
18. At that time, all of the deadlines had been passed and the issue of a PIR was unavoidable.
19. The paperwork relating to 2019/2020 has still not been received from the former clerk, but accounts and the AGAR forms have now been prepared for the year on the basis of information gleaned, experience and intuition.
20. Moving forward to 2020/2021, which has just ended on 31st March 2021, all of the accounts and forms will be correctly prepared and submitted. Some of the paperwork is still going to the previous clerk, but most is available.

What needs to happen?

21. It is easy to be wise after the event, but the first matter to be addressed is the role played by councillors in the events that led to this situation. The Clerk has the responsibility for almost everything that happens to the council, but councillors have to be sure that they oversee the clerk to assist with that burden.
22. This can mean looking at the following:
 - a) Clerk Training – an insistence that it happens.
 - b) Councillor Training – they should know what needs to happen when, at the very least.
 - c) An enforceable contract of employment.
 - d) Clerk appraisal meetings – open, honest and fair looking at the positives and the negatives and offering support for the latter.
 - e) Engagement with the clerk to offer support and assistance. A quiet clerk is not necessarily a happy clerk.
23. In addition, the councillors should ensure the security of its other assets, possibly by:
 - a) Using Cloud file storage systems such as Dropbox, that all councillors have access to. Insist that all parish computer files are stored there.
 - b) There is an office, insist that all council records are locked in that building, not held at home.
 - c) Carrying out occasional audits on all matters, to ensure compliance.
 - d) Undertaking periodic financial audits, to ensure information is being appropriately presented and bank accounts are secure.
24. Before I finish as Locum Clerk, whether or not I end up being the permanent replacement, I intend to make suggestions on how matters can be improved and I will work with the Internal Auditor to ensure compliance with all necessary requirements.

Rob Martin

9th April 2021

Locum Clerk: Rob Martin

Phone: 07768 829511

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT MONITOR

Code	31-Mar-21				
	2019/2020		2020/2021	2020/2021 to	% of Budget
	Actual		Budget	date	
	£		£	£	£
RECEIPTS					
1	19,373	Precept	19,713	19,713.42	100.00
2	-	Interest	36	-	-
3	235	Grants & Other Donations	100	4,973.03	4,973.03
4	-	Section 106 Income	-	-	-
5	74,974	PWLB Loan	-	-	-
9	-	VAT Receipts	50	-	-
	94,582	TOTAL Receipts	19,899	24,686.45	124.06
PAYMENTS					
Administration					
10	-	External Audit	350	-	-
11	-	Internal Audit	15	-	-
12	75	ICO	40	35.00	87.50
13	-	Solicitors	2,000	2,762.00	138.10
14	-	Land Registry	100	-	-
15	501	Insurance	550	506.98	92.18
16	-	Elections	-	-	-
17	8	IT&C	50	24.00	48.00
18	-	Office Consumables	300	-	-
19	-	Refreshments	50	-	-
20	-	Postage	50	-	-
21	37	Venue Hire/Zoom	35	-	-
Clerk & Councillors					
30	5,595	Clerk's Salary	4,800	-	-
31	-	NI	1,200	-	-
32	-	Clerk's Expenses	400	-	-
33	-	Councillor Expenses	100	-	-
34	-	Councillor Allowances	100	-	-
35	94	Training & Development	500	-	-
Subscriptions					
41	246	DALC/NALC	225	274.62	122.05
42	44	SLCC	30	-	-
43	95	DCT	60	-	-
Car Park					
50	-	Maintenance & Improvements	300	-	-
Orchard Centre					
60	624	Cleaner	624	649.00	104.01
61	-	Cleaning Consumables	50	-	-
62	550	Electricity	330	141.51	42.88
63	206	Water	220	176.96	80.44
64	489	Maintenance & Improvements	300	15.00	5.00
65	377	Telephone & Broadband	600	389.24	64.87
Telephone Kiosk					
71	-	Refurbishment	-	-	-
72	-	Maintenance	-	-	-
Defibrillator					
80	-	Installation	-	-	-
81	-	Maintenance & Consumables	200	-	-
Community Website					
90	-	Development	750	-	-

