

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of **Lewknor 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 2026; 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 2025/26

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 council should have answered 'No' to Assertion 7 of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return as they did not take appropriate action on matters reported from internal and external audit from 2024/25.

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

On review of the council's Notice of Public Rights, we have noted that this refers to the accounting year end 31 March 2025 in part 2 of the form. We believe this is a human error on completion and that the requirements to publish the Notice of Public Rights was made correctly.

The council provided an explanation for the variances on box 6, 7 and 8 on Section 2 of the AGAR from the prior year to the current year. Whilst the explanation was reasonable, no values were initially provided in order to support the movement. These were later provided on request. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting financial information is provided with their annual submission. A similar point was also noted by the auditors on the prior year external audit report.

Upon review, general reserves appear to be held at a low level. The council should keep this under review and ensure that they have sufficient general reserves to cover expenditure. Per Paragraph 5.34 of the SAPPP Practitioners' Guide 2025, best practice suggests this should generally be at least 3 months expenditure as a minimum. These cannot include ring fenced funds and should avoid including funds which are designated for another purpose.

The Internal Auditor has signed off the Annual Internal Audit Report after the Section 1: Annual Governance Statement was approved by the council suggesting it was not available for review and consideration by the council as they completed their statements. It is presumed that the assertion responses in Section 1: Annual Governance Statement refer to the previous year's internal audit report and /or to other checks performed by the council.

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

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 2026.

External Auditor Name



External Auditor Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Date

23/07/2026