ALTON
Town Council

Telephone (01420) 83986
www.alton.gov.uk
info@alton.gov.uk

Town Clerk: Mr Tom Horwood

Town Hall
Market Square
Alton
Hampshire
GU34 1HD

11 March 2026

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the **ALTON TOWN ANNUAL ELECTORS' MEETING** will be held at the Assembly Rooms, Alton GU34 1BA on Wednesday 18 March 2025 at 6:30pm with light refreshments from 6pm when the under mentioned business will be under consideration. All electors living within Alton and Holybourne are entitled to attend.

Councillor Annette Eyre
Town Mayor

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Town Mayor's Address.

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting held on 19 March 2025.

3. To approve the minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 15 December 2025.

4. To table the Alton Town Council audited accounts year ending 31 March 2025.

5. The Town Mayor will welcome representatives of her charity for this year, St Michael's Hospice, to present the work they do in the community.

6. Town Council officers will make a presentation on the Town Council's activities over the last year and plans for the coming year.

7. Open Forum: To receive questions and statements from electors of the Alton Town Council area. Where possible residents are requested to provide their representations at least 5 days prior to the meeting in order that there is sufficient time to prepare responses.

8. The Mayor's closing comments.

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ALTON TOWN ELECTORS’ MEETING
HELD ON 19 MARCH 2025 AT 7:00PM

Present:	Councillor	Annette Eyre -	Town Mayor
		Matthew Bayliss	
		Mark Boyce-Churn	
		Graham Hill	
		Nick O’Brien	
		Janice Treacher	
		Jonathan Waugh	

In attendance:	Pat Harris -	Town Clerk
	Hayley Carter -	Deputy Clerk
	Samantha Brown -	Councillor Support Admin Officer
	Inspector Darren Murphy -	East Hampshire Police
	Dedicated Named Officer -	Neil Croutear -Alton Town Police
	Richard Mayon-White -	A31 Primary Care Network
	6 members of the public	

116 **<u>Welcome and Town Mayors Address</u>**

The Town Mayor welcomed all to the Annual Meeting of Electors and made the following address:

Alton just wouldn’t be Alton without its legion of volunteers - Thank you. In my role as Mayor, I have seen the unwavering commitment and time that they each give to their passion. Sadly, their efforts go mainly unnoticed - I must admit being one! I questioned why that in 35 years of living in Alton, had I not noticed these amazing groups and volunteers. The realisation was I didn’t need them in my life at this present time. However, it is with the help and support of these groups and volunteers that people can live an enriched life. So many people face challenges that they can’t see a way out of for many reasons; pride, affordability or just not knowing that there is someone local who can and will help.

Throughout the year I have taken great pleasure in meeting just some of these amazing people who have devoted their life to the causes close to their hearts; the ones who joined because a friend said come along, to the ones who needed the support of a group at one time and then decided to give something back. I see many recurring faces who give so much of their time to the community, and always with a smile on their faces.

During the recent Volunteers Fayre, I was struck by just how many organisations were looking for support, not financial although that would help, but from people giving of their time. None were asking for hours upon hours of volunteering but accepting whatever people could offer - whether it be popping leaflets through doors, making something at home or being at the end of a phone. Every little helps no matter how big or small!

As our community continues to expand these groups will have a critical role to play in how our community thrives. The services provided by these organisations I believe need to come out of the shadows and into the fore so that every resident knows who they are and how to find them. In my role as a Town Councillor and your current Mayor, I am continually looking at how the town can continue to thrive through the challenging times ahead of it. I will serve Alton for as long as it needs me and along with my fellow councillors we want to see and feel the passion for our town and we will continue to respect and honour each residents voice and make Alton the very best it can be.

117 **Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 13th March 2024**

On the proposal of Councillor Matthew Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill, it was

RESOLVED
The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and will be signed by the Town Mayor at a later date.

All in favour.

118 **To table the Alton Town Council Audited Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2024**

Councillors noted the Audited Accounts as presented

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Annette Eyre, it was

RESOLVED
To approve the Audited Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2024

All in favour.

119 **Town Mayor to welcome representatives of Community Groups to speak about the work they do in the Community**

The Town Mayor welcomed:

Inspector Darren Murphy – East Hampshire Policing & DNO Neil Croutear Alton Town Police

Inspector Murphy began by providing some statistics on the headlines and the teams:

- The team cover an area of some 200 square miles, which has a population of approx. 128,000 – as a comparison Portsmouth has an area of approx. 15 square miles, with an approximate 235,000 population)
- There are pockets of population which are in the national top 3% of deprivation
- Significant housing development in both the Alton and Bordon areas continuing
- Part of the area covered by the team has National Park status
- Road network of A3/A3M & A31 corridor presents difficulties for policing

