

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24

- 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
 - Sections 1 and 2 **must** be completed and approved by the authority.
 - Section 3 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 2024**.
- 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 2024**. 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 2024
 - 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 2023/24

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.

Publication Requirements

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

Before 1 July 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited.
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. 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

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24

- 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 2024.
- 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 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 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 2024 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 2023/24

HUTTON PARISH COUNCIL

<https://huttonsomerset.org.uk>

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.	✓		
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 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")			✓
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 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).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (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

09/06/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

PAUL RUSSELL

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

10/06/2024

***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).**

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

HUTTON 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 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.	✓		<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>
			✓	

*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:

27/6/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

24.16.D

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

Chair

Peter A. Dull

Clerk

B. Dooler

<https://huttonsomerset.org.uk>

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

HUTTON PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	31931.09	8488.99 <i>8489</i>	<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	104016.00	126504.00	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	51540.18	57623.50	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	63896.53	21665.79	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	3272.27	3188.86	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	11829.48	120728.20	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	8488.99	47033.64	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	8488.99	47033.64	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	352400.00	352400.00	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	30250.00	30250.00 <i>28417</i>	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]

Date

25/6/24

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

27/6/24

as recorded in minute reference:

24.16.C

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

[Signature]

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

In respect of

HUTTON 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. (*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 2023/24

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 2024.

*We do not certify completion because

External Auditor Name

External Auditor Signature

Date

This reconciliation should include **all** bank and building society accounts, including short term investment accounts. It **must** agree to Box B in the column headed "Year ending 31 March 20XX" in the Accounting Statements of the AGAR – and will also agree to Box 7 where the accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis. Please complete the highlighted boxes, remembering that unpresented cheques should be entered as negative figures.

#NAME?

Name of smaller authority:

Hutton Parish Council

County area (local councils and parish meetings only):

Financial year ending 31 March 2024

Prepared by (Name and Role):

Date:

		£	£
Balance per bank statements as at 31/3/XX:			
Current	54092698	2000.00	
Reserve	546046	15606.32	
Bonus Saver	81110340	30164.53	
			47770.85
Petty cash float (if applicable)			0.00
Less: any unpresented cheques as at 31/ 2024			
	115	34.76	
	147	400.73	
	183	180.31	
	187	6.00	
[add more lines if necessary]	188	35.99	
	290	28.35	
	298	246.00	
	300	78.97	
			1011.11
Add: any un-banked cash as at 31/3/2024			46759.74
	Tall	10.00	
	Vickery/Black	22.00	
	Unknown	42.50	
	Evans	16.50	
	NatWest	42.40	
	Brownies	52.50	
	Withers	44.00	
	Withers	44.00	
			273.90
Net balances as at 31/03/2024			47033.64
What is the figure in Box B in the Accounting Statement?			47033.64
Does the bank reconciliation above agree to Box B?			Yes

Explanation of Variances (Receipts and Payments)

You can view annual return variances and add explanations to them.

Box No	Description	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	Variance	Explanation
1	Balances brought fwd	32931.09	8488.99		See 2023 P1001 Report P10
2	Annual receipt	304016.00	126504.00	22488.00 (12%)	Elmhurst Project 10,000 Potential Consultant Fees £10,000 Scout Hut improvement £2,000
3	Total other receipts	51546.18	57623.50	9081.32 (12%)	
4	Staff Costs	63896.53	21665.79	28270.00 (44%)	Payment to a Locum Clerk £22,500 Staff 1% Salary increase in April 2023 £12,000 Back holiday pay x 2 Employees £1,000 Gratuity Payment to previous Clerk who left in office £7,500
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	3272.27	1488.98	83.41 (1%)	
6	Total other payments	111929.48	120726.20	8808.72 (8%)	
7	Balances carried forward	8488.99	47033.64	38544.65 (454%)	Increase in Reserves to cover anticipated expenditure in 2024 2025 £15606.00 omni Saver £30164.00
8	Total Cash and Short Term Investments	8488.99	47033.64	38544.65 (454%)	Increase in Reserves to cover anticipated expenditure in 2024 2025 £15606.00 omni Saver £30164.00
9	Total Fixed Assets and Long term investments	352400.00	352400.00	0.00 (0%)	
10	Total Borrowings	30250.00	30250.00	0.00 (0%)	

