

Annual Governance Statement 2016/17

1.0 SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

- 1.1 Thanet District Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and that funding is used economically, efficiently and effectively. Thanet District Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, Thanet District Council is responsible for putting in place suitable arrangements for the governance of its affairs, which facilitate the effective exercise of its functions and include arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 Thanet District Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016). A copy of the Local Code is available on our website or can be obtained from the council offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent, CT9 1XZ. This statement explains how Thanet District Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement.

2.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values by which the authority is directed and controlled, together with the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Thanet District Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework has been in place at Thanet District Council for the year ended 31 March 2017 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

3.0 METHODOLOGY FOR PREPARING THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

- 3.1 The Annual Governance Statement is prepared using a method similar to that used in previous years, including:
 - Managers providing an assurance statement as to the extent and quality of internal control arrangements operating within their departments for the year. The declaration covers a comprehensive list of those systems and procedures which deliver good

governance. Managers are asked to declare any weaknesses in their governance arrangements.

- Directors / Service Managers reviewing the results of those declarations, identifying those issues which are significant or which are common to more than one area and discussing the outcomes with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for each service area.
- Assurance statements from the Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and the following key areas: performance management, procurement and risk management identifying any governance issues that have arisen and should be addressed in the forthcoming year.
- Statements from the shared service partners we work with on compliance with the governance arrangements in place.
- Reviewing the annual reports from Governance and Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- Considering the Internal Audit Annual Report and the Section 151 Officer's report on the effectiveness of the internal audit arrangements in place.
- The council's Governance and Audit Committee considers the draft Annual Governance Statement in June and is afforded the opportunity to give its input to the statement and to consider whether it accurately reflects the council's control environment.
- The Governance and Audit Committee approves the Annual Governance Statement in September and it is signed off by the Chief Executive / Section 151 Officer and Leader of the Council.

4.0 THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

4.1 There are a number of key elements to the systems and processes that comprise the council's governance arrangements, which are set out below.

4.1.1 There is a clear vision of the council's purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users that is clearly communicated.

- The Vision for Thanet was adopted by Council in July 2009. This document sets out the future plans for what Thanet will look and be like in 2030. It was consulted on widely with staff and members, the residents' panel, partners and stakeholders.
- The council identified and communicated its aims and ambitions for Thanet in October 2015 for the next four years when a new Corporate Plan was approved. The plan contains three priorities and three corporate values which are supported by measures of success.

4.1.2 Arrangements are in place to review the council's vision and its implications for the council's governance arrangements.

- The Corporate Plan will be reviewed annually to take into account progress against the priorities and outcomes of the annual budget setting process. Each review will evaluate and determine if there are any implications for the council's

governance arrangements with appropriate amendments being made as necessary.

- 4.1.3 Arrangements exist for measuring the quality of services, ensuring they are delivered in accordance with the council's objectives and that they represent the best use of resources.

Performance progress is tracked through monthly monitoring of key performance indicators, service tasks and projects. Progress against the council's Corporate Plan is reported quarterly to Cabinet. Additionally, monthly service reports summarise all key projects, tasks and performance measures specific to each service. The performance framework is operated on Inphase™, a performance management system.

The Council's data quality framework sets out the Council's requirement that any data used by the authority should be fit for purpose. Fitness for purpose of performance data is assured through the following activity:

- Challenge of measure definition when new indicators are identified through service planning;
- Set up of measures at denominator and numerator level to ensure that calculations are not carried out manually;
- Calculation checking through the data entry process;
- Manager review of data entered by staff;
- Training provided to managers and staff on how to use the data entry and reporting system;
- Challenge through the target setting process;
- Challenge through monthly monitoring of performance data;
- Advice and support provided to staff and managers as requested on the capture and use of management data.

- 4.1.4 The roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny and officer functions are clearly defined, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication.

Roles and responsibilities for Cabinet, Council, Overview and Scrutiny and all committees of the council, along with officer functions are defined and documented, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication within the council's Constitution. The Constitution is regularly reviewed and updated.

- 4.1.5 Codes of conduct defining the standards of behaviour for members and officers are in place, conform to appropriate ethical standards and are communicated and embedded across the council.

Codes of conduct defining the standards of behaviour for members and staff have been developed and communicated and are available (as part of the Council's constitution) on the council's website and intranet site, Thanet Online Matters (TOM). These include Members' Code of Conduct, Code of Conduct for Staff, Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy, member and officer protocols and regular performance appraisals linked to service and corporate objectives.

