



# BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

To Finance & Staffing Cllrs; S Hitchings (Chair), H Miéville (Vice Chair), C Stevens, Y Miéville, T Clarkson, M Putt, A Cross, G Del-Pinto, L Hitchings:  
All other recipients for information only.

Tuesday, 02 June 2026

Dear Member

## Summons

You are summoned to a meeting of the **Finance & Staffing Committee** of Blandford Forum Town Council for the transaction of the business shown on the agenda below. To be held at 7 pm on **Monday, 08 June 2026** in the Corn Exchange. The quorum for the Finance & Staffing Committee is 5.

## Public Participation

Before the agenda is considered, there will be 15 minutes public participation, which may be extended at the Committee's discretion, during which members of the public may speak. During the meeting, members of the public and Dorset Council representatives may indicate they wish to speak and, at the Chairman's discretion and with Members' approval, may be allowed to do so on points of information only. The Committee may also invite members of the public to comment on issues where their knowledge may assist the Committee.

## General Duties of the Council

Members are reminded that, in exercising its functions, the Council must consider the following: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, belief or disability), Crime & Disorder, Health and Safety, and Human Rights. Disabled access is available. Councillors are reminded of The Seven Principles of Public Life:

**Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.**

## Recording of Meetings

All attendees should be aware that filming, recording, photography or similar activity may take place during the meeting.

**Date of Next Finance & Staffing Committee Meeting:** Monday, 21 September 2026

Yours sincerely

Claire Commons BA (Hons), Town Clerk

Twinned with Preetz, Germany



Town Clerk's Office  
Church Lane, Blandford Forum  
Dorset DT11 7AD



Twinned with Mortain, France



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## Agenda

FS1	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION .....	3
(7:00 pm)	To allow the public to make representations to the Council. ....(up to 15 mins) <i>Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, S.10</i>	
FS2	APOLOGIES.....	4
(7:20 pm)	To receive and consider for acceptance, apologies for absence from Councillors summoned to attend .....	(1 min) <i>(Local Government Act, 1972 s.85)</i>
FS3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST .....	5
(7:21 pm)	To declare interests relating to the business of the meeting.....	(2 min) <i>Blandford Forum Town Council Code of Conduct, 2021</i>
FS4	MINUTES .....	7
(7:23 pm)	To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee. ....	(2 min) <i>(Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12)</i>
FS5	OFFICER REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE .....	8
(7:25 pm)	To receive reports pertaining to the Finance & Staffing Committee. ....	(5 min) <i>(Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12)</i>
FS6	YEAR END BUDGET REVIEW .....	10
(7:30 pm)	To present the year-end budget outturn position .....	(5 mins)
FS7	REVIEW OF FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION .....	13
(7:40 pm)	To receive and retrospectively approve financial transactions and controls.....	(5 mins)
FS8	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2025/26 .....	14
(7:45)	To review AGAR documentation and recommend to Full Council.....	(20 mins) <i>Local Government Act 1972 s.151</i>

Anticipated meeting end time 7:55pm

**FS1**      **Public Participation**

(7:00 pm) To allow the public to make representations to the Council.

(up to 15 mins)

*Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, S.10*

**Report Author:** Town Clerk

**FS1.1.1**    **Background**

- a      The Standing Orders of the Council (specifically Standing Order 3) provide for a designated Public Participation session at each meeting of the Council and its Committees.
- b      During Public Participation, members of the public are invited to address the meeting regarding matters on the published agenda or within the Council's powers.
- c      Public Participation is distinct from the formal business of the meeting. Once the session concludes, the public are observers only and must not participate further unless invited by a resolution of the Council.
- d      The Council's commitment to openness, transparency, and community engagement supports the inclusion of Public Participation within the formal structure of the meeting.
- e      At the Annual Meeting of the Council, Public Participation shall only commence after the election of the Chair, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 and Standing Orders.

**FS1.1.2**    **Members of the public registered to speak**

- a      There are no members of the public registered to speak at the point of issuing papers.

