



# COUNCIL MEETING

Members are summoned to attend a Meeting

of the Town Council to be held at **7.45pm** on

**Wednesday 17 October 2018**

**at Loughton Library & Town Hall  
Traps Hill, Loughton, IG10 1HD**

to transact the business as shown in the agenda.

**Enid K Walsh  
Town Clerk**

11 October 2018

**Councillor S Murray (Town Mayor)  
Councillor S Murphy (Deputy Town Mayor)**

P Abraham  
T Cochrane  
T Downing  
J Mahoney  
C C Pond

J Angold-Stephens  
B Cohen  
J Jennings  
A Omer  
C P Pond

P Beales  
M Dalton  
J Jogia  
T Owen  
M Stubbings

R Brookes  
C Davies  
K Latchford  
S Pewsey  
D Wixley

Note to Councillors:  
If you are unable to attend the meeting,  
please phone your apologies  
to the office on 020 8508 4200

## AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence**  
To receive any apologies for absence.
  - 2 Declarations of Interest**  
For Councillors to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any items on the Agenda.
  - 3 Confirmation of Minutes**  
To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 18 July and 29 August 2018.
  - 4 Public Representations**  
To hear any representations from members of the public who have registered a request to address the Council in accordance with Standing Order no 1(h).
  - 5 Questions Without Discussion**  
To answer any questions which have been submitted in accordance with Standing Order no 8.
  - 6 Town Mayor's Engagements and Announcements**  
The Town Mayor will report on any events he has attended to represent the Town Council.
  - 7 Matters for Report**  
To report any further significant information on matters which have been previously discussed, in addition to those which may already be included on the Agenda.
    - 7.1 Policing**  
Following the two public meetings held at Loughton Club in September 2018, the Council is asked to consider the report provided on page 3.
    - 7.2 Highways**  
An invitation from the County Council has been received via the Essex Association of Local Councils with regard to 'Devolution and Public Realm/Highway Services'.
- \* A copy of the correspondence is provided on page 4.
- 8 Reports from Members on Outside Organisations**
    - 8.1 To receive brief reports from representatives on outside organisations**  
Council representatives on outside organisations are requested to make a written report, which is attached to the Agenda, on meetings that they have attended. A verbal report can be made on meetings attended within ten days of the Council meeting.
      - i) Epping Forest District Citizens' Advice – 19 July 2018 – Cllr Angold-Stephens;
      - ii) Voluntary Action Epping Forest – 12 September 2018 – Town Clerk
      - iii) Local Councils' Liaison Committee – 10 September 2018 – Cllrs C C Pond and Wixley and the Town Clerk
      - iv) EALC 73<sup>rd</sup> AGM & Conference – 20 September 2018 in Great Dunmow – Cllr Wixley and Assistant Town Clerk

v) Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve Consultative Group – 12 September 2018 – Cllr Wixley

vi) Epping Forest Consultative Committee – 10 October 2018 – Town Clerk

vii) Tree Wardens – 2 October 2018 – Cllr Wixley

\* See pages 5 – 11 for the reports.

## **9 Reports from Committees**

### **9.1 Planning and Licensing**

Held on 16 and 30 July, 20 August, 3 and 17 September, 1 October 2018.

### **9.2 Recreation**

Held on 29 August 2018.

### **9.3 Environment and Heritage**

Held on 12 September 2018.

### **9.4 Resources and General Services**

Held on 10 October 2018.

## **10 Epping Forest Youth Council**

To receive a brief presentation from the local representatives on the EFYC on their current projects.

## **11 Accounts and Audit 2017/18**

A copy of the External Auditor's Certificate is provided on page 12.

The Notice of Conclusion of Audit was published on 28 September 2018 and is currently displayed on the noticeboards around the town and on the Council's website together with a copy of the auditor's apology.

\* As previously reported to the Resources and General Services Committee, the Town Clerk appealed against the External Auditor's comment and an extract from her letter and the response from PKF Littlejohn is provided on page 13.

For information, a number of town and parish councils inspected by the same company have received a similar comment this year.

**Enid K Walsh  
TOWN CLERK  
11 October 2018**

## Agenda item 7.1

### Policing

Following the recent public meetings held in the Loughton Club, enquiries have been made into the options available to assist the Council in deciding how best to respond to residents' concerns about increasing crime levels and the lack of visible policing.

