

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: Governance and Audit Committee, 12 December 2024
Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2023/24
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) Following conversations with Members at and subsequent to the last Committee and with a number of Corporate Directors in follow up to the responses provided, we are now in a position to present to you with the final draft of the Annual Governance statement for 2022/23.
- d) 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.
- e) This year's statement tells a positive story around the actions completed but, as ever, highlights the need for a relentless focus on continuous improvement where opportunities arise.
- f) Subsequent to the Committee meeting, the General Counsel will arrange for a the signature statements to be added by the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer before seeking the Leader's signature.

2. Recommendations

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to:

- a) AGREE the Annual Governance Statement

3. Background Documents

None.

4. Report Author and Relevant Director

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