

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 13
Details	Report on General Power of Competence
Purpose of Report	To decide whether to adopt the general power of competence
Power/authority	Localism Act 2011, ss. 1-8 – power for an eligible council to do anything subject to statutory prohibitions, restrictions and limitations
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that Members resolve to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopt the general power of competence

1. Introduction

The powers of a town or parish council are set out in legislation. A council may choose to use all, some or none of those powers but if there is no power to take a particular action then it is unlawful. However, if a council meets certain criteria it may resolve to adopt the general power of competence

2. General power of competence

The general power of competence enables a local authority to do anything that individuals generally may do.

However, a local council is only eligible to invoke the general power if:

- two-thirds or more of total number of councillors are elected (as opposed to co-opted); and
- the clerk holds one of several qualifications, as defined by regulations

Such eligibility must be confirmed by resolution and minuted at a meeting of the council and reaffirmed at each subsequent relevant annual meeting that it remains eligible.

2. Current Position

Whilst the Council has held the general power of competence in the past it was not able to retain it at the last elections in 2019 as there was no clerk in post at that time. Since

then, due to a number of resignations that have resulted in co-options, rather than elections, the number of elected members has been below the two-thirds threshold.

However, as the Council now has an appropriately qualified clerk and as result of the 2023 election, the Council, if it so chooses, can resolve to adopt said power

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members resolve to:

- adopt the general power of competence

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 15
Details	Report on Council’s budgetary position at conclusion of Q4 2022-23
Purpose of Report	To note the Council’s financial position as at the 2022-23 year end, including annual financial statement of allotments
Power/authority	Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 & Seaton Town Council Financial Regulations
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the year end position • note the year end position as regards allotment income and expenditure • note earmarked reserves

1. Background

As required by the Council’s Financial Regulations, statements of all receipts and payments as against the annual budget should be presented regularly to the Council. This enables underspends to be identified and adjustments made where Members believe funds could be more appropriately allocated and ensures that Members are kept updated on any material variances (ie those in excess of 15% of the requisite budget).

Attached, as Appendix 1 to this report, Members will find details of all income and expenditure which shows expenditure as at 31 March 2023. At the year end, expenditure stood at 94.3% of budget which indicates accurate financial forecasting for the requisite period.

Additionally, the Council regularly review the need for existing earmarked reserves and whether these should be adjusted. This is also addressed in the report.

2. Income – Q4

The majority of the Council's income is derived from the precept - which is payable by EDDC in two installments in April and September. However, during the last financial year, the Council has had some success in securing grant funding and also increasing the income generated from its land and buildings, which explains why actual income, as against anticipated income, stands at 109.8%.

3. Material variances in excess of 15%

Throughout the financial year, in line with the Council's Financial Regulations, the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) reports any material variances in terms of over or underspends in excess of 15%, along with proposals for virements where considered appropriate. At the year end, the RFO has to report material variances to the external auditor.

4. Allotments

As part of its asset register, the Council's owns and manages 105 allotments. These are all let and there is a waiting list in excess of 50 people. At the end of each year, the Council prepares a simple income and expenditure schedule, detailing expenditure for the year, as against income. At year end, EMR 333 Allotments is adjusted to reflect any deficit or surplus. As at 31 March 2023, income for 2022-23 stood at £2,885 and expenditure (including a notional administration charge of £1,000) stood at £3,877 making a deficit of £1,008 as detailed in the attached statement at Appendix 2.

5. Earmarked Reserves

A summary of monies held in earmarked reserves is attached as Appendix 3.

6. Summary

On the basis of the Council's financial position at the end of Q4, the Council's budget for financial year 2022-23 was on target, with increased income and expenditure on budget.

7. Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members:

- note the year end position
- note the year end position as regards allotment income and expenditure
- note earmarked reserves



Julia Mutlow
Town Clerk
Seaton Town Council
The Marshlands Centre
Harbour Road
Seaton
EX12 2LT

17th April 2023

Dear Julia,

Report on Internal Audit carried out on 17 April 2023

An audit was carried out by Kevin Rose on Monday 17 April 2023. This was the Year End audit following on from the Interim Internal Audit carried out on 21 November 2022.

The audit was undertaken using our standard IAC Audit Checklist, used for all Local Councils, which has 198 items. A total of 45 items were tested during this audit. Including the items tested during the Interim Internal Audit visit a total of 151 items have been checked during the financial year a further 47 items on the standard Checklist were checked and confirmed as being Not Applicable to your Council. There were no items unchecked at the year end.

Areas subject to audit were;

the payment system (Box B), risk and insurance (Box C), budget and precept setting and monitoring (Box D), income billing, collection and VAT (Box E), payroll (Box G), assets and investments (Box H), bank reconciliations (Box I), and accounting Statements (Box J).

Of the 45 items tested during this audit a Positive response was obtained in respect of 43 tests. There were 2 Negative responses identified, details of which are set out in the attached Year End Internal Audit Observations. A detailed breakdown of our audit testing and Responses is set out in the attached Year End Internal Audit Summary.

I can confirm that none of the Observations raised during the year will give rise to a Negative response in the year end Internal Audit Report.

IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd.
Registered in England No 09753929 VAT Reg No 220 6715 38
23 Westbury Road , Yarnbrook, Wiltshire, BA14 6AG
Email: admin@audit-iac.com Tel:01225 775511

I would like to express my thanks for the assistance provided to me during my audit.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Rose". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and a stylized "Rose".

Kevin Rose ACMA
Director

The Clerk
Seaton Town Council
Marshlands Centre
Harbour Road
Seaton
Devon
EX12 2LT

17-Apr-23

Explanation of "Not Covered" responses

Further to our Internal Audit of your Council for the financial year 2022/23 I am pleased to submit the signed Internal Report for your Annual Return. We have completed our work and I can confirm that we have not given a Negative response for any of the Internal Control Objectives.