**FS1.1.3**    **Conduct of Public Participation**

- a      Public Participation will occur at the start of the meeting.
- b      Each speaker may address the meeting for a maximum of three minutes, subject to the Chair's discretion to extend or reduce this time if necessary.
- c      The maximum total duration for Public Participation shall normally be 20 minutes unless the Council resolves otherwise.
- d      Speakers are asked to address the meeting courteously, and must not make offensive, defamatory, or irrelevant comments. Speakers do not have a right to expect debate or immediate responses.

**FS1.1.4**    **Recording of Public Participation**

- a      The minutes of the meeting shall record that Public Participation took place and will summarise the general topics raised, but shall not record the names of individual speakers.

**FS1.1.5**    **Recommendation**

- a      That the public comments are received, and any points of note are identified for consideration at future meetings of the Council or its committees or for action by officers of the Council

**FS1.1.6**    **Reason for Recommendation**

- a      To acknowledge public engagement in accordance with Standing Orders and ensure that matters raised are appropriately considered without committing the Council to immediate decisions.

**FS2** Apologies

(7:20 pm) To receive and consider for acceptance, apologies for absence from Councillors summoned to attend (1 min)

*(Local Government Act, 1972 s.85)*

**Report Author:** Town Clerk

**FS1.2.1** **Background**

- a Councillors are holders of public office and are summoned to attend meetings of the Council and its committees.
- b In accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council must consider and decide whether to accept the reason for absence provided by any Councillor who is unable to attend a meeting.
- c If a Councillor fails to attend any meeting of the Council (or its committees) for a period of six consecutive months, without having obtained formal acceptance of their apologies by the Council (or the relevant committee), they are automatically disqualified from office.

**FS1.2.2** **Apologies received and reason**

- a No apologies have been received at the point of issuing papers.

**FS1.2.3** **Recommendation**

- a That the Council considers and either accepts or rejects each apology for absence received.

**FS1.2.4** **Reason for Recommendation**

- a Accepting apologies resets the six-month period for continuous attendance, ensuring compliance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

(End)

**FS3** Declarations of Interest

(7:21 pm) To declare interests relating to the business of the meeting.

(2 min)

