

FAO: The Members of Thornhackett Group of Local Councils

Date: 02 February 2024

Our Ref:DO0164

SAAA Ref: SB08502

Thornhackett Group of Local Councils

Public Interest Report: Certifying exemption from a limited assurance review for the year ending 31 March 2022 where the exemption criteria was not satisfied

Dear Members

As appointed auditors, we have a duty to consider whether to issue a report in the public interest when a matter comes to our attention which we believe the authority should consider or the public should know about.

The authority is responsible for the use of funds raised by local taxation and should properly account for how it has used and protected those funds. Thornhackett Group of Local Councils is required by law to prepare an AGAR:

- summarising its financial position; and
- giving assurances that it has adequate governance arrangements to protect public funds.

The authority is required to submit the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (“AGAR”) to their appointed auditor, together with all supporting documentation requested by the auditor as set out in their instructions for the relevant year.

This letter constitutes a public interest report using our powers for the 2022/23 reporting year under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act). Thornhackett Group of Local Councils certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2022 which meant that it was not required to submit an AGAR or any of the necessary supporting documentation for that year. As a result of figures reported within the AGAR submitted for 2022/23, information has come to our attention in respect of the year ended 31 March 2022 to indicate the criteria for certifying exemption were not all satisfied, as total income for the year ended 31 March 2022 exceeded £25,000. The prior year certification of exemption is therefore not valid and by certifying exemption for that year, the authority has failed to submit the relevant documents for review.

The Act requires the authority to consider this public interest report at a public meeting within one month of the date of this letter. The full requirements of Schedule 7 can be found here: Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (legislation.gov.uk) and the authority should ensure that it complies with all requirements. This letter gives rise to an additional fee of £210.00 plus VAT payable by Thornhackett Group of Local Councils which will be issued on conclusion of the 2022/23 review process. Thornhackett Group of Local Councils should also note that, as a result of receiving this public interest report, it is not eligible to certify itself as exempt from limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2024 (if it would otherwise be eligible), as it has

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failed one of the qualifying requirements set out in Regulation 9(3) of The Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015.

Following the issue of this public interest report our limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2023 may now be concluded. You may expect to receive your closure documents and our invoices shortly. We have a duty to send a copy of this report to the Secretary of State and the power to send a copy to anybody we think appropriate.

Yours faithfully

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BDO LLP
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BDO LLP

cc. Clerk - Thornhackett Group of Local Councils
Secretary of State
National Audit Office
Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Limited
Monitoring Officer of Dorset Council