You will note that we have given 'Not Covered' responses in respect of Control Objective K, L and O and we are required to explain why we have done this.

- *The reason for the "Not Covered" response for Objective K is that it is not applicable to your Council as the Council did not certify itself exempt from limited assurance review for the 2021/22 financial year.*
- *The reason for the Not Covered response for Objective L as your 'annual turnover' exceeds £25,000 and you are therefore not subject to the publication requirements of the Transparency Code.*
- *The reason for the Not Covered response for Objective O as it is our understanding that the Council does not act as Trustee.*

The External Auditor may query why we have responded 'Not Covered' and, if so, you should provide them with a copy of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Rose ACMA
Director

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Seaton Town Council

<https://seaton.gov.uk/>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 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	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 bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
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 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.			✓
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)</i> .	✓		
O. (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

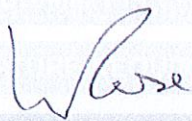
Name of person who carried out the internal audit

14/04/2022

21/11/2022

Kevin Rose - IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

17/04/2023

***If the response is 'no' please 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).**

Seaton Town Council Financial Year 2022-23

Year End Internal Audit Observations



IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd

Audit date: 17 April 2023

C This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

No.	Audit Test	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Council has formally documented Internal Controls	Council has not formally documented Internal Controls	Council should formally document its Internal Controls.	Medium	Whilst all internal controls are documented within the Council's Financial Regulations, it is accepted that a separate internal controls document should be adopted.
2	The Council, meeting as a whole, has reviewed the effectiveness of its internal control system as required by Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015	The Council has not reviewed the effectiveness of its internal control system as required by Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.	Council to note the requirement for it to regularly review its internal control system.	High	Please see comment above. This will be rectified and an internal controls document presented for adoption at the next meeting of the Council on 15 May 2023.

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.

No.	Audit Test	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Deductions have been properly paid over to HMRC	Council does not have a process to review and confirm the balance on HMRC PAYE account each year. It was noted that in the prior year this information was provided to the Internal Auditor from East Devon payroll services who have access to the Councils HMRC account.	Council to put in place a process for the review and confirmation of the PAYE balance recorded with HMRC. This should be carried out at the end of each financial year.	Medium	Seaton Town Council (STC) has entered into a service level agreement with East Devon District Council, to deal with all matters pertaining to STC's payroll, HMRC and LGPS and reports are provided to the Town Clerk on a monthly basis. The Town Clerk will make arrangements to access the HMRC Report at the end of each year.

Seaton Town Council



Interim Audit Date: 21/11/2022

Year End Audit Date 17/04/2023

Internal Audit Summary 2022-23

(shaded Internal Control Objectives are not applicable to your Council)

Internal Control Objective	Negative Analysis				Responses			Recommendations		
	Non - Compliance	High	Medium	Low	Advisory	Positive	Negative		N/A	Not Checked
A <i>Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
B <i>This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	32	0	7	0	0
C <i>This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.</i>	0	1	2	0	0	8	3	1	0	3
D <i>The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	1	0	0
E <i>Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.</i>	0	1	3	0	0	20	2	3	0	4
F <i>Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	0	0
G <i>Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.</i>	0	0	2	0	0	16	1	8	0	2
H <i>Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	4	0	0
I <i>Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	2	0	0
J <i>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.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	4	0	0
K <i>If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2020/21 AGAR tick "not covered"</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
L <i>If the authority has an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000, it publishes information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the Transparency code for smaller authorities.</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	N/A	N/A

2022-23 Internal Audit Seaton Town Council

Internal Control Objective		Negative Analysis					Responses				
		Non - Compliance	High	Medium	Low	Advisory	Positive	Negative	N/A	Not Checked	Recommendations
M	The authority, during the previous year (2021/22) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	0	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	1
N	The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	1	0	0
O	(For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	N/A
Total		0	3	2	0	0	143	8	47	0	10

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 Form 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 Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 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** **must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** **must** 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 on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2023**.
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 2023**. 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 2023
 - 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 2022/23

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 the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2023 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 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2023 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 Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *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 AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2023.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR 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 bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then 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 2022) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2023).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage 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 2023**.

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?	N/A	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	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 been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023 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.	N/A	

* *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 2022/23

Seaton Town Council

<https://seaton.gov.uk/> OR PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 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	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 bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
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 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.			✓
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)</i> .	✓		
O. (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).

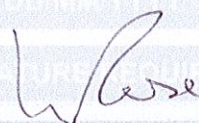
Date(s) internal audit undertaken

14/04/2022 21/11/2022

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Kevin Rose - IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

17/04/2023

***If the response is 'no' please 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 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

SEATON TOWN 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 2023, 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:

15/05/2023

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

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE ADDRESS www.seaton.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	292,542	356,583	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	356,939	389,187	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	43,339	53,245	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	150,374	198,456	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	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	185,863	191,187	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	356,583	409,372	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	349,933	395,579	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	353,437	362,284	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	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 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

Date

10/05/2023

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

15/05/2023

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’s Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>.

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 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2022/23

(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 2022/23

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 2023.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

Explanation of variances – pro forma

Name of council authority:
County Area (local councils, and parish meetings only)

Seaton
Devon

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);
- New from 2020/21 onwards: variances of £100,000 or more require explanation regardless of the % variation year on year;
- 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).

