

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 14 JUNE 2023
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year 2022/23 (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:-
considers the draft Annual Governance Statement and provide any comments for onward submission to the Audit Committee.

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, including: Senior Management Team, Members, Corporate Working Groups, Internal and External Auditors and other sources.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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
 - Senior Governance Officer

- Information Governance and Member Support Assistant

It was also agreed that a representative from the council's Internal auditors (Shared Internal Audit Service) and the Shared Anti-Fraud Services (due to the council's recent membership) should also be included in the membership of this group, to provide relevant feedback and input.

The Governance Group has considered the following sources of assurance:

Internal

- existing policies and procedures
- internal review activity (at both Member and officer level)
- Senior Management Team Management Assurance Statements
- the work of the Shared Internal Audit Service and Shared Anti-Fraud Services
- the work of the Operational Health and Safety Board
- reports and feedback from key internal groups (e.g. Equalities and Safeguarding) and responsible officers (e.g. Data Protection Officer)

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 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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