

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of

Oakham Town Council

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 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, 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.

A review of the council's website, the finance section and using the search function, has identified that the council does not appear to have fully met the requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Section 13(1) which states that the final audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return should, on conclusion of the audit, be available for public access, which includes publication on the council's website. The council amended Sections 1 and 2 of their 2024/25 return year during the 2024/25 review process however only the original version of Section 1 is visible on the council's website. In addition, the Notice of Conclusion for 2024/25 has not been published as is required by Section 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The council should bring these points into line with the regulations as soon as practically possible.

We identified during our review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return that box 9 of the prior year column (2025) on Section 2 - Accounting Statements did not agree to the figures provided on the 2024/25 form. No explanation was provided for this amendment, and neither the column nor the box have been marked as 'Restated' to bring it to the attention of the reader. This is a breach of proper practices and as a result a 'No' response should have been provided at Assertion 1 on the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement. As the figures for the 2026 year appear to be correctly stated we do not believe this should impact the 2026/27 return.

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

Information to complete our intermediate testing was not provided on request, however we were able to satisfy our review using supporting information obtain from the website. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their annual submission. This is a repeated issue, but we note that the council has confirmed within its AGAR form that it has not implemented all points raised in the reports of its auditors.

Boxes 1-6 of Section 2 of the AGAR do not arithmetically add down to box 7 by £1 when summed. When rounding the numbers for the return care should be taken to ensure boxes 1-6 sum to box 7 in accordance with Paragraph 2.20 of SAPPP Practitioners' Guide 2025 and that box 7 agrees or reconciles to box 8 as is required per Paragraph 2.24 of SAPPP Practitioners' Guide 2025.

We identified during our review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return that box 6 of the prior year column (2025) on Section 2 - Accounting Statements did not agree to the figure provided on last year's form by £1. In revising box 6 for the comparative year, boxes 1-6 no longer cast down to the figure in box 7 by £1.

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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



External Auditor Signature

Date

21/09/2026

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

The council provided an explanation for the variance on Box 4 on Section 2 of the AGAR from the prior year to the current year. Whilst the explanation was reasonable, no values were initially provided in order to support the movement. These were later provided on request. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting financial information is provided with their annual submission.

Please note that the Annual Governance Statements and Accounting Statements were not sent to us with the initial submission. Please would you ensure these documents are included within the initial submission going forwards.

On review of the council's website on 30 June 2026, which was during the council's public rights period, it was identified that the website did not include a copy of the AGAR documents as required to meet the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Section 15(2). This was later uploaded to the website, but the public rights period was not re-commenced. In future, the council should ensure that all information required is published on the council's website for the entire public rights period. We would anticipate the council responding 'No' to Assertion 4 on its 2026/27 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

The Internal Auditor has answered 'No' to several control objectives and the council have also correctly reflected 'No' to several assertions on the Annual Governance Statement. This demonstrates continuing issues during the year with regards to lack of controls, compliance, governance, monitoring, and reporting. The internal Auditor has also noted some improvements and we are aware that the council has plans in place to resolve these and we expect to see these plans fully actioned in 2026/27.