- 4.1.6 Standing orders, standing financial instructions, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes / manuals which are reviewed and updated as appropriate, clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required to manage risks.

The council has established policies and procedures to govern its operations. Key within these are the Financial Procedure Rules, Procurement Strategy and Contract Standing Orders, Risk Management Strategy, Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers, Anti-

Fraud and Corruption Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy, Whistleblowing Code and Human Resources policies. Ensuring compliance with these policies is the responsibility of everyone throughout the council. These key controls are subject to periodic review, including that by Internal Audit, and are updated to ensure that they are relevant to the needs of the organisation.

Contract Standing Orders set out the rules governing the procurement process to ensure that value for money is achieved whilst meeting all legal and statutory requirements and minimising the risk of fraud or corruption. The council's Procurement Strategy is a high level view of how to promote effective procurement across the whole organisation. It outlines what good procurement means in Thanet and details the supporting framework. This Strategy is underpinned by the Procurement Code of Practice which is a step-by-step guide for all purchasing activities providing information, advice and guidance for officers responsible for spending the council's money.

A risk management framework has been in place across the council for some years with the objective of embedding effective risk management practices at both strategic and operational levels. The Risk Management Strategy and Process documents are reviewed on an annual basis and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee.

- 4.1.7 The council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010).

The council's financial management arrangements conform to CIPFA standards. The Director of Corporate Resources has statutory responsibility for the proper management of the council's finances. The management of the council's finances within departments is devolved to directors / service managers through the Scheme of Delegation for Financial Authority and Accountability. Directors / service managers further devolve decision making to managers and business unit managers through departmental schemes of management.

The Financial Services Team provides detailed finance protocols, procedures, guidance and training for managers and staff. The structure of the Financial Services Team ensures segregation of duties and all committee reports are reviewed by the appropriate Financial Services staff.

The internal audit function is an independent appraisal process and is provided by the East Kent Audit Partnership, who have direct access to members. They undertake reviews which provide management with a level of assurance on the adequacy of internal controls and of risks to the council's functions / systems. They give sound objectivity as well as benefiting from a large resource-pool which brings with it a good level of robustness. Throughout the year, the internal auditors perform a wide range of reviews covering both financial matters and other more service / output specific objectives, including value for money assessments. The conclusion is a report that is produced for management, which includes an assessment of the level of assurance that can be derived from the system of internal controls related to the service that is reviewed.

- 4.1.8 The core functions of an audit committee are undertaken.

The role of the Governance and Audit Committee is set out in the Constitution and one of its key roles is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment. It is a committee comprising council members independent of the executive which oversees the internal audit function and considers all relevant reports of the external auditor.

The terms of reference for the Governance and Audit Committee are prepared in line

with 'CIPFA's Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities' and are reviewed annually whilst undertaking the self-assessment into the committee's effectiveness and achievements against its terms of reference.

- 4.1.9 Arrangements exist to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful.

The council has in place a Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer has a duty to report on any actual or likely decision which would result in an unlawful act or maladministration. All decisions to be taken by members are supported by a legal assessment provided by the appropriate officer.

The council has in place a Responsible Finance Officer and Deputy under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. This role ensures lawfulness and financial prudence of decision making, has responsibility for the administration of the financial affairs of the council and provides advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues.

- 4.1.10 Arrangements for whistleblowing and for receiving and investigating complaints from the public are in place and well publicised.

The council has in place a Whistleblowing Code whereby staff and others can report concerns about various sorts of wrongdoing or alleged impropriety. The Whistleblowing Code was approved by Governance and Audit Committee, as part of the council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. The Code is available on the website and is also proactively communicated to those contracting with the council.

Thanet District Council wants to provide the best service it can to the community and has a Customer Feedback process in place, which includes complaints, compliments, service requests, member contact and comments. Service improvements take place as a direct result of customer feedback received and are published on the council's website and Members' Portal.

- 4.1.11 Arrangements exist for identifying the development needs of members and senior officers in relation to their strategic roles, supported by appropriate training.

Member Briefing sessions are programmed on a regular basis to ensure that members are properly equipped to effectively fulfil their responsibilities in the governance of the council's operations.

As part of the annual appraisal process, training and development needs of staff are identified and a development plan is drawn up to meet those needs.

- 4.1.12 Clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders are in place, ensuring accountability and encouraging open consultation.

