

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *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 and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- 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.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2025.
- 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.
- 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.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2024) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2025).
- 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 2025**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
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', has an explanation been published?	✓	
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 2025 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.	✓	

**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

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

PARISH COUNCIL OF WATERHOUSES

ENTER

<https://waterhousesparishcouncil.co.uk>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, 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 2024/25 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.			✓
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 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
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 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 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 2023/24 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only)	Yes	No	Not applicable
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

20/05/2025 DDMM - YYYY 27/5/2025

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

JASON BUXTON AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

J. Buxton

Date

27/05/2025

*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 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

Paish Council of Waterhorses

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 2025, 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.
				✓	

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

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

12/6/2025

and recorded as minute reference:

MIN 120625 - FINANCIALS

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

Chair

D Stone

Clerk

[Signature]

ENTER

<https://waterhorsespaishcouncil.co.uk>

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

Parish Council of Waterhouses

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	15986	17286	<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i> 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	20500	21500	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	11482	75895	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	7776	8815	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	22906	87649	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	17286	18217	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	17286	18217	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	286270	348096	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 2025 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

12/6/2025

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

12/06/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

120625 - FINANCIALS

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



Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Parish Council of Waterhouses

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 2025; 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 2024/25

(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. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

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

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify/do not 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 2025.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

Attachment 1.1

Bank reconciliation – Example

This reconciliation must include **all** bank and building society accounts and other short-term investments*. It **must** agree to Box 8 in the column headed "Year ending 31 March 2025" in Section 2 of the Annual Return. It will also agree to Box 7 where the accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments (cash) basis, but not when an income and expenditure basis is used.

Parish Council Name PARISH COUNCIL OF WATERLOUSES

Financial year ending 31 March 2025

Prepared by C. HINTON (CLERK) (Name and Position) Date 20/5/2025

Balance per bank statements as at 31 March 2025:	£	£
e.g. Current account	100	
High interest account	28257	
Building society premium a/c		28357
Petty cash float (if applicable)		
Less: any un-presented cheques at 31 March 2025 (normally only current account)		
Cheque number	2061 - 133 2192 - 9600 2182 - 44 2193 - 12 2183 - 126 2194 - 60 2188 - 34 2195 - 131	10,140
Add: any un-banked cash at 31 March 2025		
e.g. Allotment rents banked 31 March 2025 (but not credited until 1 April 2025)		
Net balances as at 31 March 2025		18217
The net balances reconcile to the Cash Book (a receipts and payments account, which should be maintained even if your authority uses income and expenditure accounting) for the year, as follows:		
CASH BOOK		
Opening Balance 1 April 2024	17286	
Add: Receipts in the year	97395	
Less: Payments in the year	96464	
Closing balance per cash book [receipts and payments book] as at 31 March 2025 (must equal net balances above)	18217	

X SB
27/5/25

Instructions:

Please complete the coloured boxes with figures per the AGAR and figures for earmarked reserves.

The 'Explanation Required?' box will indicate whether an explanation is required to explain reserves exceeding the tolerable threshold set by Forvis Mazars (1.15 x the higher of precept and total payments).

If explanations are required, please document these in the rows below (*insert more rows where required*).

Once a sufficient amount of explanations has been provided, this will be shown with a 'Yes' in the 'Explanation sufficient?' line.

Box 2 Precept 21,500 x 1.15 = 24,725

Box 4	Staff costs	8,815
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Box 5	Loan interest / capital repayments	0
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Box 6	Other payments	87,649
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$$96,464 \times 1.15 = 100,796$$

Max level of reserves

100,796

Box 7 Balances carried forward

18,217

Explanation required?

No

Explanation(s) for earmarked reserves:

NB: NOT 'general' funds/reserves

PLAY AREA INSTALLATION

12.120

NEW GATES FOR PAVILION

1.200

13,320

Reserves not earmarked

4,897

Explanations sufficient?

