

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015-16**

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the committee with the final draft version of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2015-16 prior to its inclusion in the Statement of Accounts. The AGS is attached as Appendix A.
- 1.2 The Annual Governance Statement has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2015/16.
- 1.3 The preparation and publication of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a statutory requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011. The Council is required to “conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control” and to prepare a statement on internal control “in accordance with proper practices”.

**2 Recommendations for decision**

2.1 The Audit Committee is requested to:

- a) Review the Annual Governance Statement 2015/16 (AGS)
- b) Consider the robustness of the Council’s governance arrangements
- c) Approve the AGS prior to its inclusion in the Statement of Accounts

**3. Supporting information**

- 3.1 A draft version of the Annual Governance Statement was reported to this Committee in March 2016. At that meeting members of the committee had the opportunity to discuss and comment on the statement.
- 3.2 The final draft version of the Annual Governance Statement is now presented to the Committee for approval.
- 3.3 Once it has been approved by the Audit Committee, the statutory Annual Governance Statement will be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive at the same time they sign the Annual Statement of Accounts,
- 3.4 The assurance gathering process is based on the management and internal control framework of the Council.

**4. Options considered**

- 4.1 None – this is a statutory requirement.

**5. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 To comply with legislation

**6. Resource implications**

None

Contact Officer

Kate Mulhearn, Business Assurance Service Manager,  
01296 585724

Background Documents



# **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

**APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016**

# **Annual Governance Statement - April 2015 to March 2016**

## **1. Scope of Responsibility**

Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Aylesbury Vale District Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Aylesbury Vale District Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Aylesbury Vale District Council's arrangements for ensuring good corporate governance are embedded in its constitution, policies and procedures. It has not approved and adopted a separate single code of corporate governance. However the principles to which the Council operates are intended to be consistent with those contained in the CIPFA / SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. Copies of the Council's principal policies and codes of practice can be consulted on its website ([www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk](http://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk)). A list of the more significant documents is attached at Appendix A.

This statement explains how Aylesbury Vale District Council has complied with the principles of corporate governance and also meets the requirements of regulations 4(2) and 4(3) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to internal control.

## **2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework**

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risk to the achievement of Aylesbury Vale District Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

## **3. The Governance Framework**

The governance framework has been in place at Aylesbury Vale District Council for the year ended 31 March 2016 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Governance Report and Statement of Accounts.

### **3.1. Identifying, communicating and reviewing the Council's vision**

Aylesbury Vale District Council's statement of its long-term vision for the Vale:

*"To secure the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the people and businesses in the area."*

To enable the Council to realise this vision, the focus is on working:

- To enable essential infrastructure for growth and sustainability of the area be it physical or social
- To ensure fair and speedy access to essential services and their referral to partners
- To provide a healthy and dynamic institution for making effective decisions about the area, to which everyone can contribute
- To stimulate, innovate and enable economic growth of the area, its regeneration and the attraction of inward investment
- To provide or commission services and products that customers and businesses have agreed add value to their lives

The Council has an ambitious agenda to meet the financial pressures facing the public sector and is committed to supporting the local economy and transforming the district through its Commercial AVDC programme. Key Plans include:

- Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16-2019/20
- Commercial AVDC Business Transformation Programme
- Capital Programme
- Housing and Homeless Strategy 2014-2017
- Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (under development)

### **3.2. Ensuring effective management of change and transformation**

The approach adopted to achieve organisational change is through the Commercial AVDC programme. This will see each service fundamentally reviewed in terms of what is delivered, to whom, by who, at what cost and what the recipient should be expected to pay for it.

The work being undertaken within the Commercial AVDC programme is being overseen and directed by the Cabinet member for Business Transformation and is being subjected to scrutiny by Finance and Services Scrutiny Committee. To ensure greater accountability, a separate Programme Board has been established and meets regularly.

### **3.3. Measuring the quality of services for users and value for money**

Projected budgetary pressure resulting from the Government's public sector efficiency agenda have made reduction of the Council's cost base through either efficiency, cuts or by increasing its income, the top strategic priority. The extent of the reduction in available funding is predicted to be such that this will fundamentally reshape the size and structure of the organisation. The Council is currently undertaking a review of Business Intelligence and Performance Management systems to ensure they are aligned to the changing organisational structure and priorities.

The Council has a sound understanding of its costs and performance and the factors influencing these. Cost and performance information is used in financial and service planning to make policy and service provision decisions and to identify efficiency savings.

The Council regularly reviews costs to assess whether they are commensurate with the range, level and quality of services provided. It actively seeks and evaluates new ways of delivering services to achieve efficiencies and works with partners and other service providers to compare and evaluate processes, costs and outcomes.

