

## SOUTH KELSEY & MOORTOWN PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Councillor

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Sunday 21 June 2026, commencing at 10.00 am, in South Kelsey Village Hall. The business to be dealt with at the meeting is listed in the following agenda.

Dated 8 June 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Hall', is written over a faint rectangular stamp or watermark.

Cllr N Hall

Chair to the Parish Council

# **SOUTH KELSEY & MOORTOWN PARISH COUNCIL**

Extraordinary Meeting to be held on Sunday 21 June 2026 at 10.00 am

South Kelsey Village Hall

## **AGENDA**

### **Extraordinary Council Meeting**

#### **Commence Formal Parish Council Meeting; Standing Orders invoked:**

26/063 Apologies for absence and acceptance of any reasons given

26/064 Declarations of interest in accordance with the Localism Act 2011

26/065 2025/26 AGAR Report from the Internal Auditor and completed documentation for signature by the Chair and RFO.

# Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

SOUTH KELSEY AND MOORTOWN PARISH COUNCIL

https://south-kelsey-moortown-parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk

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.	✓		
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

27/04/2026 15/06/2026 DD/MM/YYYY

LYDIANA HOPTON INTERNAL AUDITOR

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

*[Signature]*

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

15/06/2026

\*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).

## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

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

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i>
1. Balances brought forward	25733	9736	<i>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.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies <b>RESTATED</b>	13840	16340	<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 <b>RESTATED</b>	23548	66,339	<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 <b>RESTATED</b>	4177	4155	<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	0	<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 <b>RESTATED</b>	49,208	72,321	<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	9736	15,939	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	9736	15,939	<i>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.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets <b>RESTATED</b>	121,624	187,965	<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	0	0	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	✓		For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.

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.**

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

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

## Explanation of variances – pro forma

Name of smaller authority: [REDACTED]  
 County area (local councils and parish meetings only): [REDACTED]  
 Insert figures from Section 2 of the AGAR in all Blue highlighted boxes

Next, please provide full explanations, including numerical values, for the following that will be flagged in the green boxes where relevant:

- variances of more than 15% between totals for individual boxes (except variances of less than £200);
- variances of £100,000 or more require explanation regardless of the % variation year on year;
- New from 2025/26 onwards: variances of £500,000 or more in Box 3 require explanation regardless of the % variation year on year for smaller authorities with income and/or expenditure exceeding £500,000

	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	Variance £	Variance %	Explanation Required?	Automatic responses trigger below based on figures input, DO NOT OVERWRITE THESE BOXES	Explanation from smaller authority (must include narrative and supporting figures)
1 Balances Brought Forward	25,733	9,736				Explanation of % variance from PY opening balance not required - Balance brought forward agrees	
2 Precept or Rates and Levies RESTATED	13,840	16,340	2,500	18.06%	YES		After raising funding through grants and the PC installed new park equipment, they agreed to budget for park equipment depreciation at £1000.00 per year. The 2 community defibrillators would also eventually need replacing and the PC agreed to budget £200.00 depreciation per year to build the funding to replace when required. The PC is required to hold 3-6 months operating costs in reserve, and the PC realised this had fallen behind, so agreed to budget and additional £1200.00. For the park, additional budget of £100.00 to cover insurance for additional equipment was agreed. This accounts for the total variance of £2500.00.
3 Total Other Receipts RESTATED	23,548	66,339	42,791	181.72%	YES		The majority of the increase is from a COF grant, which was greater than the grant funding achieved the previous year, but see spreadsheet for full details.
4 Staff Costs RESTATED	4,177	4,155	-22	0.53%	NO		
5 Loan Interest/Capital Repayment	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		
6 All Other Payments RESTATED	49,208	72,321	23,113	46.97%	YES		The majority of the increase is accounted for by the refurbishment of South Kelsey Park. See spreadsheet for full details.
7 Balances Carried Forward	9,736	15,939				VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED	
8 Total Cash and Short Term Investments	9,736	15,938				VARIANCE EXPLANATION NOT REQUIRED	
9 Total Fixed Assets plus Other Long Term Investments and	121,624	187,965	66,341	54.55%	YES		Assets increased because of the investment in South Kelsey Park. Full details included in the spreadsheet.
10 Total Borrowings	0	0	0	0.00%	NO		

