

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

Kingshurst Parish 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 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors

2 External auditor limited assurance opinion 2023/24

Except for the matters report 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 the Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The inspection period for the exercise of electors' rights was set for 31 working days which is more than the mandatory 30 working days as set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Paragraph 14(1). Although this is considered to be a minor technical breach, given more than the standard amount of time was provided for, in future the Council should ensure it provides the precise public inspection period. We would anticipate the Council taking this into account when it completes Assertion 4 on its 2024/25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

It was noted during the review process that the council has included allowances for councillors in Box 4 (Staff Costs). As Councillors are not employees we would have expected this to be included in Box 6 (Total Other Payments). This issue was also raised on the prior year's External Audit Report and hence this issue was not appropriately actioned. The Council therefore should have answered 'No' to Assertion 7 of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return which relates to taking appropriate action on matters reported from internal and external audit.

Allowances were identified as having been paid to co-opted councillors, contrary to The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 regulation 4. Therefore, we would have expected assertion 3 to be answered 'No'. Recommendations have been raised to the council to review and discuss these payments and to agree a resolution.

During the year the clerk had still not been enrolled into a pension scheme, which remains a failure to follow all necessary laws and regulations. As a result, we would have expected Assertion 3 to have a 'No' response. As this was raised on the prior year External Audit Report, we would have also expected Assertion 7 to be answered 'No'. Since the year end, we are informed that this issue has been rectified and appropriate payments are being made, therefore we do not anticipate any future issues.

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

On initial submission of the AGAR, Section 2 did not include the signature of the RFO. This was queried with the Council and the AGAR was resubmitted with the signature included. The Council should ensure that when submitting future returns that the submission includes all boxes completed including signatures.

On the Annual Internal Audit Report, the date of sign off was not included by the internal auditor. Please ensure this is included in future.

The Internal Auditor has signed off the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24 after the Section 1 Governance Statement 2023/24 was approved. As the completed 2023/24 report was not available for review and consideration with the form, it is presumed that the Assertions in Section 1: Annual Governance Statement refer to the previous year's internal audit report and to other checks performed by the Council.

Incomplete information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to significant variances, which was later provided on request. The Parish Council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their annual submission.


The Return required to be amended in respect of Box 8 of Section 2 - Accounting Statements. This was originally '0' and later resubmitted with the correct figure. The original return advertised to the public was therefore technically incorrect, but we consider there to be no significant impact from this omission. The Council should in future ensure that all boxes are fully completed in accordance with paragraph 2.5 of the JPAG Practitioners' Guide.

The Internal Auditor has answered 'Yes' to Control Objective G of their report which relates to salaries and allowances and related liabilities following the correct requirements. As noted above, the auto enrolment pension was not implemented until after the 23/24 period and allowances were paid to members not entitled during the period, so we expected this to be answered 'No'.

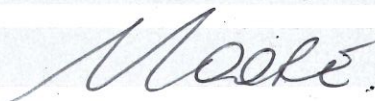
3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

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 2024.

External Auditor Name

 MOORE

External Auditor Signature



Date

09/01/2025