These options will be considered at the Recreation Committee meeting on 7 November to enable a 2019/20 budget item for this to be included if so wished.

- Specials** – allow £1,000 per Special per annum.  
For information, Witham Town Council has budgeted for 5 of these volunteers. However, their scheme has not been in operation long enough to judge its impact. Whilst the cost may seem reasonable there are issues about recruitment delays and retention, and therefore sustainability. The advantage is that Specials have the same powers as warranted police officers.

Divisional Commander Lewis Basford commented that he would retain command over the Specials in terms of direction and due to the voluntary nature of the role the issues would be 'when they worked' and then retaining them.

Enquires have been made with the British Transport Police as it too offer a specials role.
- PCSOs** – allow £38,500 per annum per PCSO.  
Buckhurst Hill Parish Council has started this scheme. The Parish Clerk reports there has been some reduction in ASB since the introduction although this is difficult to quantify as the offenders appear to travel in on the Central Line and British Transport Police have been more proactive in this regard. The PCSO works a 9-day shift pattern (3 x 8am – 5pm, 3 x 2pm – 10pm and 3 days off). BHPC is supposed to be able to task the officer but the regular 6 – 8 weekly meetings provided for in the Service Level Agreement are yet to be arranged.

The disadvantage is that PCSOs do not have the power of arrest. Divisional Commander Lewis Basford has also commented that he would be unlikely to recruit and train a new PCSO for over a year as only one course is run each year
- Police Constable** – allow £51,000 per officer.  
Advantage – according to Divisional Commander Lewis Basford, "it really gives you a dedicated Police Constable to problem solve and become a figure head".

The Constable could be part of the new EFDC community team where tasking is on a daily basis. Enquiries have already been made with some of the other local councils facing similar problems to see if they would be prepared to share costs to make this a more realistic option.
- Park Guard** – a security firm approved by Essex, Hertfordshire and the Metropolitan Police, see <https://parkguard.co.uk/about/> They can be employed by parish and town councils at £20 per hour per guard to target hot spots, say for 2 – 3 hours on a Friday/Saturday evening for at least a month's contract – this enables them to book staff more reliably. EFDC has used them in the past for particular Estates where there have been problems. Guards don't have the power of arrest but do carry handcuffs. They provide a uniformed presence on the street (deliberately similar to that of a police officer's), gathering information and providing a reassuring presence. They are able to call the police directly if something more serious develops.
- Increase public awareness** by additional poster campaigns and articles in Think Loughton – this is already in hand. Advantage – the low cost option. Relevant and reliable information is provided by Colin Freeman, ambassador for Neighbourhood Watch.

**Agenda item 7.2**

**Highways**

**Devolution and Public Realm/Highway Services**

The Essex Association of Local Council writes:

“Councillor Kevin Bentley, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, is keen to explore how joint working between ECC and Parish/Town Councils could deliver better outcomes for our residents and businesses.

You will be aware of the financial pressures facing ECC and therefore Cllr Bentley welcomes an opportunity to jointly review how certain Highways services might be delivered via Parish/Town Councils, and in the process of doing so significantly reduce cost. The services could include such matters as grass cutting and special verge maintenance, weed control, tree and hedge cutting, minor repairs to footways, installing and maintaining signs, winter salt bags scheme, maintaining bus stop flags and shelters, and maintenance of Public Rights of Way.

The offer being made is for the Town Council to be involved in a pilot scheme over the next 6 - 12 months, delivering the above-mentioned services in collaboration with ECC. We are looking to select 3 Councils per District area (total of 36) to be involved in the pilot and therefore we are seeking expressions of interest.”

On behalf of the Council, the Town Clerk has expressed an interest without commitment and subject to the receipt of more detailed information.

Cllr CC Pond has already raised concerns at an ECC full council meeting and will provide an oral report for members.

The Council is asked to NOTE the report.

## Agenda item 8

### Reports from Members on Outside Organisations

#### i) **Epping Forest District Citizens' Advice meeting held on Thursday 19 July 2018**

Following the recent death of Tony Jennings it was agreed that a legacy from him would be spent on office equipment for the Epping Bureau where he worked for a long time. His death has left Epping short of debt advisers and this is being addressed along with the urgent need for training in Universal Credit.

