

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
AUDIT COMMITTEE – 29 JUNE 2022
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year 2021/22 (attached at Appendix A), which has been compiled in accordance with best practice set out in the CIPFA / SOLACE Guidance Framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Audit Committee:-
- (a) Considers and, once satisfied, approves the Draft Annual Governance Statement.
 - (b) Authorises the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council, to make any subsequent amendments to the Draft Annual Governance Statement necessitated by the comments made by the Audit Committee,
 - (c) Recommends its certification by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The CIPFA / SOLACE Guidance Framework emphasises that the AGS is a key corporate document. The most senior Member and the most senior Officer of the Council have joint responsibility as signatories for its accuracy and completeness.
- 3.2 The signatories need to ensure that the AGS accurately reflects the governance framework for which they are responsible. In order to achieve this, they are likely to rely on many sources of assurance, e.g. Chief Officers, Members, Senior Managers and the Council’s External Auditors and other review agencies.
- 3.3 As in previous years, the production of the AGS has been co-ordinated by the Governance Group, an officer group chaired by the Chief Executive in her capacity as Head of Paid Service.
- 3.4 The Group’s membership also comprises:
- Head of Law & Administration – the Council’s Monitoring Officer
 - Head of Resources (Section 151 Officer)
 - Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
 - Governance Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
 - Service Manager (Financial Services) (deputy Section 151 Officer)
 - Chair of Operational Health and Safety Board
 - Principal Governance Officer

Due to the current senior management restructure, the job titles and designations of these roles may change in the future. It was also recently agreed that a representative from the council's Internal auditors (Shared Internal Audit Service) should also be included in the membership of this group, to provide external challenge.

The Governance Group has considered the following sources of assurance:-

Internal

- existing policies and procedures
- internal review activity (at both Member and officer level)
- Heads of Service's Management Assurance Statements
- the work of the Shared Internal Audit Service, Performance Management, Procurement and Risk Management
- the work of the Operational Health and Safety Board

External

- the work of the Council's External Auditors

3.5 Members are also asked to note that the AGS is subject to review by the Council's External Auditors.

3.6 The Annual Governance Statement was considered by the Standards Committee on 15 June 2022 who recommended its onward submission to Audit Committee.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

4.1 Local authorities are required to prepare a governance statement in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

5 Financial Implication(s)

5.1 There are no direct financial implications.

6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 Failure to produce an annual governance statement would be in breach of regulatory requirements and have legal and reputational implications.

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 There are none.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 There are none.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 There are none.

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

10.1 There are none.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

11.1 There are none.

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

12.1 A copy of the completed statement is placed on the council website.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority "A well-run council which puts our customers first".

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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