

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Chilton 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

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.

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

Paragraph 1.14 of the JPAG Practitioners Guide 2024 states that the standing orders and financial regulations need to be regularly reviewed, fit for purpose, and adhered to. In regards to the review of the financial regulations, we note that new model financial regulations were circulated in May 2024 and that the new clerk attended training on financial regulations in October 2024 in which it has been decided that the current financial regulations adopted by the council need to be updated. The clerk has confirmed that this will be prioritised as soon as possible, but we would recommend that where the council do not review these documents annually, that they document the timetable for their reviews to ensure such reviews are being made on a regular basis. Best practice would be to include the Code of Conduct in this timetable to ensure the council check for updates of the model code and document this fact, whether or not updates are required.

As part of our Intermediate Testing it was noted that the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct were not visible on the Council website in contradiction to their declared publication scheme. Please could you ensure these documents are uploaded as soon as possible. As a result of this we would also have anticipated the internal auditor responding 'no' to internal control check L.

We note that the contact email address on the council's website does not appear to belong to the council. Paragraph 1.26 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024 states every authority should have an email account that belongs to the council and to which the council has access. An email account that is considered to belong to the council should have an authority owned domain, for example clerk@abcparrishcouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abcparrishcouncil.org.uk. From 1 April 2025 this became a mandatory requirement and the council will need to consider whether it is fully compliant.

Upon review, general reserves appear to be held at a low level. The council should keep this under review and ensure that they have sufficient general reserves to cover expenditure. Per Paragraph 5.34 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024, best practice suggests this should generally be at least 3 months expenditure as a minimum. These cannot include ring fenced funds and should avoid including funds which are designated for another purpose.

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.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Date

16/09/2025