

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 2PM

ONLY to be completed on behalf of PARISH MEETINGS OF PARISHES NOT HAVING PARISH COUNCILS, 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 for Parish Meetings on completing Form 2PM of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 that have financial transactions

1. Every Parish Meeting in England where the higher of all gross income **or** gross expenditure was £25,000 or less **must**, after the end of each financial year, complete Form 2PM of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices*, unless the Parish Meeting:
 - a) does not meet the qualifying criteria for exemption; or
 - b) does not wish to certify itself as exempt
2. Parish Meetings 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** that the Parish Meeting **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 2026** Failure to do so will result in reminder letter(s) for which the Parish Meeting will be charged £40 +VAT for each letter; and
 - b) The **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (Form 2PM)** which is made up of:
 - c) **Annual Internal Audit Report (page 4)** **must** be completed by the Parish Meeting's internal auditor.
 - d) **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement (page 5)** **must** be completed and approved by the Parish Meeting.
 - e) **Section 2 – Accounting Statements (page 6)** **must** be completed and approved by the Parish Meeting.

NOTE: Parish Meetings certifying themselves as exempt SHOULD NOT send the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor.
3. The Parish Meeting **must** approve Section 1 Annual Governance Statement before approving Section 2 Accounting Statements and both **must** be approved and published on a suitable website or be displayed in the local area **before 1 July 2026**

Publication Requirements

Parish Meetings **must** publish on a suitable website or display in the local area various documents as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015.

Parish Meetings without a website **must** display the documents in the local area for 14 days. These include:

- **Certificate of Exemption**, page 3
- **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26** page 5
- **Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26** page 6
- 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 Parish Meeting may request a limited assurance review. If so, the Parish Meeting should not certify itself as exempt or complete the Certificate of Exemption. Instead it should complete Form 3PM of the AGAR 2025/26 and return it to the external auditor together with the supporting documentation requested by the external auditor. The cost to the Parish Meeting for the review will be **£210 +VAT**.

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

If it decides to certify itself as exempt, the Parish Meeting must complete and return the Certificate of Exemption on Page 3 to the external auditor to confirm that it has certified itself exempt.

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.