The 2018-19 Objectives from EFDC are not possible to achieve as follows –

1. EFDC have been unable to secure additional external funding to the level required by EFDC.
2. EFDC are unable to provide a monthly advice session at Ongar due to lack of funds and very few clients.
3. This is also the case for the course proposed for Norway House. Residents do not want to attend.
4. Having contacted all the local secondary schools they do not want the CAB to deliver financial awareness training to pupils.

This shows that those setting the objectives do not have realistic expectations of the CAB and its work. Members of the team were to attend the Overview & Scrutiny Committee when they hope to be able to raise these issues.

Chigwell Parish Council was unable to offer any financial assistance last year as the CAB applied too late so they applied early this year and Chigwell decided they didn't want to offer any support.

There is some funding available via Essex for Trading Standards problems as this is no longer available at ECC level. It is £75 per client seen in this respect. There may also be funding for mental health clients.

The new managers at both Loughton and Epping have settled in well. All offices are also up-to-date with the GDPR changes. Waltham Abbey has received a donation of office equipment from a grateful client but their offices are in a poor condition.

Cllr Jill Angold-Stephens

#### ii **Voluntary Action Epping Forest – 12 September 2018**

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting was held on 12 September 2018 at Epping Hall and opened by Cllr Richard Basset, Chairman of Epping Forest District Council. Gill Mann, the chairman, and Jacqui Foile, chief officer, presented their annual reports for 2017/18.

VAEF continues to provide support to the local voluntary and community sector. The charity provides funding assistance and a weekly information bulletin. Members of staff have played an active part in the sector by ensuring that the views on health and wellbeing, social care, the ageing population, young people's issues and general community matters are shared and represented.

Acting as an umbrella organisation, VAEF also maintains the Essex Connects database, a searchable directory of groups and community services. It continues to run the Gardening Service for people physically unable to do so themselves and in partnership with EFDC, provides a handyman service for council tenants who are over 60 and/or disabled.

VAEF has received two awards, the ECC Corporate Social Responsibility Award for the Supported Volunteering Learning Disabilities Project and the High Sheriff Essex Against Crime Cup for security and safety work.

At the end of March 2018, the offices moved from the base in Homefield House, Epping, and now have a base in Thornwood.

In 2018/19, the focus will be on assisting the community with activities linked to improving emotional and mental wellbeing including an innovation – working with ACE Weight Management to offer weekly weigh-in sessions and advice.

The support of Loughton Town Council is acknowledged in the Annual Report, a copy of which is available from the Town Council Offices on request.

Town Clerk

**iii Local Councils' Liaison Committee** – 10 September 2018 – Cllrs C C Pond and Wixley and the Town Clerk

This Committee, which now only meets twice a year, is chaired by the Chairman of Epping Forest District Council. Cllr Chris Pond was elected Vice-Chairman for 2018/19.

Topics discussed included:

- a. **Community Champions** – a partnership with the voluntary sector.  
EFDC is looking for people who are passionate about where they live to help improve resilience. They should be already involved in the community, keen to support and promote local events and be a welcoming face. The popular 'winter warmer' events rotate around the district with forthcoming dates in Epping, Ongar, Fyfield and Nazeing. Currently at the recruitment stage, EFDC will provide training and support to the volunteers.
- b. **Changes to planning delegations**  
Simon Hill, Assistant Director (Governance), reported on the changes, confirming that EFDC was not seeking to diminish the role of local councils in the planning process. These changes were in the 'context of the Local Plan' and the 'need to meet targets and plan workflow'.

If local councils felt strongly enough about an application, they should be prepared to speak at an Area Plans Sub-Committee to make their case. In addition to notifying a planning officer, speakers must also register with Democratic Services by 4.00 p.m. on the day before the meeting. District councillors wishing to ensure an application was considered by the Sub-Committee were reminded that they only had four weeks from the date of publication to make their request.

Members were also advised to contact the case officer if any applications which pre-dated these changes were yet to be decided.

A review after the first twelve months was promised.

- c. **Air quality**  
Further to the last meeting, EFDC had issued a press notice advertising that fines would be issued for motorists idling near to school gates but there had been no further action on this. Simon Hill was asked to provide a report on enforcement issues in this regard.