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT MONITOR

Code	31-Mar-21				
	2019/2020		2020/2021	2020/2021 to	% of Budget
	Actual		Budget	date	
	£		£	£	£
91	-	Maintenance	-	-	-
		Maintenance - General			
100	-	Annual Inspections	500	-	-
101	165	Church Clock	250	165.00	66.00
102	75	DAA Lighting	110	75.00	68.18
103	1,223	Grass Cutting	620	300.00	48.39
104	-	Verge Cutting	215	-	-
105	45	Landscaping	100	121.00	121.00
106	-	Weed Spraying	-	-	-
107	-	Noticeboard	-	-	-
108	-	Church Green Gates	-	-	-
109	-	Outdoor Bench	-	-	-
		Public Rights of Way			
120	-	Maintenance & Improvements	500	-	-
		Emergency Planning			
130	-	Equipment	100	-	-
131	-	Booklet	-	-	-
132	-	Maintenance & Improvements	100	-	-
133	-	Training	-	-	-
		Grants Made			
140	940.00	Lapford Church Green	940.00	1,458.63	155.17
141	186.20	LYPFT	200.00	-	-
		COVID Emergency			
150	-	LERT Expenses	-	2,680.28	-
151	-	Equipment	-	27.20	-
		Section 137			
160	250	General Donations	910.00	-	-
161	30.00	Armistice Wreath	30.00	30.00	100.00
162	30.00	Litter Pick Refreshments	60.00	-	-
163	-	Highways Improvements	75.00	-	-
164	-	Fireworks Event	-	-	-
165	-	Armistice Event	-	-	-
166	-	Flags	-	-	-
167	-	Competition Prizes	-	-	-
		Lower Town Place - Capital Expenditure			
168	-	Site Costs Funded by Loan	-	71,027.40	-
		Loan Repayments			
170	1,940.45	PWLB Repayments	-	4,499.26	-
400	452.85	VAT Expenditure	50.00	6,512.90	-
	14,276.89		19,089.00	91,870.98	481.28

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

FINAL ACCOUNTS 2019/2020

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

2018/2019 Actual £		2019/2020 Outturn £
RECEIPTS		
18,433	Precept	19,373
2,263	Other Receipts	75,209
-	VAT Receipts	-
20,696	TOTAL RECEIPTS	94,582
PAYMENTS		
2,251	Administration	621
127	Staffing	5,595
228	Councillors	78
316	Subscriptions	327
48	Car Park	-
1,906	Orchard Centre	2,255
-	Telephone Kiosk	-
316	Defibrillator	-
790	Community Website	-
2,475	Maintenance - General	1,517
-	Public Rights of Way	-
1,161	Emergency Planning	-
1,804	Grants Made	1,126
-	COVID Emergency	-
1,794	Section 137	310
-	Loan Repayments	1,940
532	VAT Expenditure	506
13,746	TOTAL PAYMENTS	14,277
16,644	General Reserve	b/f 20,138
20,696		Receipts 94,582
(13,746)		Payments (14,277)
(3,540)		Transfers (74,974)
20,054		c/f 25,469

R J M E
Locum Clerk

1/4/21

John G. Hemmings
CHAIRMAN 05/04/21

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

FINAL ACCOUNTS 2019/2020

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT
RESERVES

20,138	General Reserve	25,469
	Earmarked Reserves	
200	Car Park Refurbishment	200
200	Church Clock Overhaul	200
1,305	Calor Gas Rural	1,305
1,277	Transparency Code	1,277
150	PROW	150
4,744	PWLB	4,744
-	Lower Town Place	74,974
28,014		108,319

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

BANK RECONCILIATION AS AT 31st MARCH 2020

		£	£
Bank Balances			
	NatWest	12,650.26	
	NS&I	95,772.64	
	Other	198.45	
			108,621.35
Uncleared Payments			
08/04/2019	1506 DALC	22.00	
02/12/2019	1490 DALC	94.00	
26/03/2019	1505 LPFYT	186.20	
			302.20
TOTAL BALANCES			<u>108,319.15</u>
Balance at 1/4/2019	Current Account	22,811.29	
	NS&I	5,004.57	
	Other	198.45	
			28,014.31
Plus Receipts		94,581.73	
Less Payments		(14,276.89)	
			80,304.84
TOTAL BALANCES			<u>108,319.15</u>
Reconciliation			<u>-</u>