	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	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	392,542	356,583					
2 Precept or Rates and Levies	356,939	389,187	32,248	9.03%	NO		
3 Total Other Receipts	43,339	53,245	9,906	22.86%	YES		The Council's overall Other receipts for 2022/23 increased by £9,906 over the previous year. In 2022/23 the Council received a one-off £12,000 licence fee from a third party as a fee for permitting them to locate a data cabinet on the Council's land, which was £11,000 more than had been received in 2021-22, for the use of the Council's land and this provides the overall reason for the variance. Whilst there are other small variations up and down in different budget lines which account for the remainder, this explains the reason for the substantive variance.
4 Staff Costs	150,374	198,456	48,082	31.97%	YES		In April 2022, the Council recruited an additional member of staff, and the salary, employer NIC and LGPS contributions account for the substantive part of the variance. The remainder relates to the national pay award made to all staff in 2022/23 which, in total, amounted to £8,480.
5 Loan Interest/Capital Repayment	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		
6 All Other Payments	185,863	191,787	5,924	2.86%	NO		
7 Balances Carried Forward	356,583	409,372			NO	VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED	
8 Total Cash and Short Term Investments	349,933	395,579				VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED	
9 Total Fixed Assets plus Other/Long Term Investments and	353,437	362,294	8,847	2.50%	NO		
10 Total Borrowings	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		

Rounding errors of up to £2 are tolerable

Variances of £200 or less are tolerable

CONFIRMATION OF THE DATES OF THE PERIOD FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS

Name of smaller authority: **SEATON TOWN COUNCIL**

County Area (local councils and parish meetings only): **DEVON**

On behalf of the smaller authority, I confirm that the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights are as follows:

Commencing on **Monday, 5 June 2023**

and ending on **Friday, 14 July 2023**

(Please enter the dates set by the smaller authority as appropriate which must be 30 working days (i.e. Monday – Friday only, and not Bank Holidays) inclusive and must include the first 10 working days of July 2023 (i.e. Monday 3 July – Friday 14 July).

We have suggested the following dates: Monday 5 June – Friday 14 July 2023. The latest possible dates that comply with the statutory requirements are Monday 3 July – Friday 11 August 2023.)

Signed: _____

Role: TOWN CLERK

This form is only for use by smaller authorities subject to a review:

Please submit this form to PKF Littlejohn LLP with the AGAR Form 3 and other requested documentation – this form is not for publication on your website.

Photo ID required for local elections on 4 May

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station in some elections. This new requirement will apply for the first time in England at the local elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.

The new rules will apply to:

Local elections
Police and Crime Commissioner elections
UK parliamentary by-elections
Recall petitions

From October 2023, the new requirements will also apply to any future UK General elections.

In Devon, there are district, town and parish council elections on Thursday 4 May, so you will need an accepted form of photo ID if you want to vote in person.

Spring COVID-19 booster programme now underway

People across Devon will be able to book their Spring coronavirus booster jab from Wednesday 5 April.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) confirmed last month that there would be a spring coronavirus booster programme. They advise that it should be offered to adults aged 75 years and over, residents in care homes, for older adults and individuals aged 5 and over who are immunosuppressed. People invited should make sure their appointment takes place at least three months since their last dose.

The NHS will contact you when it's your turn to be vaccinated. There are different ways you can get a COVID-19 vaccine booster, including booking online, attending a walk-in site or at a local NHS service such as your GP.

New emergency alert system launched by UK Government

You may have heard in the news that the UK Government's new Emergency Alerts system is now live. The system will enable people to be contacted through their mobile phone if their lives are at risk in an emergency. The service will be used to warn you about life-threatening emergencies, for example severe flooding. Emergency Alerts are messages sent to all compatible 4G and 5G mobile phones when there's a danger to your life, health or property in the area you're located. They don't need your location or phone number and only the Government and the

emergency services can send them. If you don't have a mobile, you'll still be kept informed through other channels.

There will be a UK-wide test of the Emergency Alerts system taking place on Sunday 23 April 2023. If you have a compatible phone, you will receive a welcome message. You do not need to do anything when you receive it, as it's just a test to ensure the service is working effectively.

Every penny of the extra £9.4m will be spent making our roads more resilient.

Every penny of the extra £9.4 million for Devon, announced in the Chancellor's budget recently, will be spent on improving our roads and making them more resilient. In addition, a further £5.5bn of funding for Highways maintenance was announced on the 31st of March. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-street-works-regime-to-clamp-down-on-pothole-pain>

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced the extra cash specifically to fund vital highways maintenance. Most of it will go towards the Local Area Capital Programmes, which will reflect local priorities identified through myself as County Councillor and the local Neighbourhood Highway Officer.

Using inspections and survey data, the remaining funding will be directed to preventative works to stop potholes forming in the first place. Prolonged spells of very wet weather and freezing road temperatures this winter have been hugely detrimental to the condition of our 8,000-mile road network. To tackle it, over the past few months, we doubled the number of pothole teams, introduced weekend working and extended working hours across the network. That resulted in up to 2,200 potholes being repaired each week.

DCC has secured additional funding to help households weather the rising costs of living, to help pay for food, energy, and other essential items.

This is the fourth tranche of the government's Household Support Fund that we've been able to secure. The latest bid amounts to just over £10 million, to cover the period from April 2023 until March 2024. It will take Devon's total level of Household Support Funding received so far to just over £25 million.

The funding is to support households most in need and are struggling to pay for food, energy, water bills and other related essentials. Specifically, those households that may not be eligible for other support that is already available from the government will be targeted as they often fall through the cracks.

We must submit plans mid-May to the Department of Work and Pensions, setting out how we, with Team Devon and other voluntary and community partners, will make the latest funding available to residents. Plans are expected to include:

- Continuation of food vouchers during school holidays to support families in receipt of free school meals. Over 20,000 children in Devon were eligible for these vouchers previously.
- Support for the early help service providing financial support to low-income households towards food, energy bills and other essentials.
- Energy vouchers for those on low incomes with pre-paid meters, targeted through Citizens Advice East Devon.

The Household Support Fund is one aspect of the support that councils across the county are making available to households. For further information about the range of support available please visit <https://www.devon.gov.uk/cost-of-living/>

Devolution deal for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay moves a step closer.

A new deal that will transfer money and powers into the hands of local Leaders across Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay, has moved a step closer with the backing of the Government's Levelling Up Minister, Dehenna Davison.

Outline approval has been given for a Devon-wide devolution deal which could bring greater local control and allow partners to tap into additional resources to help tackle key local priorities, such as affordable housing, better public transport, as well as providing for the skills that the local economy needs.

