

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24 in respect of Seaford Town Council ES0088

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 2024; 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 2023/24

On 19 September 2024, 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 2024. 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.

- 1) Section 1, Assertion 3 has been incorrectly completed. Information has come to our attention that there was a failure to comply with The Local Government Act 1972 and the Public Contract Regulations in respect of the declaration of any conflict of interest within the procurement process. As a result, this assertion should have been answered 'No'. The smaller authority has subsequently amended its procurement process to ensure this does not recur.
- 2) Section 1, Assertion 2 has been incorrectly completed. Information has come to our attention that the smaller authority did not comply with its Financial Regulations in respect of income receivable and the regular review of fees and charges. As a result, this assertion should have been answered 'No'.

- 3) Section 1, Assertions 2 and 6 have been incorrectly completed. The internal auditor was appointed as responsible financial officer of the smaller authority during the year under review. This is in contravention of the smaller authority's financial regulations as well as proper practices regarding the independence of the internal auditor. As a result, these assertions should have been answered 'No'.

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

- 1) We note that the smaller authority has a considerable number of assets with a significant value of over £10 million. In order to improve transparency, we recommend that the smaller authority enhances its fixed asset register to follow the recommendations of the Practitioners' Guide paragraph 5.58.
- 2) We received challenge correspondence in relation to the 2023/24 AGAR which we considered before completing our work. The authority will receive an invoice in relation to this additional work.

External auditor certificate 2023/24

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 2024.

PKF Littlejohn LLP

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18/06/2026