- The team consists of:
    - 5no 24/7 response teams. 1 sergeant, 6 PCs per team- each team has student in training
    - 3no Neighbourhood Teams- each team -1 sergeant, 4-6 PCs, 2 PCSOs
    - Neighbourhood Enforcement Team – based at Havant/Fareham

- The team covers:
    - Country watch
    - Special Constabulary
    - Roads Policing (based at Whitchurch and Havant)
- A new East Hants Priority Crime Team being established this month

The Dedicated Named Officers and the areas they cover are:
- DNO Neil Croutear – Alton Town
- DNO PC Alex Routt – Alton Rural
- DNO PC Lauren Bourne – Petersfield Town
- DNO PC Sarah Clement – Petersfield Rural including Rowlands Castle, Horndean, Clanfield
- DNO PC Ben Godwin – Bordon, Whitehill, Lindford, Headley Down
- DNO Matt Doran – Longmoor Rural including Liss, Liphook, Grayshott

Inspector Murphy then highlighted 'Hampshire Alert':

- a free web-based system which the public can sign up to which allows them to choose what information they want to receive and what format they want to receive it in – email, text or phone message – so the 'alert' is personal to them.
- Alerts are about crime, witness appeals and general policing activity and issues in their local area, and what is being done about them.
- They'll also hear about positive police action, good news stories and be able to play an active part in helping us with our public appeals.

He then went on to provide details of what the public's top five priorities are for Alton (according to the Hampshire Alert system).

1. Speeding
2. Fly tipping
3. Road Safety
4. Burglary
5. Parking issue

Also of importance in East Hampshire were:

6. Dog fouling
7. Dog bites
8. Anti-social behaviour

Finally Inspector Murphy explained the current work of the policing team in our area:

1. **County Line drugs supply network development**
   - currently 12+ people arrested for different drug supply offences or disruptive tactics (such as drug driving)
2. **Shoplifting**
   - improving evidence capture from businesses (CCTV and the actual evidence….). Increased reporting gets a better picture of what and where. Repeat offenders sent to court/remanded in custody
3. **Rural crime engagement & reporting**
4. **Young people**
   - cohort of a small group creating the most calls for service- multi-agency
   - Cops 4 Coffee drop-ins at school's initiative. Neil Croutear explained that he goes into both Eggars and Amery Hill every week and spends time with the staff and students, building relationships and enabling good communication both ways.
5. **Social media**
   - improving the police footprint on the work undertaken

A Q&A session followed with questions from both councillors and members of the public.

The Mayor then introduced **Richard Mayon-White – A31 Primary Care Network**

Richard started by explaining what the A31 PCN is and is made up of:

- **3 GP Practices:**
  - Boundaries Surgery
  - Chawton Park Surgery
  - The Wilson Practice

- **The PCN provides:**
  - Cancer Care, Mental Health, Physio, Social Prescribers, Proactive Care, Administrative services, Vaccinations, Health Checks & Strategic leadership
  -
- **It covers an area of around 33,000 people. The current situation is that:**
  - Existing services are scattered across the area
  - Silos have developed
  - Difficult for patients to navigate between services
  - Services are reactive to problems
  - Budgets are restricted/reduced
  - Morale is low

He went on to explain that all the component parts are in place, they just need to be rearranged.

Stage 1 is understanding the problem: who we are as a population and what our needs are:

- Ageing population with more long-term conditions
- Working age population with decreasingly good health: obesity in adults aged 25 and over will jump from 31.7% of women in 2021 to 42.6% in 2050 (a 34% rise), while obesity in men will rise from 29.3% to 39.5% (a 35% rise).
- Young people with mental health problems & less physically active

Integrated neighbourhoods:

- Seeking to realign services to improve pathways for patients
- Provide whole system solutions to complex problems
- Greater local control over service provision
- Where appropriate, services are delivered locally
- Focus on prevention

NHS Strategy – 10 year plan

- Hospital to Community
- Treatment to Prevention
- Analogue to Digital

Stage 2 – what can we do locally?

- Improve relationships across health & social care
- Collaborate on initiatives
- Be willing to think differently

Progress to date:

- A31 PCN has convened several workshops bringing together stakeholders
- Increased collaboration between stakeholders

Health on the High Street is an initiative which is aimed at prevention and getting people to take responsibility for their health. It provides a warm hub, a supportive environment and no appointments are needed. It can be found in the Assembly Rooms every Wednesday from 10am to 2pm. Richard went on to say that the Assembly Rooms is a qualified success story:

- Dementia Friendly have done an incredible job of revitalising the building
- Foundation for partnership working
- Needs to evolve into a true hub for health & wellbeing in the community
- Town Council is an active partner in the initiative
- Part of a reimagining of the High Street – a healthy community vision

The next steps:

- Continue to seek greater partnerships
- Be willing to explore new ways of working

- See health and wellbeing as an integral part of the community
- Prevention is better than cure!

Richard then took questions from the floor.

