

## Report of City Solicitor

## Report to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

## Subject: Annual Governance Statement

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

## Summary of main issues

1. The Council has a duty to undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control. Following that review a committee, in our case the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, must approve an annual governance statement.
2. The review of effectiveness of the Council's Governance arrangements, has been informed by matters considered by;
  - Executive Board
  - Corporate Governance and Audit Committee (particularly assurance reports from officers reporting to the committee)
  - Reports and opinions from;
    - Internal Audit
    - External Audit
    - Inspectorates
    - Peer Reviews
  - Appropriate enquiries of management and staff with relevant knowledge and experience.
3. The attached Annual Governance Statement has been prepared in accordance with proper practices specified by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 has been previously released as a draft in June to accompany the Statement of Accounts when put on deposit. This committee considered that version of the document at the meeting of the committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> June.

4. The document has been updated following assurances received by Committee in June and now reflects reports considered by the Executive Board in the intervening period (e.g. the annual report from the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board) and is presented to this committee for approval.

### **Recommendations**

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to approve that the attached Annual Governance Statement.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) to the committee for approval.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The Annual Governance Statement is a public statement on the adequacy of the Council's governance arrangements, and, as directed by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, must accompany the statement of accounts.
- 2.2 The Regulations, specifically Regulation 6 requires authorities to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control in accordance with 'proper practices'<sup>1</sup>. These proper practices have been used as the basis for preparing the AGS which appears at Appendix 1.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 This year, as last, the review of effectiveness has been undertaken on an ongoing basis including internal and external audit of our internal control processes, and matters that have been the subject of reports to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, the Executive Board and other member forums. In addition Directors have reviewed the attached statement and have confirmed that, to the best of their knowledge and belief, all matters of significance have been disclosed.
- 3.2 Members will recall from the June meeting that as a result of requirements contained in Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the Authority was under a duty to release a draft Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Accounts when they are placed on deposit. That draft document was signed by both the Council's Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer and was available for Member comment at the last meeting of the committee.
- 3.3 The document has been updated following assurances received by Committee in June and now also reflects:
  - Reports considered by the Executive Board in the intervening period (e.g. the annual report from the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board);
  - Receipt by the authority of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual letter to the Authority; and,
  - The view received from our External Auditor on the Statement, which is that "the Annual Governance Statement is not misleading or inconsistent with information they are aware of from their audit of the financial statements."
- 3.4 The Statement is now presented to committee for approval.
- 3.5 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to agree the attached Annual Governance Statement and authorise the Chair to sign the statement on behalf of the committee.

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<sup>1</sup> CIPFA/SOLACE - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016 Edition)

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 The Corporate Leadership Team and Best Council leadership Team have both been consulted on content of the draft Annual Governance Statement, particularly to ensure that there are no omissions or misrepresentations.
- 4.1.2 As a signatory to the Statement the Leader of Council has also been consulted.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 The Annual Governance Statement links to the objectives of the Council Business Plan relating to Equality – specifically that all major decisions needing to evidence that appropriate consideration has been given to equality issues.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The Statement has been aligned with the Council's Corporate Governance Code and Framework which was approved by this Committee in April 2017.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 The Annual Governance Statement makes links to the objectives of the Council Business Plan relating to the budget and financial planning and management – specifically that all directorates work within their approved budget and that arrangements ensure the Council maintains revenue reserves.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 The Annual Governance Statement is a public statement on the adequacy of the Council's governance arrangements, and as directed by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, must accompany the statement of accounts.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, specifically Regulation 6, requires authorities to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control in accordance with proper practices. The system of internal control, including arrangements for the management of risk, assists the Council in effectively exercising its functions.
- 4.6.2 In addition the committee and the Executive Board have received regular reports which demonstrate that there is an on-going process for identifying, evaluating and managing risks.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The Annual Governance Statement concludes that key systems are generally operating soundly and, where weaknesses have been identified arrangements, arrangements are in place to resolve them.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to agree the attached Annual Governance Statement and authorise the Chair to sign the statement on behalf of the committee.

## **7 Background documents**

- 7.1 None