

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: Governance and Audit Committee, 23 July 2024
Subject: Annual Governance Statement Update
Status: Unrestricted

1. Overview

- a. 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 activity within the Council.
- b. The approach taken to the AGS by Kent County Council in recent years has involved broad testing across the Council through surveys of those playing a role in supporting governance at all levels of the organisation. The Officers involved have supported the process by answering a more detailed set of questions; this has provided a richer and far more granular view.
- c. There is a shorter period between the publication of this year's Statement and the AGS for 2022/23 compared to previous years' reporting timescales. The draft AGS for 2023/24 can be expected in September 2024. This is to bring the timescale more in line with External Audit reporting and following the prior year audit and governance reporting going to County Council.
- d. As much of the activity that would be explored in depth in a 'regular' AGS has been picked up in the most recent year's Statement, the methodology for 2023/24 has been adapted with the intention to consolidate what is being done and work to ensure that the fundamentals are being addressed.
- e. The report will also provide detailed reporting and outcomes against the previously identified actions and plans.

2. Governance and Audit Committee Role

- a. As emphasised in previous Statements, the Governance and Audit Committee continues to play an important role in ensuring that the authority's corporate governance framework meets recommended practice, is embedded across the whole Council, and is operating throughout the year with no significant lapses. It is therefore considered appropriate that the Committee Members have the opportunity to feed into this year's AGS.
- b. In between the July and September formal meetings of Governance and Audit Committee, Members of the Committee will be asked to contribute to this year's process. This is particularly important given some of the prior findings about the Member role in the Council's governance, particularly those from the external auditor. In the first instance, we will arrange an informal meeting to discuss how that contribution is best made.

- c. The outcomes of the Committee's input will be reflected in the statement and reported back in September.

3. Recommendation

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to note the approach to the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24.

4. Background Documents

None.

5. Report Author and Relevant Director

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