120 **Open Forum - To receive questions and statements from Electors of the Alton Town Council area, including those received in advance**

The were no questions to councillors.

121 **Closing Comments**

The Mayor took the opportunity to thank everyone for attending this evening.

The meeting closed at 8.33pm.

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF AN ALTON PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2025 AT 6:00PM

The meeting was called by Madison Allen, Charles Kaye, Melba Kellermann, Stephen Marshall, Leonard Meek and David Oliver.

Present:	Councillor Annette Eyre	- Town Mayor / Elector
	Tom Horwood	- Town Clerk - ATC
	Hayley Carter	- Deputy Clerk - ATC
	Natalie Beckell	- Events and Marketing Lead Officer - ATC
	Samantha Brown	- Councillor Support Admin Officer - ATC
	Wendy Simson	- Assistant to the Clerk - ATC
	58 other electors	
	2 other members of the public	

1 **Welcome and Election of Chair**

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. She introduced herself and explained that in law if the Mayor is in attendance she must chair the meeting so this item had only been put on the agenda in case she was not in attendance. She then indicated the agenda which was on the screen and made the following statement:

“At the start, please can I note that the subject of the matter is King’s Pond, which is a matter that many people feel very strongly about? I would ask everyone to please listen and contribute with respect. We may disagree, but everyone here cares about Alton and wants the best for King’s Pond. Everyone will have the opportunity to speak and should be listened to without interruption. If that does not happen, I may have to suspend the meeting for a break or adjourn it to another day.

“To be fair to everyone, we have numbered white sheets, which I will use to call on you to speak. If you wish to speak again, I will go through the numbers again, so please be patient.”

2 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following electors: Chris Botten, Graham Hill, Roger Lamb and Barbara Tansey.

3 **Debate and Parish Poll**

3.1 Purpose of meeting (Town Clerk to describe the legal process)

The Town Clerk described his role in the meeting, saying he is not here to advocate for any particular outcome but is here to advise on procedures to ensure they are lawful.

He emphasised that this is not a council meeting, but a meeting of electors who get to vote on a question or questions to be put to the meeting.

He went on to explain that:

- The meeting has been called through a democratic and legal process which can be found in the Local Government Acts of 1894, 1933, 1972 and a Court of Appeal judgment of 1965. These are old laws not often used, and he asked those present to be patient as processes are worked through.
- The purpose of the meeting is an opportunity for electors to discuss King's Pond and, if you want to test questions with those electors who are present in the meeting. It is also the method of calling for a 'Parish Poll' among all electors in the parish.
- The first legal requirement is that the Mayor must chair the meeting if she is present.
- The second is that only those on the Electoral Register for Alton can propose, second or vote on a question. Those who are not electors may participate in the debate but not vote.
- The third is that, if ten electors later in the meeting demand a Parish Poll, it must be identical to a question that has already been put to the meeting.
- Other rules are that any questions must be:
  - capable of being acted on by Alton Town Council
  - clear and able to be answered by Yes or No
  - proposed, seconded, and voted on by Alton electors

Finally, he explained about the Parish Poll that:

- "The object of a poll is to check that the opinion expressed by the parish meeting is that of the electors as a whole" (Lord Justice Russell 1965)
- The name of the person proposing the question will be published and we will need to take their address at the end of the meeting
- 10 electors (or one-third of electors present, whichever is less) can demand that a question be put to the public in a Parish Poll
- It must be a question that has been voted on by the meeting
- The poll is run by EHDC and the expenses are charged to ATC (EHDC has estimated £10,000)

- Polling stations are open 4-9pm; due to it being an old law there are no poll cards or postal/proxy voting
- If decided tonight the poll must be held by 22 January 2026
- The result will be reported to ATC in February.
- By law, the result is not binding

3.2 Debate and any Questions to be put to the Meeting

Each person who thought they may wish to speak had been given a number on the way in. The Mayor first explained how the debate would be conducted:

"I will call on each speaker in turn to speak on King's Pond. If you wish to speak again later in the meeting, I will come around the list again later, so no-one should miss out on speaking.

"If you have a Question to be put to the Meeting, or an Amendment to any of the Questions, please state it clearly and the Town Clerk will put it on the screen, for the Meeting to consider. You must be an elector to be able to propose, second or vote on a Question.

"If you are proposing a question, we will need your name, and your Question will need to be seconded by another elector. We will check the Proposer's address if the Meeting later decides that it will be put to the public in a Parish Poll.

"When we have all the Questions and Amendments, we will firstly vote on whether to accept any Amendments to the Questions, and I will ask those in favour of amending the question to indicate For and then Against, using your blue card. Please hold the card up while we count the votes.

"When we have the full list of Questions, incorporating any Amendments, I will ask the Meeting to indicate Yes or No to each Question, in the same way."

