

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Kingham 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.

Section 14(1) of the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015 requires the period of public rights should be a 'single period of 30 working days'. The Council provided a period of 29 working days in 2022-23 for the review of their records which is a breach of the regulation and the Council need to note this for completion of the governance assertions on the 2024 form. In future the council should ensure that it calculates and provides a period of precisely 30 working days.

It was noted on review that the announcement of the Period for Public Rights was the same date as the approval of Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. Regulation 12 – 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 set out the order required to be followed when approving, announcing and publishing the Return and related documents in order to satisfy the Public Rights requirements. The Return must be approved prior to the Notice being published. To be able to demonstrate this, proper practice requires that the Notice is published no sooner than the day following the approval meeting and the Public Rights period commences no sooner than the next working day after that.

The AGAR Section 2 Statement of Accounts 2022 column does not arithmetically add down to Box 7 when summed due to a transposition error in Box 4 resulting in a difference of £45. When inputting the comparative numbers for the Return care should be taken to ensure this mirrors the previous return correctly.

Section 1 of the AGAR was completed as approved on 17/05/2023 with a minute reference 20230517. Section 2 of the AGAR was dated on the same day and had the same minute reference. On investigation (due to the same minute references used), the minutes found on the Parish Council's website clearly show both Sections 1 and 2 were approved at the Parish Meeting held on 17 May 2023 and recorded as minute items 12 and 13 respectively.

As such, the minute references reflected on the AGAR are incorrect. We would expect this to be reflected in the council's response to Assertion 3 on the 2023-24 return and any future minute references to match back to the reference provided in those minutes.

This issue also occurred last year and was noted on the External Audit report. Therefore, we would have expected a 'no' response to Assertion 3 and 7 on this year's Section 1 Annual Governance Statement but the Council has answered 'yes' to these incorrectly.

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

The Internal Auditor did not initially complete Box O on the Annual Internal Audit Report. When this was updated and resubmitted the 'Yes' answer given was consistent with other items on the AGAR and so no concern remains in this area.

The AGAR Section 2 Statement of Accounts 2023 column does not arithmetically add down to Box 7 by £1 when summed. When rounding the numbers for the Return care should be taken to ensure the Return sums correctly.

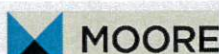
The internal auditor has provided a 'yes' response at control check K on their report. This suggests that the council correctly claimed exemption from audit in the previous (2021-22) year. As the council was not exempt and did not claim exemption the answer to this point should have been 'not covered'.

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.

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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

Date

08/09/2023