

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22 in respect of Dunston Parish Council LI0109

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 2022; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

External auditor report 2021/22

On 27 September 2022, 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 2022. 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 before 1 July 2022, 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 in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015:

- The minute references indicate Section 2 was approved before Section 1 and the minutes from the meeting where the AGAR was approved confirm this.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. Please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR:

- The smaller authority has not addressed the 'except for' matter raised by the external auditor when qualifying the prior year AGAR. The smaller authority has not restated the 2020/21 figure for omitted assets in Section 2, Box 9. The smaller authority has identified that there may be other errors in the fixed asset register and intend to carry out a comprehensive review of the register during 2023/24.
- Section 2, Box 7 for the current year does not agree to Boxes 1+2+3-(4+5+6). We note that payments in one bank account have been omitted from the figure in Box 6 in error. The figure in Box 6 should read £28,716.

Section 1, Assertion 3 has been incorrectly completed. It has come to our attention that the smaller authority's website was not able to be updated for several months during the year under review and subsequently. As a result, certain documentation was not published on the website in accordance with the relevant regulations and therefore this assertion should have been

answered "No". We note that the website has subsequently been updated but is currently not up to date in respect of Agendas and Minutes of Meetings. The smaller authority has confirmed that this is in the process of being addressed.

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

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 2022/23 for the exercise of public rights, since the approval date was after the start of the period for the exercise of public rights, the period was less than 30 consecutive working days in length and did not include the first 10 working days of July and the correct information was not published on a website as well as a noticeboard. As a result, the smaller authority must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2023/24.

We received challenge correspondence in relation to the 2021/22 AGAR which we considered before completing our work. The authority will receive an invoice in relation to this additional work.

External auditor certificate 2021/22

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 2022.



PKF Littlejohn LLP

13/04/2023