**INTERNAL AUDIT RESPONSE**

**CLERK REPORTING**

There is a culpability that as an elected body we all have an equal responsibility on our Parish Council. I make this point because errors have been made. Whilst not assigning responsibility to any particular persons mistakes were made in previous accounting statements and these were not necessarily the fault of the parish clerk at the time.

Many of the documents relating to parish council business such as Standing Orders and Financial Regulations must be adopted and consequently advertised by the Council. The absence of such documents has previously been identified by the Chairman and myself – the Clerk, and more importantly now in the internal audit report. I am in the process, overseen by the Chairman, of writing a Complaints Policy. It is the intention of the current Parish Clerk (myself) that all such documents will be available during the forthcoming year.

Undertaking work over and above the ‘day job’ does have a cost implication and this is something Councillors need to consider in budgeting and more importantly setting the Precept. The Precept of £2,500 per annum does constrict the Council and obstructs how it functions even to the extent of having an ability to train its Councillors effectively.

I can categorically state that the Statement of Accounts prepared by myself are correct, that our status as operating in a business capacity with HMRC is in good order and confirmation of this is on this year’s Audit file. The internal audit identified that it is not good practice to carry forward a salary liability. This happened to the sum of £224 in 2015/16 year end and was not earmarked as reserved expenditure. Whilst it is earmarked now salary is being carried over again and to eliminate such occurrences with the permission of the Chairman I shall in future be claiming my salary quarterly with an intention of the final quarter being agreed and paid timely. It is recommended that salaries are paid by standing order but this may have an untoward implication as the salary pertains to the business the Parish Council undertakes during a period and this can vary quite considerably.

The Parish Council needs to be fit for purpose and it needs to identify its weaknesses and overcome them.

As you will be aware I have not received any formal training up to this point and any training we can identify as necessary will be helpful. It is also important that Councillors are prepared to undertake training to support the Council’s needs. Parish Councillors are aware that training is expensive and we need to agree a training budget.

The Council must set a general budget to realise the constraints placed upon it. I would consider that we hold a capital reserve bank account for items already earmarked such as the grant monies from the Transparency Fund which is for a laptop and a scanner. This would have been previously agreed and I would hope minuted before the grant was applied for, therefore the money should be spent on these earmarked items.

May 2017