

## **Report of the Executive Director – Core Services**

### **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 28<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

#### **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/2020**

##### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This brief covering report presents the Authority's 2019/2020 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

##### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee considers the AGS as an accurate statement reflecting the governance arrangements in place and the actions arising from the annual governance review process.**
- 2.2 **Subject to the Committee's comments, it is recommended that the Draft AGS is submitted to full Council for approval.**
- 2.3 **It is also recommended that the Committee receives updates on the progress of the actions identified in the AGS action plan at each of its meetings.**

##### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The production of an AGS is a statutory requirement as defined in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. However, those regulations do not provide any guidance as to the contents or format for the document. CIPFA provides guidance but this is not mandatory and so what emerges is a variety of styles, lengths and formats for AGSs across local government.
- 3.2 One aspect of that CIPFA guidance for 2019/20 has recommended that the AGS specifically reflects the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had. Whilst the greatest impact has fallen within the current 2020/21 financial year, the AGS is signed at the point when the statement of accounts is signed-off and therefore needs to reflect the most up to date position.
- 3.3 The AGS is by definition a public document and should therefore be constructed in a style that allows the reader to understand the governance arrangements of the Council and obtain assurance that there has been a robust annual review

process resulting, where appropriate, in actions to address any improvements identified.

- 3.4 The AGS for 2019/20 has been prepared following an annual governance review process the Committee considered at a previous meeting. This proved to be very useful and highlighted where senior managers themselves saw opportunities to further enhance and improve governance arrangements.
- 3.5 It is important that the AGS is not seen as an 'end of year' process and that there is therefore a constant focus on the actions throughout the year. The Committee should be assured that following the annual governance review process all Business Units committed to reflect on their own reviews at their management team meetings on a continuous basis. In support of that the Committee will receive updates to the action plan at each of its meetings.
- 3.6 As the Committee is aware, a new approach to broader governance assurance is also being developed that will support and integrate into the new risk management arrangements but also embed the focus on governance that the recent annual governance review introduced. The Committee will of course be kept informed as to the development of the governance assurance framework which will provide a clearer focus for the Committee itself across its wider governance remit. Work is also underway to ensure there is easy public access to the AGS and other governance documents through the Council's website.
- 3.7 The AGS is appended to this report.
- 3.8 The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the AGS and subject to any comments a revised draft will be submitted to Full Council for formal approval.

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