Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Meriden 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 limited assurance opinion 2023/24

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.

Incomplete information was provided with the initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to significant variances, which was later provided on request. This point was also raised on our 2022-23 report and therefore points raised by the external auditor have not been appropriately actioned. The council should therefore have provided a 'No' response to assertion 7. This will need to also be considered on your 2024-25 AGAR.

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

On review, the council's general reserves appear higher than the generally accepted level for smaller authorities. General reserves are the level of reserves after adjusting for any earmarked or ringfenced funds. The council informed us that the build-up of reserves is because the council is anticipating an increase in costs next year but does not plan on increasing its precept. Per Paragraph 5.33 of JPAG Practitioners' Guide, best practice suggests that general reserves should cover at least 3 months of expenditure and anything greater than 12 months of expenditure is considered excessive.

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

MOORE

External Auditor Signature Moore Date 12/09/2024