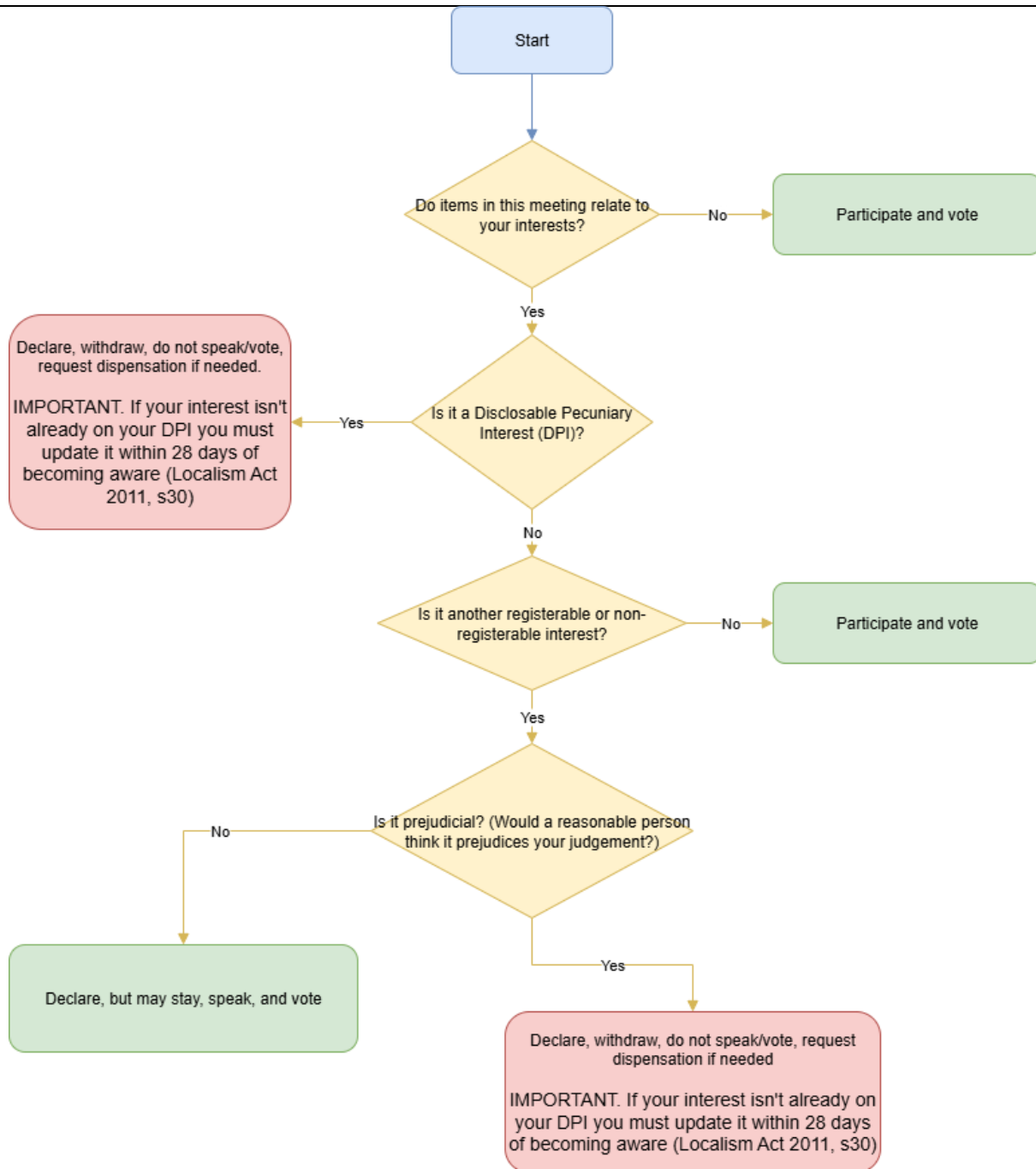
*Blandford Forum Town Council Code of Conduct, 2021*

**Report Author:** Town Clerk

**FS1.3.1** **Background**

- a All Councillors and Officers are reminded of their obligations under the Blandford Forum Town Council Code of Conduct to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests, or Non-Registerable Interests relating to matters on the agenda.
- b Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest, it is the individual Councillor's responsibility to declare that interest at the earliest opportunity in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- c The Clerk will report any dispensations granted prior to the meeting.
- d Refer to Tables 1 and 2 in the [Code of Conduct](#) for further details about the types of interests which may apply.
- e If you think you need to request a dispensation, the process is included within the [Dispensation Request Form.docx](#).
- f The table below provides a summary of what your responsibilities are depending on the type of interest declared.

Type of Interest	Declare at Meeting?	Stay for Debate?	Vote?	Withdraw?	Notes
DPI (registered or not)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Must declare and withdraw, unless dispensation granted
Other/Non-Registerable (not prejudicial)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Declare, but may participate fully
Other/Non-Registerable (prejudicial)	Yes	No (except to speak if public can)	No	Yes	Declare, may speak if public can, then withdraw
With Dispensation	Yes	As specified	As specified	As specified	Dispensation may allow limited participation



**FS1.3.2 Recommendation**

a That the Council notes the declarations made in relation to the business of the meeting.

**FS1.3.3 Reason for Recommendation**

Recording declarations at the meeting ensures transparency, compliance with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct, and adherence to statutory obligations.

(End)

**FS4** Minutes

(7:23 pm) To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee.(2 min)

*(Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12)*

Report Author: RFO

**FS1.4.1** **Background**

- a In approving draft minutes, the Council is concerned solely with whether the minutes accurately record the proceedings and resolutions of the relevant meeting.
- b It is immaterial whether individual Councillors were present at the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- c If any corrections are necessary due to inaccuracies, amendments must be approved by formal resolution before the minutes are signed.

**FS1.4.2** **Recommendation**

- a That the minutes of the [Finance & Staffing Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026](#) be approved for signing as a true record of the decisions taken.

