

Guidance notes on completing Form 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23, 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 2023. 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 2023**. 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. 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 2022) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2023).
- 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 2023**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have 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 Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	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 been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	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>)	✓	

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

HALSALL 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 2023, 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.	✓		<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.	✓		<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.	✓		<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.	✓		<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.	✓		<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.	✓		<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.	✓		<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.	✓		<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.	Yes	No	N/A <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>
	✓		

*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:

14/06/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

05/06/2023 5.2

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

Chairman

Elizabeth Wright

Clerk

JCF

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
✓	

www.halsallparish.org.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

HALSALL PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	25,192	34,285	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	17,418	17,343	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	26,051	14,550	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	13,900	12,591	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	20,476	29,384	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	34,285	24,203	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	34,285	24,203	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	219,887	219,607	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).

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 do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 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

4/6/2023

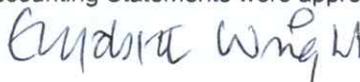
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

14/6/2023

as recorded in minute reference:

05/06/2023 5.3.

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



Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

HALSALL PARISH COUNCIL

www.halsallparish.org.uk/information/finance

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, 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 2022/23 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. NO PETTY CASH USED		✓	
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 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick 'not covered')			NOT APPLICABLE
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes ✓	No	Not applicable

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

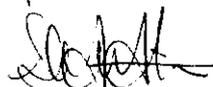
Date(s) internal audit undertaken

15/04/2023 27/04/2023

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

LESLEY RUTH STOFFORTH

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date 27/04/2023

*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).

Explanation of variances – pro forma

Name of smaller authority: **Halsall Parish Council**
County area (local councils are Lancashire)

Insert figures from Section 2 of the AGAR in all Blue highlighted boxes

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 onwards: 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).

	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	Variance £	Variance %	Explanation Required?	Automatic responses trigger below based on figures input. DO NOT OVERWRITE THESE BOXES	Explanation from smaller authority (must include narrative and supporting figures)
1 Balances Brought Forward	25,192	34,285				Explanation of % variance from PY opening balance not required - Balance brought forward agrees	
2 Precept or Rates and Levies	17,418	17,343	-75	0.43%	NO		
3 Total Other Receipts	26,051	14,550	-11,501	44.15%	YES		In 2021/22 received £13,170 in CIL grants; £2,137 in COVID Grants; a full year of reimbursed staff costs for Trust work (see line 4). In 2022/23 CIL Grant was £7,012; no COVID grants; only 3 months of reimbursed staff costs for Trust administration. So receipts in 2022/23 are lower than in 2021/22.
4 Staff Costs	13,900	10,508	-3,392	24.40%	YES		Prior to 1st August 2022, HPC provided administrative services to the Trust (Bookkeeping, correspondence and village hall booking etc) for a monthly service fee, a total of £2084 from 1/4/22 to 31/7/22. After 1st August the Trust had recruited their own employee for these tasks so the service fee stopped and the HPC staff cost was reduced.
5 Loan Interest/Capital Repayment	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		
6 All Other Payments	20,476	29,384	8,908	43.50%	YES		In 2022/23 spent £11,421 on CIL projects. In 2021/22 only spent £1,140 on CIL projects.
7 Balances Carried Forward	34,285	26,286			NO	VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED	
8 Total Cash and Short Term Investments	34,285	24,203				VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED	
9 Total Fixed Assets plus Other Long Term Investments and	219,887	219,607	-280	0.13%	NO		External Auditor Report for 2021/22 required a correction from £190,820 to £219,887 which has been applied.
10 Total Borrowings	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		

Rounding errors of up to £2 are tolerable

Variances of £200 or less are tolerable

BOX 10 VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED IF CHANGE CAN BE EXPLAINED BY BOX 5 (CAPITAL PLUS INTEREST PAYMENT)

Bank reconciliation – pro forma

This reconciliation should include **all** bank and building society accounts, including short term investment accounts. It **mu** column headed “Year ending 31 March 20xx” in Section 2 of the AGAR – and will also agree to Box 7 where the accounts receipts and payments basis. Please complete the highlighted boxes, remembering that un-presented cheques should be figures.

