

Draft Annual Governance Statement 2020 - 21

Meeting	Governance and Audit Committee
Date	28 July 2021
Report Author	Estelle Culligan (Director of Law and Democracy)
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Ash Ashbee - Leader
Status	For Information
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	All

Executive Summary:

To provide the Governance and Audit Committee with the draft Annual Governance Statement 2020/21.

Recommendation(s):

Committee agrees the draft Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 which will be shared with our external auditors for amendment and comment by them prior to publication in September.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal

Regulation 6(1)(a) of the Accounts and Audit regulations 2015 requires the council to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and include a statement reporting on the review with any published statement of accounts. Regulation 6(1)(b) of the Regulations requires that the statement is the Annual Governance Statement

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. However failure to comply with statutory timescales may have legal implications

Corporate

The Annual Governance Statement is a corporate document and as such should be owned by all senior officers and members of the authority. Failure to accept the AGS will diminish the council's governance arrangements.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- *To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
- *To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it*
- *To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*

The AGS supports the public sector equality duty directly.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -
(delete as appropriate)

- Communities

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The annual governance statement (AGS) is a statutory document which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the council to carry out its functions effectively.
- 1.2 The statement is produced following a review of the council's governance arrangements and includes an action plan to address any significant governance issues identified.
- 1.3 The Governance and Audit Committee will consider this draft AGS and assurance gathering process. The AGS will then be audited and the Monitoring Officer will make any necessary changes before final publication In September 2021.

2.0 The Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

- 2.1 The draft AGS, which is attached at Annex 1, should reflect the corporate governance environment of the council as detailed in the adopted Local Code of Corporate Governance. In essence, the AGS is the formal statement that recognises, records and publishes the council's governance arrangements
- 2.2 The AGS is a key corporate document, and the Leader and Chief Executive have joint responsibility as signatories for its accuracy and completeness. In order to ensure that the AGS accurately reflects our Governance Framework, a number of sources of assurance are gathered to feed into the preparation of the document. The draft has already been or will shortly be consulted upon with the Leader, Chief Executive / Section 151 Officer and all members of the Corporate Management Team.
- 2.3 An action plan will be developed to address the governance issues identified. This will be monitored through the council's monitoring system and an update report will be provided to Governance and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis

3.0 Next Steps

- 3.1 If approved, the draft will be reviewed by Grant Thornton for additional comments and as part of their annual process of approving and signing off the accounts.

Contact Officer: *Estelle Culligan (Director of Law and Democracy)*

Reporting to: *Madeline Homer (Chief Executive)*

Annex List

Annex 1: Draft Annual Governance Statement 2020 - 2021

Corporate Consultation

Finance: *Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)*