

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2020/21 in respect of Batheaston Parish Council AV0010

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 2021; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

External auditor report 2020/21

On 29 September 2021, 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 2021. 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.

The internal auditor's report has highlighted that the smaller authority did not publish the External Auditor Report and Certificate for 2019/20 on its website in accordance with the publications requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The response to Section 1, Assertion 3 should therefore have been 'No'.

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

We note that the smaller authority did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision during the year 2021/22 for the exercise of public rights, since the period for the exercise of public rights did not include the first 10 working days of July. As a result, the smaller authority must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2022/23.

In the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, and their detailed report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to significant weaknesses in relation to the maintenance of bookkeeping, risk assessment, maintenance of asset register, and publication requirements. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner

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The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance assertions in Section 1, Assertions 1, 2, 5 and 7 but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. The AGAR had to be sent back for amendment.

External auditor certificate 2020/21

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 2021.



PKF Littlejohn LLP

29/09/2021