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 Part 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** is completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** are to be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published **before 1 July 2020**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2020**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2020
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on a publicly accessible website:

Before 1 July 2020 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2019/20**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2019/20**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2020 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this Annual Governance and Accountability Return. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty), and is properly signed and dated. Where amendments are made by the authority to the AGAR after it has been approved by the authority and before it has been reviewed by the external auditor, the Chairman and RFO should initial the amendments and if necessary republish the amended AGAR and recommence the period for the exercise of public rights. If the AGAR contains unapproved or unexplained amendments, it may be returned and additional costs will be incurred.
- The authority **should** receive and note the annual internal audit report if possible before approving the annual governance statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2020.
- Do not send the external auditor any information not specifically requested. However, **you must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the Annual Governance and Accountability Return covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the external auditor has to review unsolicited information, or receives an incomplete bank reconciliation, or variances are not fully explained, additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2019) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2020).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the period for the exercise of public rights. From the commencement date for a single period of 30 consecutive working days, the approved accounts and accounting records can be inspected. Whatever period the RFO sets it **must** include a common inspection period – during which the accounts and accounting records of all smaller authorities must be available for public inspection – of the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2020**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?		
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations from last year to this year been published?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2020 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

* *Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices*, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

This authority's internal auditor, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls to be in operation **during** the financial year ended 31 March 2020.

The internal audit for 2019/20 has been carried out in accordance with this authority'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 alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Agreed? Please choose one of the following		
	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.		✓	
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.			
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.			
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.			
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.			
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.			
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.			
I. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.			
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.			
K. IF the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2018/19, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2018/19 AGAR tick "not covered")			
L. The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2019 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.			
M. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

DD/MM/YY

DD/MM/YY

DD/MM/YY

ENTER NAME OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

Signature of person who
carried out the internal audit

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YY

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

**Note: 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, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

We acknowledge as the members of:

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for 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 2020, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We 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.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.		✓	during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.		✓	considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.		✓	arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Other information required by the Transparency Codes (not part of Annual Governance Statement)

Authority web address

AUTHORITY WEBSITE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 for

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2019 £	31 March 2020 £	
1. Balances brought forward	20,980	28,014	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	18,085	19,373	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	2,663	75,209	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	969	5,562	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	1,940	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	12,745	6,775	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	28,014	108,319	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	28,014	108,319	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	32,438	32,438	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	73,750	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
		✓	N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2020 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

DD/MM/YY

Date

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20

In respect of

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2020; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

Our responsibility is to review Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (see note below). Our work **does not** constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would do.

2 External auditor report 2019/20

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2019/20

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2020.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YY

*Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website (www.nao.org.uk)

Explanation of variances – pro forma

Name of smaller authority: **LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL**
County area (local councils are): **DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL**

Insert figures from Section 2 of the AGAR in all Blue highlighted boxes

Next, please provide full explanations, including numerical values, for the following that will be flagged in the green boxes where relevant:

- variances of more than 15% between totals for individual boxes (except variances of less than £200);
- a breakdown of approved reserves on the next tab if the total reserves (Box 7) figure is more than twice the annual precept/rates & levies value (Box 2).

	2018/19 £	2019/20 £	Variance £	Variance %	Explanation Required?	Automatic responses trigger below based on figures input, DO NOT OVERWRITE THESE BOXES	Explanation from smaller authority (must include narrative and supporting figures)
1 Balances Brought Forward	20,980	28,014					
2 Precept or Rates and Levies	18,085	19,373	1,288	7.12%	NO		
3 Total Other Receipts	2,663	75,209	72,546	2724.22%	YES		£75,000 loan received from PWLB for Lower Town Pace Project. Also £2,400 extra grant received in 18/19 than in 19/20
4 Staff Costs	989	5,562	4,593	473.99%	YES		£2,500 of staff payments in 19/20 related to 18/19.
5 Loan Interest/Capital Repayment	0	1,940	1,940	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!		First Loan Payment to PWLB for £75,000
6 All Other Payments	12,745	6,775	-5,970	46.84%	YES		£960 in external audit fees in 18/19, zero in 19/20? Benches £775, Website £790
7 Balances Carried Forward	28,014	108,319				VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED EXPLANATION REQUIRED ON RESERVES TAB AS TO WHY CARRY FORWARD RESERVES ARE GREATER THAN TWICE INCOME FROM LOCAL TAXATION/LEVIES	
8 Total Cash and Short Term Investments	28,104	108,319			YES	VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED	
9 Total Fixed Assets plus Other Long Term Investments and	32,438	32,438	0	0.00%	NO		
10 Total Borrowings	0	73,750	73,750	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!		#DIV/0!

