

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Goring Heath 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 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.

We identified during our review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return that box 9 of the prior year column (2024) on Section 2 - Accounting Statements did not agree to the figures provided on the 2023/24 form. The explanation provided for these amendments did not explain why the 2024 amount was stated at £97,946 when previously it had been £97,549 neither was the amount and the column marked as 'Restated' to bring it to the attention of the reader. This is a breach of proper practices and as a result a 'No' response should have been provided at Assertion 1 on the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement. As the figures for the 2025 year appear to be correctly stated we do not believe this should impact the 2025/26 return.

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

On review, the council's general reserves are higher than the generally accepted level for smaller authorities. General reserves are the level of reserves after adjusting for any earmarked or ringfenced funds. The council have acknowledged this issue and unanimously agreed to reflect this in next year's budgeting process. Per Paragraph 5.34 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024, best practice suggests that general reserves should cover at least 3 months of expenditure and anything greater than 12 months of expenditure is considered excessive.

The council submitted an incorrect version of their Notice of Public Right when we requested the document be submitted. The correct version, as confirmed by the clerk, was later found on the website confirming compliance with the regulations. The parish council should in future ensure that the correct supporting information is provided with their annual submission.

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, appearing to read 'Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Date

23/07/2025