

Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee

22 September 2021

Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Electoral division: Not applicable

Summary

The report advises of the requirements for the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21. It includes a draft Statement for approval at Appendix A. A draft Action Plan covering significant governance issues arising from the Statement is attached at Appendix B.

Recommendations

That the draft Statement and Action Plan be recommended for adoption through the signatures of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). This statement has been produced in line with guidance issued in 2016 by CIPFA / SOLACE on best practice for developing and maintaining a locally adopted Code of Governance. A Corporate Code of Governance was approved by the Governance Committee at a meeting on 12 September 2016.
- 1.2 Corporate Governance is the process by which the County Council ensures and gives assurance that it is doing the right things, in the right way, in a timely and accountable manner. It comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the County Council operates and through which it accounts to its communities.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The draft AGS for the County Council for 2020/21 outlines:
 - the scope of governance responsibilities
 - the purpose of the governance framework
 - a description of the governance framework
 - arrangements for review of the effectiveness of the governance framework
 - Governance issues that need to be addressed.

- 2.2 Information is gathered from a number of sources, internal and external. The draft Statement was discussed with senior officers and auditors. The Executive Leadership Team considered the draft AGS and actions. It is now presented to this Committee for consideration alongside the approval of accounts. The later timescale is due to the ongoing effects of the public health emergency. If the Committee is satisfied, it is asked to recommend the adoption of the Statement through the signatures of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.
- 2.3 Progress on improvements on the main Governance issues identified in last year's Statement are mentioned, including Children's Services and the Fire and Rescue Service, where follow-ups to external inspections have found that positive progress is being made in both services' improvement journeys.
- 2.4 Any further external inspections will be taken into account in next year's Annual Governance Statement. A Youth Justice inspection is expected during 2021/22 and the Care and Quality Commission has indicated that inspections of Adults' Services are likely in future.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 The external auditor was consulted on the draft Annual Governance Statement and the auditor's comments have been taken into account in the final version.

5 Finance

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
There are risks from services failing to deliver the action plan	Individual directorates, the Executive Leadership Team and this Committee, monitor these risks.
There are reputational risks from a failure to adopt a comprehensive AGS and action plan	This plan is ready for approval and has the commitment of the senior leadership team who will be responsible collectively for its implementation.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1 The Statement is aligned with the Code of Corporate Governance.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

Appendix B - Action Plan

Background papers - None