

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of **Fringford 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 2025; 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 2024/25

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.

Boxes 1-6 of Section 2 of the AGAR do not arithmetically add down to Box 7 by £1,309 when summed. This suggests that figures have been transposed when being entered onto the form. When entering the numbers for the Return care should be taken to ensure boxes 1-6 sum to box 7 in accordance with Paragraph 2.19 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024 and that box 7 agrees or reconciles to box 8 as is required per Paragraph 2.23 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024.

The External Auditors also noted the above issue on the 2023/24 audit report. The council therefore should have answered 'No' to Assertion 7 of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return which relates to taking appropriate action on matters reported from internal and external audit as these issues were repeated this year.

Section 16(1) of the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015 requires the Notice of Conclusion of Audit to be published on the authority's website. In future, the council should ensure that this notice is available on their website alongside the signed external audit report and the audited AGAR.

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

The inspection period for the exercise of electors' rights provided in respect of the 2024/25 AGAR does not include the first ten working days of July as specified in the Accounts and Audit Regulations, Part 15 (1). We would anticipate this being taken into account when completing Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement on the 2025/26 AGAR.

Insufficient information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to the breakdown of reserves, which was later provided on request.

On review of this information, the council's general reserves are higher than the generally accepted level for smaller authorities. General reserves are the level of reserves after adjusting for any earmarked or ringfenced funds. Per Paragraph 5.34 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024, best practice suggests that general reserves should cover at least 3 months of expenditure and anything greater than 12 months of expenditure is considered excessive.

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

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 2025.

External Auditor Name



External Auditor Signature

Moore

Date

16/07/2025