

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20 in respect of Walkington Parish Council HU0244

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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 2020; 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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On 26 November 2020, we issued a report detailing the results of our limited assurance review of Sections 1 and 2 of this authority's Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2020. We explained that we were unable to certify completion of the review at that time. We are now in a position to certify completion of the review.

The external auditor report given in Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return requires amendments as follows:

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 was not accurately completed before submission for review:

- Section 1, Assertion 3 has been incorrectly completed. The Council has responded "YES", the correct response is "NO". The Council did not have adequate Financial Regulations in place until March 2020, although we note that the Council's Standing Orders before that date did cover contracts and a limited number of other financial regulations.

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

We note that Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return were approved on 22/06/2020 but that the public rights period did not commence until 01/09/2020. The period set is not strictly in contravention of the timing permitted under the legislation introduced as a result of Covid-19, but it should be noted that this year's extension to allow later public inspection was intended to allow for authorities who were not able to approve their AGAR until as late as the statutory deadline of 31 August 2020.

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.

Tel: +44 (0)20 7516 2200 • www.pkf-l.com

PKF Littlejohn LLP • 15 Westferry Circus • Canary Wharf • London E14 4HD

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We fully appreciate the difficulties arising as a result of coronavirus restrictions; 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 & Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2020.

PKF Littlejohn LLP

**PKF Littlejohn LLP
16/02/2021**