The council has increased the level of community input into its decision making processes by increasing the number and variety of opportunities made available to the community. This includes online conversations and feedback as well as focus groups, workshops and the more traditional methods such as postal questionnaires. A greater emphasis is being placed on online consultation and social media.

The council has a well-established and effective consultation function which includes a wide range of consultation methods to ensure that as many groups and individuals as possible are able to participate. Before undertaking any consultation or communication, action plans are completed to detail exactly how key groups will be

targeted. The council delivers an extensive programme of consultations throughout the year.

The council also regularly communicates and consults with residents online via the council website, through social media such as Twitter and Facebook, through local press, via secondary and primary schools, through local forums and organisations.

- 4.1.13 Governance arrangements in respect of partnerships and other group working incorporate good practice and are reflected in the council's overall governance arrangements.

Partnership working is governed by agreements, protocols or memoranda of understanding relevant to the type of work or relationship involved. The council ensures that all are fit for purpose and the council's interests are protected.

5.0 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

- 5.1 Thanet District Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the senior managers within the authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the East Kent Audit Partnership's annual report, and also by comments made by our External Auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

- 5.2 The process that has been applied by the council in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework, includes the following:

5.2.1 The Authority

The Council comprises 56 Members and, as a whole, takes decisions on budget and policy framework items as defined by the Constitution.

5.2.2 The Cabinet

The Cabinet is responsible for the majority of the functions of the authority, within the budget and policy framework set by Full Council. Executive decisions can be taken by the Leader or Cabinet and Cabinet Members or Officers acting under delegated powers, depending upon the significance of the decision being made.

The Forward Plan lists the key decisions to be taken by Cabinet over the forthcoming four months. The plan is updated around the middle of each month to take effect from the 1st of the following month.

5.2.3 The Governance and Audit Committee

The council has an established Governance and Audit Committee, which is independent of the executive function of the council, and is responsible for overseeing internal and external audit, risk management processes and reviewing the adequacy of internal controls.

5.2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel consists of non-executive members and is appointed on a proportional basis, with political groups represented in the same proportion as on Full Council. It does not have any decision-making powers, but monitors the performance of the Leader and Cabinet and scrutinises services and policies throughout

the district (both member and officer).

5.2.5 The Standards Committee

The Standards Committee is established by Full Council and is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst councillors. In particular, it is responsible for advising the council on the adoption and revision of the Members' Code of Conduct and for monitoring the operation of the Code.

5.2.6 The Chief Financial Officer

The role of the Chief Financial Officer is a fundamental building block of good corporate governance. The two critical aspects of the role are stewardship and probity in the use of resources; and performance, extracting the most value from the use of those resources.

5.2.7 The Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer has a duty to: report on matters he/she believes are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration, be responsible for matters relating to the conduct of Councillors and Officers and keep under review the operation of the Constitution to ensure it is lawful, up to date and fit for purpose.

5.2.8 The Internal Audit function

The internal audit function is undertaken by the East Kent Audit Partnership, which provides this service to not only Thanet District Council but also Dover and Shepway District Councils, and Canterbury City Council. Internal audit is an independent appraisal function, which seeks to provide management with a level of assurance on the adequacy of internal controls and of risks to the council's functions / systems.

5.2.9 Management and officers

The council's internal management processes are reviewed regularly and any changes or updates are communicated through the Heads of Service, Managers' forum and staff development sessions, and any management training that is undertaken.

6.0 REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS 2016/17

The internal audit function is performed by the East Kent Audit Partnership (EKAP), which provides internal audit services to the councils of Dover, Shepway and Canterbury, as well as to Thanet. As a result of this collaborative approach the partnership is able to be robustly resourced and provides a mechanism for promulgating best practice to the East Kent authorities that use its services.

The auditors are independent to the management of the council and have direct access to the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee if required. They provide a regular update to the Committee at each of the quarterly meetings, and attend any special meetings that may be convened during the year.

6.3 As at 31 January 2017 the Internal Auditors completed 278 days of review equating to 94% of planned completions and are likely to achieve circa 98% to 100% completion by the end of March 2017. The EKAP undertake a regular schedule of follow up audits to ensure that management have implemented the action plans arising from each audit. Members can see full details within the Internal Audit Annual report.