(End)

**FS5** Officer Report to the Committee











(7:25 pm) To receive reports pertaining to the Finance &amp; Staffing Committee.

(5 min)

*(Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12)***Report Author:** Town Clerk**FS1.5.1** Summary

- a Reports provided within this item are to be received, they provide updates on decisions already taken by the Committee and actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation (where not previously reported).

**FS1.5.2** Updates and Actions from Monday, 23 March 2026

Minute Decision	Status	Update
71.5 Investment account signatories	 Complete	All bank accounts have been updated with current signatories.
72 Internal Auditor continued appointment	 In Progress	This will be scheduled for decision on the Full Council agenda of 22 June 2026
73 Insurance Risk Assessment	 Complete	Resolved at the Annual Council meeting, 5/5/26
74 Risk Assessment Management Policy	 Complete	Resolved at the Annual Council meeting, 5/5/26
75 Asset Register	 Complete	Resolved at the Annual Council meeting, 5/5/26
78 F&S Remit and Financial Regulations	 Complete	Resolved at the Annual Council meeting, 5/5/26
79 Free Venue Hire	 Complete	
80 Investment Policy	 Complete	
81 Virement of underspent reserves	 Complete	
83.2 Change in responsibilities/hours	 In Progress	To be reviewed at F&S in September (1 month short of required timeline) or December (2 months over required timeline)

**FS1.5.3** Budget monitoring report 2026/27

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Budget Variance	Status
<b>INCOME</b>					
Admin	59,595	4,963	13,689	8,726	Over-Budget
<b>Admin Total</b>	59,595	4,963	13,689	8,726	Over-Budget
Corn Exchange	34,100	2,842	6,205	3,363	Over-Budget
Woodhouse Gardens	5,000	417	369	(47)	Under-budget
Larksmead	1,500	125	0	(125)	Under-budget

Cemetery	16,000	1,333	1,927	594	Over-Budget
Sundries	3,950	329	2,134	1,805	Over-Budget
Park Road		0	513	0	Over-Budget
Skate park	0	0	300	300	Over-Budget
<b>R &amp; A Income</b>	<b>60,550</b>	<b>5,046</b>	<b>11,448</b>	<b>5,889</b>	Over-Budget
CCTV, Planters & Markets	12,700	1,058	1,361	303	Over-Budget
Marsh & Ham Toilets	1,000	83	150	67	Over-Budget
Tabernacle Toilets	0	0	0	0	Under-budget
<b>T &amp; GP Totals</b>	<b>13,700</b>	<b>1,142</b>	<b>1,511</b>	<b>370</b>	Over-Budget
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>133,845</b>	<b>11,150</b>	<b>26,648</b>	<b>14,985</b>	On Target
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Admin	133,459	11,122	33,735	22,613	Over-Budget
Corn Exchange Project Officer / Consultant	0	0	0	0	Under-budget
Salaries	615,743	51,312	45,844	(5,468)	Under-budget
<b>Admin &amp; Payroll</b>	<b>749,202</b>	<b>62,434</b>	<b>79,579</b>	<b>17,145</b>	Over-Budget
Vehicles	14,160	1,180	853	(327)	Under-budget
Corn Exchange	78,200	6,517	11,282	4,765	Over-Budget
Woodhouse Gardens	4,966	414	265	(149)	Under-budget
Larksmead	2,000	167	340	173	Over-Budget
Recreation Ground (Barnes Trust)	42,671	0	0	0	Under-budget
Glenmore Workshop	10,110	843	539	(303)	Under-budget
Cemetery	7,854	727	514	(214)	Under-budget
Park Road EVCPs	1,000	83	523	440	Over-Budget
Langton	450	38	0	(38)	Under-budget
Skatepark	3,725	310	0	(60)	Under-budget
Sundries	20,350	1,696	3,891	2,195	Over-Budget
<b>R &amp; A Totals</b>	<b>185,486</b>	<b>11,974</b>	<b>18,207</b>	<b>6,483</b>	Over-Budget
CCTV, Planters & Markets	41,895	3,491	3,674	183	Over-Budget
Marsh & Ham Toilets	52,670	4,389	1,686	(2,703)	Under-budget
Tabernacle Toilets	2,160	180	28	(152)	Under-budget
<b>T &amp; GP Totals</b>	<b>96,725</b>	<b>8,060</b>	<b>5,388</b>	<b>(2,672)</b>	Under-budget
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,031,413</b>	<b>82,468</b>	<b>103,173</b>	<b>20,955</b>	Over-Budget
<b>TOTAL (NET COST)</b>	<b>897,568</b>	<b>71,318</b>	<b>76,525</b>	<b>5,971</b>	Over-Budget

