

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - must be completed and approved by the authority.**
 - is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2023**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2023**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2023 authorities **must** publish:

Not later than 30 September 2023 authorities **must** publish:

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

**for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.*

- 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 2023.
- 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 Chairman, 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 2022) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2023).
- 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 2023**.

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 Chairman of the approval meeting?	✓
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023 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

SEASCALE PARISH COUNCIL

<https://www.seascaleparish.com/>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, 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 2022/23 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.

Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year. ✓

This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for. ✓

This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these. ✓

The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate. ✓

Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for. ✓

Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for. ✓

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied. ✓

Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained. ✓

Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year. ✓

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. ✓

If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. ✓

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. ✓

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. ✓

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR. ✓

(For local councils only)

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

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Date

***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).**

We acknowledge as the members of:

SEASCALE 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 2023, that:

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>
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>
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>
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>
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>
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>
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>
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>
(For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the funds/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit	✓	<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>

***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:

09/04/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

09.04.23 - 2.4

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

Chairman

Clerk



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Balances brought forward	80,725	70,910	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
(+) Precept or Rates and Levies	23,355	23,822	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received
(+) Total other receipts	37,783	47,525	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
(-) Staff costs	6,000	6,045	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
(-) 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)
(-) All other payments	64,953	84,486	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
(=) Balances carried forward	70,910	51,725	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) (4+5+6)
Total value of cash and short term investments	70,910	51,725	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.
Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	70,223	72,675	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.
Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB)

101.2152
 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

Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable) ✓

The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 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

[Redacted Signature]

Date

25.04.2023

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

25.04.2023

as recorded in minute reference.

25.04.23.25

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

[Redacted Signature]

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of **Seascale Parish Council**

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

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 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors

2 External auditor report 2022/23

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 year end reserves it was noted that the entire reserves held by the council appeared to be earmarked for a specific purpose. Whilst it is understood that councils should not hold large volumes of reserves without purpose, it needs to be recognised that it is highly unlikely that any budget will account for every eventuality for up to a year in advance and therefore an element of general reserve is a practical necessity.

Best practice suggests this should be something between 0.5 and 2 times the annual precept. The Council carefully review its definition of earmarked reserves and to assess the level of general reserves it should carry in order to ensure the council can continue to function for a reasonable period if other funding or incomes be delayed or cease.

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

There is a trivial rounding error in this year's column when summed. When rounding the numbers for the Return care should be taken to ensure the Return sums correctly.

Section 2 of the AGAR was initially submitted without the Trust Fund disclosure in Box 11a completed. This was later resubmitted with a 'No' answer which was in line with our expectations and so there are no further concerns in this area.

The Internal Auditor has signed off the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23 after the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 was approved. This means the completed 2022/23 report was not available for review and consideration with the form. It is presumed that the statements in Section 1 Annual Governance Statement refer to the previous year's internal audit report.


3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

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 2023.

External Auditor Name

▲ **MOORE**

External Auditor Signature



Date

10/09/2023

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2022-23 ACCOUNTS
PERFORMED BY: Sue Bamforth, FCMA,CGMA,SRMA

NAME OF PARISH: Seascale Parish Council

COMPLETED DATE: 24th April 2023

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The information provided is comprehensive and found to be accurate.

Financial controls are in place and supported by a robust risk register, minutes and detailed accounting records. From undertaking the audit, I have no significant recommendations to make which would affect the accuracy of the Parish Accounts that are advertised on the website and sent to PKF Littlejohn. The accounts are accurate, concise and reconciled thanks to the diligence of the Clerk/RFO

SUMMARY OF TESTING AND FINDINGS

Internet Control Area	Documents reviewed	Findings
Overall financial controls set properly	Financial Regulations Standing Orders Minutes	Satisfactory
Budgetary Control - proper arrangements	Budget reports as part of Council minutes	Satisfactory and recorded
Expenditure - authorisation in accordance with Standing Orders	Invoices Bank Statements Minutes	Robust - Sample test of 8 invoices examined along with bank statements and accounting records.
Expenditure - accounting	Cash Book Bank reconciliations	Bank reconciliations are done each month, cash book is regularly maintained and accurately reported.
Income Controls	Cash book Bank statements	Accounts detail all income and can be traced to accurately to banking
Payroll - legally performed	Payroll records	3rd party payroll provided is used. No testing was undertaken.
Risk Management	Insurance policy	Risk register in place with main Risk Assessments in place. Insurance cover Via Zurich Municipal
Asset Management	Asset Register	Asset register is up to date
Information Management (Transparency Code)	Website	Website displays required level of financial information.