

HECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Heckington Parish Council Finance Committee meeting held on Thursday 29 May 2025 at 7.30pm in the Parish Council Chambers, St Andrews Street, Heckington

1. To elect the Chair of the Finance Committee (FC/010)

Councillor Wright proposed Councillor Tucker as Chair of the Finance Committee. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Davison. The motion was passed by resolution of the Committee. Councillor Tucker abstained from the vote. Councillor Tucker will hereafter be referred to as the Chair.

2. Chair's Welcome (FC/011)

The Chair welcomed the one member of the public to the meeting. She delivered the usual health and safety announcements and asked those present to silence their mobile devices.

3. Public Forum (FC/012)

No comments.

4. Councillors present (FC/013)

Councillor Tucker, Chair
Councillor Davison
Councillor Garlick
Councillor Spencer
Councillor Wright

5. Apologies (FC/014)

None.

6. To receive any reports of member's interest, pecuniary or otherwise in relation to the agenda and any dispensations in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 (FC/015)

7. Approval of Minutes (FC/016)

The Chair proposed that the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on 24 April 2025 are accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Wright and the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Committee.

8. Finance (FC/017)

a) Budget Head, Workshop

The Chair asked for the creation of a new budget head for the workshop which is currently listed under the cemetery budget head. She proposed that £500 is taken from the training budget head, £1,000 from the village maintenance budget head, £1,000 from the village trees budget head and £500.00 from the events budget head. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Spencer and the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Committee. Members reviewed the current expenditure versus the budget to date.

Action: Clerk to add to the agenda for the June meeting of the Parish Council.

b) Ring-fencing of the VAT income for 2024/25

Members noted that the Parish Council had agreed at the Annual Parish Council meeting on 19 May to ring-fence £10,132.00 for the Pavilion changing room refurbishment.

- c) Ring-fencing of income from burials and memorials
The Chair informed the meeting that the Cemetery Committee will be putting forward a request for all income from the cemetery to be ring-fenced specifically for cemetery improvements. The Finance Committee unanimously agreed to support this proposal.
- d) Final internal audit report 2024/25
Members noted the final internal audit report.



Internal Audit Report

This audit report is to read in conjunction with the Annual Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Council:	Heckington Parish Council
Internal Auditor:	Stacey Knowles
Year Ending:	March 2025
Date of Report	12 th May 2025

Internal audit is the periodic independent review of a council's internal controls resulting in an assurance report designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities and operating procedures under the council's control. Managing the council's internal controls should be a day-to-day function of the council through its staff and management and not left for internal audit. It would be incorrect to view internal audit as the detailed inspection of all records and transactions of a council to detect error or fraud. This report is based on the evidence made available to me and consequently the report is limited to those matters set out below.

The council is required to take appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit and to respond to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit. Failure to take appropriate action may lead to a qualified audit opinion.

To the Chairman of the Parish Council

I have examined council business including policies, agendas & minutes, accounting and financial statements and other documents relevant to this audit. Together with the interim audit report dated 14th January 2025, this forms the completed internal audit for the year ending March 2025.

A few areas were identified in the audit conducted in January 2025 where actions were recommended and are offered as suggestions for improvement. Many of these recommendations have been implemented or will be implemented in the next financial year. This includes:

- **Key documents**
- **Policies** – Recommendation to review and adopt the following policies: Complaints policy, freedom of information policy including the model publication scheme, data protection policy, Subject Access Request Procedure and a section within the data protection policy for dealing with breaches of data. Action partially completed. The council is in the process of reviewing and adopting these policies
- **Insurance review** – Recommendation to review the current insurance levels against an accurate asset register - Action partially completed. The council has taken steps to revise the asset register which has resulted in a restatement of box 9-fixed assets on the AGAR for the prior year. The revised asset figure is being used to effect new insurance cover from 25/26. The council has revaluation of buildings on its action plan to complete.

- **Transparency**
 - **AGAR** - Approval of the AGAR sections and confirmation that the council has confirmed the dates for the public rights inspection period. Recommendation completed. The council has made changes for consideration of the 24/25 AGAR documents and will follow the recommended order of business on the agenda to approve the documents.
 - **5 Years of annual returns published** – Recommendation not completed.
 - **Roles not published and other transparency information** – Recommendation not completed.
The council has an action plan in place for considering the recommendations of the internal audit carried out in January 2025. A website review to ensure that the council is complying with all aspects of transparency regulations and best practice will be carried out.

