

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Medbourne 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 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.

We identified during our review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return that Boxes 4 and 6 of the prior year column (2023) on Section 2 - Accounting Statements did not agree to the figures provided on the 2022-23 audited return. We note the reason for these amendments was due to the Council's cost for use of external payroll services being previously included within Box 4 rather than Box 6 however the column has not been marked as 'Restated' to bring it to the attention of the reader. This is a breach of proper practices and as a result a 'No' response should have been provided at Assertion 3 on the 2023-24 Annual Governance Statement. As the figures for the 2024 year appear to be correctly stated we do not believe this should impact the 2024-25 return.

It was noted by the Internal Auditor that the Council does not assess levels of income or establish specific earmarked reserves during the budgeting process as required by Paragraphs 1.8 and 1.13 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2023 with further guidance provided in Paragraphs 5.24 - 5.27. Therefore, since this is a breach of proper practices, we would have expected Assertions 1 and 3 on the 2023-24 Annual Governance Statement to have been answered 'No'.

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

Boxes 1-6 of Section 2 of the AGAR 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 boxes 1-6 sum to box 7 in accordance with Paragraph 2.19 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2023 and that box 7 agrees or reconciles to box 8 as is required per Paragraph 2.23 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2023.

The Clerk's signature has been entered on Section 2 in the Box where the date of the Council meeting for the approval of Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. Whilst we have no concerns over the correctness of the approval following our review, care should be taken to ensure signatures and dates are entered in the correct boxes.

Insufficient 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.

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



External Auditor Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Moore".

Date

09/09/2024