The deal won't require a change to the established democratic structures across the area, or the need for an elected Mayor. Instead, new powers can be devolved to a partnership of existing local councils who would deliver on a joint programme working alongside a wide range of other local stakeholders.

Local partners across Devon have now been invited to work together to prepare a final business case to present to Government for approval later in the year. Any final deal would require local consent with the full agreement of all the constituent councils as well as Parliamentary approval.

END

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 21
Details	Town Clerk’s Report
Purpose of Report	To provide a summary of highlights of the ongoing work of Seaton Town Council
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that Members note the summary and work log.

1. Introduction

Each month the Town Clerk presents a summary of all ongoing projects. This is, of course, over and above the general day-to-day operational work being carried out to manage the Council’s assets. Where relevant, substantive reports on some projects also appear as separate items of business on the agenda.

2. Summary of matters to note

- **Governance**
 - **Elections** – the local elections took place on 4 May 2023 and the Council welcomes a new council (including 9 returning councillors and 3 new ones). All councillors have been provided with introductory information and documentation to be completed before they take up office and reminded of their duties as a councillor. Training has also been arranged with the Devon Association of Local Councils. Letters have been sent to all outgoing councillors, thanking them for their service to the town.
 - **Policies** – officers have carried out a comprehensive review of all the Council’s policies and constitutional documents, to ensure their ongoing fitness for purpose and drafted new policies, as considered appropriate.
- **Finance**
 - **Grant applications** – the financial year started positively with three grants being secured. Two, of £1,000 each, from Re:Store, towards the Seaton Summer Celebration and Children’s Festival respectively and a further grant of £600 from South West Water in respect of the STC/EDDC/RNLI water safety initiative. Two further applications have been submitted to the

National Lottery Fund (£9,900) and the Alpkit Foundation (£300) in respect of the Children's Festival/Beach School and decisions are awaited.

- **CCLA** – as resolved by Council, an account has now been set up with the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund and £250,000 deposited therein. The account was established in mid-April and £432.17 interest achieved in on the first two weeks of operation. If performance remains stable, this will provide an additional income in excess of £10,000 per annum.
- **CIL Report 2022-23** – the annual CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) Report has been prepared and submitted to East Devon District Council. CIL contributions currently stand at £7,026.85.
- **2022-23 financial year end** – the Town Clerk prepared the year end and closed down the financial year with RBS Rialtas on 14 April 2023 and the financial year for the Q4 forms part of the agenda. All VAT returns for 2022-23 have been submitted to HMRC. In summary, actual income for the year stood at 109.8% over the projected income and expenditure slightly below the projected expenditure at 94.3%.
- **2022-23 year end internal audit** – the Town Clerk met with the internal auditor on 17 April 2023 who conducted the year end audit with 3 minor observations which have now been rectified and the report is attached as a separate item of business on this agenda.
- **Annual Return (AGAR) 2022-23** -the annual governance statement and accounting statements have been prepared and will be submitted to the external auditor, once approved by the annual meeting of the Council. This is separate item of business on this agenda.
- **Treatment of VAT** –further specialist advice has now been received from the Parkinson Partnership and their report is attached under a separate agenda item.
- **Events**

The Town Council is delivering an extensive schedule of events during 2023, led by the Deputy Clerk:

 - **King Charles III's Coronation** – to commemorate this historic event the Council introduced a simple small grant scheme available to community groups wishing to hold mark the occasion. In total 5 grants were made, totalling £1,342:
 - *Gateway Theatre Company – live screening of Coronation*
 - *Gateway Theatre Company – live screening of Coronation Concert*
 - *Seaton Primary School PTFA – t-shirt painting in Windsor Gardens*
 - *Seaton PCC – flowers and refreshments*

- *Seaton Memory Café – fish and chip lunch* – a thank you letter is attached as Appendix 1.

Additionally, officers compiled leaflets and posters detailing all events happening over the Coronation weekend, of which the Council were notified, and distributed these across the town. Finally, 1,500 packets were filled with wildflower seeds with an STC/Coronation logo and distributed to Seaton's children via the primary schools and nurseries and to St. Gregory's as part of the Flower Festival. A Beach Clean was organised, in conjunction with Surfers Against Sewage, for the 'Big Help Out', national day of volunteering on the Coronation weekend. The Council made a contribution to Pebbles towards their kind provision of hot drinks after the Beach Clean and provided chocolate to all youngsters who participated.

- **Seaton Summer Celebration** – since the last update, a further has been the town's community groups and the Deputy Clerk has been liaising with them closely in planning their involvement in the day's itinerary. Some 18 groups & organisations will be taking part. Officers have worked closely with some exceptional volunteers – Simon Durrant (booking the 4 live acts), Marek Steven (publicity) and Andrew Gwyn Davies (risk assessments and general logistics). A temporary event notice application has been explored and agreed with EDDC than none is required, due to exceptions permitted by the relevant legislation for certain licensable activities arranged by local authorities. The infrastructure (WCs/bins/PA system/stage) have all been booked along with an ice cream van and circus skills workshop. Volunteer stewards need to be recruited and the design of the posters and banners to promote the event is close to completion.
- **Seaton Children's Festival** – the infrastructure for this event has now been booked along with activities including a craft cabin, science workshops, a magician, walkabout balloon modelling, outdoor games, circus skills, a pop-up Seaton Beach School. Community groups will also participate in this event and will offer activities such as storytelling, slime making, coconut shy, popcorn stand. Discussions are ongoing regarding offering Warhammer and music activities to attract older children.
- **Seaton Jurassic Weekend** – the Seaton Children's Festival will be complemented by a Jurassic-themed weekend including the annual Outdoor Cinema to mark 30 years since the film *Jurassic Park* was released. Officers are working with Andrew Gwyn Davies and Marek Steven to deliver this.