**FS1.5.4 Recommendation**

- a That the reports are received and noted and any actions arising identified for future meetings of the Council or its Committees

**FS1.5.5 Reason for Recommendation**

- a To keep members updated on committee actions and information.

(End)

**FS6** Year End Budget Review

(7:30 pm) To present the year-end budget outturn position

(5 mins)

**Report Author:** Town Clerk**FS1.6.1** **Summary and Background information**

- a This report presents the final outturn position for the Council's Administration Budget and Overall Revenue Budget for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026
- b The detailed reports are provided below to show the comparison between approved budgets, actual income and expenditure, variances at year end, and adjustments relating to earmarked reserves.
- c The key points to note:
  - o The Council has operated within its overall budget for 2025/26
  - o The overall revenue budget shows a significant underspend against the approved budget which is attributed to a combination of budget savings across a number of service areas and stronger than expected income.
- d Members are asked to receive and note this report.

**FS1.6.2** **Recommendation**

- a Receive and note the year-end outturn position for the Administration and overall revenue budgets for 2025/26.

(End)

ADMINISTRATION COSTS		£					
N/L code		Annual Budget	Budget to Date	2025/26 Actual to Date	Covered by Reserves	Revised Actual	Budget Variance
4010	Advertising	600	600	790		790	190
4012	Audit	4,635	4,635	4,113		4,113	(522)
4014	Bank Charges	1,142	1,142	333		333	(809)
4015	Property Fund Admin Charge / Exp	4,635	4,635	4,426		4,426	(209)
4016	PWLB Admin Fee					0	0
4018	Equipment Maintenance/Hire	500	500	567		567	67
4028	New Equipment	200	200	280		280	80
4039	IT New Equip	200	200	2,674	2,474	200	(0)
4040	IT Maintenance/Software	10,750	10,750	11,397		11,397	647
4041	IT Consumables	60	60	185		185	125
4042	Professional Services	18,567	18,567	17,584	4,405	13,179	(5,388)
4043	Office Rent		0	7,000	7,000	0	0
4050	Newsletter/Forum focus/publication	4,700	4,700	3,884		3,884	(816)
4053	Photocopier Charges	1,675	1,675	1,146		1,146	(529)
4054	Stationery & Printing	600	600	703		703	103
4057	Subscriptions	3,075	3,075	2,744		2,744	(331)
4060	Postage	800	800	474		474	(326)
4065	Telephones + broadband	5,000	5,000	2,012		2,012	(2,988)
4094	Staff Training & Travel Exps	4,000	4,000	2,883		2,883	(1,117)
4095	Staff Travel & Expenses	3,000	3,000	1,788		1,788	(1,212)
4096	Cllrs allow, Training & Travel Exps	5,000	5,000	5,258		5,258	258
4097	Meeting Exps	100	100	39		39	(61)
4099	Staff Welfare	400	400	324		324	(76)
4301	Health & Safety Staffing	3,000	3,000	1,149		1,149	(1,851)
41079	EMR - Neighbourhood Plan			916	916	0	(0)
5500	Grants - General	6,000	6,000	5,323		5,323	(677)
5505	Grants - SLAs	22,000	22,000	22,200		22,200	200
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>100,639</i>	<i>100,639</i>	<i>100,190</i>	<i>14,796</i>	<i>85,394</i>	<i>-15,245</i>
4701	Insurance	36,000	36,000	29,647		29,647	(6,353)
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>36,000</i>	<i>36,000</i>	<i>29,647</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>29,647</i>	<i>(6,353)</i>
4800	Mayoral Expenses	2,967	2,967	1,310		1,310	(1,657)
4802	Civic Expenses	5,500	5,500	6,419	609	5,810	310
4805	Civic Twinning	150	150			0	(150)
4806	Civic - Freedom	150	150			0	(150)
	Honorarium - Town Crier/Mace Bearer	1,400	1,400	800		800	(600)
4803/8	Membership to Guild of Mace Bearers and Town Criers	100	100	40		40	(60)
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>10,267</i>	<i>10,267</i>	<i>8,569</i>	<i>609</i>	<i>7,960</i>	<i>(2,307)</i>
	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>146,906</b>	<b>146,906</b>	<b>138,405</b>	<b>15,404</b>	<b>123,001</b>	<b>(23,905)</b>
INCOME							
2025	Interest	2,500	2,500	71,504	62,371	9,134	6,634
2003	Property Fund Dividend	30,000	30,000	36,750	9,073	27,677	(2,323)
2030	Cricket Club loan interest			43	0	43	43
3890	Calendar Sales/Mayor's Charity			700		700	700
3893	Grant Income	0	0			0	0
3894	Misc Income	1,000	1,000	1,489	215	1,275	275
3897	Overtime Charges	50	50	29		29	(21)
3899	Photocopying	150	150	139		139	(11)
3901	Proof of Life	0	0	138		138	138
3902	Book sales	0	0	15		15	15
3920	Admin Charge - Barnes for Rec	6,170	6,170	6,170		6,170	0
3925	Salary charge -out to Barnes for a Re	28,325	28,325	28,325		28,325	0
	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>68,195</b>	<b>68,195</b>	<b>145,302</b>	<b>71,658</b>	<b>73,643</b>	<b>5,448</b>
	<b>NET COST/ (INCOME)</b>	<b>78,711</b>	<b>78,711</b>	<b>(6,896)</b>	<b>(56,254)</b>	<b>49,358</b>	<b>(29,353)</b>

