

Annual Governance Statement 2020 - 21

Meeting	Governance and Audit Committee
Date	1 December 2021
Report Author	Estelle Culligan (Director of Law and Democracy)
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Ash Ashbee - Leader
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	All

Executive Summary:

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

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee agrees the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 and authorises the Leader and Chief Executive to sign it off for 2020/21 and for it to be published.

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 considered the draft AGS on 28 July 2021. Since then, Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, have issued statutory recommendations under s24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, which the Council accepted on 2 November 2021. The AGS has been updated accordingly.

2.0 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

- 2.1 The 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 undergone a process of consultation with the Leader, Chief Executive, Acting Section 151 Officer, internal and External Audit.
- 2.3 An action plan is included within the document to address the governance issues identified. This will be monitored and an update report will be provided to the Governance and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

3.0 Next Steps

- 3.1 If approved, the AGS will be signed by the Leader and Chief Executive and will be published prior to the publication of the accounts for 2020/21.

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

Reporting to: *Madeline Homer (Chief Executive)*

Annex List

Annex 1: Annual Governance Statement 2020 - 2021

Corporate Consultation

Finance: *Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)*

Corporate: *Madeline Homer (Chief Executive)*