**d. Local Plan update**

The Plan had not yet been submitted owing to the judicial review which although unsuccessful had been followed by an appeal. The original injunction preventing the submission remained in place. However, the policies in the draft Plan were already being applied.

Revisions to the NPPF had been introduced in July 2018. EFDC had until 24 January 2019 to submit the Plan for it to be assessed against the original framework.

The revised NPPF gave more weight to design elements. Consequently, large scale developments were being evaluated by a 'quality review panel' (an elite panel of experts chaired by Peter Maxwell of the London Legacy Board). This enabled them to be 'vetted' on submission. The costs were met by the developers.

Development Management Forums were being held to engage with the community at an early stage. These were run by EFDC and allowed planning issues to be aired, (e.g. the Quinn Estates development at North Weald).

Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Mitigation Strategy: work is underway to finalise an Action Plan to mitigate the impact of large developments within 3.2km of the Forest from increased recreational pressure. Currently there is a freeze on such planning applications until the impact is known.

The next meeting of this Committee will be on Monday 11 March 2019.

Town Clerk

**iv EALC 73<sup>rd</sup> AGM & Conference** – 20 September 2018 in Great Dunmow – Cllr Wixley and Assistant Town Clerk

The President Cllr John Jowers opened the AGM and following the confirmation of the minutes of the 2017 meeting invited Chairman, Cllr Peter Davey, to present the annual report.

Treasurer Cllr David McPherson-Davis presented the accounts for the year 2017/18. A request for a two per cent rise in the EALC affiliation fees for 2019 was approved.

The membership also approved Mr Maurice Howard CIPFA to continue as Auditor for the following year.

A motion proposed by Cllr Linda Belgrove on behalf of the Tendring Association of Local Councils was passed as follows:

*If a town or parish council has a dispute with its principal authority the only way to progress its complaint, if local discussion or remedy fails is:*

- (1) *where negligence, incompetence, misinterpretation of law or policy has taken place, the only legal recourse is a Judicial Review; or*
- (2) *where suspected criminal negligence or where there is evidence of corruption or cronyism, a complaint to the Police is the only action that can be taken.*

*Both of these can be very costly.*



*The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman advises that Section 27(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1974 precludes it from investigating complaints from public bodies.*

*Therefore the EALC requests that NALC takes up this issue with the government to repeal that part of the section that currently prevents matters such as above, emanating from a town or parish council being dealt with by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.*

In addition to the formalities of the AGM, there were presentations from:

- Mike Gogarty, Director at Essex County Council of Wellbeing, Public Health & Communities on Developing the Role of the Parish Sector;
- Clive Emmett, Chief Officer, Council for Voluntary Service Uttlesford, on a Green Matters Project.
- Cllr David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council on Localism and subsidiarity.

The conference concluded with the annual awards presentations.

Assistant Town Clerk

**v Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve Consultative Group – 12 September 2018**

Cllr Wixley has provided the following copy of the minutes of this meeting for information.

Present

Mike Poole (EWT), Abigail Oldham (EFDC Countrycare), Roger Warner (Friends and Walkers of Roding Valley Meadows), Adrian and Dorothy Liddle (Roding Valley Horse Riders), Nicky Fuller (Oakwood Hill Estates Resident Association), Cllr David Wixley (Loughton Town Council), Cllr Jane Forker-Clark (Buckhurst Hill Parish Council), Barry Scrutton (GFCT)

- 1) Welcome and introductions
- 2) Apologies for Absence – Catherine Mercer (Essex Wildlife Trust), Judy Adams (EWT Local Group), Ken Adams (Essex Botanical Society)
- 3) Election of Chair – Nicky Fuller agreed to be Chair for the meeting.
- 4) Matters arising from previous meeting 07/03/2018: AO updated the group on the £50,000 grant from EA to plant trees along the river bank through the recreation ground. Planning has been granted subject to plans being finalised, but DW raised concerns about changes to Loughton Brook. AO advised that a site meeting would soon be taking place and DW will be invited along.

AO also updated on the fly-tip eyesore on the reserve. The owner has been prosecuted once and has put up some sheeting to hide the site from view but is now due in court again.

- 5) Matters arising from Working Group and Management Group meetings – not held due to recruitment of new Landscape Conservation Area Manager. An appointment has now been made and they should be starting soon.