CHANGE OF CONTACT DETAILS

Name of Smaller Authority:

County:

	Clerk/RFO (Main contact)	Chair
Name	Bruce Poole	Peter Dutton
Address	Rooftops 10 South Street Burnham-on-Sra Somerset TA8 1BS	4 Payne Road Hutton Weston-Super-Mare BS249QS
Home telephone number	07887802922	01934915470
Work telephone number	07887802922	
Mobile telephone number	07887802922	0788761060
Email address	clerk@huttonsomerset.ot.uk	pdupton@huttonsomerset.org.uk

CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH BDO LLP

To be completed annually and minuted at a meeting of the smaller authority.

Name of Smaller Authority	Hutton Parish Council
---------------------------	-----------------------

I confirm that there are no conflicts of interest with BDO LLP.


I confirm the following conflicts of interest (please detail below):

This was confirmed and minuted at the following meeting:

Date of Meeting	Minute Reference
27/6/24	24.16.2.

Signed (Clerk/RFO)

Print Name


Bevco Poole

Signed (Chair)

Print Name


PETER DUTTON

HUTTON PARISH COUNCIL
NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION OF
UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE &
ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

NOTICE	NOTES
<p style="text-align: center;">Friday 28th June 2024</p> <p>2. Each year the smaller authority's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The unaudited AGAR has been published with this notice. As it has yet to be reviewed by the appointed auditor, it is subject to change as a result of that review.</p> <p>Any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested. For the year ended 31 March 2024, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:</p> <p>Bruce Poole BA(Hons) FSLCC MMC Parish Clerk & RFO Rooftops 10 South Street Burnham-on-Sea T8 1BS bruce.poole@2024agarrfo.com 07887802922</p> <p>Monday 1st July 2024 and ending on Friday 9th August 2024</p> <p>3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records, and • The right to make an objection which concerns a matter in respect of which the appointed auditor could either make a public interest report or apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the smaller authority. <p>The appointed auditor can be contacted at the address in paragraph 4 below for this purpose between the above dates only.</p> <p>4. The smaller authority's AGAR is subject to review by the appointed auditor under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the NAO's Code of Audit Practice 2015. The appointed auditor is:</p> <p>BDO LLP Arcadia House Maritime Walk Ocean Village Southampton SO14 3TL councilaudits@bdo.co.uk</p> <p>5. This announcement is made by (e) Bruce Poole BA(Hons) FSLCC MMC RFO - Responsible Financial Officer</p>	<p>(a) Insert date of placing of the notice which must be not less than 1 day before the date in (c) below</p> <p>(b) Insert name, position and address/telephone number/ email address, as appropriate, of the Clerk or other person to which any person may apply to inspect the accounts</p> <p>(c) Insert date, which must be at least 1 day after the date of announcement in (a) above and at least 30 working days before the date appointed in (d) below</p> <p>(d) The inspection period between (c) and (d) must be 30 working days inclusive and must include the first 10 working days of July</p> <p>(e) Insert name and position of person placing the notice - this person must be the responsible financial officer for the smaller authority</p>

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTS: A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

Please note that this summary applies to all relevant smaller authorities, including local councils, internal drainage boards and 'other' smaller authorities.

The basic position

The [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#) (the Act) governs the work of auditors appointed to smaller authorities. This summary explains the provisions contained in Sections 26 and 27 of the Act. The Act and the [Local Government Finance Regulations 2015](#) also cover the duties, responsibilities and rights of smaller authorities, other organisations and the public concerning the accounts being audited.