**ANNUAL REVENUE BUDGET REPORT**

2025/26

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Budget Variance	Status
<b>INCOME</b>					
Admin	68,195	68,195	73,643	5,448	Over-Budget
<b>Admin Total</b>	<b>68,195</b>	<b>68,195</b>	<b>73,643</b>	<b>5,448</b>	Over-Budget
Corn Exchange	3,520	3,520	16,920	13,400	Over-Budget
Woodhouse Gardens	7,725	7,725	5,429	(2,296)	Under-budget
Larksmead	1,500	1,500	5,448	3,948	Over-Budget
Cemetery	12,000	12,000	14,767	2,767	Over-Budget
Sundries	3,807	3,807	8,098	4,291	Over-Budget
Park Road	0	0	1,999	0	Over-Budget
Skate park	0	0	0	0	Under-budget
<b>R &amp; A Income</b>	<b>28,552</b>	<b>28,552</b>	<b>52,661</b>	<b>22,110</b>	Over-Budget
CCTV, Planters & Markets	19,000	19,000	13,192	(5,808)	Under-budget
Marsh & Ham Toilets	550	550	1,040	490	Over-Budget
Tabernacle Toilets	0	0	0	0	Under-budget
<b>T &amp; GP Totals</b>	<b>19,550</b>	<b>19,550</b>	<b>14,232</b>	<b>(5,318)</b>	Under-budget
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>116,297</b>	<b>116,297</b>	<b>140,536</b>	<b>22,241</b>	On Target
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Admin	146,906	146,906	123,001	(23,905)	Under-budget
Corn Exchange Project Officer / Consultant	0	0	0	0	Under-budget
Salaries	580,590	580,590	569,297	(11,293)	Under-budget
<b>Admin &amp; Payroll</b>	<b>727,496</b>	<b>727,496</b>	<b>692,298</b>	<b>(35,198)</b>	Under-budget
Vehicles	13,230	13,230	11,038	(2,192)	Under-budget
Corn Exchange	92,485	92,485	37,053	(55,432)	Under-budget
Woodhouse Gardens	4,246	4,246	5,298	1,052	Over-Budget
Larksmead	2,500	2,500	6,384	3,884	Over-Budget
Recreation Ground (Barnes Trust)	36,788	36,788	38,679	1,891	Over-Budget
Glenmore Workshop	8,283	8,283	9,027	744	Over-Budget
Cemetery	7,062	7,938	7,888	(50)	Under-budget
Park Road EVCPs	1,000	1,000	3,539	2,539	Over-Budget
Langton	241	241	337	96	Over-Budget
Skatepark	1,016	1,016	339	(677)	Under-budget
Sundries	18,420	18,420	18,328	(92)	Under-budget
<b>R &amp; A Totals</b>	<b>185,271</b>	<b>186,147</b>	<b>137,910</b>	<b>(48,237)</b>	Under-budget
CCTV, Planters & Markets	23,620	23,620	16,686	(6,934)	Under-budget
Marsh & Ham Toilets	14,900	14,900	15,248	348	Over-Budget
Tabernacle Toilets	13,636	13,636	11,055	(2,581)	Under-budget
<b>T &amp; GP Totals</b>	<b>52,156</b>	<b>52,156</b>	<b>42,989</b>	<b>(9,167)</b>	Under-budget
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>964,923</b>	<b>965,799</b>	<b>873,197</b>	<b>(92,601)</b>	Under-budget
<b>TOTAL (NET COST)</b>	<b>848,626</b>	<b>849,502</b>	<b>732,661</b>	<b>(114,842)</b>	Within Budget