- 6) Ranger's Report – DW asked why dock was pulled from the meadows along with ragwort and thistles. MP explained that dock was a negative indicator species which can take over if left. It is also unpalatable to livestock and so isn't wanted in the hay.

MP went through Ranger's Report, outlining volunteer work including the Learning Disabilities Conservation Group from VAEF who are planning to start coming once a week, and are working towards a certificate in conservation work. MP outlined main areas of work; hay cutting had been completed with bale numbers down on previous years, mainly due to the weather. A successful corporate volunteer day was held with UK Power Networks who replaced bridges on the reserve, and new steps had been installed near Andrew's Pond on a slippery slope. Forest Fun days held during holidays have been successful and well attended. The reserve has again been awarded a Green Flag, MP would look in to getting a flag pole to display the flag, and whether planning permission would be required.

- 7) Work plan – MP picked out some work which will be taking place next year. Following a visit from Natural England, EWT are being allowed to do some early cuts across some of the flood meadows to combat grasses which are becoming too dominant. This has not been allowed in the past due to HLS restrictions, but a derogation is being applied for to allow some early cuts over the next two years. MP was asked about the hydrology study in the work plan; MP explained this was to look at ways of keeping the fen area wetter, as previous attempts had been unsuccessful. Funding is being sought to undertake a new study to look at options.
- 8) Upcoming major works – Fencing work was successfully completed across around half of the reserve, making the fields much more stock proof.
- 9) Grazing – MP updated that further fencing work was planned across the reserve to make other areas of the reserve more stock proof.
- 10) Recommendations to take forward to WG/MC – None.
- 11) Any other business – MP updated on plans for the car park next to the reserve at Oakwood Hill. Although EWT were unfortunately not part of the original consultation, Natural England had raised concerns about increased footfall having a detrimental effect on the SSSI. The council have offered to provide some funding to build a surfaced path across part of the reserve to direct people when on site, reducing traffic across the SSSI itself. This is currently being discussed by EWT staff.
- 12) Next meeting – 13 March at 7pm.

**vi) Epping Forest Consultative Committee**

The following items were referred to in the Superintendent's report.

- Epping Forest has again been awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award for its 'top facilities and excellent use of green space' and the Green Heritage Award in recognition of its historic features and the high standard of conservation. It has continued to receive both the Green Flag Award and Green Heritage Award since 2003.

- The Football Foundation has provided a grant of £34,777 to enable the City Corporation to develop Parklife hub plans for Wanstead Flats football to a feasibility stage.
- Fly tipping incidents continue to rise with roadsides being the most vulnerable locations. Joint enforcement operations with Essex Police and EFDC have targeted those requiring waste transfer licences in an attempt to reduce fly tipping in the Forest.
- Hot summer weather had an obvious impact on the Forest. At least 37 fires were recorded in the four month period with the worst being that on Wanstead Flats with over 60 acres damaged. The majority of incidents were related to arson and disposable BBQs.
- Local Plan – a Special Area of Conservation Mitigation Strategy is to be put before EFDC.
- End of school term celebrations caused antisocial behaviour incidents in the Forest with drink and drugs. Discussions have been held with the local schools.
- Arrangements for the London Borough of Waltham Forest's use of Chingford Plain for an opening event for the inaugural year of the London Borough of Culture on 1st January 2019 are in hand
- Woodredon Estate properties are now 'under offer' but the land has been retained under leasehold to enable the City of London to retain control.

A copy of the agenda with the supporting reports may be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ax8ndu>

Town Clerk

**vii Tree Wardens**

The most recent meeting was held on 2 October 2018 was attended by:

Kevin Mason, Chairman (now retired from EFDC Countrycare but continuing as a TW volunteer and co-ordinator).

Abigail Oldham, Countrycare

Robin Hellier, EFDC Tree Officer

Steve Mayhew, EFDC Street Tree Officer

12 Tree Wardens including two relatively new TW's from Loughton.

We were shown an interesting film which lasted for approximately 45 minutes called "New Light Through Old Windows". The title of the film didn't seem to me to have a connection with the subject matter which was Urban Forestry referring to the importance of trees in expanding urban environments brought about by the worldwide increase in population. The film highlighted some interesting human relationships with trees such as tree dressing, apparently started in Shropshire in 1660 and supported by Charles II, and that a third of local authorities have no tree strategy which is concerning if, as predicted, 60% of the world's urban areas have yet to be built by 2030.