Rounding errors of up to £2 are tolerable

Variances of £200 or less are tolerable

**2025/26 BOX 3 VARIANCE - TOTAL OTHER RECEIPTS**

	24-25	25-26	VARIANCE	EXPLANATION
Grants	£	22,400.00 £	65,600.00 £	PC achieved grant funding of £21300 in 2024, then £65500 in 2025 for park development. District Council grant of £100 per year.
Bank Interest	£	395.61 £	708.70 £	
CILS	£	729.92 £	-£	Grant funding was moved into a savings account on receipt until paid to suppliers
Allotment rent	£	22.50 £	30.00 £	
<b>TOTALS</b>	£	<b>23,548.03 £</b>	<b>66,338.70 £</b>	7.50 Undercharged 2024-25
			<b>42,790.67</b>	

**2025/26 BOX 6 VARIANCE - ALL OTHER PAYMENTS**

	2024-25	2025-26	VARIANCE	EXPLANATION
<b>ADMINISTRATION/GENERAL</b>				
Working from home a/l	£ 325.00	£ 312.00	£ -	Staff changeover in 2024 - paid 2 weeks extra for overlap
Overtime	£ 2.90	£ 68.96	£ 66.06	Regular working hours reduced from 6.5-5.5 pw but overtime allowance
Travel	£ 51.75	£ 8.10	£ -	Stopped posting each agenda and minutes on noticeboard so little mileage
Clerk Training	£ 35.58	£ -	£ -	Initial clerk training in 2024 not required in 2025
IT	£ 206.61	£ 614.00	£ 407.39	Covers One Drive and Ink. Microsoft billed PC for 3 years instead of 1 but wouldn't credit it back.
Stationery + Postage	£ 32.72	£ -	£ -	Less physical postage in 2026
Publishing & Events	£ 41.23	£ -	£ -	Posters, flyers and refreshments
Hall Hire	£ 294.00	£ 208.00	£ 86.00	Reduced the time for meetings and found it was sufficient.
Liability Insurance	£ 702.17	£ 456.83	£ 245.34	First phase of playpark installation. Insurers insisted on new policy so paid more initially
LALC Membership	£ 186.86	£ 191.90	£ 5.04	LALC increase
LALC Annual Training Scheme	£ 110.00	£ 120.00	£ 10.00	LALC increase
ICO	£ 35.00	£ 47.00	£ 12.00	ICO increase
Audit	£ -	£ 490.00	£ 490.00	Additional external audit in 2025
Unity Bank Charges	£ 71.40	£ 73.00	£ 1.60	Increase in 2025
Park Project	£ 39,615.50	£ 66,281.00	£ 26,665.50	Phase one of the park project in 2024, phase 2 in 2025. 2025 costs include £1064 training and inspection allowed by COF funding
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			£ 27,160.07	
<b>VILLAGE MAINTENANCE SPENDS</b>				
Grass Cutting	£ 997.50	£ 1,077.00	£ 79.50	Extra grass cut in 2025
Grounds Person	£ 905.00	£ 905.00	£ -	Contract for 5 years so no increase
Park Maintenance	£ 651.67	£ 1,289.00	£ 637.33	Signage, tree survey in 2024, tree work required for safety in 2025
Defibrillators (maintenance)	£ 212.00	£ 183.00	£ -	Still under warranty 2024, maintenance charge 2026
Community Speed Reduction	£ 4,500.00	£ -	£ -	One-off purchase 2024
Anglian Water	£ 34.91	£ -	£ -	Water supply cut off 2024
Laptop replacement	£ 200.00	£ -	£ -	One-off purchase 2024
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			£ 4,047.08	
<b>TOTAL</b>			£ 23,112.99	

## 2025/26 BOX 9 VARIANCE - TOTAL FIXED ASSETS

The Parish Council achieved grant funding to develop the facilities at the parish park.

<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>Total Asset Value</b>	<b>£ 121,624.00</b>
2025-2026		
Purchases	Accessibility main path	£ 15,850.00
	2 Goal Posts	£ 1,766.00
	Toddler climbing frame	£ 9,207.00
	Two Toddler Springers	£ 1,350.00
	Teen shelter	£ 16,692.00
	Gym Equipment	£ 9,938.00
	2 Picnic Benches	£ 3,340.00
	Park Sign	£ 50.00
	Nature signage	£ 374.00
	Safety matting	£ 4,550.00
	Park main gate	£ 2,100.00
Donations	Picnic Bench	£1,670
Items Scrapped	Single metal hand gate and posts	-£ 135.00
	Goal Post	-£ 411.00
<b>2025-26</b>	<b>Total Variance</b>	<b>£ 66,341.00</b>
<b>2025-26</b>	<b>Total Asset Value</b>	<b>£ 187,965.00</b>

## SOUTH KELSEY AND MOORTOWN PARISH COUNCIL

Declaration by the Responsible Financial Officer, Mrs Christine Major:

These Accounting Statements are unaudited and therefore the Accounting Statements as published may be subject to change.