Name of smaller authority: **HALSALL PARISH COUNCIL**

County area (local councils and parish meetings only): **LANCASHIRE**

Financial year ending 31 March 20xx

Prepared by (Name and Role): **Chris Pyne Parish Clerk**

Date: **04/06/2023**

	£	£
Balance per bank statements as at 31/3/xx:		
Unity Bank Current	8,841.9	
Unity Bank CIL	15,345.6	
RBS Current	15.0	
[add more accounts if necessary]		
account 4		
account 5		
account 6		
account 7		
account 8		
	24,202.5	
Petty cash float (if applicable)		-
Less: any un-presented cheques as at 31/3/xx (enter these as negative numbers)		
item 1		
item 2		
item 3		
item 4		
[add more lines if necessary]		
item 5		
item 6		
item 7		
item 8		
		-
Add: any un-banked cash as at 31/3/xx		
		-
Net balances as at 31/3/xx (Box 8)		24,202.5

Halsall Parish Council Asset Register 31st March 2023

Asset Number	Asset Description	Valuation . £	Location/Comments
1	Wooden seat	449	Summerwood Lane
2	Wooden seat	449	Church
3	Wooden seat	449	A5147/Gregory Lane
6	Bus shelter	1,798	
7	Bus shelter	1,798	
8	Bus shelter	10,543	Shirdley Hill
9	Bus shelter	8,582	New Shelter by monument
10	Flag pole	1,011	
11	War Memorial	25,271	
12	Memorial Gates	14,382	
13	Memorial Gates posts and small wall	12,636	
14	St Aiden's Hall	104,724	
15	St Aiden's Hall - Tables		
16	St Aiden's Hall - Chairs		
17	St Aiden's Hall - Vacuum Cleaner		
18	St Aiden's Hall - Electric Urn		
19	St Aiden's Hall - crockery and cutlery	8,447	
20	New Play Equipment	29,067	
	TOTAL	219,607	

Smaller authority name **HALSALL PARISH COUNCIL**

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

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

**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 4th July 2023 (a)</p> <p>(Revised - Previously 15th June. Published from 19th June to 24th July 2023 - as advised by External Auditor)</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 2023, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:</p> <p>(b) halsallparishclerk@gmail.com Or Parish Clerk, 36 Heathey Lane, Ormskirk, L39 8SH</p> <p>commencing on (c) Wednesday 5th July 2023</p> <p>and ending on (d) Wednesday 15th August 2023</p> <p>3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and• 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. <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>PKF Littlejohn LLP (Ref: SBA Team) 15 Westferry Circus Canary Wharf London E14 4HD sba@pkf-l.com</p> <p>5. This announcement is made by (e) Chris Pyne (Parish Clerk)</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>

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **Halsall Parish Council – LA0096**

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 2023; 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 2022/23

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:

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 2023/24 for the exercise of public rights, since the period for the exercise of public rights did not include the first 10 working days of July. As a result, the smaller authority must answer ‘No’ to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2024/25.

3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

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 2023.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

27/09/2023

Halsall Parish Council

Notice of conclusion of audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2023

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

Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

	Notes
<p>1. The audit of accounts for Halsall Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 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 is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of Halsall Parish Council on application to:</p> <p>(a) Halsall Parish Clerk _____ 36 Heathey Lane Ormskirk _____ L39 8SH _____</p> <p>(b) <u>9 am to 5 pm</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>(b) Insert the hours during which inspection rights may be exercised</p>
<p>3. Copies will be provided to any person on payment of £ <u>1.00</u> (c) for each copy of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.</p>	<p>(c) Insert a reasonable sum for copying costs</p>
<p>Announcement made by: (d) <u>JC Pyne</u>  Parish Clerk</p>	<p>(d) Insert the name and position of person placing the notice</p>
<p>Date of announcement: (e) <u>28/9/2023</u></p>	<p>(e) Insert the date of placing of the notice</p>