

## Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Sidlesham 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

### 2 External auditor report 2022/23

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.

The Council approved the final accounting statements section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return after 30 June which does not comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

It was noted on review that the announcement and commencement of the Period for Public Rights was before the approval 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 inspection period for the exercise of electors' rights does not include the first ten working days of July as specified in the Accounts and Audit Regulations, Part 15 (1).

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 24 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.

We reported in the prior year in relation to the Notice of Public Rights not being properly raised. As the Notice of Public Rights for the 2022 year end was during the 2022/23 financial year, the Council should have answered 'No' to Assertion 4 on Section 1 of the AGAR. As the same issue in relation to the Notice of Public Rights has arisen for the current year, the Council should also have answered 'No' to Assertion 7 of Section 1.

On the initial submission of the annual return, the approval dates and minutes references for both Section 1 and Section 2 were incomplete. Following correspondence with the Council, they provided a copy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 11 October 2023. Under minute reference 21, 'it was unanimously agreed by all that the End of Year Accounts for 2022/23 were accepted as a true representation of the Accounts'. Therefore it is noted that the minutes did not record the approval of the AGAR form but rather the fact that the year end accounts were approved. It should be noted that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the full council to approve Sections 1 and 2 of the return individually and in that specific order and the minutes should reflect this. The council should consider these points when completing Assertion 3 of Section 1 of the 2023-24 form. We would also expect to see the approval process completed in accordance with the regulations for the 2023-24 return.

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

Section 2 of the AGAR was initially submitted without the Trust Fund disclosure in Box 11a completed. This was later resubmitted with a 'No' answer which was in line with our expectations and so there are no further concerns in this area.

The Internal Auditor has answered 'Not Covered' to control Objective L on the Annual Internal Audit Report. In future, we would anticipate the review of the Internal Auditor to cover this control objective.

The Internal Auditor has answered 'Yes' to control Objective M of their report despite the council not satisfying the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015, Regulations 14(1) and 15(3) in regard to the notice of public rights period during the financial year 2022-23. We would therefore have anticipated this response to have been 'No'.

There is a trivial rounding error in this year's column when summed. When rounding the numbers for the Return care should be taken to ensure the Return sums correctly.

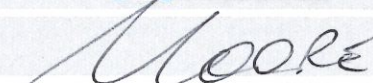
### 3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

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

 MOORE

External Auditor Signature



Date

26/01/2024

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 Part 3

Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities\*

Page 6 of 6