Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of **Royal Sutton Coldfield Town 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 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors

2 External auditor 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 the 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.

On review of the council's reconciliation between Boxes 7 & 8 and the council's explanation of variance for Box 8, it has been identified that during the year the council received funding from the Plan for Neighbourhoods fund and these funds were excluded from Boxes 3 to 7 of the AGAR. The council prepare their accounts on the income and expenditure basis and therefore, they have been included as reconciling item in the reconciliation between Boxes 7 & 8 to remove this from Boxes 3 to 7. As the council has the responsibility for delivering the project, considering and accepting contracts in respect of it and for authorizing the spending of those funds, we would have expected to see these funds included as income within Box 3. By excluding these amounts, the council has not complied with all of the regulations for the proper preparation of its accounts. As a result, the council should have provided a 'No' response to Assertion 1 of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement. We would expect the council to restate the 2024/25 figures when completing the 2025/26 return.

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

Box 10 of Section 2 for both the current and comparative years were left blank on the submission of the AGAR. We consider there to be no significant impact from this omission based on third party evidence we have obtained, however the council should in future ensure that all boxes are fully completed in accordance with paragraph 2.5 of the Practitioners' Guide.

The council provided an explanation for the variance on Box 4 on Section 2 of AGAR from the prior year to the current year. Whilst the explanation was reasonable, no values were initially provided in order to support the movement. These were later provided on request. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting financial information is provided with their annual submission.

Information to complete our intermediate testing supporting data need to be re-requested for submission. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their annual submission.

As part of our intermediate testing, we requested information showing the review of documents including Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and their Code of Conduct. The council were able to evidence that the majority of these documents had been reviewed as required. However, whilst the regulations require a regular review of the council's Code of Conduct, their document states that the code is to be reviewed at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council, which did not happen in 2024/25. The Council have confirmed this will be addressed and the Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually from 2025/26.

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

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 2025.

External Auditor Name	External Auditor Signature	Date
MOORE	Moore	18/09/2025