

ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL AUDIT REPORT: NOVEMBER 2019

I am pleased to be able to provide a positive Summary of the management, checking and recording of Alston Moor Parish Council's finances and financial management for the first half of the 2019-2020 Financial Year. The following points should be noted:

- 1) The Accounts are up to date (to 22nd Oct with the copy that I have), I note that Chris Johnson, the Parish Clerk has completed these up to the first week of November. All payments are supported by Invoices, recorded in the Accounts and are later noted as transactions in the main Bank Account. Included in an Appendix an Audit Trail for four separate transactions for 2019-2020.
- 2) The Insurance Policy is comprehensive, and the Register of Assets remains up to date.
- 3) Financial information on the Parish Council Website is up to date and it includes the Precept budget for 2019-2020. All items of expenditure over £100 are included and the Council Members' Register of Interest is (with one minor exception) up to date. Details on policies included/ updated and financial information in Appendix.
- 4) Accounting Records are accurate, though with some minor oversights. For instance, there are missing details (of whom?) on two paying-in slips, a duplicate cheque-stub (new cheque issued on 8th July to replace an earlier lost cheque- the original stub and second stub could confuse). Interest receipts recorded in the Accounts could be missed as they didn't arise in the Bank Account used for Council business.

I include in the Appendix specific details of the matters that I have discovered.

- 5) Budgetary controls remain robust and they have indeed been further enhanced by a recent amendment to Financial Regulations (Sept 23rd 2019, Minutes) so that all payments in excess of £1,000 (not just above £5,000 as before) require ratification from the whole Council before such payments are authorised (Sec4.1 and 5.8, Financial Regulations Document) . The two- signature rule with regards to cheques and getting Council approval before making monthly payments continue to be followed meticulously.

Preliminary comparison of expenditure in the Accounts with budgeted expenditure for 2019-2020 show that the Parish Council remains well within budget.

As a result of the excellent careful management of Public funds by the Parish Council in recent years there is likely to be a surplus of funds exceeding £20,000 across the three bank accounts that the Parish Council has at the end of this financial year (see "Estimated Year End Balance" in Financial Statement in the general Accounts). Additionally, there's almost £2,400 of "ear-marked" funds dating back three years or more which are still unspent: This includes £517.77 ear-marked for a "Hospital Campaign" dated 2006-07 and 2007-08. Thus, there is over £22,400 sitting in the Parish Council bank-accounts unlikely to be spent, whilst there are other needs locally that may need resources.

- 6) Alston Moor Parish Council continues to have robust policies and procedures in-place to keep money, Council property and staff safe and secure. For example, no cash is ever kept in the Office at Alston Town Hall. The Risk Assessment Register remains current.

Other issues of note remain the competence and attention to detail of those who do the Accounts, check the Parish Council's finances and handle public funds. The Parish Clerk has an updated employment contract; she is also remunerated to the appropriate (updated April 2019) pay-grade.

Ian Pennell (November 2019)