

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25 in respect of Ockley Parish Council – SU0057

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 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2024/25

On 28 September 2025, we issued a report detailing the results of our limited assurance review of Sections 1 and 2 of this authority's Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2025. We explained that we were unable to certify completion of the review at that time. We are now in a position to certify completion of the review.

The external auditor report given in Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return requires amendments as follows:

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.

The smaller authority failed to approve the AGAR in time to publish it by 1 July 2025, the date required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and did not disclose this by answering 'No' to Section 1, Box 1.

The AGAR has not been signed/approved in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015:

- The date for Section 2 and minute references have been incorrectly recorded on the AGAR. The agenda of the meeting at which the AGAR was approved has been reviewed, but not the minutes. The agenda demonstrates that Sections 1 and 2 have been approved in the correct order. The smaller authority should ensure that the correct dates and minute references are recorded on the AGAR in future.
- The agenda of the meeting at which the AGAR was approved is dated 1st July 2025, and the agenda shows the date of the minutes of the meeting to be 7th July 2025. Therefore, Section 2 was not signed by the Responsible Finance Officer before approval.

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

In the prior year, the smaller authority was exempt from our review, thus we have not reviewed any evidence to support the prior year comparatives on the AGAR.

We note that the smaller authority did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision during the year 2025/26 for the exercise of public rights, since the approval date was after the start of the period for the exercise of public rights. As a result, the smaller authority must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2026/27.

The smaller authority has not provided:

- an adequate explanation for the variance between the prior and current year values in Box 3 of Section 2
- evidence of consideration of risk management arrangements by the whole authority during 2024/25. This was requested as part of our intermediate review procedures.
- a bank reconciliation as at the year end.

External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

PKF Littlejohn LLP

PKF Littlejohn LLP

30/09/2025