Number 1 – Vici Moore said she had been horrified about what's been going on. The misinformation going round has been terrible. She said she does not think there is enough information to make a decision. A lot of the information is not current and it is misleading. She added that a lot of this is about the River Wey, which is dried out for much of the year. She had been at a global conference and things are deteriorating, and this area of the country is becoming drier. Nobody globally has done anything about the problems. We're also extracting more water as the town has got bigger, so most of the year we have a dry river full of litter. King's Pond will become the only standing water in the town for wildlife. She noted that lots of the wildlife at King's Pond is protected legally. She went on to say that we are lucky to have King's Pond and people need to know the facts to make decisions. Locally we can make a difference. She proposed that the pond either needs to be left alone or dredged, adding that we only need to regularly dredge one end as that is where the bulk of the silt is deposited.

Number 2 – declined to speak

Number 3 – John Murray proposed the following question to the meeting:

"Should Alton Town Council tamper with water levels jeopardising tree health and wellbeing?"

The question was seconded by Melba Kellermann.

As questions were raised (and later amended), they were displayed on a screen for all to see.

Number 4 – Councillor Nick O'Brien said that he supports having a Parish Poll but now is not the time. He stressed that the nights are dark, the weather is cold and wet, and people will not come out to vote. He proposed that there be a Parish Poll as part of the Public Consultation already promised for the end of Stage One. He said if the meeting agreed to delay the poll, he would bring a proposal to Full Council to make the result of the poll binding, subject to a minimum turnout.

Number 5 – Councillor Don Hammond asked, regarding the question proposed, what was meant by "tamper with water levels"? He questioned whether this was something that was in the power of Alton Town Council to do. He added that he is also not opposed to a Parish Poll, only to the timing of it. At the end of Stage One everyone in the parish will be able to make an informed choice, as the council has promised all along. A Parish Poll is great but not now.

Number 6 – A resident said that if you make a mistake and do not listen to the local people who have all the information it could be catastrophic. In St Albans they did that with a roundabout and all the taxi drivers told them it would not work. They were right. At least that could be put back to how it was. If the council does all this with the pond and it doesn't work, you will have destroyed this wonderful landscape forever.

Number 7 – Councillor Kellermann said he was glad to hear there was a sudden enthusiasm among his fellow councillors for a Parish Poll. He said he has been asking for a referendum for three years. He added that the suggestion of a 'minimum turnout' is ludicrous, and that there is no other vote subject to a minimum turnout. He went on to say that people do not need more information. The Council has been going on about this for ages. The council is going to start this process all over again and waste more money. He said that he can't think of a sensible reason to continue to explore an unwanted option. Had the council been listening to public opinion this meeting would not be necessary.

Number 8 – A resident stated that the proposals do not include the ways in which the public use the pond, wanting their grandchildren to be able to enjoy it. They asked who had called this meeting and why.

The Town Clerk responded, saying that six electors called the meeting under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, but he could give the legal reason only and some of the convenors may choose to explain why when it was their turn to speak.

Number 9 – wished to say nothing at this time.

Number 10 – Jackie Slack said she could not understand why you would want to spend £10,000 of public money on a poll now. Surely that money would be better spent on finding the best options for King's Pond. She said she would rather see the money spent on the research needed than on a pointless poll when the council had already promised to fully consult the public.

Number 11 – Anthony Furnival said that the reason this meeting was called (emphasising he was not one of the people who called it and he too feels that another time for a poll would be better) was that this council has not always been a listening council, but he was pleasantly surprised in the Full Council meeting on 10th December that some are starting to listen. He said that people have called this meeting because they are frustrated. He said that pushing ahead with Stage One was based on a survey the council had done a year ago, yet they dismissed a survey that had 2,500 responses. He said he does not believe we are seeing democracy, adding that we only hear selective voices if they agree with certain councillors. He said some points he had made were just dismissed and good points raised by other councillors were labelled 'conjecture'. He emphasised that he respects the amount of work done by the Task & Finish Group and by Councillor Hammond, saying that he may disagree with him but he respects the time he has put in. He went on to say that he feels a different leader of the Task & Finish Group is needed – someone who is aligned with what the public want. He stated that not everyone wants to make a decision based on scientific fact; people have an emotional connection to the pond. It may be that they went there as a child, took loved ones there, or have a bench dedicated to the memory of someone.

Number 12 – Melba Kellermann proposed six questions to the meeting:

1. Do you believe that Alton Town Council is listening to residents concerning King's Pond?
2. Would you like a binding referendum on King's Pond?
3. Do you want King's Pond to remain the same size, dredged with improvements?
4. Do you trust Alton Town Council to spend council taxpayers' money wisely?
5. Should Alton residents be consulted on any further spending on King's Pond?
6. Do you want to remove Don Hammond from any further King's Pond focus groups?

Her questions were all seconded by Anne Noon.

Number 13 – had nothing to add at present.

