

# Billingshurst Parish Council

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL RETURN

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

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

NOTICE	NOTES
<p>1. Date of announcement <u>FRIDAY 03 JUNE 2016</u> (a)</p> <p>2. Each year the body's Annual Return needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by the Audit Commission. The unaudited Annual Return 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 2016 these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:</p> <p>(b) <u>MRS B.M. BELL, PARISH CLERK, BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL, BILLINGSHURST CENTRE, ROMAN WAY, BILLINGSHURST RH14 9QW 01403 782555</u></p> <p>commencing on (c) <u>Monday 6 June 2016</u></p> <p>and ending on (d) <u>Friday 15 July 2016</u></p> <p>3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and</li><li>• 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 body.</li></ul> <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 body's Annual Return 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>PKF Littlejohn LLP Ref: SBA 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor 1 Westferry Circus Canary Wharf London E14 4HD (<a href="mailto:sba@pkf-littlejohn.com">sba@pkf-littlejohn.com</a>)</p> <p>5. This announcement is made by (e) <u>MRS B.M. BELL, PARISH CLERK</u></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 body</p>



## COUNCIL ACCOUNTS: A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

**Please note that this summary applies to all smaller relevant bodies, including 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 councils and other local public bodies. The Act and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 also cover the duties, responsibilities and rights of councils, other organisations and the public concerning the accounts being audited. As a local resident, or an interested person, you have certain legal rights in respect of the accounts of local councils. As an interested person you can inspect a council's accounts 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 council 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 accounts

Any interested person can inspect the accounts, which includes but is not limited to local electors. You can inspect your council's accounts, any related documents, and any report the auditor made in that financial year. The law says you may inspect the accounts to be audited and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers and receipts relating to them for that financial year. You can copy all, or part, of these accounts and related 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 about staff. You may also not be able to 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 councils have finished preparing accounts for the financial year they must make them available for inspection. 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 accounts. Councils must tell the public, including advertising this on their website, that the accounts and related documents are available to inspect. By arrangement you will then have 30 working days to inspect and make copies of the accounts. You may have to pay a copying charge. The 30 day period must include a common period of inspection during which all councils' accounts are available to inspect. This will be 1-14 July 2016 for 2015-16 accounts. The advertisement must set out the dates of the period for the exercise of public rights, how you can communicate to the council that you wish to inspect the accounts 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 accounts

Anybody can ask a question, but only local electors can ask questions formally. **You should first ask your council** about the accounts. 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 council the opportunity first to explain anything in the accounts that you are unsure about. If you are not satisfied with the council's explanation, you can ask the external auditor to explain points in the accounts.

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 accounts 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.



Before you ask the external auditor any questions, inspect the accounts fully, so you know what they contain. Please remember that you cannot formally ask questions, under the Act, after the end of the period for the exercise of public rights. You may ask your council other questions about their accounts for any year, at any time. But these are not questions under the Act.

You can ask the external auditor questions about an item in the accounts for the financial year being audited. However, your right to ask the external auditor questions is limited. The external auditor can only answer 'what' questions, not 'why' questions. The external auditor cannot answer questions about the council's policies, finances, procedures or anything else unless it is directly relevant to an item in the accounts. Remember that your questions must always be about facts, not opinions. To avoid misunderstanding, we recommend that you always put your questions in writing.

### **The right to object to the accounts**

You have inspected the accounts and asked your questions. Now you may wish to object to the accounts on the basis that an item in them is in your view unlawful or there are matters of wider concern arising from the Council's finances. A local government elector can ask the external auditor to apply to the High Court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful, or to issue a report on matters which are in the public interest. You must tell the external auditor which specific item in the accounts you object to and why you think the item is unlawful, or why you think that a public interest report should be made about it. You must provide the external auditor with the evidence you have to support your objection. Disagreeing with income or spending does not make it unlawful. To object to the council's accounts you must write to the external auditor stating you want to make an objection, including the information and evidence below and you must send a copy to the council. The notice must include:

- confirmation that you are an elector in the council's area;
- why you are objecting to the accounts and the facts on which you rely;
- details of any item in the accounts that you think is unlawful;
- details of any matter you think the external auditor should make a public interest report about; and
- what you would like the external auditor to do.

Other than it must be in writing, there is no set format for objecting. You can ask someone to represent you and deal with your objection. This person does not have to live in the area covered by your council. You must say which power or powers you would like the external auditor to consider using to deal with your objection. You can only ask the external auditor to act within the powers available under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. You can ask the external auditor to do either or both of the following:

- issue a report in the public interest; and/or
- apply to the courts for a declaration that an item of account is against the law.

### **A final word**

You may not use this 'right to object' to make a personal complaint or claim against your council. You should take such complaints to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, local Law Centre or to your solicitor. Councils, and so local taxpayers, meet the costs of dealing with questions and objections. In deciding whether to take your objection forward, one of a series of factors the auditor must take into account is the cost that will be involved. They will only continue with the objection if it is in the public interest to do so. If you appeal to the courts against an auditor's decision, you will have to pay for the action yourself.

For more detailed guidance on public rights and the special powers of auditors, copies of the publication *Council Accounts – a guide to your rights* are available from the NAO website.

If you wish to contact your Council's appointed external auditor please write to the address in paragraph 4 of the *notice of public rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return*.



# Section 1 – Annual governance statement 2015/16

We acknowledge as the members of:

Enter name of  
smaller authority here:

BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including 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 2016, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this smaller 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 smaller authority to conduct its business or on 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 smaller authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered the financial and other risks it faces and has 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 smaller 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.	✓		has met all of its responsibilities where it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

This annual governance statement is approved by this smaller authority and recorded as minute reference:

126116(a)  
dated 04.05.16

Signed by:

Chair

dated

Signed by:

Clerk

dated

[Redacted Signature]

4/5/16

[Redacted Signature]

04.05.2016.

\*Note: Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response. Describe how this smaller authority will address the weaknesses identified.



# Section 2 – Accounting statements 2015/16 for

Enter name of smaller authority here:

BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance				
	31 March 2015 £	31 March 2016 £					
1. Balances brought forward	326 033	349 678	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	217 914	243 539	Total amount of precept or (for IDBs) rates and levies received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.				
3. (+) Total other receipts	191 836	98 698	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	137 631	141 736	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and employment expenses.				
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	20 257	20 257	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the smaller authority's borrowings (if any).				
6. (-) All other payments	228 317	161 723	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	349 678	373 249	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	252 197	369 911	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>				
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	1450 890	1464 287	The original Asset and Investment Register value of all fixed assets, plus other long term assets owned by the smaller authority as at 31 March				
10. Total borrowings	182 892	172 442	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).				
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✓</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Yes	No	✓		The Council acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets. N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.
Yes	No						
✓							

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2016 the accounting statements in this annual return present fairly the financial position of this smaller authority and its income and expenditure, or properly present receipts and payments, as the case may be.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer

[Redacted Signature]

Date 28/4/2016

I confirm that these accounting statements were approved by this smaller authority on this date:

06.05.2016

and recorded as minute reference:

127/16(5)

Signed by Chair of the meeting approving these accounting statements.

[Redacted Signature]

Date 4/5/16