

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **Brinklow Parish Council**

1 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 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors

2 External auditor report 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, 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.

The Council 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. The External Auditors on the 2021-22 audit report noted that the Internal Auditor drew attention to weaknesses in relation to authorisation procedures, lengthmens' expenses and the fixed asset register. From reviewing the internal audit report for 2022-23 these weaknesses have not been completely addressed with regards to the fixed asset register and the authorisation procedures. The internal auditor noted that the process for payment of lengthmens' expenses had been improved and we asked further questions in relation to these expenses and responses were satisfactory. We expect the council to make the remaining improvements or consider their answer to Assertion 7 on the 2023-24 Return.

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

Section 2 of the AGAR was initially submitted without the Trust Fund disclosure in Box 11a completed. This was later resubmitted with a 'No' answer which was in line with our expectations and so there are no further concerns in this area.

The Internal Auditor has answered 'No' to Control Objective K on the Annual Internal Audit Report that are stated to relate to authorities that were exempt in the current or prior year. This authority does not meet the threshold to be exempt and so we would expect this to be answered 'Not covered'.

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.

Incomplete information received with regards to earmarked reserves. The parish council should in future ensure that earmarked/general reserves are scheduled in their entirety. Explanations received and acceptable so no further concerns in this area.

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



External Auditor Signature

Date

18/07/2024