Number 14 – Clare Meaden said she just wanted to respond to a comment about how people make decisions – emotively. She said that King's Pond means a lot to her and has been a great source of comfort. She said that coming to a meeting such as this makes her really anxious but she forced herself to come as the pond is so important to her.

Number 15 – This member of the public said the general principle is, do we want to keep King's Pond as it is or have it changed?

Number 16 – This member of the public said notwithstanding the comments about climate change and from the Environment Agency, we need to preserve what is a very valued amenity for the town and for wildlife. If we build a good silt trap it will catch all the silt and make it easier to dredge. They then asked what a minimum turnout is.

The Town Clerk clarified (in response to Numbers 4 and 16) that in law there is no such thing as a binding parish poll or a minimum turnout. The council could choose to approve a policy statement in advance on how they intend to regard the results of a poll, but a parish poll is not legally binding.

Number 17 – Jeremy Buck said that he would like to see King's Pond retained in much the way it is at the moment. However, he added that he believes the issues are not as straightforward as some people would have us believe. He had believed the council had already made a decision because of what is being said about the council, but said that having looked into it properly he does not believe that now. He stressed that it is only right that the council should explore all the options properly as they will still have the same issues in several years' time. He also deplored the personal nature of question number 6 proposed by Mrs Kellermann and agreed that now is not the time to have a poll. It should be put to the public at the end of the investigations so the public can make a proper decision.

Number 18 – A resident said that in the meeting last week Councillor Hammond had said that people in the meeting did not represent Alton and dismissed comments from Councillor Quincey. If we do not wish to spend £10,000 on a poll, we should despise even more spending money on an option that people do not want. Councillorsshould listen to people.

Number 19 – Stephen Gough said that King's Pond has been a favourite place for his family. People are questioning why we need a Parish Poll now. The council has spent £40,000 on a fact-finding mission and we have not seen anything from that. They are now going to restart that process and spend another £50,000. He said that he goes to lots of meetings about King's Pond because he is passionate about it. A scientist spoke earlier about the River Wey being a winterbourne and King's Pond being our only standing water. As a fisherman, he said that chalk streams are extremely rare, and that the idea we will have a trout stream with leaping trout in the middle of the town is ludicrous. He added that water companies and developers had apparently offered silt traps at no cost to the council and that should be looked into. He felt sure there would be volunteers who could keep the banks and flora and fauna in good shape.

Number 20 – Councillor Richard Moore said that his personal belief is that the pond is much-loved by the people in the town. He said there is nothing wrong with the pond except that it has been neglected and needs dredging. He also added that youth organisations in the town spend a lot of time at the pond, for example the girls' brigade, Scouts and so on. He said it is also a sanctuary for mental health. People go down there and sit and enjoy it and take time out from their daily worries. He then questioned why we are continuing to explore options that are not feasible and added that £10,000 is a mere fraction of the £30-£50,000 to restart Stage One to take this forward.He finished by saying that all we need to do now with the evidence is dredge and improve. Petersfield takes pride in Heath Pond. We have 300 years of history at King's Pond and we should be proud of it.

Number 21 – Graeme Parkin said he is always surprised to hear that people are in favour of keeping the pond. They talk about a petition of 3,000 people but that is only 20% of Alton. He then proposed a question: "Do you want Alton Town Council to continue with Stage 1 so that the people can take an informed decision?" The question was seconded by Arthur Kearse.

Number 22 – A resident said that this is a very complex and emotive matter and there is a lot of misinformation out there. It is important to continue the investigations so a proper decision can be made for the future. We need facts. They added that there is already a volunteer group that works at the pond.

Number 23 – wished to add nothing to what had been said.

Number 24 – wanted to say nothing at this point.

Number 25 – This resident said they love King's Pond, and they love going there and any visitors they take there always love it, but they are very fact-based and think it is important to have all the information before making a decision.

Number 26 – this resident said they had two points 1. The drawing shows the island being cut off so that is misleading. When the meandering river was dismissed it was because the council does not own the land. Surely that should have been the first questions you asked. 2. Putting numbers in is moving the goalposts, and now you are suggesting delaying the poll. The reason they did not agree is that it is so the council can spend more money.

Number 27 – Ash Dolan-Shakeri said that when the council advertised the poll the cost of it was front and centre, whereas the information the council put out about the decision taken last Wednesday to progress had no mention of the money agreed to be spent. They added that we need to be cautious about voter fatigue and then proposed a question: "Should Alton Town Council stop investigating alternatives and instead proceed immediately with the dredging of King's Pond at its current size and adding improvements such as silt traps?" The question was seconded by Councillor Matthew Kellermann.

Number 28 – this resident said they do not envy the people who have to make this decision. They had looked into it and at present there is £134 per tonne landfill tax to pay on top of what it costs to dredge the pond. They said that asking the other people of Alton to cough up that kind of money to dredge the pond does not seem like a sensible spend.

Number 29 – This resident said that they thought there should be a poll when Stage One is completed in the summer.