- **Accounting**
 - **Internal controls** – Recommendation to ensure regular budget monitoring and bank reconciliations were carried out and minuted.
Recommendation completed. The council has been monitoring its budget since September 2024. Bank reconciliations are now clearly minuted. The process for bank reconciliations has been changed. Two members of the Finance committee meet with the RFO on a rota to review the cashbook against the bank statement and the corresponding invoices. This process meets best practice.
 - **Dual authorisation for payments** – Recommendation not yet completed. The council is in the process of setting up an account with Unity trust to enable dual authorisation for payments.
 - **S137 expenditure**- recommendation that the council needs to make clear when it is relying on the use of s137 LGA 1972. Unable to review - No further s137 payments were made in the financial year so this recommendation could not be followed up.
 - **Adoption of a financial reserve policy** – Recommendation completed. A Financial Reserve policy was adopted in January 2025.
 - **Review of earmarked reserves** – Recommendation partially completed – A review of the Earmarked reserves was scheduled in April 2025 but deferred pending the sale of land.

- **Asset control and risk assessment**
 - **Asset register review** – Recommendation completed.
 - **Inspection of assets and introduction of risk assessments and inspections for buildings**
Recommendation completed. The council has taken steps to put in place regular fire inspections and other health and safety measures for its buildings including risk assessments.
 - **Check registration of council land at HM Land Registry** – Recommendation completed. Land is confirmed to be registered appropriately.
 - **Adoption of risk register and risk management scheme** – Recommendation partially completed. The council has been working on this document and is due to adopt this in May 2025.
 - **Grants and donations policy** – Recommendation completed. Policy adopted.

- **Proper process and practice**
 - Confidential items – Recommendation completed. Now used and minuted appropriately.

- **Payroll and HR**
 - Adoption of staffing policies – Recommendation completed – The council has adopted a suite of HR policies.

- **Transactional checks**
 - Three further transactional checks were carried out during the final audit for the financial year. There was a clear audit trail from the decision to incur expenditure through to payment of the invoice.

Further audit checks completed on 12th May 2025

A review of burials, community buildings and allotments were carried out during this audit meeting as well as end of year audit checks.

Community buildings - being managed appropriately with health and safety checks in place and approved rates for hire.

Burials – The clerk was aware that the cemetery regulations required review to bring them in line with best practice. The clerk had recently attended training to facilitate this work.

Allotments – All allotment tenants have an agreement in place. The tenancy register is being put together.

Year-end process

The council is using receipts and payments, has reviewed its asset register and the final bank reconciliation was seen by the IA. The explanation of variances has not yet been completed so has not been reviewed.

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/2025

The Internal Audit section of the AGAR has been completed and signed appropriately. The following responses are given with the reasoning which is further detailed throughout this report and the report dated 14th January 2025. The responses below will affect the authority's ability to give positive assertions on the Annual Governance Statement.

Internal control objective	Response	Reason
A	No	The council did not always have appropriate accounting records kept throughout the financial year. This was evidenced in the transactional checks carried out and its processes in purchasing land.
B	No	The council did not always follow its financial regulations as evidence by purchase of land, lack of budget monitoring prior to September 2024.
C	No	A risk management scheme was not in place in the financial year. Insurance cover was not based on a sound asset register or review of the authority's risks.
D	No	The council did not review its reserves in the financial year and had not policy in place for financial reserves.
E	No	In the months prior to September 2024, the council held petty cash which was being topped up by income received. This is contrary to the council's adopted Financial Regulations.
F	No	Petty cash payments was not properly evidenced. <i>Petty cash account now ceased but was applicable for 6 months of the financial year.</i>
G	No	Instances of incorrect PAYE being paid have occurred. <i>This has now been rectified and processes changed but was applicable during the financial year.</i>
H	No	Asset registers were not properly reviewed or maintained throughout the year.
I	Yes	Periodic bank reconciliations have been carried out. Now explicitly minuted and the process improved to meet best practice
J	Yes	Receipts and payments in use
K	N/A	The authority did not certify exemption in 2023/24
L	No	The authority has not published 5 years of annual returns on its website. The council's minutes did not always include clear resolutions and the agendas did not always provide enough detail to disclose the council's intentions behind an item.
M	Yes	The council adequately provided for a period for the exercise of public rights.
N	Yes	All required documents were published.
O	N/A	The council does not act as a trustee.

