

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 22 JUNE 2021
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2020/21

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year 2020/21 (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 Standards Committee:-
- (a) Considers and once satisfied, approves the Draft Annual Governance Statement for onward submission to the Audit Committee.
 - (b) Subject to any comments by the Audit Committee, 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 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:
- Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning & Governance)
 - Corporate Director (Housing & Communities)
 - 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)
 - Principal Governance Officer

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

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.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

4.1 Local authorities are required to prepare a governance statement in accordance with 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 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 to engage with our communities.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An EqlA 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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