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

In respect of **Horne Parish Council – SU0047**

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.

The smaller authority has disclosed that it made proper provision during the year 2025/26 for the exercise of public rights, by answering 'Yes' to Section 1, Assertion 4. However, as was reported last year, we are aware that it failed to do this and therefore should have answered 'No' to this Assertion. It has also disclosed that it took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit, by answering 'Yes' to Section 1, Assertion 7, which, based on the above, is not correct.

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. The responses given in Section 1, Box 9 and Section 2, Box 11 are not consistent. The smaller authority has confirmed it is not a sole managing trustee by answering 'N/A' to Section 1, Box 9 and so the response to Section 2, Box 11 should have been 'yes'.

The AGAR has not been approved in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015:

- The minute references on the AGAR are unclear. The minutes of the meeting at which the AGAR was approved have been reviewed and do not demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 have been approved in the correct order and so it is not possible to determine whether Section 1 was approved prior to Section 2 in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The smaller authority should ensure that the minutes properly demonstrate the order of approval and the minutes references are correctly recorded on the AGAR.

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 10, and it has not provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

The smaller authority has not provided:

- an adequate explanation for the variance between the prior and current year values in Boxes 3 & 6 of Section 2

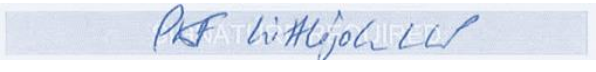
The Annual Internal Audit Report focuses on a series of internal control objectives covering an authority's key financial and accounting systems and concludes whether, in all significant respects, the internal control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the authority. We note that the internal auditor has not provided an explanation for the 'no' response to the following internal control objectives: M, N, O. The Annual Internal Audit Report will inform the authority's response to Assertions 2 and 6 in the annual governance statement. As a result, the authority must ensure that assurance that has not been provided via these control objectives has been sought elsewhere.

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 

Date 25/09/2026