

Title of meeting: Governance and Audit and Standards Committee

Date of meeting: 16th July 2021

Subject: Annual Governance Statement

Report by: Kelly Nash, Corporate Performance Manager

Wards affected: n/a

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The report seeks approval from the Governance and Audit and Standards Committee for the council's draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2020/21.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Governance and Audit and Standards Committee are asked to:

- 1) Agree the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 (Appendix 1)
- 2) Approve the refreshed Local Code of Governance (Appendix 2)

3. Background

3.1 The authority has a duty to produce and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). This sets out how Portsmouth City Council has complied with the Local Code of Governance, and how the authority meets the requirements of Regulation 4 (3) of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.

3.2 The purpose of the AGS is to set out the systems and processes in place to ensure that Council business is conducted lawfully and in accordance with proper standards. Compliance helps ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. It also acknowledges the Council's responsibility to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised by outlining significant governance issues facing the organisation, and setting out how these will be addressed.

3.3 It is a key role of the Governance and Audit committee to monitor governance issues across the authority and ensure they are performance managed. The Governance and Audit and Standards Committee receive regular updates on the development of the Annual Governance Statement. Governance issues are also



reviewed regularly by the Corporate Governance Group which is attended by the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer, Director of Finance and Resources, Director of Corporate Resources and the Chief Internal Auditor.

- 3.4 The AGS reports against seven core principles of governance set out in the International Framework for Good Governance in the Public Sector. The document is attached as Appendix 1. The detail of how the organisation addresses these principles is set out in the Local Code of Governance, which has been refreshed for 2021 and is attached for approval by Governance and Audit and Standards Committee as Appendix 2. Every year, a number of sources are analysed, including the Annual Audit Letter, in order to review the council's practices and highlight further governance issues where the authority may be exposed.
- 3.5 For 2020/2021, the Annual Governance Statement also notes the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and that the implications of this for the governance of the organisation as we move into the recovery phase.
- 3.6 The Annual Governance Statement also includes the annual opinion on the effectiveness of the internal system of control from the Chief Internal Auditor.
- 3.7 Due to the pandemic, the timetables for agreement of accounts and finalisation of the AGS have been extended. However, it is unlikely that the content of this document will change significantly before final submission, and therefore it is timely for the Governance and Audit and Standards Committee to consider the report and comment at this stage.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement has been prepared according to the proper practice framework - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government issued jointly by SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) and CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) in 2016.

5. Integrated impact assessment

- 5.1 An integrated impact assessment is not required as the recommendations do not directly impact on service or policy delivery. Any changes made arising from this report would be subject to investigation in their own right.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Legal considerations have been taken into account in the preparation of this report and where appropriate embodied within it.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

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Signed by: David Williams, Chief Executive

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Draft Annual Governance Statement 2020/21
Appendix 2 - Local Code of Governance

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: