

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Bowness On Solway 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.

Historically the Council have not kept adequate records of fixed assets. This has previously been noted in the report of the External Auditor. During the current year the fixed asset register has been updated for the fixed asset purchases/additions in the 2022/23 financial year however the fixed asset purchases as mentioned in the prior year's External Auditor Report (bus shelter, defibrillator, noticeboards) have still not been included as a fixed asset addition on the 2021/22 fixed asset register and hence as an asset on the 2022/23 fixed asset register. Therefore, the values entered in the 2022 and 2023 column for Box 9 of Section 2 Accounting Statements have been understated by the value of these fixed asset additions which based on the variance explanation provided for Box 6 (total other payments) of Section 2 totals to £20,322. This means the 2022 and 2023 figures for Box 9 should read £20,357 and £40,531 respectively. Please could the Council ensure the 2023 figure is restated on the 2023/24 return and marked appropriately along with the fixed asset register being updated for these assets.

As this was brought to the attention of the Council in the previous year's audit report but not actioned, the Council should have answered 'No' to Assertions 1 and 7 of the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement.

Box 11b on Section 2 of the AGAR was submitted with a 'No' response. Given the Council are not a sole trustee, the response to this box should have been 'N/A'.

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

The bank reconciliation was not provided on the initial submission. This is one of the supporting documents we require on the initial submission therefore please note this for the future.

Additional variance information needed to be requested. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their initial annual submission.

On initial submission, control objective D of the Annual Internal Audit Report was not answered. This was later answered and resubmitted with the answer of 'Yes' which is in line with expectations.

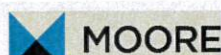
The Internal Auditor ticked 'Yes' to control Objective K on the Annual Internal Audit Report which relates to whether a Council correctly certified itself exempt in the prior year. We expected this control objective to be answered 'Not covered' as last year the Council did not claim exemption from review and submitted an AGAR 3 for review.

The Internal Auditor ticked 'no' to control Objective L on the Annual Internal Audit Report which relates to whether a Council correctly published all necessary information at the time of their visit. On a brief review of the website, it appears that the Notice of Audit Conclusion for 2022 is not with the published data, but it is not clear if anything else was missing at that time and has since been uploaded to rectify the issue.

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



External Auditor Signature

Date

29/09/2023