

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Woodstock Town 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 year end bank reconciliation, there is a Lloyds Corporate Card balance of £23.62 which appears to be a credit card. As per Paragraph 2.21 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024, amounts owing on credit cards must not be included within Box 8 but are to be treated as creditors and thus included within the reconciliation between Boxes 7 and 8. Therefore Box 8 has been understated by £24 and should be £405,339. The council should note this when completing the 2025/26 return.

On the amended Section 1 provided, the council has recorded a 'No' response to Assertion 9 effectively reporting that it has not met its responsibilities as a sole managing trustee of a trust. Since the council have confirmed they are not a sole trustee based on responses on other sections of the AGAR, the response to this Assertion should have been 'N/A'.

A review of the Financial Matters 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.

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

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'.

Incomplete 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.

We identified during our review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return that box 6 of the prior year column (2024) on Section 2 - Accounting Statements did not agree to the figures provided on last year's form by £1. In revising box 6 for the comparative year, boxes 1-6 no longer cast down to the figure in box 7 by £1.

The council has confirmed that during the year they did not review their internal controls. The council is required to review the effectiveness of its internal controls on an annual basis as per the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 section 6 paragraph 1 and the JPAG Practitioners Guide 2024 at paragraph 1.20. We note that the council are due to formally implement this later in 2025 and this should be recorded in the minutes.

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 that reads 'Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Date

19/08/2025