

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
AUDIT COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2024  
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION)

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Council must conduct a review annually of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and prepare an Annual Governance Statement reporting on the review with the Statement of Accounts.
- 1.2 This report sets out the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/24 for the period ending March 2024 and the Statement includes the Council's significant challenges and risk, the governance arrangement and internal controls in place.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Audit Committee:
- a) Consider the Annual Governance Statement;
  - b) Agree the Annual Governance Statement for signing by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive Officer.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 The purpose of an AGS, which is published with the Statement of Accounts, is to provide an accurate representation of the Council's governance arrangements in place during the year and to identify areas where there are significant gaps or where improvements are required.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The signatories need to ensure that the AGS accurately reflects the governance framework for which they are responsible.
- 3.4 As in previous years, the production of the AGS has been co-ordinated by the Corporate Governance Group, an officer group chaired by the Chief Executive in her capacity as Head of Paid Service.
- 3.5 The Group's membership also comprises:
- Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) - (Section 151 Officer)
  - Executive Director (Place)
  - Service Director (Property Maintenance & Climate Change)
  - Service Director (Resident & Neighbourhood)
  - Assistant Director (Legal & Governance) – the Council's Monitoring Officer

- Assistant Director (Finance) (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
- Assistant Director (Customer Service and Transformation)
- Governance Services Manager
- Human Resources Manager
- Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Chair of the Operational Health and Safety Board
- Information Governance Officer
- Officer from the Shared Internal Audit Service

3.6 The AGS is subject to review by the Council's External Auditors.

3.7 The AGS 2023/24 was considered and agreed by the Corporate Governance Group prior to being considered by 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 The Annual Governance Statement and Action Plan do not give rise to any equalities implication. However, the Council has had due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act in preparing and approving the statement.

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