

## Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2020/21 Part 2

To be completed by smaller authorities where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure did not exceed £25,000 in the year of account ended 31 March 2021, and that wish to certify themselves as exempt from a limited assurance review under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015

There is no requirement to have a limited assurance review or to submit an Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor, **provided** that the authority has certified itself as exempt at a meeting of the authority after 31 March 2021 and a completed Certificate of Exemption is submitted no later than **30 June 2021** notifying the external auditor.

WILLINGHAM BY STOW PARISH COUNCIL

certifies that during the financial year 2020/21, the higher of the authority's total gross income for the year or total gross annual expenditure, for the year did not exceed **£25,000**

Total annual gross income for the authority 2020/21:

£23,745

Total annual gross expenditure for the authority 2020/21:

£12,607

There are certain circumstances in which an authority will be **unable to certify itself as exempt**, so that a limited assurance review will still be required. If an authority is **unable to confirm the statements below then it cannot certify itself as exempt** and it **must** submit the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return Part 3 to the external auditor to undertake a limited assurance review for which a fee of **£200 +VAT** will be payable.

By signing this **Certificate of Exemption** you are confirming that:

- The authority was in existence on 1st April 2017
- In relation to the preceding financial year (2019/20), the external auditor **has not**:
  - issued a public interest report in respect of the authority or any entity connected with it
  - made a statutory recommendation to the authority, relating to the authority or any entity connected with it
  - issued an advisory notice under paragraph 1(1) of Schedule 8 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ("the Act"), and has not withdrawn the notice
  - commenced judicial review proceedings under section 31(1) of the Act
  - made an application under section 28(1) of the Act for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful, and the application has not been withdrawn nor has the court refused to make the declaration
- The court has not declared an item of account unlawful after a person made an appeal under section 28(3) of the Act.

If you are able to confirm that the above statements apply and that the authority neither received gross income, nor incurred gross expenditure, exceeding £25,000, then the Certificate of Exemption can be signed and a copy submitted to the external auditor **either** by email **or** by post (not both).

The Annual Internal Audit Report, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements, an analysis of variances and the bank reconciliation plus the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 including the period for the exercise of public rights still need to be fully completed and, along with a copy of this certificate, published on the authority website/webpage\* before 1 July 2021.

**By signing this certificate you are also confirming that you are aware of this requirement.**

Signed by the Responsible Financial Officer

Date

*[Signature]*

6/5/2021

I confirm that this Certificate of Exemption was approved by this authority on this date:

6/5/2021

Signed by Chairman

Date

*[Signature]*

6/5/21

as recorded in minute reference:

2021/210

Generic email address of Authority

Telephone number

willinghambystow.pcc@sky.com

01427 788440

\*Published web address

<https://willingham-by-stow.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk>

**ONLY this Certificate of Exemption should be returned EITHER by email OR by post (not both) as soon as possible after certification to your external auditor, but no later than 30 June 2021. Reminder letters incur a charge of £40 +VAT**



# Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21

WILKINGHAM BY STOW PARISH COUNCIL

WILKINGHAM-by-STOW, Parish, Lincolnshire, gov, UK

During the financial year ended 31 March 2021, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2020/21 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			N/A.
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2019/20, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2019/20 AGAR tick "not covered")	✓		
L. The authority publishes information on a website/webpage, up to date at the time of the internal audit, in accordance with the Transparency code for smaller authorities.	✓		
M. The authority, during the previous year (2019-20) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2019/20 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
<b>O. (For local councils only)</b> Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

DDMMYYYY 01/07/2021 DDMMYYYY

BARBARA BUSSETT

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

B. Bussett

Date 01/07/2021

\*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

\*\*Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).



## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

We acknowledge as the members of:

WILLINGHAM BY STOW 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 2021, that:

	Agreed		Yes	No	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.	✓				prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓				made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
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.	✓				has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
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.	✓				during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
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.	✓				considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓				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.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓				responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
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.	✓				disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
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.	Yes	No	N/A		has met all of its responsibilities where as a body corporate it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
			✓		

\*For any statement to which the response is 'no', an explanation must be published

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

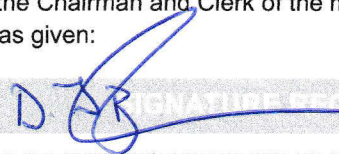
08/07/2021

and recorded as minute reference:

2021/2476

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

Chairman

 SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

 SIGNATURE REQUIRED

### Other information required by the Transparency Code (not part of the Annual Governance Statement)

The authority website/webpage is up to date and the information required by the Transparency Code has been published.

