

## Weald Parish Council

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### Notice of conclusion of the audit

### Annual Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

Section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. The audit of accounts for the Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 has been concluded.</p> <p>2. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of the Council <del>Meeting (s)</del> on application to:</p> <p>John Caird, Clerk<br/>Pagwood, Long Barn Road<br/>Weald, TN14 6NJ</p> <p>3. Copies will be provided to any local government elector on payment of £0.50 for each copy of the Annual Return.</p> <p>Announcement made by: John Caird<br/>Date of announcement: 24th September, 2024</p> |  |
|---|--|

## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

Weald 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.  | ✓      |    | 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.  | ✓      |    | 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. | ✓      |    | 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.   | ✓      |    | 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.  | ✓      |    | 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.  | ✓      |    | 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.  | ✓      |    | 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.                                  | ✓      |    | 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.                         | Yes    | No | 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:

19.06.2024

and recorded as minute reference:

4, 5, 1

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

Chair

Clerk

www.sevenoakswaldpc.com

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This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

19.06.2024

and recorded as minute reference:

4.5.1

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

Chair

Clerk

*[Handwritten signatures of Chair and Clerk]*

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## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

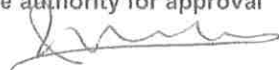
Weald Parish Council

|   | Year ending           |                       | Notes and guidance  |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
|   | 31 March<br>2023<br>£ | 31 March<br>2024<br>£ |   |
| 1. Balances brought forward                                 | 116971                | 174405                | 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                          | 46200                 | 46200                 | Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.   |
| 3. (+) Total other receipts                                 | 64903                 | 95274                 | 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  | 4250                  | 8151                  | 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                     | 3469                  | 3399                  | Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).  |
| 6. (-) All other payments                                   | 45950                 | 231550                | 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                             | 174405                | 72779                 | 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           | 174405                | 72779                 | 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 | 265499                | 446,000               | 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  | 38500                 | 36300                 | 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



Date

16 06 2024

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

17 06 2024

as recorded in minute reference:

4, 5, 2

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



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

In respect of

**Weald 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.

The Council has not fully implemented recommendations made in 2022/23 external audit reports. The Council answered yes to the relevant assertion in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement (assertion 7), claiming it has taken appropriate action in respect of audit reports. In future, the Council should ensure that appropriate action in response to audit recommendations is taken within a reasonable time.

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 required that the 2023 period of public rights covered 30 working days and commenced no later than 1 July 2023. This requirement was not met and the council incorrectly ticked 'Yes' to assertion 4. Although the public rights period in 2024 was compliant, the Council needs to put in place arrangements to ensure that it can always meet its statutory obligations in respect of public rights and answers 'No' to assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement where this has not been achieved.

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

As part of its Annual Governance and Accountability Return submission the Council is required to provide for audit explanations for significant variances (15% or greater) between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 figures in Section 2. Such explanations support the Council's own understanding of its financial performance.

For 2023/24 the Council provided insufficient explanation of its variances because not all variances above the tolerance level were initially quantified and explained. Although all significant variances were subsequently quantified and explained by the Council, the Council should ensure this is completed as part of the initial submission of its AGAR.

### 3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

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 2024.

\*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable.

External Auditor Name

**Forvis Mazars LLP, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1DF**

External Auditor Signature

*Forvis Mazars LLP*

Date

**18 September 2024**