

Guidance notes for Parish Meetings on completing Part 2PM of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20, Sections 1 and 2

- A Parish Meeting that wishes to declare itself exempt from the requirement for a limited assurance review must do so at a meeting held between 1 April and 30 June 2020. It should not submit its Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor.
- The Certificate of Exemption should be returned to the external auditor no later than 30 June 2020. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT.
- The Parish Meeting **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of its Annual Governance and Accountability Return and the Certificate of Exemption. 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.
- The Parish Meeting **should** receive and note the annual internal audit report before approving the annual governance statement and the accounts.
- Make sure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty), and is properly signed and dated. Avoid making amendments to the completed annual return. Any amendments must be approved by the Parish Meeting and properly initialled.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for completeness at the meeting at which it is signed off.
- **You should inform your external auditor about any change of Chairman, and provide a relevant email address and telephone number.**
- The Parish Meeting must publish numerical and narrative explanations for significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 6**. Guidance is provided in the *Practitioners' Guide** which may assist.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2019) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2020).
- The Chairman, on behalf of the Parish Meeting, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights. From the commencement date for a single period of 30 consecutive working days, the approved accounts and accounting records can be inspected. Whatever period is set **must** include a common inspection period – during which the accounts and accounting records of all smaller authorities must be available for public inspection – of the first ten working days of July.
- The Parish Meeting **must** publish 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 2020.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes been completed?	✓	
	Have the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights been published?	✓	
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', is an explanation available for publication?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Parish Meeting's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations from last year to this year been published or displayed?	✓	
	Is an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 available, should a question be raised by a local elector and/or an interested party?	✓	

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices,** can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk