

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Thaxted Parish Council – EX0246

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 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 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 (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 has not addressed the ‘except for’ matter raised by the external auditor when qualifying the prior year annual return. Section 2, Box 1 and 7 of the prior year should read £377,476 and £383,682 respectively. In the current year AGAR, trust fund transactions and balances have not been excluded for the prior year figures (Box 1 and 7) or the current year reported figures due to the authority being unable to open a bank account and amalgamate the funds. However, where there is no separate bank account in operation, financial transactions of the trust fund that have passed through the bank account of the smaller authority should be reflected in the Section 2 figures. The smaller authority has correctly ticked ‘No’ to Section 1, Assertion 9 to acknowledge these departures from proper practice.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review:

- The figure in Section 2, Box 3 of the prior year comparative column does not agree to the prior year final signed AGAR and no evidence was provided in explanation when requested.

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

None.

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

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

 SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

09/09/2023