Thank you to Heidi for meeting with me. Although the council has not met its internal control objectives, Heidi should be congratulated on making the recommended steps to improve the council’s governance processes and putting in place proper practices.

Yours sincerely

Stacey Knowles

Internal Auditor

Lincolnshire Association Local Councils

Date: 12th May 2025

The Chair went through the action plan item by item and noted the actions that had been completed.

The Internal Auditor recommended dual authorisation but the Chair proposed that this additional layer of security is not required citing the robust nature of the current internal controls. Councillor Davison seconded the proposal was the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Committee.

Members discussed the risk assessment of assets.

Action: Clerk and Caretaker to create a comprehensive list of Parish Council assets. Routine weekly checks will form part of the Caretaker’s duties.

Members agreed to review the risk register quarterly.

e) Monthly Finance Checks

Members noted the rota for monthly finance checks as part of the internal control to detect and prevent fraud.

April – Councillor Tucker/Councillor Davison (*complete*)

May – Councillor Davison/Councillor Garlick (*outstanding*)

June – Councillor Garlick/Councillor Wright

July – Councillor Wright/Councillor Spencer

August – Councillor Spencer/Councillor Tucker (*repeat*)

The Clerk recommended that Councillors Davison and Garlick perform checks on the Clerk’s weekly reconciliation dated 29 May 2025.

9. Chambers (FC/018)

a) Review of the Fire Risk Assessment and matters arising.

The Chair informed the meeting that there were 16 findings from the FRA report and the risk to life from fire at the premises was found to be SUBSTANTIAL with a MEDIUM level of risk. This is a normal fire hazard of occupancy, with fire hazards generally subject to appropriate controls other than minor short comings. The cost implications associated with the FRA will be in excess of £1,000.

They identified:

Finding	Comments	Action	Status
PAT testing	Completed on 27 May 2025	None	Complete
Building	No fire extinguisher in the kitchen/incorrect extinguishers (powder) throughout the building.		Outstanding
Housekeeping	Storage in the downstairs unused toilet.	Will be removed weekly by the Caretaker. Clerk to remove Christmas decorations to the Store. Towels will not be put to dry on radiators.	Outstanding

Blocked call point in the library	Completed	Shelving unit has been moved.	Complete
Understairs storage		Clerk to liaise with library staff to clear the area and move to the store.	Outstanding
Combustible items are stored within the distribution board housing	Completed		Complete
System to manage fire hazards presented by contractors			Outstanding
Front doors	Both doors should always be unlocked.		Complete
Manual sliding door to the meeting room	This can drop off the roller when closed preventing escape		Outstanding
Noticeboard at the front door	Exposed noticeboard with combustible materials and sharp objects	Members reviewed this from a risk assessment perspective and agreed that the risk is low.	Complete
Emergency Lighting	Not working	Fentec are going to quote for six new bulkheads. This has been out of order since replacing the fluorescent lights with LEDs as they are not compatible with the light fittings.	Pending
Signage	Fire exits and extinguishers		Outstanding
Fire Alarm System	This is not compliant with British Standards for this type of premises. There are also issues in relation to detector positions and additional detectors are required.		Outstanding
Fire Safety Policy	None		Outstanding
Written Fire Emergency Plan	None		Outstanding
Evacuation Chair training	None		Outstanding
Building Induction	None		Outstanding
Fire Warden Training for staff	None		Outstanding
Fire evacuation drills are not carried out		Clerk to commence evacuation drills.	Outstanding
Routine testing not being carried out		Weekly fire alarm checks are carried out and recorded. Monthly emergency light testing is carried out and recorded.	Complete

Action: Clerk to liaise with Arion to gain an understanding of what is required to bring the fire alarm system in line with British Standards. Clerk to contact EvacuSafe for details of training.

