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

In respect of	**Teston Parish Council**

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, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 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 Council has not fully implemented recommendations made in 2022/23 external audit reports. The Council answered yes to the relevant assertion in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement (assertion 7), claiming it has taken appropriate action in respect of audit reports. In future, the Council should ensure that appropriate action in response to audit recommendations is taken within a reasonable time.

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

In undertaking the review of the 2022/23 Annual Return it came to our attention that the Council had not met the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in providing electors with a period of 30 working days to inspect the accounts. The Council correctly answered no to the relevant assertion in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement.

In undertaking the review of the 2023/24 Annual and Accountability Return (AGAR) it came to our attention that the Council had not maintained an adequate system of internal control during the period. The Council correctly answered no to assertion 2 in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement. The Council should review their arrangements for ensuring an effective internal control system is in place during 2024/25 and should tick the relevant assertion as 'No' where this is not the case.

In undertaking the review of the 2023/24 Annual and Accountability Return (AGAR) it came to our attention that the Council had not met the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in providing electors with a period of 30 working days to inspect the accounts.

In undertaking the review of the 2023/24 Annual and Accountability Return (AGAR) it came to our attention that the Council had not carried out a risk assessment and taken appropriate steps to manage risks. The Council correctly answered 'No' to assertion 5 in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement. In future, the Council should ensure that it has conducts a risk assessment and introduces internal controls to ensure that risks are effectively managed.

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.

*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable.

External Auditor Name

Forvis Mazars LLP, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1DF

External Auditor Signature *Forvis Mazars LLP* Date **17 September 2024**