Managers and budget holders are able to access financial reports through the finance system. Summary reports are prepared for Corporate Board and Members. These show current expenditure, forecast predicted outturn for the year and highlight any areas where unexpected variances are apparent.

To promote best practice and value for money in procurement, the Council has entered into a joint arrangement with Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise' (iESE). iESE is a sector wide organisation with considerable cross cutting experience and knowledge of various procurement approaches. The performance of this arrangement is being kept under review by the Finance and Services Scrutiny Committee.

### **3.4. Roles and Responsibilities of Members and Officers**

The Council's Constitution sets out the roles of and relationships between the full Council, the Cabinet and Scrutiny and other Committees in the policy and decision making process and sets out their legal requirements. It also sets out a record of what responsibility each Council body or individual has for particular types of decisions or for decisions relating to particular areas or functions. The Constitution requires that all decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council will be made in accordance with the principles set out in the Constitution. The Leader is responsible for determining the scheme of delegation for executive functions which is included in the Constitution.

The Cabinet structure and the membership of the committees was reviewed following the May 2015 elections having regard to the political balance rules and some changes were made. The effect of which was to consolidate some of the portfolios resulting in a reduction of Cabinet Members from eight to seven. The Leader intends to keep the individual workloads under review, but at present is satisfied with the current arrangements.

To encourage participation and accountability one hour is set aside for questions from members at every ordinary meeting of the full Council. There is also provision for public participation at meetings and a facility for the public to make statements relevant to a matter on the agenda at Council, Cabinet and other committees. Full Council meetings and Strategic Development Management Committee are now webcast.

The Constitution sets out how the public can access the decision making process. Cabinet publishes a plan 28 days before each meeting setting out key decisions to be taken at the meeting. Notice is also given of the intention to hold a meeting or part of a meeting in private to enable confidential or exempt information to be discussed.

Minutes and papers for Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings which are open to the public are freely available on the Council's web site. The only papers not available will be those that are exempt under the Council's procedures rules as set out in the Constitution.

The Transition Board which comprises the Corporate Team and senior managers ensures that the senior officers work as a team to enable the Council to best serve the people who live and work in the Vale. All managers are involved in Manager Group meetings which receive information on corporate issues and projects. The series of "Let's Get Talking" sessions continued in 2015/16 where Directors and Cabinet members meet with staff

across the Council to discuss current issues and give staff the opportunity to ask questions.

### **3.5. The Standards of Behaviour for Members and Staff**

Member behaviours are governed by a code of conduct which is set out in the Constitution. The code covers disclosable pecuniary interests as required by the Localism Act 2011 and also retains the requirements to disclose personal and prejudicial interests and those to register gifts and hospitality received in a member's official capacity together with interests in outside bodies, charities and pressure groups. The Code of Conduct was adopted by full Council in July 2012.

All members of the Council have completed a register of their pecuniary and personal interests. Copies of guidance produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government on the revised code have been provided to every member and they have also received information from the Monitoring Officer highlighting the key aspects.

The Constitution also includes protocols covering member/officer relations, member involvement in commercial transactions and a members planning code of good practice.

There is a three stage procedure for dealing with complaints that Members have broken the code of conduct. A code of conduct for employees was approved in 2013 in conjunction with trade unions and employee representatives. This covers all aspects of conduct at work from how to treat colleagues to any conflicts of interest and dealing with matters such as accepting gifts and hospitality.

### **3.6 Financial Regulations and Schemes of Delegation**

The Financial Regulations and Procedures, including the scheme of delegation, provide the framework for managing the authority's financial affairs. They apply to every member and officer of the authority and anyone acting on its behalf. They are linked to the other regulatory governance documents forming part of the Council's Constitution, for example, Contracts Procedure Rules.

The Council's Financial Regulations and detailed Financial Procedures were reviewed and updated during February/March 2016 to ensure alignment with best practice and to reflect the authority's commercial approach to financial management. They set out clear roles and responsibilities for members, the Section 151 Officer and senior managers within a modern financial control environment. The Contract Procedure Rules have also been revised during the year. The revised Financial Regulations will be taken to Cabinet for approval in July 2016.

Compliance with financial procedures is assessed as part of internal audits.

### **3.7 Role of the Chief Financial Officer**

The Council largely mirrors the recommendations made by CIPFA with regards to the role of the Chief Financial Officer and his or her position and status within the organisation. For this purpose the Chief Financial Officer is the Director with responsibility for Finance (Section 151 Officer).

The Director with responsibility for Finance has a key position within the organisation and sits as a member of the Transition Board, this being the main officer decision making body of the organisation responsible for developing, implementing and delivering the strategic objectives of the organisation.

