

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Audit Committee		
DATE:	30 May 2018		
TITLE:	Draft 2018 Annual Governance Statement – covering the 2017-18 year		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Monitoring		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Leader		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Ged Greaves, Senior Policy and Performance Officer		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:

The Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee¹ state:

*“The main areas of responsibility for the Audit Committee will be to: ...
b. Review the Council’s assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), to check that it properly reflects the risk environment and any actions required to improve it.”*

This report brings the Council’s draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2018 to the Committee for review, challenge and an opportunity to input prior to the AGS being finalised and considered at the Committee’s meeting in July 2018.

The preparation and publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a statutory requirement². The AGS is a public statement that describes and evaluates the Council’s overall governance arrangements, in particular how it has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance during a particular financial year. The draft AGS is attached at Appendix A.

KEY ISSUES:

1. CIPFA³ issue guidance and a template to aid authorities in their work on their AGS; this is used as a framework, but the document is written with fresh content each year.
2. Section 7 refers to the draft Action Plan devised for the 2018/19 year (shown on the final page of the document)
3. Input has been collated from Executive Directors, Service Managers and Internal Audit for the draft statement
4. External Audit will review the final version prior to the final version coming to the Audit Committee in July 2018.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

Options do not apply; the Council must prepare, approve and publish a statement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is invited to

1. Review the draft Annual Governance Statement 2018 (as attached) and determine

¹ As agreed by Full Council in June 2016

² Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1)

³ Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

whether the work undertaken to review the governance arrangements in place during the 2017/18 year is appropriate and whether there are any gaps

2. Determine any additional actions the Committee would like to be taken to inform the final version of the document which will be brought to the Committee in July 2018.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to ensure that the Audit Committee have the opportunity to review, challenge and provide input prior to the AGS being finalised and brought to the Committee for approval in July 2018.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

1.1 The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance sets out six core principles of good governance that focus on the systems and processes for the direction and control of the Council and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. These core principles include:

- Focusing on the purpose of the Council
- Roles and responsibilities of members and officers
- Standards of conduct and behaviour
- Decision making, scrutiny and risk management
- Developing capacity and capability of members and officers
- Engaging with local people and stakeholders

1.2 The extent to which the Council adheres to these principles is described in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

1.3 The preparation and publication of the AGS is a statutory requirement. The AGS is a public statement that describes and evaluates the Council's overall governance arrangements during a particular financial year. It includes a self-assessment of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements, across all areas of activity, together with a statement of the actions being taken or required to address any areas of concern.

2. The draft Annual Governance Statement

2.1 The draft AGS has been produced in accordance with relevant professional guidance and notable practice and a comprehensive review has taken place to ensure that the suggested areas are included in the Council's AGS for 2017/18.

2.2 As the statement is being brought to the Audit Committee at an earlier stage than in previous years, a minor amount of information and a date remains to be clarified and this is highlighted in yellow (page 18 of the draft AGS).

2.3 Sections 1 and 2 are broadly the same as with the 2017 AGS, these are 'introductory sections'.

- 2.4 Section 3 is the main body of the document and uses the CIPFA guidance as headings, the content has been updated to reflect practices during the year under review.
- 2.5 Section 4 contains information based on standard reports and events that inform the Review of Effectiveness.
- 2.6 Section 5 draws attention to the 'Areas of special interest in terms of governance' that the Council has in place.
- 2.7 Section 6 covers 'Known Changes in the 2018/19 year'.
- 2.8 Section 7 refers to the Action Plans devised for the 2017/18 year (see Appendix B) and for the year ahead 2018/19 (see Appendix C).
- 2.9 The development of the draft AGS, and the consultation process, has engaged Service Managers and Executive Directors. In particular, input has been obtained at this stage from the Audit Manager, the S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Democratic Services Manager, the ICT Manager, the Policy, Performance and Personnel Manager and the Assistant Director - Central and Community Services.

3. Issues for the Panel to Consider

- 3.1 The following areas have been identified as aspects the Committee may wish to consider:
- i. Does the AGS cover all areas of our operations?
 - ii. Is it meaningful, easy to read and underpinned by robust evidence?
 - iii. Does it accurately reflect our control structure and a sense of its risks, vulnerabilities and resilience to challenges?
 - iv. Has compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance been assessed and have any departures from it been disclosed and explained?

4.0 Corporate Priorities

Not applicable, statutory requirement.

5.0 Policy Implications

None.

6.0 Financial Implications

None.

7.0 Personnel Implications

None.

8.0 Statutory Considerations

- 8.1 The adoption of the Annual Governance Statement will be required in July 2018 to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

9.0 Equality Opportunity Considerations

None.

10.0 Risk Management Implications

10.1 The Annual Governance Statement forms part of the Council's risk management process and will provide reasonable assurance once adopted in July 2018 (as defined in section 8 of the AGS itself) that the Council is complying with the adopted Code of Corporate Governance.

10.2 The Audit Committee is having input at a draft stage to assist in maintaining an effective approach to producing the AGS. If this approach is not taken, it may lead to the Council being:

- unable to meet its statutory duty
- unable to demonstrate it has effective corporate governance arrangements in place
- open to criticism from external audit.

11.0 Recommendations

The Committee is invited to

1. Review the draft Annual Governance Statement 2018 (as attached) and determine whether the work undertaken to review the governance arrangements in place during the 2017/18 year is appropriate and whether there are any gaps
2. Determine any additional actions the Committee would like to be taken to inform the final version of the document which will be brought to the Committee in July 2018.

12.0 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None

Background Papers

CIPFA/SOLACE Framework including Guidance Notes and Addendum

Cabinet / Panel agendas

Code of Corporate Governance

Various policies, strategies, procedures

Council Constitution