

## Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of **WHIMPLE PARISH COUNCIL– DV0384**

### 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’s limited assurance opinion 2024/25

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.

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

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance Assertion in Section 1, Box 5, but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

In the completion of the Internal Auditor’s detailed Internal Audit Check, the internal auditor has drawn attention to weaknesses in relation to VAT reclaim. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner.

### 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

**PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP**

External Auditor Signature

*PKF Littlejohn LLP*

Date

11/08/2025

## **Whimble Parish Council Statement on External Auditor's Report**

### **External Auditor comment:**

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance Assertion in Section 1, Box 5, but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

### **Council response:**

*During the 2024/25 financial year, Whimble Parish Council had a Risk Management Strategy and considered risk while discussing plans and actions. What was not in place was an up to date risk assessment that was considered on a regular basis.*

*The Council has an action plan to strengthen its risk management arrangements during the 2025/26 financial year. This includes:*

- ✓ *Reviewing and approving the Risk Management Strategy (approved by Council on 19 May 2025 and published on the website)*
- ✓ *Reviewing and approving the Council's risk assessment (approved by Council on 19 May 2025)*
- ✓ *Reviewing the risk assessment on a quarterly basis to identify and new and emerging risks as well as tracking progress of existing risks (Quarter 1 review went to the Council on 21 July 2025 and Quarter 2 will be considered in October 2025)*

### **External Auditor comment:**

In the completion of the Internal Auditor's detailed Internal Audit Check, the internal auditor has drawn attention to weaknesses in relation to VAT reclaims. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner.

### **Council Response:**

*The VAT reclaims for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years were completed in a prompt manner in April 2024 and 2025 respectively. The Clerk (as the Responsible Financial Officer) completes the VAT reclaim in April each year immediately after the financial year end has finished.*

*The Clerk identified that an old VAT reclaim had not been completed for the 2022/23 financial year. A VAT reclaim was received in May 2023 and it was assumed that this was for the 2022/23 financial year when, in actual fact it was for the 2021/22 financial year. This was during the period when the former clerk left in early 2023, an interim clerk was in post until July 2023 when the current clerk started in post.*

*The Clerk has pulled together all of the VAT invoices for the 2022/23 financial year and a reclaim will be submitted to the HMRC shortly.*