All material financial decisions must be approved by the Director with responsibility for Finance or his deputy and the decision making structure of the organisation is designed to ensure that this happens through the report approval framework. Processes, systems, internal controls and risks are maintained and frequently reviewed in order to ensure that good financial management exists within the organisation and that value for money is achieved.

The Director with responsibility for Finance is professionally qualified and skilled and is provided with the necessary resources to provide a finance function that is fit for purpose and suitably equipped to meet organisational and stakeholder needs.

### **3.8 Role of the Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committees and Standards Committee**

The Audit Committee is a key component of the Council's governance framework providing independent assurance to the members of the adequacy of the Council's governance, risk management and internal control frameworks. The Committee receives regular internal and external audit reports and is effective in contributing to improving the internal control environment of the Council. The Audit Committee terms of reference comply with CIPFA's guide.

The Audit Committee's Annual Report, including the annual assessment of the effectiveness of the committee, will be discussed at their meeting in July 2016. It will be circulated to all members, who will have the opportunity to raise questions at full Council. It will also be published on the Council's website.

An annual report on the work of the Scrutiny Committees is presented to Council each year and for 2016 will be considered by full Council on 18 May 2016. The annual report will summarise the issues considered by the Scrutiny Committees during the course of 2015/16 and will continue to provide opportunities for members of the public and the wider Council membership to suggest possible topics for review.

The Standards Committee comprises seven district councillors plus two councillors from town or parish councils and three independent persons who are not entitled to vote. The two parish/town council representatives have been nominated by the Aylesbury Vale Association of Local Councils and the three independent persons have been appointed following public advertisement and interview.

The Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2015/16 will be submitted to the full Council on 18 May 2016. This sets out the work of the Committee over the year, including information on the Committee's Role and Terms of Reference, an overview of its activities during the year and a report on the monitoring of complaints and compliance with the Code of Conduct. The Annual Report is published on the Council's website.

### **3.9 Compliance with Relevant Laws and Regulations, Internal Policies and Procedures**

Ensuring compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations involves a range of measures which include:

- Awareness, understanding and training carried out by internal officers and external experts
- The drawing up and circulation of guidance and advice on key procedures, policies and practices



- Proactive monitoring of compliance by relevant key officers including the Section 151 Officer (Director with responsibility for Finance) and the Monitoring Officer

Compliance with new or revised policies is monitored by the relevant key officers and is incorporated in the Service Risk Assurance Process.

Business Assurance Services (internal audit) develops a risk based annual audit plan which includes consideration of compliance across all areas of AVDC. Reports are produced for management, recommendations for improvements agreed and implementation monitored through to completion. Internal and external audit updates and reviews are reported to the Audit Committee.

Under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Monitoring Officer is required to report to the Council where, in his/her opinion, a proposal, decision or omission by the Council, its Members or Officers is, or is likely to be, unlawful and also to report on any investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman. It has not been necessary for the Monitoring Officer to issue a formal report for the year 2015/16.

The Section 151 officer also has a legal responsibility to issue formal reports if they have particular concerns about the financial arrangements or situation of the Council. No such formal reports have been issued during the 2015/16 financial year.

### **3.10 Risk Management Arrangements**

The Council has in place a process for identifying, assessing, managing and reviewing the key areas of risk and uncertainty that could impact on the achievement of the Council's objectives and service priorities. Strategic risks for the Council have been identified and monitoring arrangements in place through quarterly review with the Transition Board.

A Service Risk Assurance process in place for all services and risk registers are in place for major projects.

As a result of the Commercial AVDC programme and the substantial changes facing the Council the risk management arrangements are being reviewed to ensure they are appropriate going forward.

### **3.11 Whistle-blowing and Complaints Procedures**

The Whistleblowing Policy and reporting procedures are available on the Council's website. This forms part of the Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy Strategy. There have been no whistle-blowing reports in 2015/16. There has been no use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act during 2015/16.

There is a Customer Comment, Compliments and Complaints Policy which includes a public document explaining the process. There are also detailed procedures for staff who are dealing with a complaint. All staff are required to complete the Customer Comment, Compliments and Complaints e-learning module.

In 2014/15 the Council maintained the British Standards Institute Complaints Standard. However it was decided not to continue with this certification in 2015/16 due to the cost. The process for complaints, however, remains the same as when the council had the certification.

The Standards Committee considers any complaints made against councillors relating to breaches of the code of conduct. Details of how to make a complaint and the committee's procedure for dealing with member complaints are available on the Council's website and hard copies of a complaints leaflet have been distributed to information points throughout the District. There were no complaints against councillors which lead to a full investigation in 2015/16.

### **3.12 Anti Fraud and Corruption**

Business Assurance Service and the Director responsible for Finance are responsible for developing and maintaining the Council's anti-fraud and corruption strategies.

