

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22

In respect of

Bampton 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 2022; 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.

As part of our intermediate testing performed based on the size of the authority, we confirmed that Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and a Code of Conduct had been adopted by the authority. A review of the minutes available on the Council's website for the year however, found no evidence that these documents, particularly the Financial Regulations and Standing Order had been reviewed by the Council during the year. Proper Practices provided by the JPAG Practitioners Guide state in Section 1.14 that these governance documents should be reviewed on a regular basis. This is to ensure that they remain appropriate and fit for purpose. Whilst it is not a regulation that reviews are completed on an annual basis, where they are not completed annually, the council should diarise them to ensure regular reviews are undertaken to satisfy the requirements. As no confirmatory minutes have been provided to substantiate regular reviews the Council should therefore have answered 'No' to Assertion 3 of the Annual Governance Statement.

A review of the document archive on the Council's website has found that the Council has not fully met the requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Regulation 13 (2)(b) which states each Annual Governance and Accountability Return together with any other documents published under Regulation 13(1) should, on conclusion of the audit, be available for public access for a period of 5 years from their initial publication date which includes publication on the Council's website. The only information that could be located was in relation to the 2020/21 Annual Return. This also indicates the answer to Box 3 of the Annual Governance Statement should have been 'No'.

The Council provided an explanation for the variance between Box 3 on Section 2 of AGAR from the prior year to the current year which did not reduce the variance to below the required level of 15%. We requested clarification from the Council but this has not been provided, however a review of the previous year and the Council's website suggests that a rental income stream lost during 2021 was also lost for the 2022 year due to restoration work being undertaken on the Old School Community Centre. This being the case, we have satisfied ourselves regarding the level of variation in other income during the period. However, the Council should provide sufficient explanations to bring variations below 15% in the future.

The Council has provided no explanation for the variance between this year and last year for boxes 7 and 8 of Section 2. As the balance at box 7 is a product of boxes 1-6 and we have been able to satisfy ourselves regarding the individual amounts, we are content that no further explanation is required. Similarly, box 8 reflects the reconciled bank amounts and therefore we are satisfied that the variation is covered by the explanations provided for boxes 1-6.

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

NONE

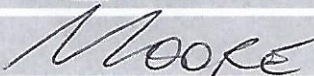
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We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2022.

External Auditor Name

 **MOORE**

External Auditor Signature



Date

26/09/2022