

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **SCOTHERN PARISH COUNCIL – LI0311**

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’s limited assurance opinion 2023/24

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.

- Information received from the smaller authority indicates that the prior year Section 2, Box 9 figure is not an accurate figure of all the assets held as at that date. The council has confirmed it was unable to locate the asset register for the year 2022/23, however the current year Section 2, Box 9 figure has been updated to reflect the correct position.
- Section 1, Assertion 2 has been incorrectly completed, and should have been ticked ‘No’. In the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, and their detailed report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to significant weaknesses in relation to compliance with financial regulations and appliance of PAYE requirements. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor’s response to Internal Control Objectives B and G. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner.

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

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance Assertion in Section 1, Box 3 but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

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

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

22/09/2024