The meeting continued with various reports from Tree Officers and Tree Wardens but of particular interest to me was that I've noticed that a number of street trees planted in Loughton during the last planting season appear to have died as a result of the long dry Summer.

Of particular concern is that two of the three Scots Pine trees planted opposite The Broadway as replacements for the landmark Corsican Pine, which was lost to the road widening project, appear to have died. Steve Mayhew had watered these trees but strictly speaking they are not EFDC's responsibility as that appears to rest with the contractor for the road widening project and for a period of 5 years from the completion of the scheme, after which responsibility then passes to EFDC.

Arrangements for replacing these trees, should they die within the 5 year period, seems unclear but is something that I intend to pursue should that happen.

SM reported that he had 112 new street trees for planting in the current planting season. This is a reduction in numbers from previous years. He confirmed that a dead street tree in Avondale Drive, Loughton, which has recently been cut down would have, as I suspected, been planted when that part of the town was developed for housing in the mid-1930s. Some of those original trees are still healthy but their numbers are declining.

Robin Hellier reported on the extra work that would be generated by the creation of the Garden Town (as part of the Local Plan) and that extra tree officers may be engaged to cope with the work.

As usual I can supply members with the minutes of the meeting when I receive them, should any members request them.

Cllr Wixley

**Agenda item 11  
Accounts and Audit 2017/18**

**Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2017/18**

In respect of **Loughton Town Council EX0166**

**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 2018; 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 2017/18**

Except for the matters reported below, on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR 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.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review as unpaid direct debits as at the year end of £598 have been incorrectly included as reconciling items in the bank reconciliation. The figures in Section 2, Box 8 should read £866,741 and the value of the unpaid direct debits should feature as another reconciling item between Boxes 7 and 8. Please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR.

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

**3 External auditor certificate 2017/18**

We 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 2018.

External Auditor Name

**PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP**

External Auditor Signature

*PKF Littlejohn LLP*

Date

18/09/2018

\* Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews for 2017/18 in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website ([www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk))

**Agenda item 11 cont'd**

**Extract from the appeal letter sent by the Town Clerk:**

*I am in receipt of your report and certificate for 2017/18 and wish to appeal the matter raised.*

1. *The auditor's comment in Section 2 refers to unpaid direct debits as at the year-end of £598. However, the bank reconciliation you will have on file with the Council's papers shows only two such payments of £552.95 and £34.98 totalling £587.93 (£588). Please explain the £10 discrepancy in your figures.*
2. *Attached are copies of the two relevant invoices which clearly show that these direct debits were scheduled to have been called for on 29 March and 30 March respectively. Whilst I acknowledge there may have been a processing delay owing to the Easter Bank Holidays this year, the accounting of these two payments in the 2017/18 financial year rather than showing them as creditors was, I consider to be, the correct method, a view supported by the Council's internal auditor, Auditing Solutions. I would therefore be grateful if you could provide a copy of PKF Littlejohn's guidelines as to the treatment of direct debits.*

*The 'Notice of conclusion of audit' and certified AGAR will now be displayed as required. However, in view of the above information I would be grateful if you could undertake a review and reconsider this matter at your earliest convenience.*

*I await your response.*

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**Extract from PKF Littlejohn's response:**

*I have reviewed the file. You are correct that the two direct debits total £588, not £598. This was an error on our part and the report should have read:*

*The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review as unpaid direct debits as at the year end of £588 have been incorrectly included as reconciling items in the bank reconciliation. The figures in Section 2, Box 8 should read £866,731 and the value of the unpaid direct debits should feature as another reconciling item between Boxes 7 and 8. Please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR.*

*Please accept our apologies for the error.*

*Our guidelines, supplied by the NAO regarding DDs and SOs are that as these transactions are not generated by individual instructions for each payment, they are not considered to be banking transactions until the payment comes out of the bank. On this basis it is therefore not correct for DD's and SO's to be part of the bank reconciliation, they should be included as creditors and form part of the reconciliation between Boxes 7 and 8 on the AGAR.*

*You may wish to post this email along with the AGAR to explain the situation.*