

By: Ben Watts, General Counsel (Monitoring Officer)

To: Governance and Audit Committee – September 22nd 2021

Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides a draft copy of the Annual Governance Statement and an update on governance generally within the Council

1. In July 2018, as part of the activity ongoing to review the Council's constitution, Members agreed that Kent County Council should adopt the CIPFA/SOLACE "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition" and make the necessary consequential changes to the Code of Corporate Governance and the Constitution.
2. During the previous administrative cycle, Members of this Committee discussed the workings of the Governance and Audit Committee, the Annual Governance Statement the CIPFA/SOLACE framework amongst other things with the Head of Internal Audit and the Monitoring Officer. As part of those discussions, it was recommended and subsequently agreed by Members that the Governance and Audit Committee should formally consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement.
3. Since 2018, we have been changing the way that we do the Annual Governance Statement. The statutory officers, with advice from the Head of Internal Audit have been improving the way in which we collect responses and build up the Annual Governance Statement. For 2021, we are introducing the opportunity for Members to see and discuss the statement whilst it is in draft format. Accordingly, appended to the paper, is the draft version of this year's Annual Governance Statement that was prepared earlier in the summer to go alongside the draft accounts. As with last year, there will be further changes to the final version to reflect the experience and activities of the last few months before a final draft is prepared. This is because it is important that the Annual Governance Statement reflects the position at the point of signature, not preparation.
4. The Committee has always had the opportunity to consider the AGS but this additional step provides an opportunity for Members to ask questions before the final commentaries of the statutory officers are added and the statement is presented in final draft for approval in the next meeting.
5. An Annual Governance Statement is required by law and reports publicly on the effectiveness of governance and control. Whilst the majority of the statement before Members relates to the financial year 2021/22, it is important that the document also represents the present governance challenges faced by the Council. Accordingly, the final draft statement includes reference to a range of issues that have arisen since 1

April 2021 and, in particular, the latest impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the Council.

7. Members of the Governance and Audit Committee play a key and ongoing role in the governance of the County Council and this opportunity for annual reflection is reflected in the recommendations.

Recommendation:

The Committee is invited to discuss the paper and:

- i. DISCUSS and COMMENT on the draft Annual Governance Statement.

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