

Agenda Item No: 5
Report To: **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 15 March 2022

Report Title: 2021/2022 Annual Governance Statement

Report Author & Job Title: Charlotte Hammersley, Compliance and Data Protection Manager



Summary: Each year the council must produce and approve an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS designed to summarise the council's approach to governance and show how the council fulfils the principles for good corporate governance in the public sector. The AGS needs to draw conclusions, based on evidence throughout the past year, about the effectiveness of the council's arrangements.

Our governance arrangements are well-developed but they also evolve. Their various components are subject to ongoing development, which are summarised in the AGS.

In conclusion governance arrangements remain appropriate, effective and adaptive to change as circumstances dictate.

Purpose of the report:

1. To provide the Audit Committee with assurance on the effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements over the last year.
2. To provide details of those additional areas where the organisation's governance will develop further over the forthcoming year.
3. Once approved, the AGS is signed by the Leader and the Chief Executive and included alongside the council's Statement of Accounts.

Recommendations: **The Audit Committee is asked to approve the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement**

Contact officer: charlotte.hammersley@ashford.gov.uk

2021/22 Annual Governance Statement

Introduction and Background

1. The AGS is prepared each year to review all aspects of the council's governance arrangements in accordance its Local Code of Corporate Governance which was adopted in 2016.
2. The AGS deals with progress that has been made on any recommendations highlighted in the previous year's AGS (2020/21), before moving on to explain the governance arrangements in place and key changes or improvements that have been made throughout the 2021/22 year. Finally, the AGS makes a series of recommendations to further strengthen our arrangements over the coming year.

Proposal/Current Position

3. In addition to the council's own assessment, the Head of the Audit Partnership provides an opinion on the council's governance for inclusion in the AGS. At the present time, an interim opinion has been made whilst the planned audits for 2021/22 are concluded. The opinion covers the period April to December 2021 and is based on an interim assessment for the council provided by the previous Head of the Audit Partnership at the time of their departure. In addition the Partnership Deputy Head of Audit and Audit Managers, all of whom are qualified professional auditors and have extensive knowledge and experience, have confirmed they are not currently aware of any issues that would adversely impact upon the opinion.
4. It is planned that the opinion will be reviewed again and reported back to this Committee at the summer meeting.

Conclusion

5. Good governance is a continuously evolving process and the AGS sets out the council's framework together with identified areas for improvement in 2021/22. Once approved, the AGS will be placed on the council's website alongside the council's Statement of Accounts.