- **Community engagement** – as part of the planning for the above events, a series of meetings have been held with the town's community groups over recent months. Notes of the last meeting, held on 21 April 2023, are attached as Appendix 2. Additionally, insofar as purdah has permitted, information has been promulgated on the Council's website and Facebook pages.
- **Allotments** – the annual financial statement has now been prepared with £1,008 remaining in the earmarked reserve for allotments. Officers have recently split some of the larger plots vacated during the last year, thereby increasing the total number of allotments from 105 to 110. Notice has been given by 3 tenants and these 3 plots will be reallocated, once the current tenants have vacated. There are currently 55 names on the waiting list. The invoices in respect of allotment fees and water recharges have been issued and sent to all tenants. 95% of invoices have been settled to date.
- **Annual Town Meeting & Annual Report 2022-23** – the ATM was held on Thursday, 23 March 2023. The Town Clerk prepared an Annual Report which was circulated in advance, highlighting the Council's achievements over the preceding 12 months. A copy of the report is appended to this summary as Appendix 3.
- **Bus Shelters** – the Facilities Officer has been working with officers from EDDC and DCC and secured funding for the replacement of all 11 bus shelters in the town.
- **Seaton Beach Watch** – officers have been working closely with the Seaton Neighbourhood Policing Team ('SNPT') to implement this scheme which enables beach hut owners and occupiers to register their details on forms held by the Tourist Information Centre, that will be passed on to the SNPT. The SNPT will also carry the registration forms with them, so beach huts owners / users can register directly with the police if they so wish. It's part of a wider campaign to reduce anti-social behaviour, especially in light of the spate of criminal damage to the beach huts last year. This collaborative project was highlighted a recent report in the Midweek Herald. An information poster is attached as Appendix 3.
- **Beach matting** – in conjunction with EDDC this was laid during the last week in April and The Town Clerk met with a news team from a national daily news show, along with the Council's Disability Champion, Nicky Dack. They will be returning in the Summer to film further when they will broadcast the footage. The matting has been extended this year and the Council has contributed a further £5,000 towards it.
- **Water Safety Awareness Project** – officers have been working with both the Beach Safety Officer at EDDC and RNLI on this initiative. The artwork has been finalised and vinyl signage produced. EDDC will arrange for the circular vinyl

stickers to be attached to all life rings in Seaton and Axmouth Harbour. The A5 vinyl stickers will also be added to existing EDDC signage along the beach and distributed to beach front businesses for display. The Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk met with the Community and Partnerships Manager at Southern Water on 19 April and secured a grant of £600 towards the total cost of £906.

- **Bunting** – with the assistance of Harcombe Engineering, the Town Maintenance Officer has erected the bunting for the Summer season.
- **Seaton Beach School** – the Seaton Beach School Easter sessions were well attended. Extensive discussions and meetings have taken place with EDDC's Events and Beach Safety Officers, who are responsible for the management of the beach, and further comprehensive risk assessments have been produced to ensure all aspects of the beach school activities are conducted in the utmost safety. A fitness licence has now been issued to Seaton Town Council in respect of this initiative.
- **Warm Hub** – the final warm hub took place on 28 March with refreshments and games for all who attended. This initiative has been a huge success with a wide demographic of people attending, including older visitors and young people with their carers. The sessions have been well supported by community enablers and Rachel Cox, social prescriber working alongside Seaton's GPs. It would seem that other reasons for attending are social interaction and general advice on accessing other services and all were asked to complete a questionnaire to enable officers to gather evidence in support of possible future projects, such as a Friendship Hub, to provide an affordable place for residents to go to alleviate loneliness and socially interact with advice available on different issues, from time to time. Research is being conducted into possible grant funding for such an initiative and, depending on the outcome of that research, proposals may be brought to Members in due course.
- **Play Park Inspections** – the annual play park inspections of the Underfleet and Elizabeth Road have been carried out by RoSPA. These annual inspections are a legal requirement and carried out in addition to the weekly inspections carried out by the Town Maintenance Officer. The Town Maintenance Officer has made arrangements with Harcombe Engineering to carry out recommended repairs, as highlighted by the inspections. They have already carried out repairs to some equipment at the Underfleet - the Titan has had shackles, Swiss links, chains and u-bolts replaced and the roundabout has been dismantled and Harcombe are replacing the bearings. Other parts have been ordered from HAGS to repair other equipment.
- **Marshlands** – the building works to be carried out to Marshlands are now scheduled. The Town Clerk & Facilities Officer had a positive meeting and site

visit with DCC Officers regarding the possible future occupation of the Harbour Road-side of the building on 2 May 2023. A further meeting will take place over the next couple of weeks and a joint business case is being prepared for presentation to Members in due course.

- **Seaton Hole Telephone Box** – officers have been working with a local volunteer to strip back, repair and repaint the phone box for use as a small art gallery to raise funds for local projects. Before and after photos are attached at Appendix 5.
- **Youth Project** - research by the Facilities & Projects Officer is ongoing as to the types of activities that might be popular with young people in the town and how this might be funded. A consultation has now been prepared and will be circulated as widely as possible. A report will be brought to Council in due course.
- **Christmas Lights** – Officers have been working on how best to deliver the Christmas lights display going forward, now that the 3-year contract with a lighting supplier has come to an end and proposals for securing in-house Christmas lights, rather than entering into a further 3-year contract, are now included as a separate report on the agenda.
- **Staffing** – all staff appraisals have been carried out. In summary, all staff are working at optimum levels to deliver the Council’s numerous special projects, events, building works and day-to-day operations. Whilst all staff are at capacity in terms of their respective workloads, moral is high, days lost through sickness are extremely low and Team Seaton continues to combine the respective skills of officers to deliver for the town’s community.
- **Training** – staff have undertaken the following training and development since the last meeting:
 - **Town Clerk** – Devon Carers Awareness Training
 - **Deputy Clerk** – Clerk’s Essentials Training – Devon Carers Awareness Training Modules 1 & 3; Module 2 was postponed due to workload and will be undertaken in June.
 - **Facilities Officer** – Devon Carers Awareness Training Facilities Management Diploma (Level 7) – ongoing
 - **Administration & Community Events Officer** – Devon Carers Awareness Training
 - **Town Maintenance Officer** - Devon Carers Awareness Training

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members note the summary.