<b>FS7</b>	<b><u>Review of Financial Documentation</u></b>	
(7:40 pm)	To receive and retrospectively approve financial transactions and controls	(5 mins)
<b>Report Author: Business Support Officer</b>		

### FS1.7.1 Summary and Background information

- a In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations (sections 5 & 6), members are required to receive and retrospectively approve schedules of payments and financial transactions made under delegated authority.
- b The Committee has been provided with the following:
- o [Faster Payments](#): 16 March 2026 – 22 May 2026
  - o [Direct Debits](#): 1 February 2026 to 30 April 2026
  - o [Petty Cash claims](#): 27 March 2025-26 (claim 10), 11 May 2026-27 (claim 1)
- c These records are presented to enable the Committee to exercise oversight of payments already made and to confirm that the transactions are properly received and approved in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

### FS1.7.2 Further Information Sources

- a [Financial Regulations](#)

### FS1.7.3 Legal Authority and Implication

- a The Committee's consideration of this item is in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations governing the review and retrospective approval of payments made under delegated authority.
- b Retrospective approval supports proper financial oversight, transparency, and accountability in the administration of Council funds.

### FS1.7.4 Recommendation

- a That the Committee receives and retrospectively approves:
- o Faster Payments totalling **£616,178.35** including transfer of precept funds to other Town Council account
  - o Direct Debit payments totalling **£188,335.80**.
  - o Petty Cash Claims 10 & 1 totalling **£172.80**.
- for the periods set out in the supporting documentation

### FS1.7.5 Reason for Recommendation

- a To ensure compliance with Financial Regulations and maintain appropriate member oversight of financial transactions made under delegated authority.

(End)

<b>FS8</b>	<b><u>Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26</u></b>	
(7:45)	To review AGAR documentation and recommend to Full Council	(20 mins)
<i>Local Government Act 1972 s.151</i>		
<b>Report Author: RFO</b>		

### FS1.8.1 Summary and Background information

- a The Council is required to complete the AGAR for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.
- b This consists of
- o Internal Auditor's Report – to follow
  - o [Internal Auditor page of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return](#)
  - o [Section 1 Annual Governance Statement](#)
  - o [Section 2 Statement of Accounts](#)
  - o [Annual Accounts document](#)
  - o [Confirming the dates of the Exercise of Public Rights](#)
  - o [Confirm any conflicts of interest with the External Auditor BDO LLP](#)
  - o [Change of contact details](#)
- c The Finance & Staffing Committee's role is to review and scrutinise and make recommendations to Full Council.

