

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25 Form 2

To be completed only by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other smaller authorities* where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less, that meet the qualifying criteria, and that wish to CERTIFY themselves as EXEMPT from a limited assurance review

Guidance notes on completing Form 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

1. Every smaller authority in England where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less **must**, after the end of each financial year, complete Form 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices*, unless the authority:
 - a) does not meet the qualifying criteria for exemption; or
 - b) does not wish to certify itself as exempt
2. Smaller authorities where the higher of all gross annual income or gross annual expenditure **does not exceed** £25,000 and that meet the qualifying criteria as set out in the Certificate of Exemption **are able to declare themselves exempt** from sending the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor for a limited assurance review **provided** the authority **completes**:
 - a) The **Certificate of Exemption**, page 3 and returns a copy of it to the external auditor **either by email or by post (not both) no later than 30 June 2025**. Failure to do so will result in reminder letter(s) for which the Authority will be charged £40 +VAT for each letter; and
 - b) The **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (Form 2)** which is made up of:
 - c) **Annual Internal Audit Report (page 4)** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - d) **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement (page 5)** must be completed and approved by the authority.
 - e) **Section 2 – Accounting Statements (page 6)** must be completed and approved by the authority. **NOTE: Authorities certifying themselves as exempt SHOULD NOT send the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor.**
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1 Annual Governance Statement **before** approving Section 2 Accounting Statements and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2025**.

Publication Requirements

Smaller authorities **must** publish various documents on a publicly available website as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities. These include:

- **Certificate of Exemption**, page 3
- **Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25**, page 4
- **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25**, page 5
- **Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25**, page 6
- Analysis of variances
- Bank reconciliation
- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Limited Assurance Review

Any smaller authority may request a limited assurance review. If so, the authority should not certify itself as exempt or complete the Certificate of Exemption. Instead it should complete Form 3 of the AGAR 2024/25 and return it to the external auditor together with the supporting documentation requested by the external auditor. The cost to the authority for the review will be **£210 +VAT**.

Provided that the authority certifies itself as exempt, and completes and publishes the documents listed under 'Publication Requirements', there is no requirement for the authority to have a review.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25, Sections 1 and 2

- An authority that wishes to declare itself exempt from the requirement for a limited assurance review must do so at a meeting of the authority after 31 March 2025. It should not submit its Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor. However, as part of a more proportionate regime, the authority must comply with the requirements of the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.
- The Certificate of Exemption must be returned to the external auditor no later than **30 June 2025**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT for each letter.
- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR 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 authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty), and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness at the meeting at which it is signed off.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- The authority 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 2024) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2025).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish, on the authority website/webpage, 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 2025**.

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 Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2025 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	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?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? (<i>Local Councils only</i>)		MA

Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2024/25 Form 2

To be completed by smaller authorities where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure did not exceed £25,000 in the year of account ended 31 March 2025, and that wish to certify themselves as exempt from a limited assurance review under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015

There is no requirement to have a limited assurance review or to submit an Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor, **provided** that the authority has certified itself as exempt at a meeting of the authority after 31 March 2025 and a completed Certificate of Exemption is submitted no later than **30 June 2025** notifying the external auditor.

MITFORD PARISH COUNCIL

certifies that during the financial year 2024/25, the higher of the authority's total gross income for the year or total gross annual expenditure, for the year did not exceed **£25,000**

Total annual gross income for the authority 2024/25:

11215-84,000

Total annual gross expenditure for the authority 2024/25:

13817-55

There are certain circumstances in which an authority will be **unable to certify itself as exempt**, so that a limited assurance review will still be required. If an authority is **unable to confirm the statements below then it cannot certify itself as exempt** and it must submit the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return Form 3 to the external auditor to undertake a limited assurance review for which a fee of **£210 +VAT** will be payable.

By signing this **Certificate of Exemption** you are confirming that:

- The authority was in existence on 1st April 2021
- In relation to the preceding financial year (2023/24), the external auditor has not:
 - issued a public interest report in respect of the authority or any entity connected with it
 - made a statutory recommendation to the authority, relating to the authority or any entity connected with it
 - issued an advisory notice under paragraph 1(1) of Schedule 8 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ("the Act"), and has not withdrawn the notice
 - commenced judicial review proceedings under section 31(1) of the Act
 - made an application under section 28(1) of the Act for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful, and the application has not been withdrawn nor has the court refused to make the declaration
- The court has not declared an item of account unlawful after a person made an appeal under section 28(3) of the Act.

If the above statements apply and the authority neither received gross income, nor incurred gross expenditure, exceeding £25,000, then the Certificate of Exemption can be signed and a copy submitted to the external auditor either by email or by post (not both).

The Annual Internal Audit Report, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements, an analysis of variances and the bank reconciliation plus the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 including the period for the exercise of public rights still need to be fully completed and, along with a copy of this certificate, published on the authority website/webpage* before 1 July 2025.

Signing this certificate confirms the authority will comply with the publication requirements.

Signed by the Responsible Financial Officer

Date

25/6/25

I confirm that this Certificate of Exemption was approved by this authority on this date:

25/6/25

Signed by Chair

Date

25/6/25

as recorded in minute reference:

29/25(ii)

Generic email address of Authority

mitfordpc@gmail.com

Telephone number

07775907001

*Published web address

WWW.MITFORDPARISHCOUNCIL.GOV.UK

ONLY this Certificate of Exemption should be returned EITHER by email OR by post (not both) as soon as possible after certification to your external auditor, but no later than 30 June 2025. Reminder letters for late submission will incur a charge of £40 + VAT.

