

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2020/21

In respect of **Beaudesert and Henley In Arden Joint Parish Council- WA0025**

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

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 2021; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

Our responsibility is to review Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (see note below). Our work **does not** constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would do.

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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 (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.

The AGAR has not been signed in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

- Section 2 was not signed by the Responsible Finance Officer before approval.

Section 1, Assertions 3, 5 and 7 have been incorrectly completed. Information received from the internal auditor indicates that there were several failures to adhere to financial regulations during the year, including in respect of bank reconciliations (Assertion 3). In addition, no risk assessment was carried out (Assertion 5) and certain matters raised by the internal auditor in the previous year had not been addressed (Assertion 7). In light of this information the smaller authority should have responded 'No' to Assertions 3, 5 and 7. The smaller authority has confirmed that measures have been put in place to address these issues and this should not recur in the current year.

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

Whilst the period set for the exercise of public rights is not strictly in contravention of the timing permitted under the legislation, we note that Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return were approved on 04/05/2021 but that the public rights period did not commence until 01/07/2021.

Regulation 12 (3) of the Accounts and Audit Regs 2015 (signing and approval of the statement of accounts for Category 2 authorities) requires the Responsible Financial Officer, as soon as practicable after the date on which the authority complies with regulation 12 (2c) (re. accounts approved and signed following meeting), to do the following on behalf of the smaller authority:

- a) commence the period for the exercise of public rights in accordance with regulation 14 and regulation 15; and
- b) notify the local auditor of the date on which that period was so commenced.

We fully appreciate the difficulties arising as a result of the removal of the right to meet remotely; however, please consider the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, when setting the date for the approval of the AGAR in relation to the public rights period in future years.

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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 2021.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date

21/09/2021

* Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website (www.nao.org.uk)