Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of **Smith's Wood Parish 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 2025; 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 2024/25

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.

As part of our intermediate testing, it was noted that the council have not been operating the bank reconciliation regularly during the year, due to not having a clerk between November 2024 and March 2025. Whilst we note that the bank reconciliation was accurate as at the year end, they were not prepared on a regular basis in accordance with Paragraph 1.10 of the JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024. Therefore, we feel a 'No' response to Assertion 1 on the Annual Governance Statement would have been more appropriate.

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

Section 14(1) of the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015 requires the period of public rights should be a 'single period of 30 working days'. The council provided a period of 29 working days in 2024/25 for the review of their records which is a breach of the regulation and we would anticipate the council taking this into account when it completes Assertion 4 on its 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement. In future the council should ensure that it calculates and provides a period of precisely 30 working days.

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 2.19 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024 and that box 7 agrees or reconciles to box 8 as is required per Paragraph 2.23 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024.

Although the Council have confirmed that the Code of Conduct and internal controls were reviewed at the Annual Parish Council Meeting held in May 2024, these reviews were not formally minuted. The Council should ensure going forwards that reviews of all Council policies are recorded within meeting minutes. We note the Council formally recorded the review of the Code of Conduct in May 2025 and the internal controls in June 2025, so we are satisfied the council are addressing this point.

The Internal Auditor has answered 'Yes' to control objective I on their report which relates to periodic bank reconciliations being properly carried out. As the reconciliations were not prepared during the period where the council did not have a clerk, we would have expected the answer to this to have been 'No'.

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

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 2025.

External Auditor Name	External Auditor Signature	Date
MOORE	Moore	29/07/2025