- 6.4 The EKAP have met as a team and considered the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards Checklist for compliance. The results of this self-assessment showed that internal audit is currently working towards full compliance and has agreed an action plan to achieve this.
- 6.5 As part of EKAP's quality monitoring arrangements, following the completion of each audit, a satisfaction questionnaire is completed by the managers of the service that has been audited enabling the officers involved to comment on the conduct and outcome of the audit. This information is used, in part, to inform the self-assessment.
- 6.6 The EKAP Audit Manager and Head of EKAP regularly meet with the Section 151 Officer to monitor performance against the Audit Plan, but also to discuss any matters arising in relation to the performance of the Audit Partnership. Periodically these meetings are attended by External Auditors, so that they are able to gain assurances as to the effectiveness of the process. The Director of Corporate Resources & Section 151 Officer is pleased to be able to provide Members with assurance that in his opinion the Partnership operates to high professional standards, fostering an excellent working relationship with management without fettering the independence needed to be able to take a sufficiently independent perspective.
- 6.7 In addition to which, feedback from the audits and any other matters arising from the work of the partnership are considered at regular meetings that are held between the Section 151 or Deputy Section 151 Officers of each of the partnering councils and the auditors to manage any issues arising from the process. These meetings provide an additional opportunity to assess whether the internal audit function is operating in an effective manner and is compliant with the requirements of the CIPFA code.
- 6.8 Given the consistency of evidence of a quality internal audit service and the assessment outcomes referred to above it is believed that the Council has an effective internal audit function in place providing confidence in the context of their contribution to the council's Annual Governance Statement

7.0 ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN DURING 2016/17

- 7.1 Throughout 2016/17 managers within the council have met on a regular basis through the Heads of Service meetings and Managers Forum, and updates to the following corporate processes, strategies or policies have been communicated, (which are then shared with all staff through Staff Briefing Sessions):

- Annual governance statement
- Appraisals
- Bathing water quality
- Closure of accounts
- Code of conduct
- Code of corporate governance
- Complaints and FoI responses
- Compliance monitoring
- Decision notices
- Disclosure and barring service
- Emergency planning
- Enforcement review
- Equalities Impact assessments
- Finances
- Flexible and remote working

- Going paperless
- Health and safety
- Homelessness
- Housing business ready programme
- HR policies
- Information governance and equalities
- Information management
- Information sharing
- Insurance Claims
- Insurance data
- Leasehold accounting
- Leisure review
- Local plan
- Major projects
- Member/Officer Protocol
- New report template
- Officer Delegations
- Peer Review
- People strategy
- People strategy and organisational plan for change
- Performance monitoring
- Policy update
- Press and PR
- PREVENT
- Reporting incidents and crimes to the police
- Reward and recognition
- RIPA
- Risk assessments
- Risk management
- Safeguarding policy
- Staff survey
- Standby out of hours system
- Street cleansing
- Telephony
- Toilet policy
- Vision
- Volunteer policy
- Website
- Website review
- Whistleblowing
- Year-end processes

7.2 The following corporate processes, strategy or policy documents were considered and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee:

- Annual audit letter 2015-16
- Annual fraud report
- Annual governance statement 2015-16
- Annual governance statement action plan quarterly update
- Annual internal audit report
- Annual Treasury Management Review 2015/16
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Anti-Bribery Policy
- Appointing external auditors
- Audit committee assurance statement
- Chairman's report to council

- Corporate risk register annual review
- Corporate risk register quarterly update
- Draft annual governance statement 2015/16
- Draft audit assurance statement
- External Audit 2016/17 Audit Plan
- External audit fee letter
- External Audit Findings for Thanet District Council – year ended March 2016
- External Audit Grant Certification Letter 2015/16
- Final Statement of Accounts
- Government report in respect of ERDF grant claim, 2005 – 2008
- Governance Framework and Local Code of Corporate Governance update
- Internal Audit 2017-2018 Audit Plan and Audit Charter
- Internal Audit Quarterly updates
- Mid-year treasury management report
- Quarterly internal audit report update
- Review of Effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit Arrangements 2016-2017
- Treasury Management Strategy 2017/2018
- Treasury Management updates