Members reviewed a quote from Arion for £100 plus VAT to provide a Fire Risk Assessment document, a Fire Safety Policy, a Fire Emergency Plan, plans of the building defining escape routes and fire equipment, facilities and warning equipment, detailed signage, fire induction training for staff, contractor control information and reporting forms.

Members review a quote from Arion to provide new fire extinguishers at a cost of £442.50 plus VAT. Councillor Spencer reviewed the cost of like for like extinguishers from a local supplier and found the quote to be more than reasonable.

Councillor Tucker proposed that the quotes from Arion are accepted. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Wright and the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Committee.

- b) Review of the Legionella risk assessment and matters arising
Members resolved to defer this to the next meeting.
Action: Clerk to add to the next agenda for the Finance Committee.
- c) Health and safety risks associated with the accessible ramp.
Members discussed the accessibility of the ramp to the Parish Council Chambers and agreed to have it assessed by experts in the accessibility field.
Action: The Chair will work with the Clerk to progress this matter.
- d) Review of the EiCR
Members noted that recommendations arising from the EiCR. The Clerk informed the meeting that Fentec have been asked to quote to remedy their findings.
Action: Clerk to add to the next agenda for the Finance Committee.
- e) Automatic light, Office/Library Hallway
The Clerk informed the meeting that library staff do not routinely turn on the corridor light on which presents a health and safety risk to anyone accessing the toilet. An automatic light would not only remedy this but would also be cost saving as the light would not need to be left on. The Clerk informed the meeting that Fentec have been asked to provide a quote.
Action: Clerk to add to the next agenda for the Finance Committee.
- f) Review of CCTV and security within the building.
Councillor Spencer proposed the purchase of an additional CCTV camera to cover the kitchen and upstairs lift area. The proposal was seconded by the Chair and the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Committee.
Action: Clerk to explore the requirement for a CCTV policy and additional signage. Councillor Spencer to oversee the purchase of the equipment.
- g) GDPR compliant signing in book
The Chair informed the meeting that there are now three GDPR signing in books located in the office, library and upstairs kitchen and all visitors will be expected to sign in and out. The cost was £99 for the three books, this expense is to be ratified by the Parish Council.
Action: Clerk to email all Councillors to ask them to sign in with the Clerk when they attend the Chambers. Clerk to check with LALC whether members of the public can refuse to sign in when attending a Parish Council meeting.
- h) Long-term maintenance schedule for the Parish Council Chambers
Members agreed on the benefits of a routine maintenance and long-term maintenance schedule for the Parish Council Chambers; this will assist with future budgeting. The Clerk suggested a consultation with a building contractor to see if they can identify faults requiring maintenance before they become an issue requiring emergency action.
Action: Councillors Spencer and Wright to liaise with the Clerk to put together a draft schedule.

- i) Update from the Clerk in relation to the monthly routine building inspections
The Clerk informed the meeting that the following testing is routinely conducted:

Fire alarm testing	Weekly
Emergency light testing	Monthly
Fire extinguisher checks (visual)	Monthly
First aid kits (including workshop and vehicles)	Monthly

Other testing:

LOLER	Every six months
Lift Servicing	Every six months
PAT Testing	Annually
EiCR (fixed electrical test)	Every 5-years (next due 2030)
Legionella	TBC
Asbestos	Not required
Fire extinguisher servicing	Annually
Emergency light drain	Annually
Fire alarm inspection and service	Every six months
Fire risk assessment	Annually to every two years

Water temperature tests will need to be carried out weekly and a thermometer and log book will need to be purchased for this purpose.

10. Date and time of the next meeting (FC/019)

Monday 16 June 2025 at 7.30pm

11. Questions from the public (FC/020)

None.

The Chair moved the meeting into closed session at 8.45pm in accordance with the (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 to discuss the items listed below.

12. Closed Session (FC/021)

- a) Statement relating to the sale of Star Fen

The Chair proposed that the document is accepted for release after the sale of Star Fen. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Davison and the motion was passed by resolution of the Council. Councillors Garlick and Wright voted against the statement.

Action: Clerk to add the statement to the newsletter.

- b) Pavilion tenancy agreement.

Members of the Finance Committee are due to meet with the solicitor from Chattertons on Monday 2 June 2025.

The Chair closed the meetings at 8.55 pm.