### FS1.8.2 Scheme of Delegation

- a Approval of the Annual Return is reserved solely for Full Council and cannot be delegated.

### FS1.8.3 Recommendation

- a To RECOMMEND to Full Council that it;
- o Confirms that the accounting statements (AGAR section 2) have been prepared and signed by the RFO (by general agreement unless a vote is called for).
  - o Adopts the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025-26 (formal vote)
  - o Completes each question and approves the Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Section 1) (Formal Vote)
  - o Approve the Accounting Statements (Agar Section 2) and Annual Accounts (formal vote)
  - o Confirm that the Clerk and the Chair of the meeting have signed the Annual Governance Statement (general agreement unless a vote is called for)
  - o Confirm that the Chair has signed the Accounting Statements (Agar Sections 1 and 2) (general agreement unless a vote is called for)
  - o Confirm the period for the exercise of public rights as 26<sup>th</sup> June 2026 to 6<sup>th</sup> August (general agreement unless a vote is called for)
  - o Confirm Change of details to new Clerk

### FS1.8.4 Reason for Recommendation

- a To provide scrutiny and guidance to Full Council in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

(End)

## Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 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 £15 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 2025/26

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 2026**.
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 2026** 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 2026
  - 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 2025/26

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 Return **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 2026 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 2025/26** approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2025/26** approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2026 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) 2025/26

- 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 2026
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) **must** be approved before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references, even where approved on the same day.
- 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 which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection ( this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- **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.
- Additional costs may be incurred if additional audit work is required.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2025) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2026).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 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 2026**

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 <b>the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights</b> , 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 <b>31 March 2026</b> 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? <b>NB:</b> 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](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) or from [www.ada.org.uk](http://www.ada.org.uk)*

**Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26**

Blandford Forum Town Council

blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2026, 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 2025/26 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. Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all 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 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 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 2025/26 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2024-25 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 2024/25 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance. <b>PLS SEE ATTACHED NOTE</b>		✓	
P. (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

24/10/2025

18/02/2026

22/05/2026

Mrs R Darkin-Miller LLB(Hons) BFP FCA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

 SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

02/06/2026

\*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).

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL AGAR 2025/26

Test O: Assertion 10 – Digital and Data Compliance

During the year the requirements of the Council's Annual Governance Statement Assertions and of the Annual Internal Audit Report were expanded to include assurances and testing around Digital and Data. As a result, I have carried out new testing in this area. I found that whilst the Council is compliant in relation to almost all requirements, it had not carried out the following actions:

- Whilst an IT policy has now been adopted by the Council, this was only done part-way through the 26/27 financial year.

As a result, I have responded 'no' for this test.



R Darkin-Miller LLB (Hons) BFP FCA 02/06/2026

Section 1 Annual Governance Statement

**Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26**

We acknowledge as the members of:

Blandford Forum Town 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 2026, 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 have assured 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>
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.			<i>has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.</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:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

Chair SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk SIGNATURE REQUIRED

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## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

## Blandford Forum Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	
1. Balances brought forward	1,314,475	3,214,508	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value <b>must</b> agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	880,115	921,873	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	3,012,704	1,060,426	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	533,862	577,099	<i>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.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	126,388	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	1,458,925	2,928,914	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	3,214,508	1,564,405	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. <b>must</b> equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	3,310,509	1,540,081	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – <b>To agree with bank reconciliation.</b></i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	5,349,978	8,571,583	<i>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.</i>
10. Total borrowings	1,300,000	1,248,000	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>
<b>For Local Councils Only</b>	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 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

02/06/2026

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

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

**Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2025/26**

In respect of

Blandford Forum 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 2026 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 2025/26**

(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 2025/26**

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 2026

\*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature SIGNATURE REQUIRED Date DD/MM/YYYY