Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of **Old Buckenham Parish Council – NO0333**

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's 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 (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.

Section 1, Assertions 1 and 2 have been incorrectly completed. Information received from the internal auditor highlights deficiencies in accounting for VAT, lack of budget monitoring and consideration of reserves, incorrect payroll accounting and lack of documentation in respect of the precept. As a result, these assertions should have been answered 'No'. This is consistent with the Internal Auditor's responses to internal control objectives B, D, E and G.

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. The smaller authority should have the valuation policy for all fixed assets and draw up a policy to be approved by the authority and recorded in both the authority's minutes and in the asset register. When submitting the 2026/27 AGAR, the smaller authority should ensure that the 2025/26 comparative figure in Box 9 is restated for consistency and comparability.
- Section 2, Box 4 for the current year incorrectly includes items which are not staff costs as defined in the Practitioners' Guide. Please note that Box 4 should comprise payments made in relation to the employment of staff including only gross salary, employers' national insurance contributions, employers' pension contributions, gratuities for employees or former employees and severance or terminations payments to employees. Costs in respect of individuals who are self-employed, are not staff costs for the purpose of completion of the AGAR in accordance with proper practice. The figures in Section 2, Boxes 4 and 6 for the current year should read £6,191 and £33,393 respectively.
- The smaller authority has confirmed that a reimbursement of £2,252 of staff costs has been incorrectly netted off against the prior year figure in Section 2, Box 4. The smaller authority should ensure that reimbursements are treated in accordance with the Practitioners' Guide.

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 Assertions in Section 1, Boxes 4 and 6, and 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 Annual Internal Audit Report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to the fact that the smaller authority is not listed as trustee on the Charity Commission website despite answering Section 1, Assertion 9 as if it were a sole managing trustee. The smaller authority has not confirmed why this is the case and we have been unable to determine whether this is an error on the AGAR or at the Charity Commission. The smaller authority should ascertain the correct position and ensure that this is correctly recorded at the Charity Commission and on the AGAR in future.

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

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date 19/09/2026