Number 30 – declined to speak.

Number 31 – this resident said that someone earlier had been talking about democracy and having a democratic decision. They feel that the most democratic thing is to have a vote once we have all the information. They added that they might vote to dredge but they want to know what they are voting for. To go immediately to dredging is not right – we need to know what it would cost, what the alternatives are and so on.

Number 32 – had been returned as the person had left the meeting.

Number 33 – Dr June Chatfield said she has lived opposite the pond for 45 years and was involved in the last dredging of the pond. She said we need to look at the history of the pond: The West Melbury Marly Chalk that holds the water in the pond is like putty. Above that we have the Zig Zag chalk beds which are heavily fractured. The cracks in the chalk are where the water is stored. The water leaks out the sides and so we get springs. The one that feeds King's Pond dries up in the summer months. There have been times when it has dried up for longer. You do get a silt layer on top of that and in the past it went through a wet meadow. On the bank by the railway bridge you can see white chalk. They are kept white because we also have a second aquifer feeding in from Windmill Hill. There was a corn mill on the site where the old papermills were later. The water fed that mill and the stream was diverted when the mill wasn't operating. The population of Alton at that time was more like a thousand people. There is an eighteenth century map that shows a small pond on the site, but it is only very small. William King, who the pond is named after, ran it and it was after he died that the mill grew and the water wasn't sufficient. The Spicer family then ran the mill and had it operating on a daily basis. The pond rarely silted up as they would open the sluice and let it run further down the river where it became someone else's problem.

Then the mill stayed derelict for a while and were used to house German prisoners of war during the war. After that the mill was used by a battery company to make electric for their operations. Someone else then took over with a foundry and although he eventually got a building on the new industrial estate he retained ownership of the land. Memories of the pond from a gentleman called Michael Jackson, whose family then owned it, said the same birds were all there then as now, except that there were no Canada geese.

Dr June informed the meeting that the island was not formed until 1973/74 as a cheap way of getting rid of the silt when it was dredged. Taking the silt off-site is incredibly expensive, especially as it is contaminated with metals and run-off from the roads. It was dredged again in 1996. It needs dredging around every 30 years because it is an online pond.

She pointed out that some of the silt comes from the arable land up Brick Kiln Lane and some of that may now be in abeyance due to the balancing pond which was put in at Will Hall Meadow by Red Row with the development there. We will have to wait and see whether this has worked and is helping contain some of the silt.

She went on to say there is also silt run-off from King's View, so we need to contact Hampshire County Council and get them to do something about that as it is Highways responsibility as it is run-off from the roads. She finally added that there is eutrophication due to the numbers of Canda geese and this needs to be controlled.

Number 34 – this resident said it is very hard to understand and they applaud the council for trying to tackle the problem. They went on to say that there are people who think passionately that we need to have the facts and make it the best option for the future, and there are also people like them who have an emotional attachment and will not be convinced to change their mind. They added that they felt the poll should have been done earlier.

Number 35 – this resident said that 1965 to the present time is their history at the pond. They had been part of a group that wanted to make it into a sports area, with kayaking, sailing, etc. However, they said the birds have now taken over and they are more important. They said that people had then wanted to build houses on it. If we have this babbling brook that will then dry up, we know there are councils in the south of the county that are asking Alton to build houses for them because they haven't met their allocation. When we have this dried up puddle someone like CALA will come in with a brilliant proposal and say they will do all the work for us. They added that there had been two options to vote on and then five. A poll will cost £10,000 but will stop the council spending £50,000. They support dredging it and putting the dredgings under the bank. Volunteers would maintain it so there would be no cost to the council. They went on to say that before they could make an informed decision about anything they would like the council to publish all the costs of diverting the drains that go into the pond, adding that this would be a huge expense and that the whole town would be closed while they did it and the council would have to pay compensation to the businesses.

Having allowed everyone the opportunity to speak once the Mayor then allowed people to comment again or propose amendments to the questions that had been posed before the meeting was asked to vote on them.

Dr June Chatfield asked to amend the first question as it would depend on other factors such as tree surveys. She therefore proposed that it was amended to read:
"Should Alton Town Council investigate the possibility of flooding on the root health of the trees in any groundwork?" The amendment was seconded by Councillor Nick O'Brien.

The Deputy Clerk reminded the Mayor that resident Number 5 had asked earlier what was meant by 'tampering with the water levels' and whether that was something in the control of the Town Council. Andrew Murray who had proposed the question explained that if you have a field and you dig a ditch you alter the water levels and you get tree death. This is what will happen if you drop the water level. Councillor Don Hammond said they could not possibly know yet whether water levels would be affected.

The Town Clerk reminded the meeting that it had to be within the power of the Town Council to act upon any questions raised, and said that Question 3 might be rejected as there is no such thing as a binding referendum in law.

