

## Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2020/21

In respect of

Gosford and Water Eaton Parish Council

### 1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

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

### 2 External auditor report 2020/21

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 has answered 'Yes' to Box 4 of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return which relates to how the Notice of Public Rights was advertised within the financial year 2020-21. Therefore, it relates to the notice announcing the public right to review the 2019-20 return which was published during 2020-21. As noted in our Auditor Report last year, this notice was not correctly advertised therefore this assertion should have been answered 'No'.

Section 12 of the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015 requires the RFO completes Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return prior to passing it to the Council for its approval. This year, on the initial submission, the return shows that the Council approved the Return (1 June 2021) before the RFO (28 June 2021) which is a breach of this regulation. The Council have later provided an explanation stating that there has been a typographical error and that the date of RFO approval should have read 28 May 2021. The Council were given the opportunity to amend the form and resubmit it but have not done so. In future the Council should ensure the form is duly completed prior to it considering it for approval/publication/submission.

The Internal Auditor has reported that the Council did not follow proper procedures in relation to the review of risks within the 2020-21 year, but the Council has answered 'Yes' to Section 1, assertion 5, however it appears that this assertion should have been answered 'No'. On review of the Council's website it appears that the risk assessment was reviewed in June 2021 and is planned to be reviewed annually therefore we expect no further concerns in this area.

Section 16 of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, requires that as soon as reasonably practicable after the conclusion of an audit, a relevant authority must publish a statement of conclusion. We noted that your 'Statement of Conclusion' was included with the information sent to us for review and dated 28 June 2021. It appears that the Council have mistakenly used this form to notify the electors of the period for the exercise of public rights instead of the 'Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return' form. In future the Council should take care to ensure it completes the correct version of the form to notify electors of the exercise of public rights and publishes the 'Statement of Conclusion' after receiving our report.

These points should be taken into consideration when completing the assertions on the 2021-22 return.

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

The Internal Auditor has signed off the Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21 after the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 was approved. This means the completed 2020/21 report was not available for review and consideration with the form. It is presumed that the statements in Section 1 Annual Governance Statement refer to the previous year's internal audit report.

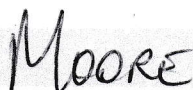
### 3 External auditor certificate 2020/21

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

 MOORE

External Auditor Signature



Date

28/09/2021