

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of

Swilland & Witnessham Parish Council – SF0369

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 2026; 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 2025/26

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 has come to our attention from the internal auditor highlighting the fact that the external auditor report and certificate for the year 2024/25 were not published on the authority's website by the dates specified in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor's response to Internal Control Objective N.

Section 1, Assertion 10 has been incorrectly completed, and should have been answered 'No' instead of 'Yes'. This is because there was no evidence of a Data Protection Policy in place. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor's response to Internal Control Objective O.

The AGAR was not fully completed before submission for review. Section 1, Box 9 has not been completed. The smaller authority has confirmed that it is not a sole managing trustee and the response should be 'N/A'.

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

The date of approval for Section 1 has been incorrectly recorded on the AGAR. The minutes of the meeting at which the AGAR was approved have been reviewed and demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 were both approved in the same meeting on 20 May 2026. The smaller authority should ensure that the correct dates are recorded on the AGAR in future.

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

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 2026.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date

02/09/2026