Atherstone Town Council

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26

Explanation of 'No' responses for publication and external audit submission

Authority	Atherstone Town Council
Financial year	Year ended 31 March 2026
AGAR form	Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3
Purpose of document	To explain the 'No' responses identified in the Annual Internal Audit Report and reflected in Section 1 of the AGAR.

1. Background

The Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025/26 includes two governance responses marked as 'No'. These responses arise from matters identified through the annual internal audit process and are explained below for transparency, publication with the AGAR, and submission to the external auditor.

The 'No' responses are governance and compliance disclosures. They do not, in themselves, alter the accounting figures in Section 2 of the AGAR.

2. Summary of responses requiring explanation

AGAR / Audit reference	Response	Reason for response	Corrective action / current position
Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement Assertion 4 **Annual Internal Audit Report Objective M**	**No**	The Council only provided a period of 25 working days for the exercise of public rights in relation to the 2024/25 accounts. The required period under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 is 30 working days and must include the first 10 working days of July.	The Council will ensure that the 2025/26 public rights period is correctly set as a single period of 30 working days, including the first 10 working days of July. The notice will be published on the Council website and retained as evidence of compliance.
Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement Assertion 10 **Annual Internal Audit Report Objective O**	**No**	At the time of the internal audit, the Council had not yet adopted a written IT policy. The Council recognises the need for a formal IT and data management policy as a matter of urgency.	The Council will prepare and adopt an IT and data management policy covering appropriate areas such as access controls, password and account management, device use, backups, cyber security, data handling, incident reporting and periodic review. The policy will then be incorporated into the Council's policy review cycle.

3. Detailed explanation - Assertion 4: Exercise of public rights

Assertion 4 in Section 1 of the AGAR asks whether the authority provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

The Council has answered 'No' because the period provided for the exercise of public rights for the 2024/25 AGAR was 25 working days, rather than the required 30 working days. This is also reflected in the Annual Internal Audit Report under Objective M.

The Council acknowledges this procedural issue. For the 2025/26 AGAR, the Responsible Financial Officer will ensure that the public rights period is correctly calculated, published and evidenced. The Council will retain a copy of the published notice and supporting website evidence with the AGAR file.

4. Detailed explanation - Assertion 10: IT and data management

Assertion 10 in Section 1 of the AGAR asks whether the authority has put in place arrangements for effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.

The Council has answered 'No' because, at the time of the internal audit, a written IT policy had not yet been adopted. The internal auditor noted that the Council recognises the need to address this as a matter of urgency. In all other respects noted by the auditor, the Council had complied with the requirements of Assertion 10.

The Council will prepare and adopt an IT and data management policy and will ensure that it is subject to regular review. This will strengthen the Council's documented arrangements for digital and data compliance going forward.

5. Council statement

Matter	Council response
Public rights period	The Council acknowledges the historic shortfall in the 2024/25 public rights period and will ensure full compliance for 2025/26 and future years.
IT and data management policy	The Council acknowledges that a formal written IT policy was not in place at the time of audit and will take urgent action to adopt and maintain one.
Publication	This explanation should be published with the Annual Governance Statement and AGAR, and provided to the external auditor as part of the Council's supporting explanation for the 'No' responses.

Prepared by	Jack Turner, Locum Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Date	June 2026