Councillor Matthew Kellermann proposed another question: "Should Alton Town Council approach South East Water (with immediate effect) regarding their offer of silt traps?" He said that he applauded Dr June Chapman for her history of the site and added that there is much talk of silt traps because they would mitigate flooding and act as a safety valve. He said that South East Water had broached the subject of installing silt traps at their own expense where the silt builds up. His question was seconded by Anthony Furnival.

Councillor Kellermann then went on to propose an amendment for Question 8; that it say recommencing, rather than continuing, with Stage One.

The Town Clerk said that he had not managed to find any evidence yet of such an offer from South East Water in previous town clerks' emails and asked for help finding this offer. Councillor Kellermann said that he would share details with the Town Clerk.

Ash Dolan-Shakeri said he wished to amend his own question to scrap the word "immediately" and replace it with "Should Alton Town Council stop investigating alternatives and instead proceed only with making plans and finding costs for the dredging of King's Pond at its current size and adding improvements such as silt traps?" Councillor Matthew Kellermann as seconder indicated he was happy with the change and the amendment was made accordingly.

Ash Dolan-Shakeri proposed an amendment to Question 3, that it should say: "Should Alton Town Council commit to following and implementing the results of any parish poll?" Melba Kellermann agreed to this as did her seconder so the amendment was made.

Richard Carter pointed out that a number of the questions are very leading and are unanswerable.

Councillor Don Hammond said there is an issue with the questions and there is lots to respond to, as there has been so much misinformation banded about in the meeting. Firstly, he said there was the issue of public opinion – the council had done briefings in November last year and in the surveys there was a small majority of people who wanted the council to continue to explore both options. He then said that the money spent to date is £37,000, which has been spent on a feasibility study to explore the possibility of removing the weir, surveys to work out how much silt is in the pond and would need removing in order that we can get quotes to dredge, and ecological surveys as we need to know what will be affected when we dredge and by any other work that is done. These surveys are also important for getting the relevant permissions as we will have to show the planners what there is on the site. It has also been spent on the testing of the silt for pollutants, which is needed before plans can be made to dispose of the dredged material. He emphasised that none of that work has to be repeated. It has been done and it will be referred to.

Then he said there is the 'myth' of a chalk stream. He said it is not something that has ever been proposed by Alton Town Council. The River Wey is a chalk stream, but it is never going to be the perfect clear stream people are talking about, just as the pond will never be perfectly clear. He said the aim would be to make the best pond, or the best pond and river, that we possibly can.

He went on to say that the King's Pond Preservation Society talks about research that they have done but have yet to share it. All of the information gathered by Alton Town Council is published on their website and available for anyone to look at.

With regards silt traps, there has been some discussion about putting them in certain places but there has never been talk of silt-trapping the whole river. This is not within the power of Alton Town Council. King's Pond is a 4-hectare site. It is a great open space. It will always be an open space. You will always be able to do all those activities people have spoken about on that site.

He finished by saying that neither he, nor the council, has wasted money getting the drawings redone but please rest assured that all the comments have been taken on board and the importance of the island is well-understood and documented.

Councillor Nick O'Brien said the only way we will be able to make sure we get a good response is to get the best turnout at this poll possible.

Melba Kellermann said that when the option came to Full Council on 10th December the council should have pivoted to dredging because the chamber could not be removed. Instead, we got all these new options. She added if people care the other way they can turn up to meetings.

Anthony Furnival said Councillor Hammond has accused people of misinformation, but he has exhibited behaviour unbecoming of a councillor. He also asked Councillor O'Brien to back up the comments he has made online. He went on to say there is a trust issue with the council which needs to be resolved. There is also a rhetoric about dredging the pond every thirty years, but silt traps would reduce that. He said that the King's Pond Preservation Society has spoken to three dredging companies and the figures that have been put out there do not match the figures the council has been given.

Another member of the King's Pond Preservation Society said that the professional company they had got out to look at this assured them that with new technology and the draining bags they could use all the silt on-site and so there would be no additional costs for disposal. They added that if there were huge problems with the contaminants when they did the work in 1973 and built the island, we would not have the thriving wildlife we have.

Councillor Matthew Kellermann said that surveys will have to be redone as he thinks some are time sensitive. He said that he does agree with Cllr Hammond that he has not wasted money on new drawings because this is a scheme that already has drawings done and was rejected by the previous council.

Will Seabury said we need to bear in mind that dredging is needed for both options. He commented on his perception of Councillor Hammond's behaviour.

Jeremy Buck asked if anyone else was as bemused as he was that there are such arguments among councillors and yet the public are nowhere near as informed as they are. He said that councillors should be making these decisions, not asking the public to adjudicate in this way.

Melba Kellermann said she felt that questions 4 and 9 were very similar so, with the approval of the seconder, withdrew question 4.