As a local elector, or an interested person, you have certain legal rights in respect of the accounting records of smaller authorities. As an interested person you can inspect accounting records and related documents. If you are a local government elector for the area to which the accounts relate you can also ask questions about the accounts and object to them. You do not have to pay directly for exercising your rights. However, any resulting costs incurred by the smaller authority form part of its running costs. Therefore, indirectly, local residents pay for the cost of you exercising your rights through their council tax.

The right to inspect the accounting records

Any interested person can inspect the accounting records, which includes but is not limited to local electors. You can inspect the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records. You can copy all, or part, of these records or documents. Your inspection must be about the accounts, or relate to an item in the accounts. You cannot, for example, inspect or copy documents unrelated to the accounts, or that include personal information (Section 26 (6) – (10) of the Act explains what is meant by personal information). You cannot inspect information which is protected by commercial confidentiality. This is information which would prejudice commercial confidentiality if it was released to the public and there is not, set against this, a very strong reason in the public interest why it should nevertheless be disclosed.

When smaller authorities have finished preparing accounts for the financial year and approved them, they must publish them (including on a website). There must be a 30 working day period, called the 'period for the exercise of public rights', during which you can exercise your statutory right to inspect the accounting records. Smaller authorities must tell the public, including advertising this on their website, that the accounting records and related documents are available to inspect. By arrangement you will then have 30 working days to inspect and make copies of the accounting records. You may have to pay a copying charge. The 30 working day period must include a common period of inspection during which all smaller authorities' accounting records are available to inspect. This will be 1-12 July 2024 for 2023-24 accounts. The advertisement must set out the dates of the period for the exercise of public rights, how you can communicate to the smaller authority that you wish to inspect the accounting records and related documents, the name and address of the auditor, and the relevant legislation that governs the inspection of accounts and objections.

The right to ask the auditor questions about the accounting records

You should first ask your smaller authority about the accounting records, since they hold all the details. If you are a local elector, your right to ask questions of the external auditor is enshrined in law. However, while the auditor will answer your questions where possible, they are not always obliged to do so. For example, the question might be better answered by another organisation, require investigation beyond the auditor's remit, or involve disproportionate cost (which is borne by the local taxpayer). Give your smaller authority the opportunity first to explain anything in the accounting records that you are unsure about. If you are not satisfied with their explanation, you can question the external auditor about the accounting records.

The law limits the time available for you formally to ask questions. This must be done in the period for the exercise of public rights, so let the external auditor know your concern as soon as possible. The advertisement or notice that tells you the accounting records are available to inspect will also give the period for the exercise of public rights during which you may ask the auditor questions, which here means formally asking questions under the Act. You can ask someone to represent you when asking the external auditor questions.



Hutton Parish Council

Hutton Parish Council, Hutton Village Hall, 60 Church Lane, Hutton, Somerset. BS24 9SN
Office hours: Tuesdays – 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 pm and 2.00pm to 3.30 pm. and Home
Working Monday Wednesday and Thursday 10.00 am to 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm to 3.30pm
Tel - 07887802922 e mail – clerk@huttonsomerset.org.uk online at www.huttonsomerset.org.uk

Chairman	Councillor Peter Dutton
Vice Chairman	Councillor Ben Groom
Clerk to Council	Bruce Poole BA (Hons) FSLCC MMC

BDO LLP
Arcadia House
Maritime Walk
Ocean Village
Southampton SO14 3TL

29th June 2024

Dear Sirs

Annual Internal Auditor Report Objective C

It was reported last year that the Parish Clerk died in March 2023 and as a result it was necessary to re-construct the Accounts for the previous two years. Since the 2022-2023 submission the Parish Council has concentrated on ensuring that the accounts were maintained in an appropriate manner with regular reports both to the members and the public at large.

Equally it recognised the need to review its policies especially the one pointed out by the Internal Auditor. i.e. Risk Assessment

At the extraordinary meeting on the 27th June it was announced by the Chairman that he had sourced an online undated copy from the Council's records. It was agreed that this policy amongst others would be reviewed in the coming months

Bruce Poole
Clerk to Hutton Parish Council