Yes | No

✓ |

<https://willingham-by-stow-parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk>



## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2020/21 for

WILKINGHAMER BY STOW PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2020 £	31 March 2021 £	
1. Balances brought forward	7,422	7,795	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	10,900	10,900	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	1,401	12,845	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	3,681	3,613	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	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	8,247	8,994	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	7,795	18,933	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	7,795	18,933	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – <b>To agree with bank reconciliation.</b>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	19,255	20,179	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	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council as a body corporate acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.  N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2021 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

*Caroline - Shyft*

Date

08/07/2021

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

08/07/2021

as recorded in minute reference:

2021/247c

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

*D.J.* SIGNATURE REQUIRED



## Explanation of variances – pro forma

Name of smaller authority: **Willingham by Stow Parish Council**  
 County area (local councils and parish meetings only): **West Lindsey District Council**

Next, please provide full explanations, including numerical values, for the following that will be flagged in the green boxes where relevant:

- variances of more than 15% between totals for individual boxes (except variances of less than £200);
- **New from 2020/21**: variances of £100,000 or more require explanation regardless of the % variation year on year;
- a breakdown of approved reserves on the next tab if the total reserves (Box 7) figure is more than twice the annual precept/rates & levies value (Box 2).

	20xx/xx £	20xx/xx £	Variance £	Variance %	Explanation Required?	Automatic responses trigger below based on figures input. <b>DO NOT OVERWRITE THESE BOXES</b>	Explanation from smaller authority (must include narrative and supporting figures)
1 Balances Brought Forward	7,422	7,795				Explanation of % variance from PY opening balance not required - Balance brought forward agrees	
2 Precept or Rates and Levies	10,900	10,900	0	0.00%	NO		
3 Total Other Receipts	1,401	12,845	11,444	816.85%	YES		Covid Grant £10,000, Cemetery Revenue increased £1,565
4 Staff Costs	3,681	3,613	-68	1.85%	NO		
5 Loan Interest/Capital Repayment	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		
6 All Other Payments	8,247	8,994	747	9.06%	NO		
7 Balances Carried Forward	7,795	18,933			NO	REQUIRED	
8 Total Cash and Short Term Investments	7,795	18,933				REQUIRED	
9 Total Fixed Assets plus Other Long Term Investments and	19,255	20,179	924	4.80%	NO		
10 Total Borrowings	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		



### Explanation for 'high' reserves

(Please complete the highlighted boxes.)

Box 7 is more than twice Box 2 because the authority held the following breakdown of reserves at the year end:

	£	£	£
<b>Earmarked reserves:</b>			
Reserve 1	11,000		
Reserve 2			
Reserve 3			
Reserve 4			
Reserve 5			
Reserve 6			
Reserve 7			
			11000
<b>General reserve</b>	7933		
			7933
<b>Total reserves (must agree to Box 7)</b>			<b>18933</b>



## Willingham Parish Council Final Accounts as at 31/03/21

### Summary of Receipts and Payments

Receipts	£	Payments	£
Precept	11,000.00	General Admin	4,449.08
Grass Cutting Agreement	288.88	Grounds Maintenance	2,970.00
VAT return	170.66	S137	190.00
Interest	0.92	VAT	194.15
Cemetery revenue	2,150.00	Property Maintenance	1,003.92
Parish Field Rent	135.00	Grant Funding	3,500.00
Grants	10,000.00	General Reserves	300.00
	<b><u>23,745.46</u></b>		<b><u>12,607.15</u></b>

### Account Reconciliation

#### Opening Balance 31/03/20

Account 90765678	5,782.87
Account 20183679	<u>2,012.39</u>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b><u>7,795.26</u></b>
Add receipts	23,745.46
Deduct Payments	<u>12,607.15</u>
<b>Closing balance 31/03/21</b>	<b><u>18,933.57</u></b>

Bank Accounts	Closing balance	31/03/2021
Account 90765678		16,920.26
Account 20183679		2,013.31
		<b><u>18,933.57</u></b>