The Mayor then went through the proposed questions and amendments and voting took place, first on the amendments and then on the questions. Jancine Potts queried whether the Mayor was allowed to vote and the Mayor replied that, in law, she is as she is an elector. **The results were as follows:**

	Question	*Yes*	*No*
1.	**Should Alton Town Council tamper with water levels jeopardising tree health and wellbeing?** P: John Murray. S: Melba Kellermann. ~~Amendment: **Should Alton Town Council investigate the possibility of flooding on the root health of the trees in any groundwork?** P: June Chatfield. S: Nick O'Brien.~~ [18 favour, 25 against]	8	33
2.	**Do you believe that Alton Town Council is listening to residents concerning King's Pond?** P: Melba Kellermann. S: Anne Noon.	24	23
3.	**Should Alton Town Council commit to following and implementing the results of any parish poll?** P: Melba Kellermann. S: Anne Noon.	33	10
4.	~~**Do you want King's Pond to remain the same size, dredged with improvements?**~~ ~~P: Melba Kellermann. S: Anne Noon.~~ WITHDRAWN	-	-
5.	**Do you trust Alton Town Council to spend council taxpayers' money wisely?** P: Melba Kellermann. S: Anne Noon.	18	21
6.	**Should Alton residents be consulted on any further spending on King's Pond?** P: Melba Kellermann. S: Anne Noon.	30	9
7.	**Do you want to remove Don Hammond from any further King's Pond focus groups?** P: Melba Kellermann. S: Anne Noon.	24	21

8.	~~**Do you want Alton Town Council to continue with Stage 1 so that the people can take an informed decision?**~~ P: Graeme Parkin. S: Arthur Kearse. Amendment: **Do you want Alton Town Council to recommence Stage 1 so that the people can take an informed decision?** P: Matthew Kellermann. S: Madi Allen. [38 favour, 3 against]	18	29
9.	**Should Alton Town Council stop investigating alternatives and instead proceed only with making plans and finding costs for the dredging of King's Pond at its current size and adding improvements such as silt traps?** P: Ash Dolan-Shakeri. S: Matthew Kellermann.	30	18
10.	**Should Alton Town Council approach South East Water (with immediate effect) regarding their offer of silt traps?** P: Matthew Kellermann. S: Anthony Furnival.	44	0

(Those highlighted yellow were later demanded to be taken to a Parish Poll.)

<u>3.3 Opportunity to demand a Parish Poll</u>

The Chair then asked if the public wanted to take any of the questions to a Parish Poll. The Town Clerk clarified that, as there was unanimity on it, he would be pleased to action question 10 immediately. He reminded the meeting that it did not need a majority of the meeting to demand a poll – if ten people demanded that a question be put to a Parish Poll then legally it has to happen.

Anthony Furnival asked whether there would be a difference in cost in taking more than one question to a Poll. The Town Clerk said more questions would take more counting time so there would be a higher cost for officer time and for printing the ballots. This would be a matter for the Returning Officer at EHDC to determine and for Alton Town Council to pay.

The following questions were demanded each by at least ten electors: 1-3, 5-9. The Town Council retained a record of the names of those who demanded each question.

Once the addresses had been taken from the proposers of the questions for legal purposes, the meeting closed at 9.07pm.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25 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 2024/25

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 2025.**
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 2025.** 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 2025
   - 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 2024/25

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 2025 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 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2024/25**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2025 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) 2024/25

- 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 2025.
- 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 Chair, 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 2024) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2025).
- 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 2025.**

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?	✓	
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 Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at **31 March 2025** 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.		✓

****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 2024/25

Alton Town Council

www.alton.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, 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 2024/25 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 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✓ n/a
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 *(during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		

	Yes	No	Not applicable
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

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: 03/07/2024 02/10/~~2025~~ 2024 08/01/~~2026~~ 2025.

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: Mark Mulberry

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit [redacted] Date 16/04/2025

***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 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

Alton 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 2025, that:

	Agreed Yes	Agreed No*		'Yes' means that this authority:
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.
	Yes	No	N/A	
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.			✓	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:

07/05/2025

and recorded as minute reference:

179

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair [redacted]

Clerk

www.alton.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

Alton Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	1,049,931	1,587,852	*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	826,979	851,976	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	1,099,126	726,160	*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	505,927	513,500	*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	9,411	9,411	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	872,846	849,213	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	1,587,852	1,793,864	*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	1,588,383	1,906,735	*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	3,092,603	3,088,953	*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	182,280	176,904	*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 exclude any Trust transactions.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 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 pres[redacted]

Date 07/05/2025

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

07/05/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

180.

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

[redacted]

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of Alton 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 2025; 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 2024/25

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.

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

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

To be in line with best practice we recommend that when minuting the appointment of the internal auditor, the council record they have considered the independence of the appointed auditor on an annual basis.

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

External Auditor Name

BDO LLP - Southampton

External Auditor Signature [redacted]

Date 01 September 2025