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 23
Details	Report on Local Council Award Scheme
Purpose of Report	To consider whether the Council should apply for further accreditation under the Local Council Award Scheme
Power/authority	Local Government Act 1972, s111 – power to do anything incidental to discharge of Council’s powers and functions
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve the registration of the Council for the Quality Standard Accreditation • authorise the Town Clerk to undertake such work as is required to prepare the application for the Quality Standard Accreditation • approve the application and registration fees of £180

1. Introduction

The Local Council Award Scheme (‘LCAS’) is conducted by way of a peer review, thereby enabling local councils to demonstrate they meet the standards set for their sector and ensure continued improvement. LCAS is administered by the National Association of Local Councils (‘NALC’).

There are several reasons why a council could benefit from taking part in LCAS. For those councils who are already confident that they perform to a high standard the scheme provides assurance to residents, partner organisations and grant funders that a council is up-to-date and progressive by national professional standards set by the sector.

For those councils who wish to improve, LCAS provides a framework within which to improve performance and public confidence, with policies in place for continuous development.

For all councils winning the award provides public recognition for councillors and officers that their commitment and hard work are recognised and respected.

2. Levels of accreditation

There are three levels under LCAS:

- Foundation Standard
- Quality Standard
- Quality Gold Standard

Members will recall that in September 2021, Members resolved that the Council should seek accreditation under the Local Council Awards Scheme to demonstrate to the public, other councils and stakeholders that it had attained a good standard of governance, accountability, financial management and community engagement. The Foundation Standard was achieved in December 2021.

3. Status of local councils in Devon

There are 363 town and parish councils in Devon.

Currently, 2 have obtained the Foundation Award (including Seaton), 3 have obtained the Quality Award and 2 have obtained the Quality Gold Award.

4. Current Status of Seaton Town Council

Whilst many of the requirements were in place for a higher award at the time the Foundation Standard was achieved, the Council was not in a position to apply for the higher accreditation standards at that stage as it had several co-opted councillors and a requirement of the two higher awards is to have two-thirds of councillors elected. As a result of the 2023 elections, the Council now meets this criterion.

Due to the work the Council has done over the last 3 years in improving its processes and operations generally, the Council is now in a position to apply for Quality Standard Accreditation.

5. Application Process

- 5.1 In order to commence the process, the Council must register its interest in LCAS with NALC and pay a registration fee of £80.

- 5.2 Once the Council is confident that the relevant criteria for the level applied for are in place then a meeting of the Council must confirm the same in a public meeting.
- 5.3 The local panel accreditation co-ordinator must then be contacted, and an application form completed with links to online documents. An accreditation fee of £100 is then payable.
- 5.4 Finally, when the panel is satisfied that it has seen sufficient information it will issue a report with one of three recommendations:
- The award is achieved
 - The award is achieved, but the Council is advised to make small changes
 - A lesser award is achieved
 - The award is not achieved until specific improvements have been made.

6. Costs

The cost of registration and the application fee for the Quality Standard is £180.

7. Summary

As with any Council, officers and councillors constantly review their processes, governance, budgets and efficiency to deliver optimum results for their communities. As it appears that the Council now has the criterion in place to achieve the Quality Standard, it is proposed that the Council registers for the Quality Standard Accreditation, with a view to seeking the Quality Gold Standard in due course.

Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members:

- approve the registration of the Council for the Quality Standard Accreditation
- authorise the Town Clerk to undertake such work as is required to prepare the application for the Quality Standard Accreditation
- approve the application and registration fees of £180

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 24
Details	Progress report on replacement of Seaton’s bus shelters
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on progress regarding the replacement of the town’s bus shelters
Power/authority	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1953, s4 – power to provide and maintain bus shelters on roads or land adjoining roads in the council’s area
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that Members resolve to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the update

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 6 February 2023, the Council considered a review of the town’s bus shelters, and passed the resolutions recommended in the Town Clerk’s report. For Members ease of reference, a copy of that report is attached as appendix 1.

In summary officers were authorized to work in partnership with officers at Devon County Council (DCC) and their suppliers to secure the maximum funding available from a Government funded scheme known as the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This funding stream provides in the region of £14 million for service improvements across the UK. Depending on the outcome officers were further authorized to work with partner authorities to instigate the replacement, improvement, installation and standardization of the town’s bus shelters.

2. Ownership of bus shelters

Since the February meeting, the Facilities Officer has been in discussions with officers at both DCC and East Devon District Council (EDDC) and established that the town’s eleven bus shelters are owned as follows:

Local Authority	Number owned:
EDDC	5

STC	4
EDDC	2

3. Current Progress

On 7 March 2023, the Facilities Officer arranged a meeting with officers from the 3 authorities, a representative of Fernbank Advertising representative and the Chair of the newly formed Seaton Chamber CIC.

Discussions centred around the primary bus shelters in town and site visits re carried out. The Facilities Officer's primary focus was to secure the replacement of all eleven bus shelters, so as to deliver standardization across the town, in materials that withstand Seaton's coastal location and involve the Town Council in no maintenance costs going forward.

Other discussions between the officers of the 3 authorities and the Chamber focused on the 2 bus shelters on Marine Place. The one adjacent to Jubilee Gardens is in STC ownership and DCC Highways officers raised concerns regarding its legality as it does not have the required minimum clearance of 2 metres between the shelter and the adjacent wall. EDDC owns the second shelter outside the Vault.

The Chair of Seaton Chamber presented a drawing to DCC officers that had been produced as part of the seafront enhancement scheme feasibility study suggesting removing both shelters and installing one in an alternative position on the other side of the road, by the flowerbeds.

