

Droitwich Spa Town Council

Notice of the audit and right to inspect the Annual Governance & Accountability Return

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2025

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Section 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

	Notes
<p>1. The audit of accounts for Droitwich Spa Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 has been carried out but cannot be completed for the reasons stated in the external auditor report. The accounts have been published.</p>	<p>This notice and Sections 1, 2 & 3 of the AGAR must be published by 30 September. This must include publication on the smaller authority's website. The smaller authority must decide how long to publish the Notice for; the AGAR and external auditor report must be publicly available for 5 years.</p>
<p>2. The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available for inspection and copying by any local government elector of the area of Droitwich Spa Town Council on application to:</p>	
<p>(a) <u>MARK KEYS - TOWN CLERK</u> <u>DROITWICH SPA TOWN COUNCIL</u> <u>ST RICHARDS HOUSE, VICTORIA SQUARE</u> <u>DROITWICH SPA, W19 8DS</u></p>	<p>(a) Insert the name, position and address of the person to whom local government electors should apply to inspect the AGAR</p>
<p>(b) <u>MONDAY TO FRIDAY 10AM - 4PM</u> <u>(BY APPOINTMENT)</u></p>	<p>(b) Insert the hours during which inspection rights may be exercised</p>
<p>3. Copies will be provided to any local government elector of the area on payment of £ <u>1</u> (c) for each copy of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.</p>	<p>(c) Insert a reasonable sum for copying costs</p>
<p>Announcement made by: (d) <u>MARK KEYS - TOWN CLERK</u></p>	<p>(d) Insert the name and position of person placing the notice</p>
<p>Date of announcement: (e) <u>29.09.2025</u></p>	<p>(e) Insert the date of placing of the notice</p>

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

DROTHWICK SPA 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 2025, that:

	Agree		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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

*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:

16/06/2025

and recorded as minute reference:

70/2025-2026

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

Chair

Chouder

Clerk

Haley

www.drothwickspa.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

DRICHTWICK SDA TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	842,765	764,720	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	400,140	400,140	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	119,067	161,637	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	252,633	286,690	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	NIL	NIL	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	344,619	377,984	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	764,720	661,824	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	744,655	649,107	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	5,432,550	5,880,159	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	NIL	NIL	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)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 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

decker

Date

16/06/2025

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

16/06/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

71/2025-2026

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

Chandler

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of

Droitwich Spa Town Council - WO0047

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2024/25

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR 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.

Please see below

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

The smaller authority has submitted its AGAR and supporting documentation prior to 30 September 2025; however, we have not been able to complete our review work in time to enable the smaller authority to publish the required documentation in line with statutory requirements. Once we have completed our review a final report will be provided with the certificate of completion detailing any qualifications and 'other' matters.

Our fee note for the limited assurance review will be issued when we certify completion.

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

We do not certify completion because:

We have not been able to complete our review work in time to enable the smaller authority to publish the required documentation in line with statutory requirements.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

Date

28/09/2025

Droitwich Spa Town Council
BY EMAIL

DDI:
+44 (0)20 7516 2200
Email:
sba@pkf-l.com
Date:
29 September 2025
Our Ref:
WO0047
SAAA Ref:
SB02715

Droitwich Spa Town Council
Annual limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2025

Dear Mr Keld

We have commenced our review of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for Droitwich Spa Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 but cannot formally complete it. Please refer to our 'interim' external auditor report (Section 3 of the AGAR Form 3) which sets out the reasons we have not been able to complete the review. The 'interim' report is included for your attention as another attachment to the email containing this letter along with a copy of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR. The smaller authority must consider the report and decide what, if any, action is required.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In advance of the formal conclusion, we have provided the attached documents. The authority should use this 'interim' external auditor report and:

- Prepare a "Notice of audit" which details the rights of inspection, in line with the statutory requirements. We attach a pro forma notice you may use for this purpose (a Word version is available on request). It also states that the audit has not yet been completed.
- Publish the "Notice" along with the uncertified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) before 30 September, which must include publication on the smaller authority's website. (Please note that when the statute and regulations were amended in 2014 and 2015, they did not include a requirement for the length of time for which that the "Notice" must be published. The previous statute required 14 days; but it is now up to the authority to make this decision).
- Keep copies of the AGAR available for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the published AGAR remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.

Fee

Our fee note for the limited assurance review will be issued when we certify completion. The standard review fee is in accordance with the fee scales set by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd.

Please note further charges may arise in addition to the standard fee if either:

- we have had to issue chaser letters and/or exercise our statutory powers due to a failure to provide an AGAR; or
- it was necessary for us to undertake additional work, for example due to challenge correspondence received.

Timetable for 2025/26

Next year we plan to set a submission deadline for the return of the completed AGAR Part 3 and associated documents (or Certificate of Exemption) of Wednesday 1 July 2026. It is anticipated that the instructions will be sent out during March 2026, subject to arrangements for the 2025/26 AGARs and Certificates of Exemption being finalised by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Limited (SAAA). Our instructions will cover any changes about which smaller authorities need to be aware.

- The smaller authority must inform the electorate of a single period of 30 working days during which public rights may be exercised. The period must be **exactly** 30 working days, please do not set public rights dates that cover a longer period. This information **must be published at least the day before** the inspection period commences;
- The inspection period **must** include the first 10 working days of July 2026, i.e. 1 to 14 July inclusive. In practice this means that public rights may be exercised:
 - at the earliest, between Tuesday 3 June and Tuesday 14 July 2026; and
 - at the latest, between Wednesday 1 July and Tuesday 11 August 2026.

As in previous years, in order to assist you in this process we plan to include a pro forma template notice with a suggested inspection period on our website. On submitting your AGAR and associated documentation, as was the case for this year, we will need you to either confirm that the suggested dates have been adopted or inform us of the alternative dates selected.

We would like to draw your attention to a change within the Practitioners' Guide 2025 which is mandatory for the 2025/26 period. Paragraphs 1.47 to 1.54 relate to an additional assertion to be included in the 2025-26 AGAR, Assertion 10, regarding email management, websites, compliance with both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the requirement to have an IT policy. The requirements in relation to Assertion 10 are listed in Paragraphs 1.47 to 1.54 and the local authority should review these requirements and take appropriate steps to ensure compliance.

Yours sincerely



PKF Littlejohn LLP