

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Warnham Parish Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

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

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

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors

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

Box 11a has not been completed on Section 2 Accounting Statements therefore the form is incomplete.

Section 2 Accounting Statements has not been correctly completed. Box 2 should only include precept receipts and includes other income that should have been included in Box 3. We have been unable to wholly verify the source of this other income as insufficient information has been provided. We would expect these figures to be restated on the next year's AGAR, and suitably noted as restated to bring it to the attention of the reader. Box 2 should be £92,756 and Box 3 should be restated appropriately. We would expect this to be reflected in the council's response to Assertion 3 on the 2023-24 return.

The published Notice of Public Rights requires the name, position and contact details of the person placing the notice, usually the RFO, to be entered at line 2(b) on the form to satisfy the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Paragraph 15(2)(b). This is a repeat error, and the Council should ensure this is completed in the future. This should be considered when completing next year's Annual Governance Statement.

The Council has answered 'Yes' to Box 4 of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return which relates to how the Notice of Public Rights was advertised within the financial year 2022-23. Therefore, it relates to the Notice announcing the public right to review the 2021-22 return which was published during 2022-23. As noted in our Auditor Report last year, this notice was not correctly advertised therefore this question should have been answered 'No'. The Council will need to take account of our report when completing assertion 4 on the 2023-24 Return.

The Internal Auditor has raised that the Council did not properly maintain their fixed asset register for the year. The Council have not reflected this in the Annual Governance Statement. We would have expected this to have generated a 'No' answer to Box 3 on the Annual Governance Statement.

Matters in relation to the Notice of Public Rights and fixed asset register were also raised on the prior year External Audit report and so as this area has not been corrected the Council should have answered 'No' to Box 7 of the AGAR.

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

Last year the External Audit Report noted that the Notice of Public Rights was announced incorrectly. Therefore, we expected a 'No' response to control objective M on the Annual Internal Audit Report.

The Council's name was not entered on Section 2 of the Annual Return on the initial submission. We consider the omissions to be trivial, however, the Parish Council should take care to ensure the form is fully completed in the future to ensure full compliance with the regulations and code of practice.

The Internal Auditor has not provided an explanation for their 'No' response to control objective H on the Annual Internal Audit Report. The same response was provided on the report last year, which suggests the issue has not been resolved.

The Internal Auditor has signed off the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23 after the Section 1 Governance Statement 2022/23 was approved. This means the completed 2022/23 report was not available for review and consideration with the form. It is presumed that the statements in Section 1 Annual Governance Statement refer to the previous year's internal audit report.

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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 2023.

External Auditor Name



External Auditor Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Moore', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Date

23/01/2024