DCC officers agreed to assess this as a possible alternative. In order to implement this option, the flowerbed (containing the anchor) would have to be reduced in size to accommodate space for two buses. EDDC own the flowerbed and are amenable to this option; however, if it could not be funded via the BSIP grant, then other funding sources would need to be identified.

Currently, discussions are ongoing between all parties and any works would be likely to commence in late Spring/early Summer. However, the flowerbed in Marine Place would be planted for the Summer by that stage, so the Facilities Officer will be suggesting that if the alternative proposal is feasible and funding available, then the works to this shelter should be delayed until the end of the summer season.

An email from DCC has been received stating that, provisionally, that all eleven shelters will be upgraded and funded under the BSIP but are awaiting confirmation from Fernbank Advertising as to start dates for the works.

4. Summary

Due to the efforts of the Facilities Officer, working in partnership with the two principal authorities, it is likely that all eleven bus shelters will be replaced during this financial year, thereby freeing up the Council's allocated budget to replace two of the bus shelters for other projects. This is particularly helpful, in light of the careful budgeting that will be required to come in on target by the end of the financial year.

Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members resolve:

- to note the update

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 25
Details	Report on Seaton in Bloom 2023
Purpose of Report	To consider whether to run Seaton in Bloom in 2023
Power/Authority	<p>Local Government Act 1972, s144 – power to encourage tourism to the council’s area</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972, s111 – power to do anything incidental to discharge of Council’s powers and functions</p> <p>Localism Act 2011, ss1-8 – general power of competence (if adopted)</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the update • agree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ which three councillors will judge the competition; or ○ in the alternative, decide not to run the competition in 2023

1. Background

Seaton in Bloom is an annual competition that has been run by the Council for several years and encourages residents and businesses to plant their gardens and premises to enhance the town generally. This complements the town’s parks and planting across the town, that John Widger is contracted by the Council to undertake.

A poster for the competition in 2022 is attached, for information, as Appendix 1.

In summary, the applications are administered by the Administration & Community Events Officer and then judged by councillors with a presentation for the winners of each

category. Ideally, councillors should form a panel of 3 and view each of the entries together.

2. Seaton in Bloom 2023

Since 2018, the competition has attracted between 14 and 28 entries across all categories and adds a colourful addition to the town. However, whilst popular with keen gardeners in the town, it is a considerable amount of work to advertise and administer and unfortunately, councillors have not always been available to judge the different entries or attend the presentation.

Whilst this is understandable, due to their respective other commitments and/or lack of knowledge on gardening, it also raises the question of whether the Council thinks that scarce staff resources should be spent on the administration of the competition without being certain that councillors are available and willing to co-ordinate a judging panel. Therefore the success or otherwise will be dependent on whether 3 councillors are prepared to commit to judging said competition and other councillors committing to attend the presentation, as if this not possible, then the competition cannot go ahead.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members:

- note the update
- agree:
 - which three councillors will judge the competition; or
 - in the alternative, decide not to run the competition in 2023

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 26
Details	Report on Christmas Lights
Purpose of Report	To consider how the Council should deliver the town’s Christmas lights from 2023 onwards
Power/authority	<p>Local Government Act 1972, s144 – power to encourage tourism to the council’s area</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972, s111 – power to do anything incidental to discharge of Council’s powers and functions</p> <p>Localism Act 2011, ss1-8 – general power of competence (if adopted)</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Members resolve to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve of the disposal of non-functioning lights • approve the proposed purchase of the lights, frames and bulbs detailed in this report • approve the budget virement of £1,000 from the 170/4395 bus shelters code to 227/4840 Christmas lights, should this be required

1. Background

Each year, the Council arranges and funds the hire of the town’s Christmas lights and Christmas tree and the cost of installation and removal of the same. This task is carried out by the Town Maintenance Officer and Harcombe Engineering are engaged to assist.

The Council owns some lights and, since 2020, 10 frames and some icicle lights have been hired under a 3-year contract from a lighting supplier, at a cost of £3,137 + VAT per year. These are delivered each year in November and collected after Christmas.

That contract has now ended and the Council has to decide whether to carry out a tender process resulting in a further 3 year contract or whether to deliver the Christmas lights by some other means.

2. Proposal for 2023 onwards

Over recent months the Town Maintenance Officer has been testing all existing Council-owned lights and investigating, with the help of Harcombe Engineering, whether some old non-working frames could be refurbished calculating what further lights would need to be purchased to provide the annual display. A quotation has also been sought from the existing supplier to establish whether the 10 frames that have been hired for the last 3 years could be purchased.

As a result, officers have concluded that, whilst the outlay to purchase and refurbish lights is a little more expensive than rental in the current year, significant sums would be saved on hire fees in future years.

A summary of the lights owned and those proposed for purchase is detailed below:

- **Festoon lights** – permanent lights have been installed in the Square, Fore Street and Queen Street. The Council also erects further festoon lights in other parts of Queen Street and Fore Street over Christmas. Those lights are owned by the Council but have now reached the end of their useful life and require replacement. It is proposed that these lights be installed as a permanent feature and a quotation has been obtained for their replacement (50M large Globe Maxiled Festoon at 0.33M spacings – 150 lamps total colours to be red, green & blue lamps, repeated in the same sequence. Product supplied with 3M lead before first lamp and Model RTRLED240 – 24V Transformer IP67 240 VA) of £2,050 + VAT. Additionally, a quotation has been obtained for 200 replacement red and green bulbs to enable the lights to be more colourful and to provide a stock of spares for when bulbs need replacing at a cost of £4.00 each (£800 + VAT). Only one quotation has been obtained this instance as this is the only supplier that officers have found that supplies these particular lights to match those already permanently installed. Therefore, the total cost is £2,850 + VAT.
- **Icicle lights** – these are installed in the Square, alongside the permanent lights and across roundabout. At the end of the 3-year contract the lighting supplier did not require their return, so these are now owned by the Council and are currently in good working order.
- **Frames** – the Council currently owns 5 old frames (some working; some not) which could be dismantled, and some parts potentially reused.
- **Christmas 'Tree' Cone** – currently there is no electricity supply to the Fisherman's Gap roundabout and DCC have been asked to arrange reconnection

of this supply. In some previous years the Council has installed 4 frames on the roundabout. However, some years ago, the Council built a cone like a Christmas tree instead which was popular. Should the electricity supply be reconnected, it is proposed that a cone be installed there. The cost of this would be:

- Steel and engineering – kindly donated by Harcombe
- Galvanisation - £150
- Festoon lights - £250

Furthermore, an enquiry has been raised regarding the possible purchase of the 10 existing frames (5 of which require repairs and new lights). The initial quotation provided was £2,000 but, after negotiation, this has been reduced to £750 + VAT. The cost of replacing the lights on the non-working frames would be a maximum of £200 + VAT per frame (total £1,000 + VAT). The cost may be less depending on what parts can be salvaged from the old frames.

Additionally, for comparison purposes, the cost of purely hiring 10 frames, has been obtained from the existing supplier and this would be between £1,900 and £2,850 + VAT per year, depending on the design.

3. Costs & budgets

Based on previous years, the ancillary costs are likely to be similar to those detailed below. The table also includes the proposal for lighting to be purchased:

Detail	Cost
Lighting costs	
Festoon lights & spare bulbs	£2,850
Purchase of 10 frames (previously rented)	£750
Repair of frames & new lights	£1,000 max
Christmas Tree' Cone – labour & lights	£400
Total lighting costs	£5,000
Ancillary costs	
Christmas trees	£250
Installation & removal	£2,000

Electricity	£250
Pavement licence	£100
Total ancillary costs	£2,600
TOTAL	£7,600

In 2023-24, the Council has allocated a budget of £6,600 to deliver the Christmas lights. The maximum shortfall would be £1,000 and this could be vired from the bus stops budget code, as the cost of these is now being met by central Government funding.

4. Summary

If the Council purchases its own lights significant costs will be saved on rental costs over future years, therefore, this proposal would provide best value to the public purse.

Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members resolve to:

- approve of the disposal of non-functioning lights
- approve the proposed purchase of the lights, frames and bulbs detailed in this report
- approve the budget virement of £1,000 from the 170/4395 bus shelters code to 227/4840 Christmas lights, should this be required

SEATON TOWN COUNCIL (‘the Council’)	
Date of report	15 May 2023
Item of business	23 COU 27
Details	Report on Tourist Information Centre (‘TIC’)
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on tourist information enquiries and an update on TIC cover at weekends
Power/Authority	Local Government Act 1972, s144 – power to encourage visitors
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that Members note the update.

1. Background

The new tourist information centre opened on the seafront-side of the Marshlands Centre on 11 April 2022. In order to inform future decision making, the Town Clerk considered that it may be helpful to Members to provide regular updates as to the level of enquiries being received.

For the information of new councillors, the TIC was previously run from Seaton Jurassic by Devon Wildlife Trust (‘DWT’). This was funded by the Council at a cost of £21,000 + VAT per annum. When DWT decided to relinquish the lease of Seaton Jurassic the Council took the running of the TIC back in-house and refurbished the offices on the seafront which now house both the TIC and the Council’s offices. As a result this has clearly led to a greatly increased workload for officers.

2. Summary of enquiries

The table below provides a summary of the enquiries received since 11 April 2022:

Month	Visits		Telephone		Total STC/TIC Enquiries 2022/23 (2021 figures in brackets)
	STC	TIC	STC	TIC	
	2022/23	2022/23	2022/23	2022/23	

April(16 days)	60	141	23	9	233 (no stats)
May	77	156	63	11	307 (35)
June	82	427	71	22	602 (65)
July	116	461	80	20	677 (85)
August	97	384	70	21	572 (57)
September	104	219	65	5	398 (no stats)
October	69	79	51	2	201 (no stats)
November	66	18	59	3	146 (no stats)
December	26	3	36	-	65 (no stats)
January	48	15	51	1	115 (no stats)
February	52	34	63	3	152 (no stats)
March	88	70	55	3	216 (no stats)
April	72	187	47	8	314

3. Opening hours

The tourist information centre is currently open from 9am to 1pm from Monday to Friday. This enables officers – particularly the Administration & Community Events Officer – to have a couple of hours a day after the TIC closes to concentrate on other tasks, including managing the town’s allotments, updating the website and general administration.

During Summer 2022, the TIC opened from 10am to 12pm on most Saturdays, Sundays & Bank Holidays, when volunteers were available to man it. During 2022, most volunteers were councillors with a couple of local residents kindly volunteering their time on a few weekends.

In line with the Council’s Volunteer Policy, in order to successfully recruit and retain volunteers, to ensure the TIC’s opening hours are consistent and to ensure the Council’s obligations are met in managing volunteers and a public building safely, certain actions are required, including ensuring adequate inductions and/or training being provided, volunteer agreements and contact forms being completed and properly stored and a rota being arranged (with provision for cover, should a volunteer be unavailable at short notice). In line with the Council’s Lone Working Policy, the TIC needs to be manned by 2 volunteers at any given time.

In order to achieve this, a Volunteer Co-ordinator is required to undertake and take complete ownership of the above and manage the rotas, training, paperwork and volunteers, as Officers simply have no capacity to do so.

Until such a person steps forward, be that a councillor or a member of the public, sadly, the TIC will not be opened at weekends, as the Council has no budget to employ such a person, as the allowance in last year's budget to seek additional help for the TIC was absorbed by the anticipated inflationary increases on the day-to-day operational costs in this year's budget in order to assist with keeping any increase to the precept to a minimum for the year 2023/24.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members:

- note the update
- appoint a Volunteer Co-ordinator, if available