

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

Steeple Barton 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

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.

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

Upon review, general reserves appear to be held at a low level if all the earmarked projects and costs go ahead. The Council should keep this under review and ensure that they have sufficient general reserves to cover day-to-day expenditure. Per Paragraph 5.33 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide, better practice suggests this should generally be at least 3 months expenditure as a minimum. These cannot include ring fenced funds and should avoid including funds which are designated for another purpose.

Box 10 of Section 2 for both the current and comparative years were left blank on the submission of the AGAR. We consider there to be no significant impact from this omission based on third party evidence we have obtained, however the Council should in future ensure that all boxes are fully completed in accordance with paragraph 2.5 of the Practitioners' Guide.

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify/~~do not 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.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name



External Auditor Signature

Date

11/08/2024