

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: Governance and Audit Committee, 1 February 2024
Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2021/22
Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) This paper follows a discussion at the Governance and Audit Committee in November 2023.
- 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. The contribution of Members around the design and style of the report are being built in to the new document that will be presented in draft for the 2023/24 Financial Year AGS in July 2024.
- 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 the final draft of the Annual Governance statement for 2021/22. This is set out as the Appendix.

2. Annual Governance System

- a) Behind the development of how we do the Annual Governance Statement has been the belief that it is more than a once and done tick box exercise where the Council briefly considers its governance and then pays it no heed for another year. It is instead part of a live governance system, annual in so much as there is a core of undertakings which must be performed every year, however much they are impacted by the unforeseen, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.
- b) At the next meeting of this Committee, Members will be presented with a report on the activities and progress tracker which are being built as a real-time standing item in the Governance and Audit Committee Teams site. This will also include all of the rolled up activities and progress against the external audit

recommendations and any other actions identified by the Committee during the year.

- c) At the Governance and Audit Committee meeting there will be a (short) presentation on some of the changes around monitoring and the things that will be being introduced as we move into the new financial year, alongside other improvements which are coming into delivery. These will also be captured in a formal report, as requested by Members in the March meeting which will pull together all of the activity in an holistic manner.
- d) We are already advanced in our planning our approach for the Annual Governance Statement for the current year which given the delay in this year's statement will follow on quickly in draft in the first quarter of the new financial year.
- e) Subsequent to the Committee meeting, the General Counsel will arrange for any further final changes before adding any signature statements and signatures from the Chief Executive, Corporate Director of Finance and himself before providing it to the Leader for his consideration and signature.
- f) A final copy of the Annual Governance Statement will be sent to the Members of the Governance and Audit Committee and to all Corporate Directors and Directors. It is also recommended that a copy of the Annual Governance Statement is sent to all Members.

3. Recommendations

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to:

- a) Approve the Annual Governance Statement

4. Background Documents

None.

5. Report Author and Relevant Director

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