

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **HARLAXTON PARISH COUNCIL – LI0167**

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 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 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 (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.

It has come to our attention that the Chair has temporarily been acting as RFO. Please ensure that an RFO is appointed in line with section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 as soon as possible. We note that the Chair has signed Sections 1 and 2 twice, as Clerk, RFO and as Chair. If the Chair has been appointed as RFO, then it would be considered best practice for another member to sign on behalf of the smaller authority.

We note that Section 1, Box 9 and Section 2, Boxes 11 (a) and (b) in respect of trust funds have been answered ‘N/A’ ‘No’ and ‘N/A’ respectively indicating that the smaller authority does not act as a sole managing trustee. However, evidence seen at the Charity Commission register indicates that the smaller authority is the sole trustee for three entities. The smaller authority should ensure the AGAR is correctly completed in future.

The smaller authority has disclosed that it made proper provision during the year 2022/23 for the exercise of public rights, by answering ‘Yes’ to Section 1, Assertion 4. However, as was reported last year, we are aware that it failed to do this and therefore should have answered ‘No’ to this Assertion. It has also disclosed that it took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit, by answering ‘Yes’ to Section 1, Assertion 7, which, on the basis of the above, is not correct.

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

The minutes of the meeting in which the AGAR was approved do not clearly show that both the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements were approved. The smaller authority should ensure that the AGAR is approved in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

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

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

21/09/2023