

Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee

20 November 2020

Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Electoral division: Not applicable

Summary

The report advises of the requirements for the Annual Governance Statement 2018/19. It includes a draft Statement for approval at Appendix a. This also covers the significant governance issues raised in 2018/19. Progress on previous actions is found in 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 2019/20 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 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 Updates on the main Governance issues identified in last year's Action Plan are attached at Appendix b. The Committee is asked to note the closed actions and to agree that the outstanding actions be transferred to the 2019/20 action plan.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 Not applicable. It is not suggested that any outstanding actions from the previous year be removed from the action plan.

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.

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance

Contact Officer: Charles Gauntlett, Senior Advisor, phone 033 022 22524, charles.gauntlett@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix A - Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

Appendix B - Action Plan Update

Background papers

None