Yes

Statement of Variances - Year ended 31 March 2025

Instructions for completing this template:

1. Enter figures per the AGAR in the cells highlighted in light blue. This will automatically calculate a percentage change between years.
2. If the variance is within 15%, no explanation is required. However, if it is outside this threshold, the percentage difference will highlight in yellow and an explanation is required.
3. Explanations should be entered in each section, quantified to show the figures for each year. This will automatically calculate the remaining difference and the percentage unexplained.
4. Once a sufficient explanation has been given to bring the percentage within 15% between years, the percentage difference cell will highlight as 'green' in the 'adjusted' line.

Please note that for fixed assets, regardless of the percentage change in the figure, an explanation is required for the movement.

Item	2023-24	2024-25	Difference	%	Additional comments / explanations
Box 2: Precept or Rates and levies	20,500.00	21,500.00	1,000.00	4.9%	
			-		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Box 2: Precept or Rates and levies (adjusted)			1,000.00	4.9%	No further explanation needed
Box 3: Total other receipts	11,482.00	75,895.00	64,413.00	561.0%	This increase in revenue largely reflects the grants received during the year. These helped to fund a new play area, new perimeter fencing, new ball stop nets and goal posts. The total increase in the grants received in the year was £50,294. VAT refunds in the year increased by £12,271. Taken together, these total £62,565.
			-		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Box 3: Total other receipts (adjusted)			64,413.00	561.0%	Further explanation needed
Box 4: Staff costs	7,776.00	8,815.00	1,039.00	13.4%	
			-		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Box 4: Staff costs (adjusted)			1,039.00	13.4%	No further explanation needed
Box 5: Loan interest/capital repayments	-	-	-	#DIV/0!	
			-		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Box 5: Loan interest/capital repayments (adjusted)			-	0.0%	No further explanation needed
Box 6: Other payments	22,906.00	89,415.00	66,509.00	290.4%	This change largely reflects the payments made in respect of the capital projects which were partially funded by the grants referred to above. These total £61,826. Expenditure on the pavilion and related items increased by £4,060. Together these total £65,886.
			-		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Box 6: Other payments (adjusted)			66,509.00	290.4%	Further explanation needed
Box 9: Fixed assets plus long-term investments	286,270.00	286,270.00	-	0.0%	
			-		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Box 9: Fixed assets plus long-term investments (adjusted)			-	0.0%	No further explanation needed
Box 10: Total borrowings	-	-	-	#DIV/0!	
			-		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Box 10: Total borrowings (adjusted)			-	0.0%	No further explanation needed

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Attachment 3.1

Local council name: Parish Council of Waterhouses

Notice of appointment of date for the exercise of public rights Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, and
The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (SI 234)

1. Date of announcement: June 13th 2025 2. Any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounts to be audited and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers and receipts relating to them. For the year ended 31 March 2025 these documents will be available on reasonable notice on application to: The Clerk. Chris Hinton Email: waterhousespcclerk@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 07584 128882 commencing on: June 16th 2025 and ending on : July 25th 2025 3. Local Government Electors and their representatives also have: • the opportunity to question the auditor about the accounts; and • the right to make objections to the accounts or any item in them. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the Authority The auditor can be contacted at the address in paragraph 4 below for this purpose during the inspection period at 2 above. 4. The auditor's limited assurance review is being conducted under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the National Audit Office' Code of Audit Practice. Your review is being carried out by: Forvis Mazars LLP, The Corner, Bank Chambers, 26 Mosley Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1DF Email: local.councils@mazars.co.uk 5. This announcement is made by: Chris Hinton (Clerk)	
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Jason Buxton
Riverlea
Waterhouses
Stoke on Trent
Staffs
ST10 3JR

Waterhouses Parish Council Annual Internal Audit 2024/25

Internal Audit Review to 31/03/2025

On reviewing the financial statements and accounting records for the year ending 31/03/2025, I can confirm that the financial records represent a true and fair record of the entities financial position.

The financial records and transactions are supported by the appropriate documentation, provided in an accurate and clear manner. It is evident that efficient and effective financial controls are in place, with good governance and risk management procedures.

In conclusion, the Council's financial records are well maintained and effectively managed.

Reviewer: Jason Buxton 27/05/2025

J. Buxton
27/5/25