The balance corresponds with bank statement as at 31st March 2021



## Contact details

Name of smaller authority: WILLINGHAM BY STOW PARISH COUNCIL

County Area (local councils and parish meetings only): WEST LINDSEY

Please complete this form and send it back to us with the AGAR or exemption certificate

	Clerk/RFO (Main contact)	Chair
<b>Name</b>	MRS LISA BROOKS-SLEIGHT	MR DAVID BINGHAM
<b>Address</b>	13 THE CLOSE STURTON BY STOW LINCOLN LN1 2AG	SLATE HOUSE FARM WILLINGHAM LANE WILLINGHAM BY STOW GAINBOURCH DN21 5LL
<b>Daytime telephone number</b>	01427 788440	01427 787448
<b>Mobile telephone number</b>		
<b>Email address</b>	willinghambystow.pc @sky.com	slatefarm.db@gmail.com



Smaller authority name: Willingham By Stow Parish Council

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION  
OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE &  
ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN**

**ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021**

**Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27  
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)**

NOTICE	NOTES
<p>1. Date of announcement <u>Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021</u> (a)</p> <p>2. Each year the smaller authority's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The unaudited AGAR has been published with this notice. As it has yet to be reviewed by the appointed auditor, it is subject to change as a result of that review.</p> <p>Any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested. For the year ended 31 March 2021, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:</p> <p>(b) <u>Mrs Lisa Brooks-Sleight</u> (clerk/RFO) _____ _____ <u>01427 788440</u> _____</p> <p>commencing on (c) <u>Monday 28 June 2021</u> _____</p> <p>and ending on (d) <u>Friday 6 August 2021</u> _____</p> <p>3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and</li><li>• The right to make an objection which concerns a matter in respect of which the appointed auditor could either make a public interest report or apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the smaller authority.</li></ul> <p>The appointed auditor can be contacted at the address in paragraph 4 below for this purpose between the above dates only.</p> <p>4. The smaller authority's AGAR is subject to review by the appointed auditor under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the NAO's Code of Audit Practice 2015. The appointed auditor is:</p> <p><b>PKF Littlejohn LLP (Ref: SBA Team) 15 Westferry Circus Canary Wharf London E14 4HD (<a href="mailto:sba@pkf-l.com">sba@pkf-l.com</a>)</b></p> <p>5. This announcement is made by (e) <b>Lisa Brooks-Sleight (clerk/RFO)</b></p>	<p>(a) Insert date of placing of the notice which must be not less than 1 day before the date in (c) below</p> <p>(b) Insert name, position and address/telephone number/ email address, as appropriate, of the Clerk or other person to which any person may apply to inspect the accounts</p> <p>(c) Insert date, which must be at least 1 day after the date of announcement in (a) above and at least 30 working days before the date appointed in (d) below</p> <p>(d) The inspection period between (c) and (d) must be 30 working days inclusive and must include the first 10 working days of July.</p> <p>(e) Insert name and position of person placing the notice – this person must be the responsible financial officer for the smaller authority</p>



Willingham Parish Council

Internal Auditors Report Year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

This has been an unprecedented year due to the covid pandemic where the council has had to risk assess and face challenges to manage change enabling them to continue to for fill their role. I am pleased to be able to report that the council have met the requirements of responsibility and accountability of their governance for another year despite the difficulties encountered. Controls are laid down as required for this to have been monitored following the adoption of the annual governance statement as minuted.

Following the list of guidelines as suggested and following the controls advised I have found Lisa to have continued to maintain good book keeping skills which are easily followed and legible.

The council had prepared an annual budget and monitored its expenditure against this figure during the year which has shown no unexplained variances. Noted income exceeded expectations due to a government covid grant. Minutes of meetings show monitoring of the budget expenditure and also show evidence of the required preparations made in support of the annual precept.

The income has been correctly recorded and banked in a timely fashion. In the main this is BAC payments with some cheque payments to prevent the holding of any cash. No petty cash system is used as all income is shown to have been banked.

Payments are also well documented. Following approved agreement of payment which has been recorded in the minutes; cheques are countersigned, initialled on stubs and supported with invoices.

Bank statements against reconciliation figures are correct and audit trails tally. Figures agree and there is evidence that Lisa is monitoring this monthly. The yearend accounts have been prepared on the correct accounting basis of income and expenditure and are in line with the financial regulations.

