

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Burnside Group of Local Councils**

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 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, 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 Assertion 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 2023-24. Therefore, it relates to the Notice announcing the public right to review the 2022-23 return which was published during 2023-24. As noted in the Auditor Report last year, this notice was not correctly advertised therefore this Assertion should have been answered 'No'.

Per paragraph 2.11 of the JPAG Practitioners Guide 2023 it is a requirement when completing Section 2 - Accounting Statements that the figure in box 7 of the comparative column is the same as the figure in box 1 of the current year column. The Council have confirmed that this imbalance is because figures in the prior year column (2023) require restating as follows:

	Original	Revised		Original	Revised
Box 1	£75,650	£75,664	Box 6	£22,908	£22,205
Box 2	£26,181	£26,181	Box 7	£76,938	£77,491
Box 3	£9,365	£9,230	Box 8	£76,938	£77,491
Box 4	£11,350	£11,378	Box 9	£80,364	£80,364
Box 5	£0	£0	Box 5	£0	£0

Therefore we would have expected to have seen the 2023 figures restated on the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return and the 2023 column to have been marked as 'Restated' to bring it to the attention of the reader.

The figure entered in Box 2 for the 2024 year appears to be incorrectly stated. The information provided by the precepting authority support this figure being £27,489. We can therefore only presume that there is a further error of £1,308 within the figures provided on Section 2:Statement of Accounts. We would anticipate the affected figures being restated, and marked as such, on the production of the 2024/25 Annual Return or Assertion 1 being responded to as 'no'.

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

See Continuation Sheet

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



External Auditor Signature

Date

30/09/2024



Burneside Group of Parish Council

External Auditor Report & Certificate 2023/24

Continuation Sheet

The Council left a significant time period between approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and the commencement of the Public Rights Period. The Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015, section 12 (3)(a) and proper practices require that following approval of the Return, the Public Rights Period should commence as soon as is reasonably practicable when taking into consideration the mandatory inclusion of the first 10 working days of July.

The Internal Auditor did not initially complete control objective O on the Annual Internal Audit Report. When this was updated and resubmitted, the 'Not applicable' answer given was consistent with other trust fund disclosures on the AGAR and so no concern remains in this area.

Box 11a was not initially completed on Section 2 Accounting Statements when the form was submitted. The form was resubmitted with a 'No' answer to Box 11a which was in line with our expectation so we have no further concerns.

Incomplete information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to the level of reserves held by the Council, which was later provided on request. The Parish Council should in future ensure that reserves levels are considered thoroughly and explanations provided with the AGAR when submitted to the external auditor.

Last year the External Audit Report noted that the Notice of Public Rights was announced and commenced prior to the approval of the Governance and Accountability return. Therefore, we expected a 'No' response to control objective M on the Annual Internal Audit Report.

The internal auditor has ticked 'not covered' to control objective H on the Annual Internal Audit Report which suggests that the council does not have any fixed assets. Section 2 of the AGAR shows a balance in Box 9 and so the internal auditor should ensure control objective H is considered within their testing and marked with a 'Yes' or 'No' response in the future.

The internal auditor has provided a 'yes' response at control objective K on their report. This suggests that the council correctly claimed exemption from audit in the previous (2022-23) year. As the council was not exempt and did not claim exemption, the answer to this point should have been 'not covered'.

On the original Section 2 - Accounting Statements submitted, the figures in Boxes 1-6 did not cast down to the figure in Box 7 with an imbalance shown of £100. The council reviewed and revised their return by amending Boxes 1-6 and we have no further concerns in this area.
