

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: Governance and Audit Committee, 23 November 2023
Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2022/23
Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) There are many aspects to good governance within a local authority. Done properly, they are mutually reinforcing. The Code of Corporate Governance for example has its roots in financial governance but has wider implications. The Constitution as a document sets out the formal governance rules but also establishes side-constraints for the use of informal governance mechanisms. Even were the Annual Governance Statement not required by law, it would be a useful control mechanism and enable a full judgment to be made on whether the different components are working in an aligned way.
- b) Since 2018, we have been materially 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.
- c) It is important that the Annual Governance Statement and the process to generate it are done in the spirit of continuous improvement. It is vital that an honest and open assessment of where things can be done better can be shared to support that improvement and we do so in draft to ensure that Members of the Committee are sighted on developments. We use the Annual Governance Statement as a key whole organisation discussion on governance and it applies to all Members and all Officers. The spirit in which this open process is undertaken is central to the robust statements we have provided in recent years and will continue to provide.
- d) We are now in a position to present to you with the draft of the Annual Governance statement for 2022/23. At the meeting, there will be a presentation (which will be circulated to Members ahead of time) setting out progress on the consolidated action plan items which have been delivered or are being progressed currently.
- e) We are self-aware in relation to the need to continuously improve both the way in which the Council operates and the way in which we manage and monitor that. That is an ongoing challenge and the way in which the statement is drafted and the information collated once again reflects the challenging operating position for the Council. The current programme is unprecedented and reflective of the commitment to continuously improve and to seek to address the challenges faced and key findings identified. As with previous years, some of that

programme was already planned and contemplated but the statement is the annual recognition of the steps needed to improve and to bring that activity into a single coherent structure.

- a) Subsequent to the Committee meeting, the General Counsel will arrange for a further draft to be prepared before the statement comes back in final form for approval from the Committee in January.

2. Recommendations

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to:

- a) NOTE and COMMENT on the draft Annual Governance Statement

3. Background Documents

None.

4. Report Author and Relevant Director

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