VAT has been identified and reclaimed as appropriate and 137 payments made have been within set limits. PAYE has been correctly operated. The Insurance policy has been reviewed and updated. The current Employer and Public liability insurance is in date.

The Councils assets list has been recently updated – April 2020. An improved approach has been made to the review process of risk assessments, standing orders and policies which demonstrates a more timely completion to the process.

Lisa's contract remains in force as written in 2014, updated June 2018 and marked as due for renew in 2022. Lisa represents the council as the RFO (Responsible financial officer). Her salary is in line with the advised updated guidelines and annual supervision has been carried out by the councils vice chairman.

Currently the council is midway to completing a new website to improve access to the public and transparency of its management. Viewing the information on line I have ben able to verify all requirements for display to the yearend 31/03/21 documents and found it clear and simple to use.

Barbara Bussey 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021



# Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 Part 2

To be completed only by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other smaller authorities\* where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less, that meet the qualifying criteria, and that wish to CERTIFY themselves as EXEMPT from a limited assurance review

## Guidance notes on completing Part 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21

1. Every smaller authority in England where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less **must**, following the end of each financial year, complete Part 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices*, unless the authority:
  - a) does not meet the qualifying criteria for exemption; or
  - b) does not wish to certify itself as exempt
2. Smaller authorities where the higher of all gross annual income or gross annual expenditure **does not exceed** £25,000 and that meet the qualifying criteria as set out in the Certificate of Exemption **are able to declare themselves exempt** from sending the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor for a limited assurance review **provided** the authority **completes**:
  - a) The **Certificate of Exemption**, page 3 and returns a copy of it to the external auditor **either** by email or by post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2021**. Failure to do so will result in reminder letter(s) for which the Authority will be charged £40 +VAT for each letter; and
  - b) The **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (Part 2)** which is made up of:
    - **Annual Internal Audit Report (page 4)** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
    - **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement (page 5)** must be completed and approved by the authority.
    - **Section 2 – Accounting Statements (page 6)** must be completed and approved by the authority.**NOTE: Authorities certifying themselves as exempt SHOULD NOT send the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor.**
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1 Annual Governance Statement before approving Section 2 Accounting Statements and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2021**.

## Publication Requirements

Smaller authorities **must** publish various documents on a publicly available website as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities. These include:

- **Certificate of Exemption**, page 3
- **Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21**, page 4
- **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2020/21**, page 5
- **Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2020/21**, page 6
- Analysis of variances
- Bank reconciliation
- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

## Limited Assurance Review

Any smaller authority may request a limited assurance review. If so, the authority should not certify itself as exempt or complete the Certificate of Exemption. Instead it should complete Part 3 of the AGAR 2020/21 and return it to the external auditor together with the supporting documentation requested by the external auditor. The cost to the authority for the review will be **£200 +VAT**.

Provided that the authority certifies itself as exempt, and completes and publishes the documents listed under 'Publication Requirements', there is no requirement for the authority to have a review.

If it decides to certify itself as exempt, the authority must complete and return the Certificate of Exemption on Page 3 to the external auditor to confirm that it has certified itself exempt.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

\*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.



## Guidance notes on completing Part 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020/21, Sections 1 and 2

- An authority that wishes to declare itself exempt from the requirement for a limited assurance review must do so at a meeting of the authority after 31 March 2021. It should not submit its Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor. However, as part of a more proportionate regime, the authority **must** comply with the requirements of the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.
- The Certificate of Exemption must be returned to the external auditor no later than **30 June 2021**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT for each letter.
- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR and the Certificate of Exemption. Proper Practices are found in the *Practitioners' Guide*\* which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty), and is properly signed and dated. Avoid making amendments to the completed annual return. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness at the meeting at which it is signed off.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- The authority must publish numerical and narrative explanations for significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 6**. Guidance is provided in the *Practitioners' Guide*\* which may assist.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2020) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2021).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish, on the authority website/webpage, the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2021**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes been completed?	✓	
	Have the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights been published?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', is an explanation available for publication?	✓	
Section 2	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations from last year to this year been published?	✓	
	Is an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 available, should a question be raised by a local elector and/or an interested party?	N/A	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? ( <i>Local Councils only</i> )	N/A	

\* **Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) or from [www.ada.org.uk](http://www.ada.org.uk)