

Wells City Council

Notice of conclusion of audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2024

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Section 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

	Notes
<p>1. The audit of accounts for Wells City Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 has been completed and the accounts have been published.</p>	<p>This notice and Sections 1, 2 & 3 of the AGAR must be published by 30 September. This must include publication on the smaller authority's website. The smaller authority must decide how long to publish the Notice for; the AGAR and external auditor report must be publicly available for 5 years.</p>
<p>2. The Annual Governance & Accountability Return including the auditor's certificate and opinion is available for inspection and copying by any local government elector of the area of Wells City Council on application to:</p> <p>(a) <u>CLAIRE WOODLAND</u> <u>RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER</u></p> <p>(b) <u>MONDAY - FRIDAY</u> <u>09:00 - 16:00</u></p>	
<p>3. Copies will be provided to any local government elector of the area on payment of <u>£0.50</u>(c) for each copy of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.</p>	
<p>Announcement made by: (d) <u>CLAIRE WOODLAND, RFO</u></p>	<p>(a) Insert the name, position and address of the person to whom local government electors should apply to inspect the AGAR</p>
<p>Date of announcement: (e) <u>30th SEPT 2024</u></p>	<p>(b) Insert the hours during which inspection rights may be exercised</p> <p>(c) Insert a reasonable sum for copying costs</p> <p>(d) Insert the name and position of person placing the notice</p> <p>(e) Insert the date of placing of the notice</p>

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

WELLS CITY PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed		Yes* means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

27/06/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

24/93/C1

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Janine Brune

Clerk

B + W

W.V.V. WELLS-GOV.UK

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

WELLS CITY PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	111,564	93,988	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	914,670	1,149,307	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	364,244	862,053	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	766,029	886,035	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	38,695	38,576	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	491,766	567,845	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	93,988	612,892	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	61,990	560,980	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	13,684,267	14,366,503	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	653,121	630,809	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

Date

Cliff Woodhead

12/06/2024

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

27/06/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

24/93/cii

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Jasmine Browne

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

Wells City Council – SO0286

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 2024; 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 2023/24

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.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review:

- The smaller authority has not restated the prior year figure when revaluing assets in Section 2, Box 9. Please note that the Practitioners’ Guide allows smaller authorities to use any reasonable valuation method, provided that the prior year figure is restated for consistency and comparability.

Section 1, Assertion 5 has been incorrectly completed as risk assessment was conducted by the senior management team but not reviewed by the full council. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor’s finding in the detailed Internal Audit report.

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

We note that the smaller authority did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision during the year 2024/25 for the exercise of public rights, since the approval date was after the start of the period for the exercise of public rights and notice regarding the period for the exercise of public rights was not published before the start of the period. As a result, the smaller authority must answer ‘No’ to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2025/26.

In the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, and their detailed report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to weaknesses in relation to bank reconciliations. The smaller authority must ensure that action is taken to address these areas of weakness in a timely manner.

The smaller authority has not provided:

- evidence that it has considered the independence of the internal auditor during the year under review.
- evidence that it has considered and agreed the internal audit programme of work, having regard to the authority’s identified risks, during the year under review.
- evidence that on appointment of the internal auditor, it satisfied itself with regard to the competence of the internal auditor and that there is a signed letter of engagement in place.

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

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 2024.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

25/09/2024