

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Burneside 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.

On review of the 2025 AGAR form we have noted that boxes 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 of the 2024 column do not agree to the audited AGAR published for the prior year. We expected these figures to be entered as £26,181, £2,636, £23,403, £71,563 and £71,563 respectively. If the correct figures had been presented in the comparative column, box 7 of the prior year would not agree to box 1 of the current year as required by paragraph 2.11 of the Practitioners Guide 2024. Following on from this, it was identified on the prior year's external audit report that box 2 was incorrectly stated since the figure entered (£26,181) did not agree to the information provided by the precepting authority (£27,489). As a result box 2 was understated by £1,308. The affected figures for this understatement also do not appear to have been restated on production of the 2024/25 return. As a result of all of this, we would have expected Assertion 1 on the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement to have been answered 'No'.

Section 2 Accounting Statements has not been correctly completed. Box 2 does not agree to the precept as it includes a Parish Grant. This should have been entered in box 3 'Other receipts'. As a result of this we would have expected Assertion 1 on the Annual Governance Statement to be answered 'No'. We would expect these figures to be restated on the next year's AGAR, and marked as such, to bring it to the attention of the reader. Box 2 should be £27,784 and box 3 should be restated accordingly.

A review of the Accounts & Governance Section on the council's website has found that the council has not fully met the requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Regulation 13 (1) which states that the audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return should, on conclusion of the audit, be available for public access which includes publication on the council's website. The council amended their return in the prior year during the 2023/24 audit process however the amended version of the return has not then been published on the council's website. The council should bring this into line with the regulations as soon as practically possible.

Several issues that were noted on the 2023/24 external audit report have been repeated in the current year. 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.

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

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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

Date



Moore

25/09/2025

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

Box 8 of Section 2 – Accounting Statements was originally completed as '0' for both years. This was inconsistent with box 7, which showed a balance of £54,454 for 2025 and £71,564 for 2024. As the return was prepared on a receipts and payments basis, box 7 should agree to box 8, in accordance with paragraph 2.23 of the JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024. The return was later resubmitted with the correct figures in box 8. The council should in future ensure that all boxes are fully completed in accordance with paragraph 2.5 of the JPAG Practitioners' Guide.

Box 11a was not initially completed on Section 2 Accounting Statements when the form was submitted. The form was resubmitted with a 'No' answer to box 11a which was in line with our expectation, so we have no further concerns.

The Internal Auditor has signed off the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 after the Section 1 Governance Statement 2024/25 was approved. As the completed 2024/25 report was not available for review and consideration with the form, it is presumed that the Assertions in Section 1: Annual Governance Statement refer to the previous year's internal audit report and /or to other checks performed by the council.

The Internal Auditor has provided a 'Yes' response at control objective K on their report. This suggests that the council correctly claimed exemption from audit in the previous (2023/24) year. As the council was not exempt and did not claim exemption, the answer to this control objective should have been 'Not covered'. Since this is a repeated issue, please could the council bring this to the attention of the internal auditor.

The Internal Auditor has provided a 'Yes' response at control objectives L and N on their report. This suggests that the council correctly published all relevant documents on its website. As the council currently has not published the audited 2023/24 return following amendments made during the 2023/24 limited assurance review, the answer to these points should have been 'No'.

The council left a significant time period between approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and the commencement of the Public Rights Period. The Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015, section 12 (3)(a) and proper practices require that following approval of the Return, the Public Rights Period should commence as soon as is reasonably practicable when taking into consideration the mandatory inclusion of the first 10 working days of July.

Insufficient information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to significant variances, which was later provided on request. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their annual submission.

Incomplete information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to the level of reserves held by the council, which was later provided on request. The parish council should in future ensure that reserves levels are considered thoroughly and explanations provided with the AGAR when submitted to the external auditor.