

Guidance notes on completing Form 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24, 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 2024. 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 2024**. 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 Chair, 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 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
- 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 2024**.

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 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 Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024 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?	✓	
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

Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2023/24 Form 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 2024, 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 2024 and a completed Certificate of Exemption is submitted no later than **30 June 2024** notifying the external auditor.

ARKHOLME WITH CAWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

certifies that during the financial year 2023/24, 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 2023/24: £6,125 PER AMOUNT £00,000

Total annual gross expenditure for the authority 2023/24: £5,057 PER AMOUNT £00,000

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 Form 3 to the external auditor to undertake a limited assurance review for which a fee of **£210 +VAT** will be payable.

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

- The authority was in existence on 1st April 2020
- In relation to the preceding financial year (2022/23), 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 the above statements apply and 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 2024.

Signing this certificate confirms the authority will comply with the publication requirements.

Signed by the Responsible Financial Officer Date

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

20/05/2024

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

20/05/2024

Signed by Chair

Date

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

20/05/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

7e)

MINUTE REFERENCE

Generic email address of Authority

arkholmeipc@gmail.com OWNED GENERIC EMAIL ADDRESS

Telephone number

01524 732818 NUMBER

*Published web address

<https://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/ecCatdisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat13176>

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 2024. Reminder letters for late submission will incur a charge of £40 + VAT.

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

ARKHOLME WITH CAWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

<https://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13176>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, 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 2023/24 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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

13/05/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

DEREK WHITEWAY

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

D. Whiteaway

Date

13/05/2024

*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).

Arkholme with Cawood Parish Council

Internal Auditor's Report 2023/24

Introduction

I am pleased to have again been able to provide the Council with its internal audit service for the year ended 31st March 2024.

In undertaking the audit I have:

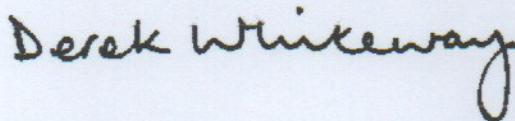
- reviewed and checked the completeness and accuracy of the financial records and supporting documents;
- reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the entries in the draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR);
- reviewed the Council's minutes regarding its consideration of governance matters including budget setting, risk management, financial regulations and the registration and valuation of assets; and
- corresponded with the Parish Clerk and been provided with additional information regarding the Council's systems and governance arrangements.

Findings

My findings and opinions are included in the responses to the "Internal Audit Report" section of the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2024 (copy attached). I am pleased to report to the Council that I have been able to confirm compliance with all relevant aspects included in the Internal Audit Report.

Opinion

It is my opinion that the Council has effective arrangements to manage its financial affairs and responsibilities. I should like to thank the Parish Clerk for her cooperation and assistance in connection with the audit.



Derek Whiteway
13th May 2024

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

ARKHOLME WITH CAWOOD 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 2024, that:

	Agreed		
	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:

20/05/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

7f)

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

Chair

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

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://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/ecCatdisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat13176>

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

ARKHOLME WITH CAWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance	
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £		
1. Balances brought forward	4,085	4,348	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	3,538	3,538	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.	
3. (+) Total other receipts	230	2,588	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	1,530	1,642	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	1,975	3,415	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	4,348	5,417	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	4,348	5,417	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	3,149	3,149	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 exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

20/05/2024

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

20/05/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

7g) MINUTE REFERENCE

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Explanation of variances – pro forma

Name of smaller authority: **Artholme with Camwood Parish Council**
 County area (local councils and 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.

	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	Variance £	Variance %	Explanation Required?	Explanation from smaller authority (must include narrative and supporting figures)
1 Balances Brought Forward	4,085	4,348				Automatic responses trigger below based on figures input. DO NOT OVERWRITE THESE BOXES
2 Precept or Rates and Levies	3,538	3,538	0	0.00%	NO	Explanation of % variance from PY opening balance not required - Balance brought forward agrees
3 Total Other Receipts	230	2,588	2,358	1025.22%	YES	Two County Council Public Rights of Way grants worth £1,600 were received this financial year. One grant worth £800 should have been received the year before. Two payments of £447.54 went out. In error owing to a cheque processing error between Natwest and Lloyds and came back as receipts.
4 Staff Costs	1,530	1,642	112	7.32%	NO	
5 Loan Interest/Capital Repayment	0	0	0	0.00%	NO	
6 All Other Payments	1,975	3,415	1,440	72.91%	YES	Two cheque payments of £447.54 went out owing to a cheque processing error between banks but were later refunded to the council. Other extraordinary payments were £120 for elections, £250 and £157.50 for biodiversity projects came out of grants received and £350 was spent on much needed maintenance for the Jubilee bench in the village. Expenditure of £192 was also incurred for the Coronation Lunch and £200 on the Christmas tree.
7 Balances Carried Forward	4,348	5,417				VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED
8 Total Cash and Short Term Investments	4,348	5,417				VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED
9 Total Fixed Assets plus Other Long Term Investments and	3,149	3,149	0	0.00%	NO	
10 Total Borrowings	0	0	0	0.00%	NO	

Rounding errors of up to £2 are tolerable

Variances of £200 or less are tolerable

Bank reconciliation – pro forma

This reconciliation should include **all** bank and building society accounts, including short term investment accounts. It the column headed "Year ending 31 March 2024" in Section 2 of the AGAR – and will also agree to Box 7 where the ac on a receipts and payments basis. Please complete the highlighted boxes, remembering that unpresented cheques sh negative figures.

Name of smaller authority: Arkholme with Cawood Parish Council

County area (local councils and parish meetings only): Lancashire

Financial year ending 31 March 2024

Prepared by (Name and Role): Claire Helme, Clerk/RFO

Date: 10/04/2024

	£	£
Balance per bank statements as at 31/3/2024:		
Lloyds Bank	£5,496.76	
	<hr/>	
Petty cash float (if applicable)		£5,496.76
Less: any unpresented cheques as at 31/3/24 (enter these as negative numbers)		
Cheque no 723	(80.00)	
		<hr/>
Add: any un-banked cash as at 31/3/24 N/A		(80.00)
		<hr/>
Net balances as at 31/3/24		<u>£5,416.76</u>

Arkholme with Cawood Parish Council
2023/24 Payments over £100

Date	Budget Heading	Payee	Detail	£Nett
15.05.23	Insurance	BHIB Ltd	Insurance Premium 2023/24	485.14
03.07.23	Clerk's salary	Claire Helme	Salary April/May/June	391.95
15.05.23	Coronation expenses	James Huddleston	Expenses Coronation Lunch	192.00
04.09.23	Clerk's salary	Claire Helme	Salary July/August/Sept	391.95
22.06.23	Jubilee bench	James Huddleston	Refurbishment of bench	350.00
21.12.23	LCC elections	Lancaster City Council	May elections	120.00
18.12.23	Clerk's salary/backpay	Claire Helme	Salary Oct/Nov/Dec & backpay	447.54
10.01.24	Christmas tree	Crabtree Xmas Trees	Christmas tree/delivery	200.00
05.02.24	S137 donation	Arkholme WI	S137 grant Arkholme WI	100.00
05.02.24	Biodiversity grant	Settlebeck School	Bird and hedgehog boxes	250.00
07.02.24	Biodiversity grant	Hedgehogs R Us	Hedgehog highway pack	157.50
15.02.24	Clerk's wages	Claire Helme	Salary Jan/Feb/March	410.48