7.3 Cabinet considered and approved the following corporate or service related strategy or policy documents:

- Air quality technical and planning guidance 2016
- Annual review of corporate risk
- Annual Treasury Management Review 2015-16
- Asset disposals
- Budget 2017-18 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2017-2021
- Budget Monitoring Reports
- Budget Strategy 2017-18
- Changes to the 2016-17 capital programme and 2017-18 to 2020-21 capital plan
- Combined safeguarding policy
- Community safety partnership plan 2017-2020
- Corporate Performance monitoring reports
- Council Tax Base Calculation for 2017-2018
- Council tax reduction scheme 2017-18
- Council tax support scheme 2017-18
- Creating a resilient future for Thanet's museums
- Designation of the Conservation Areas, Cliftonville
- Ellington Park
- Events policy
- Establishment of east Kent services committee and associated arrangements
- Exceptional hardship scheme
- Fees and Charges 2017/18
- Final outturn 2015-16
- Fulfilling Thanet's growth and development opportunities
- LED lighting for multi-storey car parks
- Manston CPO soft market testing exercise
- Multi-Storey car parks purchase
- Petition re condemnation of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes across Thanet
- Petition to change the number 9 bus route
- Single district statement of intent
- Single East Kent District Council
- Strategic asset management plan 2017-2021
- Thanet local plan consultation
- The smoke and carbon monoxide regulations 2015

- The unauthorised deposit of waste fixed penalty regulations 2016
- Treasury management strategy statement and annual investment strategy 2016-17
- Treasury Management Strategy 2017-18

7.4 The corporate or service related strategy or policy documents detailed below were considered and approved by Full Council:

- Annual Report – Chairman of Governance and Audit Committee
- Annual Report – Chairman of Standards Committee
- Annual Report- Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Annual Treasury Management Review 2015-16
- Appointment of Council's external auditors for 2018-19 and beyond
- Appointment of Independent Persons
- Budget 2017-18 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2017-2021
- Business case single East Kent Council
- Calendar of meetings
- Changes to the 2016-17 capital programme and 2017-18 to 2020-21 capital plan
- Community safety partnership plan 2017-2020
- Constitutional changes
- Corporate Priorities 2015-2019 – 10/15
- Council Tax 2017-18
- Council tax support scheme
- Dispensation under Localism Act 2011
- East Kent services delegations
- Exceptional hardship scheme
- Fees and Charges 2017-18
- Leader's reports
- LED lighting for multi-storey car parks
- Member's Allowances Scheme 2017/18
- Mid-Year Treasury Management Report 2016-17
- Pay Policy Statement 2017-18
- Pension inequality – notice of motion
- Petition re condemnation of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes across Thanet
- Petition to change the number 9 bus route
- Public speaking at meetings
- Reports of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Responsibility for Executive Functions
- Single district statement of intent
- Standards Hearing Decision
- Standing orders re dismissal of chief officers
- The Determination of the Gambling Policy Statement For the Next Three Years- 12/15
- The Determination of the Licensing Policy Statement For The Next Five Years – 12/15
- Treasury Management Strategy 2017-18
- Urgent individual cabinet member decisions

8.1 ANNUAL REPORTS – GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

- 8.1.1 To comply with best practice, the Governance and Audit Committee determined that it would consider annually whether it meets its terms of reference and how it has impacted on the internal control environment.
- 8.1.2 The council established a Governance and Audit Committee in March 2006. Whilst there is no statutory obligation to have an Audit Committee, they are widely recognised as a core component of effective governance. In recent years there has been a significant amount of regulation and guidance issues in governance arrangements for private and public sector bodies, the common feature of governance arrangements being the existence of an Audit Committee.
- 8.1.3 The purpose of the Council's Governance and Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent review of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.
- 8.1.4 The Governance and Audit Committee should ensure it has effective communication with the authority, to include the Executive, the Head of Internal Audit, the External Auditor and other stakeholders. Consequently it is considered to be best practice for the Committee to be self-aware and to submit an annual report to Council.
- 8.1.5 The annual report summarises the work of the Committee for the year and concludes that it has received clear, concise and relevant information, regular training events on topics specific to the business of the Committee, and has done all that it can to meet the aims and objectives for the Committee in the best way that it can.
- 8.1.6 The Chairman and Officers have considered the effectiveness of the Committee. The evidence demonstrating achievement of the Committee's terms of reference is contained in the Annual Report to the Council on the effectiveness of the Committee.
- 8.2 Thanet District Council's Overview & Scrutiny Panel is entitled to make an annual report to the Annual Meeting of Council. This report summarises the key achievements of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel during 2016/17 and indicated the Panels' suggested priorities for 2017/18.
- 8.2.1 The Panel unanimously agreed at the beginning of the 2016/17 to disregard political proportionality when setting out the membership of the working parties/task & finish groups. Each of the sub-group membership was set at eight to have 3 UKIP, 2 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 Democratic Independent Group and 1 Independent Group. Members established three working parties which were the Corporate Performance Review Working Party, Community Safety Partnership Working Party and Electoral Registration Process Review Task & Finish Group.
- 8.2.2 At the Panel's meeting in December 2016 it was agreed to stand down the Electoral Registration process Review Working Party and replace it with a Dreamland Working Group. It was also agreed that this group would use political proportionality and membership was set at seven to have 4 UKIP, 2 Conservative and 1 Labour.
- 8.2.3 During this municipal year, the Chairman of the Panel presented to Council four reports on the scrutiny activities being undertaken. The main focus of the reports came from the work activities of the Corporate Performance Working Party and Community Safety Working Party.

