

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **Gosforth 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

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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 published Notice of Public Rights requires the name, position and contact details of the person placing the notice, usually the RFO, to be entered at line 2(b) on the form to satisfy the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Paragraph 15(2)(b). The Council should ensure this is completed in the future.

Included within the explanation of variance provided for Box 3 on Section 2, the Council received a 'reimbursement of expenditure on Public Hall' in the year. This gave rise to a possible sole trusteeship of the Public Hall. On investigation of this, it was found on the Charity Commissions website that Gosforth Parish Council are the sole trustee of Gosforth Public Hall (charity number 223951). Therefore, based on this the Council should have provided a 'Yes' response to Box 11a on Section 2.

In completing Section 2 - Accounting Statements on a Receipts and Payments basis the council has included transactions and/or balances relating to the Public Hall it is sole trustee for. However, by including these amounts, the Council should have provided a 'No' response to Box 11b on Section 2.

Also, the Council should have provided a 'No' response to Assertion 9 of the Annual Governance Statement, as the accounts have not followed the required accounting treatment, since the Council have not discharged their accountability responsibilities for the funds, together with an additional explanation of the figures relating to the Public Hall within the accounts.

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

We also note that the internal auditor has answered 'N/A' to control objective O however as per our points noted above, we expected this to have been answered 'No'.

In the original submission, the figures used in the explanation of significant variances were incorrectly entered for items 'Reimbursement of items paid on behalf of public hall' and 'VAT refunds' within Box 3. This was confirmed by the Clerk and the figures should have been stated as £11,418 and £17,501 respectively.

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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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'MOORE' in a cursive style.

Date

30/09/2023