

## Notice of Conclusion of Audit – Annual Return for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

### Town Clerk's Response to Auditor's Opinion

#### **External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23**

Except for 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 AGAR 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 Internal Audit report identified a weakness in internal control due to monthly checks of the payment system by councillors not being completed for the last quarter of 2022/23. However, the Council answered Yes to assertion 2 of the annual governance statement. The Council should ensure that the recommendations of the internal audit report are implemented and consider answering No to assertion 2 of the 2023/24 annual governance statement if these weaknesses remained for a significant part of the 2023/24 financial year.*

#### **Town Clerk's Response**

Audits were not conducted for the period January 2023 to March 2023. The (Maternity Cover) Finance Clerk emailed the then chair of Policy and Resources in April 2023 to request that he carried out the final three audits prior to the Internal Auditor's visit, but received no response.

However, there is no legal requirement for the Town Council to undertake these additional checks. The Statement of Internal Control for 2022/23 did not include Councillor Audits.

The Statement for Internal Control for 2023/24, approved at the Policy & Resources Committee dated 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023, does include the additional following paragraph:

#### **3e) Monthly Councillor Audits**

*The Council appoints a Town Councillor (and Reserve) to carry out monthly audits on payments, receipts and procedures who reports to the Policy and Resources Committee.*

The matter of councillor monthly audits not being undertaken in a timely fashion had been raised by the Town Clerk. At the Policy and Resources Committee dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 it was resolved that there would be two councillors (the Chair of the Committee, Cllr Cook plus a reserve, Cllr Crayford) to be responsible for the monthly audits. As at the time of this report, the monthly audits are up to date.

#### **Conclusion**

The Internal Auditor's response to the Except For Matters were "its hardly a major issue although they have linked it back to the Assertion 2, which seems a bit harsh".

It is the Town Clerk's opinion that the Town Council were correct in providing a positive response to Assertion 2, due to other internal controls that were in place.

There is no valid reason for the Town Council to respond negatively to Assertion 2 of the 2023/24 annual governance statement.

Louise Bareham  
Town Clerk  
11<sup>th</sup> October 2023