

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel

To: Governance and Audit Committee, 24 September 2025

Subject: Draft Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

Status: Unrestricted

Summary: The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a key document which provides Members and Officers with the opportunity to reflect on the processes, activities and behaviours which deliver decision making and output within the Council.

1) Introduction

- a) The AGS provides an overview of the state of the authority's governance and the controls that are in place to manage key governance risks. In instances where key governance issues have been identified, the detail of actions taken to make improvements and work still to be undertaken are documented in action plans. Kent County Council is statutorily required to produce an Annual Governance Statement.
- b) The statement relies on the contribution of Members and Officers and a commitment to the continuous improvement of the way in which things are done by the Council in governance terms. Our statements have been very clear about where improvements can and should be made but this is done solely in the interests of identifying issues and making improvements. It is vital that the process is not weaponised as the Council has used the AGS process to identify and confront a number of issues that have remained out of sight in other organisations.
- c) The statement comes to the Committee in draft to update Members on progress of the development of the statement and to provide an opportunity for the Committee to understand and influence the strategic direction of the statement ahead of finalisation.
- d) After the 24 September 2025 meeting, the General Counsel will address the further changes that need to be made before finalising the Annual Governance Statement in consultation with the Chair. Work will also take place with Corporate Management Team members on finalising the actions that will be undertaken and delivered in the period ahead and these will also be included in the final statement and added to the Governance Recommendations Implementation Planner (GRIP) and the G&A Committee Teams site for Members to track throughout the year ahead.
- e) The final draft of the AGS is then sent to all Cabinet Members, Corporate Directors and Directors. It is also recommended that a copy of the approved Annual Governance Statement is then sent to all Members.

2) Governance and Audit Committee's Responsibility

- a) This report and the draft statement are brought to the Committee to provide an opportunity for Members to consider and raise any issues ahead of the finalisation of the statement.
- b) Members are reminded that the purpose of this Committee, in accordance with its [Terms of Reference](#), is to provide independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk, finance, and control arrangements.
- c) This report is brought to the Governance and Audit Committee for their consideration as the Committee is responsible for:
 - i. monitoring the development and operation of the Council's corporate governance, financial, risk, and assurance frameworks and arrangements to ensure it meets recommended practice, is embedded across the whole Council and is operating consistently throughout the year,
 - ii. review and approval of the Statement of Accounts, with related reports, and the Annual Governance Statement, and
 - iii. reporting to full Council for assurance on the Accounts and Annual Governance Statement approval.

Recommendations

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to:

- a) COMMENT on the Draft Annual Governance Statement;

3) Appendices

Appendix: Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25

4) Background Documents

None.

5) Relevant Director and Report Author

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