Christine Major, Responsible Financial Officer, South Kelsey and Moortown Parish Council,  
22 June 2026

Smaller authority name: **South Kelsey and Moortown Parish Council**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION  
OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE &  
ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN**

**ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026**

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

NOTICE	NOTES
<p><b>1. Date of announcement: Monday 22 June 2026 (a)</b></p> <p><b>2. Each year the smaller authority's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The unaudited AGAR 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.</b></p> <p><b>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 2026, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:</b></p> <p>(b) Christine Major, Clerk/RFO, 11 Foxglove Close, Brigg, DN20 8FF, Phone 07907 230711, email <a href="mailto:clerk@southkelseyandmoortown-pc.gov.uk">clerk@southkelseyandmoortown-pc.gov.uk</a></p> <p>commencing on (c) <b>Tuesday 23 June 2026</b></p> <p>and ending on (d) <b>Monday 3 August 2026</b></p> <p><b>3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:</b></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 smaller authority.</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><b>4. The smaller authority's AGAR 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 2024. The appointed auditor is:</b></p> <p><b>PKF Littlejohn LLP (Ref: SBA Team)</b> <b>30 Churchill Place</b> <b>London E14 5RE</b> <a href="mailto:sba@pkf-l.com">sba@pkf-l.com</a></p> <p><b>5. This announcement is made by (e) Christine Major, Responsible Financial Officer</b></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 exactly 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 smaller authority</p>

## LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTS: A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

**Please note that this summary applies to all relevant smaller authorities, including local councils, internal 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 smaller authorities. This summary explains the provisions contained in Sections 26 and 27 of the Act. The Act and the [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#) also cover the duties, responsibilities and rights of smaller authorities, other organisations and the public concerning the accounts being audited.

As a local elector, or an interested person, you have certain legal rights in respect of the accounting records of smaller authorities. As an interested person you can inspect accounting records 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 smaller authority 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 accounting records**

Any interested person can inspect the accounting records, which includes but is not limited to local electors. You can inspect 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. You can copy all, or part, of these records or 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 (Section 26 (6) – (10) of the Act explains what is meant by personal information). You cannot 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 smaller authorities have finished preparing accounts for the financial year and approved them, they must publish them (including on a website). 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 accounting records. Smaller authorities must tell the public, including advertising this on their website, that the accounting records and related documents are available to inspect. By arrangement you will then have 30 working days to inspect and make copies of the accounting records. You may have to pay a copying charge. The 30 working day period must include a common period of inspection during which all smaller authorities' accounting records are available to inspect. This will be 1-14 July 2026 for 2025/26 accounts. The advertisement must set out the dates of the period for the exercise of public rights, how you can communicate to the smaller authority that you wish to inspect the accounting records 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 accounting records**

**You should first ask your smaller authority** about the accounting records, since they hold all the details. 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 smaller authority the opportunity first to explain anything in the accounting records that you are unsure about. If you are not satisfied with their explanation, you can question the external auditor about the accounting records.

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 accounting records 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 accounting records 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 smaller authority 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 accounting records 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 policies, finances, procedures or anything else unless it is directly relevant to an item in the accounting records. 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 make objections at audit**

You have inspected the accounting records and asked your questions of the smaller authority. 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 smaller authority'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 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 smaller authority. The notice must include:

- confirmation that you are an elector in the smaller authority'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; and
- details of any matter about which you think the external auditor should make a public interest report.

Other than it must be in writing, there is no set format for objecting. You can only ask the external auditor to act within the powers available under the [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#).

### **A final word**

You may not use this 'right to object' to make a personal complaint or claim against your smaller authority. You should take such complaints to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, local Law Centre or to your solicitor. Smaller authorities, 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. They may also decide not to consider an objection if they think that it is frivolous or vexatious, or if it repeats an objection already considered. If you appeal to the courts against an auditor's decision not to apply to the courts for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful, 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 [Local authority accounts: A guide to your rights](#) are available from the NAO website.

If you wish to contact your authority's appointed external auditor please write to the address in paragraph 4 of the *Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return*.