

Standards Committee
22 June 2021

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 22 June 2021 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors T.Kingsbury (Chairman)

L.Musk, N.Pace, P.Zukowskyj and B.Morris

ALSO Councillors
PRESENT:

OFFICIALS N.Long, Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and
PRESENT: Governance)
S.Saunders, Legal Services Manager

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G.Michaelides.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record and noted by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors P.Zukowskyj and T.Kingsbury declared a non-pecuniary interest as appropriate by virtue of being Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

4. DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2020-21

Members received a report of the Chief Executive presenting the Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year 2020/21.

The following key points were noted:

- The Draft AGS was compiled by the Corporate Governance Group in accordance with best practice set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Guidance Framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government"

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- The draft statement reflected the impact and changes made due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The financial impact has come from both increased costs and demand for services, as well as reduced income. In addition a number of services have had to adapt to remote and Covid safe working practices, especially when engaging with the public and other key stakeholders
- A number of changes had to be made to the governance arrangements of the Council, including moving to virtual council meetings. Members agreed that the council could take pride in how quickly and how well it had moved to holding virtual meetings
- Officers had also assessed the Council's governance arrangements against CIPFA's new Financial Management Code. Whilst the council met the standards set out in the Code a number of areas had already been identified where improvements could be made and these had been included in the Action Plan going forward
- Further planned improvements and changes had been agreed by the Corporate Governance Group and were outlined in the Action Plan in section five of the draft statement

Members did highlight the appointment of a new Compliance Manager in the Housing Property Services Compliance team, and enquired as to whether those dealing with health and safety compliance issues should be included in the Corporate Governance Group. Officers confirmed that as part of the Action Plan there was an action to integrate the organisational arrangements for health and safety into the governance framework. Officers further clarified that, whilst not outlined in the report, the intention was for the Chair of the council's Operational Health and Safety Group to become a member of the Corporate Governance Group.

RESOLVED:

Members unanimously approved the Draft Annual Governance Statement for onward submission to the Audit Committee; and

Subject to any comments by the Audit Committee, recommended its certification by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

5. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

Members reviewed the proposed 2021/22 work programme for the committee. Members noted that the programme was able to change in response to events and Members' direction.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the work programme.

Meeting ended at 7.42 pm
JA