- 8.2.4 The Panel unanimously agreed at its meeting on 13 December 2016 to implement revised scrutiny arrangements. The arrangements are still relatively new and as yet Democratic Services have yet to receive a request for a scrutiny review; however Democratic Services look forward to receiving requests in the new municipal year.
- 8.2.4 Full Council agreed at its meeting on 14 July 2016 to amend the council's constitution to allow a trial of public speaking at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to take place. The trial period covered O&S meetings on 16 August, 25 October, 21 November, 13 December, 26 January and 14 February.
- 8.2.5 The Panel called-in no Cabinet decision in 2016/17

9.0 IMPROVEMENT BOARD

- 9.1 The Improvement Board met once in April 2016 and reported upon the peer review follow up report. Members observed that the report reflected improvements that had been witnessed by the Board since the original peer challenge. Peer members said that the February review was enlightening. They felt that the council was managing the council's internal corporate affairs more effectively and that the effort should also now be towards improving the outward interaction and influencing with the public and other organisations.
- 9.2 The key messages from that meeting were:
- The council will hold staff briefings to share the peer review report with staff.
 - The Chairman of the Improvement Board will draft a formal letter to be forwarded to the council formally marking the closure of the work of the Board. The letter will be shared by the council with councillors, staff and the wider public.
 - The council will also produce its response letter to the Board letter and this will be shared with all Board members before publication.
 - A suggestion that a press conference be held with all the parties involved to share the good messages coming out of this review process was well received by the Board as it was considered to be a good way of showing that council has moved on.

10. ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE 2014/15 SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The following section reflects the actions completed to address the 2014/15 Annual Governance Statement recommendations.

1. Information Governance
 - Appoint Information Governance Manager and Officer - Completed
 - Undertake review of readiness for General Data Protection Regulations - Ongoing
 - Create action plan following review - Ongoing
 - Secure appropriate training including e-learning – Ongoing
 - Approve new Information Governance policies - Completed
2. Rationalise assets
 - Complete draft asset management plan - Completed
 - Secure Cabinet approval - Completed
 - Put in place mitigation and control measures around compliance - Completed
3. Delivery of Annual Governance Statement
 - Review and refresh documents in the assurance statements - completed

- Improve timeliness of assurance statements - Secured
 - Implement Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 Framework - Ongoing
 - Access to policies and e-learning for frontline staff – Subject to website changes
4. Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)
- Provide training on evidence of compliance with PSED in decision-making - Completed
 - Put in place programme to review policies - Completed
 - Identify training needs and create training plan - Ongoing

11.0 SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 11.1 No significant governance issues have been identified from the various assurance statements and other assessments assessments into the council's governance arrangements for 2016/17.

12.0 ASSURANCE SUMMARY

- 12.1 Good governance is about running things properly. It is the means by which the council shows it is taking decisions for the good of the people of the area, in a fair, equitable and open way. It also requires standards of behaviour that support good decision making – collective and individual integrity, openness and honesty. It is the foundation for the delivery of good quality services that meet all local people's needs. It is fundamental to showing that public money is well spent. Without good governance, councils will struggle to improve services.
- 12.2 From the review, assessment and monitoring work undertaken and supported by the ongoing work undertaken by Internal Audit, we have reached the opinion that, overall, key systems are operating soundly and that there are no fundamental control weaknesses.
- 12.3 We can confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, and there having been appropriate enquiries made, that this statement provides an accurate and fair view.

Signed by:

Signed by:

Councillor Chris Wells
Leader of the Council
the September 2017

Madeline Homer
Chief Executive
the September 2017