

## Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Nuthurst Parish 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 2024; 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 2023/24

Except for the matters report 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 has recorded a 'Yes' response at Assertion 1 effectively reporting that it has put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations. Since control objective B of the Annual Internal Auditor's Report has been answered 'No' we would have expected Assertion 1 to be consistent with the Annual Internal Auditor's Report.

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

Incomplete information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to the level of reserves held by the Council, which was later provided on request. The Parish Council should in future ensure that reserves levels are considered thoroughly, and explanations provided with the AGAR when submitted to the external auditor.

Insufficient 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.

The Return required to be amended in respect of Box 10 of Section 2 - Accounting Statements. This was originally left blank and resubmitted with a '0' inserted. The original return advertised to the public was therefore technically incorrect, but we consider there to be no significant impact from this omission. The Council should in future ensure that all boxes are fully completed in accordance with paragraph 2.5 of the JPAG Practitioners' Guide.

The Internal Auditor has signed off the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24 after the Section 1 Governance Statement 2023/24 was approved. As the completed 2023/24 report was not available for review and consideration with the form, it is presumed that the Assertions in Section 1: Annual Governance Statement refer to the previous year's internal audit report and to other checks performed by the Council.

As part of our testing on the significant expenditure in the year, although the Council have provided details of the various tenders and their associated costs being considered and we are satisfied that the financial regulations are considered and followed, they have not provided sufficient details demonstrating that the Council actively monitored actual performance compared to budgeted performance with regards to the playground project. The council should ensure arrangements for monitoring actual performance against the budget are in place going forward in accordance with Paragraph 1.8 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2023.

### 3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

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 2024.

External Auditor Name



External Auditor Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Moore'.

Date

24/09/2024