

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24 in respect of Cornwood Parish Council - DV0116

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.

External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2023/24

On 27 September 2024, we issued a report detailing the results of our limited assurance review of Sections 1 and 2 of this authority's Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2024. We explained that we were unable to certify completion of the review at that time. We are now in a position to certify completion of the review.

The external auditor report given in Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return requires amendments as follows:

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

Section 1, Assertions 1, 2 and 5 have been incorrectly completed as the smaller authority has:

- made salary payments outside of payroll. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor's response to Internal Control Objective G.
- not prepared regular bank reconciliations through the financial year. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor's response to Internal Control Objective I.
- not carried out a risk assessment in the year. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor's response to Internal Control Objective C.

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

In the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to significant weaknesses in relation to timely VAT claims. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner.

Information has come to our attention from the internal auditor highlighting the fact that Sections 1 & 2 of the 2022/23 AGAR, Notice of conclusion of audit and external auditor report and certificate were not published on the authority's website by the dates specified in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The smaller authority has ticked no to Assertion 4.

The smaller authority has not provided an adequate explanation for the variance between the prior and current year values in Box 6 of Section 2

External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.



PKF Littlejohn LLP
30/09/2024