

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23 in respect of Thurcroft Parish Council SY0080

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.

External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23

On 26 September 2023, we issued a report detailing the results of our limited assurance review of Sections 1 and 2 of this authority's Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2023. We explained that we were unable to certify completion of the review at that time. We are now in a position to certify completion of the review.

The external auditor report given in Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return requires amendments as follows:

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 AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR:

- Information received from the smaller authority indicates that assets purchased during the year have not been included in Section 2, Box 9.

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

We note that the smaller authority did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision during the year 2023/24 for the exercise of public rights, since the period for the exercise of public rights did not include the first 10 working days of July. As a result, the smaller authority must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2024/25.

The smaller authority failed to approve the AGAR in time to publish it before 1 July 2023, the date required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and did disclose this by answering 'No' to Section 1, Box 1.

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance Assertions in Section 1, Boxes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

The smaller authority has answered 'No' to Section 1, Box 9 in respect of trust funds. We understand the Council are in the process of addressing issues concerning ownership of land for which they will be sole managing trustees.

We received challenge correspondence in relation to the 2022/23 AGAR which we considered before completing our work. The authority will receive an invoice in relation to this additional work.

The smaller authority should ensure it complies with its financial regulations for all payments, including ensuring all invoices are in the name of the council, and check with HMRC that all its responsibilities and liabilities are up to date and have been met.

Updated financial regulations were adopted 27 July 2023. The smaller authority should ensure all future short term and long-term contracts are assessed against the updated criteria.

The terms of reference of any sub-committees should be reviewed and followed to ensure they cover the formal approval of allocated budgets by full council, as per the most recent version adopted May 2023.

A grant funding policy was adopted September 2023. The smaller authority should ensure all future grant payments are in accordance with this policy.

External auditor certificate 2022/23

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.



PKF Littlejohn LLP

03/04/2024