Rounding errors of up to £2 are tolerable

Variances of £200 or less are tolerable

Explanation for 'high' reserves

(Please complete the highlighted boxes.)

Box 7 is more than twice Box 2 because the authority held the following breakdown of reserves at the year end:

Earmarked reserves:

	£	£	£
Car Park Refurbishment	200		
Church Clock Overhaul	200		
Calor Gas Rural	1,305		
Transparency Code	1,277		
PROW	150		
Loan Repayment Reserve	4,744		
Lower Town Place	74,974		
			82,850

General reserve

25,469

Total reserves (must agree to Box 7)

108,319

Lapford Parish Council

Lapford Parish Council Meeting 16th March 2021

The was a remote meeting of Lapford Parish Council on Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 7.30pm held on Zoom.

PART 2 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Members Present: Cllrs Ian Hemsworth (Chairman); Sue Briant-Evans; David Davenport; Julie Down; Donna Egan; Hilary Hassett; Peter Heal; Alex Shapland

Also Present: District Cllr. Clive Egington

In attendance: Rob Martin (Locum Clerk)

MINUTES

1. On a proposal by Cllr. Briant-Evans, seconded by the Chairman, it was **Resolved** to adopt the Part 2 Minutes from the meeting held on 9th February 2021 as a correct record.
2. **PARISH COUNCIL/HOLD AGREEMENT**
The Parish Council had before it the Final Draft Agreement between Lapford Parish Council and the Heart of Lapford Development Ltd (HOLD). The requirement was the Council to agree this version of the agreement to be enacted with the solicitors for both organisations.

Cllr. Hassett had a query in regard to Paragraphs 4.5 & 6.1 which seemed to conflict with paragraph 4.3, but after an explanation of the financial arrangement this was clarified.

On a proposal by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr. Heal, it was **Resolved** that the agreement be enacted by the Parish Council's solicitors, Mitchelmores.
3. **FORMER CLERK**
There were still a number of parish council documents and papers with the former Clerk, some of which were essential to support accounts and VAT claims.

The Chairman had been communicating with PC Steve Theobald at South Molton Station, who had regained access to the Council computer. It was now time to escalate the situation, in order to get the council's property back as it was now obvious that without that nothing would be returned. The Chairman had been concerned about the welfare of the former Clerk, but he would now contact the police officer and discuss the apparent 'theft' of the paperwork. The Clerk requested that a meeting take place with Juliet, on zoom, at which he could discuss with her the Crawleigh papers alongside those for Lapford.

Cllr. Down suggested that she should call Juliet and try to 'work some magic' on her.

Lapford Parish Council

Lapford Parish Council Meeting 16th March 2021

4. **LITTLE GREEN FARM**

There was concern about possible illegal development at this site. Cllr. Heal would provide a scale drawing to District Councillor Egington for him to forward to Adrian Devereaux at the District Council.

5. **ILLEGAL BONFIRE**

The Chairman highlighted recent incidents where materials were being burned in the corner of a field, of which he had photos. These would be forwarded to Sarah Jenkins of MDDC enforcement team.

6. **PARISH COUNCIL INTER-RELATIONSHIPS**

The clerk outlined his experience of working with Lapford PC to date, but was slightly confused by the various groups working within the village and their relationship to the Council. He would produce his current understanding of how they all worked together, information gleaned from the Chairman, for verification by councillors.

He also state that there was a real need to get the information from Juliet as he could not submit the back-dated VAT claims without it. There would also be nothing to audit without the paperwork.

9. **MEETING CLOSURE**

The confidential meeting closed at 9.57pm

CONFIDENTIAL