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

MITFORD PARISH COUNCIL

www.mifordparishcouncil.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, 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 2024/25 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. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty 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 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 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 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 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 2023/24 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

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

30/05/2025

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

T. BAL

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date 30.05.2025

*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 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

MITFORD PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	18275	13428	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	8840	9300	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	943	1916	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	2820	3225	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	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	11810	3834	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	13428	17585	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	20035	17585	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	10759	21502	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	0	0	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)		N/A		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 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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

1.5.25.YYYY

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

25/06/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

MIN 29/25 (ii)

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

67 Burnstones
Newcastle
NE5 2DF

30th May 2025

Dear Miss Smith

Internal Audit – Mitford Parish Council Financial year ended 31st March 2025

I have completed the internal audit for the 2024/2025 financial year.

I enclose a copy of my assessment of the systems of internal control and my audit checklist detailing the checks completed.

I have carried out the audit in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities 2018.

Whilst conducting the audit I have identified the following areas which I need to bring to the Council's attention:

Co Option process

The minutes of the 8th April highlight that Cllr Eric Dodd resigns and that NCC will be informed as per the process. The minutes of the 7th August refer to asking Eric Burn who had previously resigned to rejoin the Council if agreeable. The minutes of the 4th September state Eric Dodd has accepted a position on the Council and will return at the next meeting. Is this a typo error or the same person? I can find no evidence that this position was advertise on the website or via any other method as is required.

Financial Matters.

The 2025/26 Budget and Precept should be clearly itemised on the agenda for discussion and approval. The minutes of the 6th November refers to financial matters and that information had been previously circulated, this isn't available as an attachment to the agenda, on the minutes or the website.

Any other Business.

I note that on 2nd October 2024 you gave a donation to Rev Jones.

It is a requirement that business to be transacted at a council meeting must be specified in the summons sent to councillors, thus affording the members advance notice of what is to be considered, it is not lawful to make use of the item 'any other business' to take any substantive decision. Some Council do have 'Any other Business' at the end of the meeting to raise complaints about things such as roads and defective streetlights, however it may be useful to add that this is for information only.

Website.

The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities5 ('the Code') was issued in December 2014 and became mandatory on 1 April 2015. It applies to all 'under-£25,000' councils whether they choose to become 'exempt authorities'.

The Code requires all 'under-£25,000' councils to publish certain information on a freely accessible website. The first category of information relates to information about meetings. Councils must publish minutes, agendas and 'associated meeting papers' of all council, committee and sub-committee meetings on the website.

There is also a requirement to publish:

- the approved and signed AGAR
- the Annual Internal Auditor's Report
- the documents that in the past have been annexed to the Annual Return: bank reconciliation and explanation of significant variances
- a list of all payments over £100
- a list of 'councillor responsibilities'
- details of the council's land and building assets

I cannot access any Agendas or Minutes via the website, every time I tried to access documents, I received an error 404. There is no financial information on the website.

I have met with the Clerk and discussed the items raised in this letter as well as a discussing several other issues, she has advised that she has a plan to ensure all issues raised will be dealt with in the forthcoming year.

The new Practitioners' Guide 2025 which is published by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) sets out the requirements for the 2025/26 AGAR. This will include a new Assertion 10 covering Digital and data compliance, which includes new email management and website guidance which Council's must follow.

I have completed the internal audit section of the AGAR.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Bell', written in a cursive style.

Mrs T Bell

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

MITFORD 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 2025, 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.

*For any statement to which the response is 'no', an explanation must be published

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

25/06/2025

and recorded as minute reference:

29/25 (ii)

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

Chair

Clerk




Information required by the Transparency Code (not part of the Annual Governance Statement)

The authority website/webpage is up to date and the information required by the Transparency Code has been published.

Yes | No

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MITFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Budgetary Control Report 2024/2025 up to 31.03.25

	2024/2025 Budget	Spend at 31.03.25		Expected turn out	% of budget spent
		£	£ p		
			sub-total		
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2024	20,035.51		20,035.51		
Salary March 25			250.00		
Town & Country Tree Surgeons March 25			480.00		
Gavin Christie March 25			506.00		
NCC Speed Sign March 25			5,371.37		
Balance minus 24/25 creditors			13,428.14		
Add Receipts					
Precept 24/25			9,300.00	9,300	
VAT Reclaim			1,135.84		
Village Hall Loan Repayment			750.00		
Allotment rent 2025			30.00	30	
				0	
Receipts to date			11,215.84	0	
Sub-total	20035.51		24,643.98	9,330	
Deduct payments					
Clerk's Salary	3,000	3225.00		0	107.5
Clerk's travel costs	0	0.00		0	0
Training costs	0	0.00		0	0
Insurance	300	201.95		0	67
Audit fees	300	45.00		0	
DPA	0	35.00		0	
Subscriptions	0	145.23		0	
Village Warden	2900	2265.00		0	78
Hall Hire	220	0.00		0	0
Grants	0	50.00		0	
Village Hall & Community	5000	0.00		0	0
Contingency	1500	750.00		0	50
Election costs	0	0.00		0	0
Website	500	323.00		0	65
Fayre support	750	0.00		0	0
Misc	600	0.00			
VAT paid	0	19.00		0	
Payments to date	15,070	0	7,059.18	0	47
Balance in hand per cash book			£17,584.80	9,330	
Cash at Bank 31.03.25			17,584.80		
less unrepresented payments			0.00		
Add income not yet credited			0.00		
Agreed to cash book balance			17,584.80		

Notes

Unrepresented Payments		£ p
		£0.00

Earmarked Balances	b/f	
Warm Hub Resilience	6000.00	
Contingency	1500.00	
Unreserved Funds	10,084.80	
Total		17,584.80