CIPFA's "Code of Practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption" supports organisations seeking to ensure they have the right governance and operational arrangements in place to counter fraud and corruption. During the year Business Assurance Services performed a fraud benchmarking assessment of the current state of the Council's fraud governance structures and processes against the CIPFA code.

The Council has reached a basic level of performance against the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption. This includes having adequate arrangements in place against most of the performance criteria that are fundamental to the management of fraud and corruption risks. There remain a number of areas where performance should be improved before a good standard of performance can be evidenced. Having considered all principles set out in the CIPFA code and the gaps, a high level action plan has been developed to strengthen the Council's position in managing the risk of fraud. Progress on implementation of actions, which include a review of the Council's Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy in 2016/17, is reported to the Audit Committee.

### **3.13 Member and Officer Development Needs**

An all-party Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) is in place to oversee, monitor and help progress delivery of learning and development for elected Members to meet individual and corporate needs, and to achieve value for money. The MDSG has continued its work, with some changes in membership, following the 2015 District Council elections. A Member Induction Programme was successfully delivered to newly elected Councillors following the 2015 elections. This included training on the Code of Conduct and ethical standards.

The MDSG undertook surveys of Members in July-August 2015 asking them to identify their future development and support needs. The survey results have been used to put together a Member Development Programme (MDP) which covers a range of issues including scrutiny skills, casework/advocacy, the local Member role in planning applications and enforcement, public speaking, effectively communicating with the media, housing matters and safeguarding.

AVDC has a comprehensive training and development programme. Details of the programme are available to all staff and Members on the Intranet. This takes into account both the organisation development needs as well as individual needs. The eLearning hub is now well established with a wide range of learning and development opportunities, alongside more traditional classroom programmes. We continue to work collaboratively with other public sector organisations across Buckinghamshire to deliver management and leadership training. This has the benefits of staff being able to receive training in a timely manner and also learn from other organisations.

As part of the Commercial AVDC programme the Council is developing a new behavioural framework for officers and will be reviewing the processes for annual performance review in 2016/17.

The Council operates a joint coaching scheme with Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC). Staff can self nominate or be referred to the scheme by their managers; they are then able to choose a coach from BCC or AVDC. This has been well used over the last 12 months.

The apprenticeship programme has been further developed offering training opportunities to young people. Nine teams have employed apprentices during 2015/16.

### **3.14 Communication and Consultation with the Public and Other Stakeholders**

The Council recognises and welcomes the importance of consulting effectively with local people and other stakeholders who have an interest in life in the district.

The Council uses a wide range of channels to both consult and communicate with the community and other stakeholders. Consultation methods range from quantitative self-completion questionnaires to focus groups depending on the target audience and the objectives of each consultation project. Regular communication channels include the residents' magazine delivered to all households, a proactive media relations programme (radio, TV, newspapers), parish and community noticeboards, poster sites and targeted literature. Social media including text messaging, Twitter, Facebook and web casting are being used proactively.

AVDC launched its new website in August 2015. The website is clear, easy to use and available on any device at any time. The website was developed in consultation with residents, customers and council services to ensure the site provides what is needed in this advancing digital environment.

### **3.15 Information Governance Arrangements**

Information governance is overseen by the Information Governance Group (IGG) which is chaired by the Director with responsibility for Finance who fulfils the role of Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO). This group comprises of managers from key departments who are empowered to take decisions on information management. The IGG's key responsibility is to ensure that the Information Management Strategy is maintained and that actions are taken to implement the strategy and kept it up to date.

### **3.16 Governance Arrangements for Partnerships**

Article 1 of the constitution commits the Council to providing community leadership in partnership with local people and businesses and effective and transparent decision-making, and to improving the delivery of services in consultation with the community. The Council has identified its significant partnerships and there are appropriate governance arrangements in place.

The significant partnerships are:

- Local Enterprise Partnerships - South East Midlands LEP (SEMLEP) and Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP (BTVLEP). AVDC is in overlapping LEP arrangement as they both have a natural geographical fit with the Vale and reflect the common "travel to work areas" and shared workforce, housing, skills and infrastructure issues. AVDC has had a seat on both of the LEP

Boards, which is helpful in being in a strong position to influence and ensure there is LEP impact in the Vale and its economic growth, benefitting AVDC's communities.

- Buckinghamshire Advantage (50% share) is the delivery arm of the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's (BTVLEP). It also develops a number of separate capital projects and infrastructure investment. It is currently working closely with Aylesbury Vale District Council and the Buckinghamshire County Council, on the Aylesbury Woodlands scheme. Woodlands is an extensive site to the east of Aylesbury, and includes commercial premises, leisure facilities, road infrastructure and housing. An outline planning application for the scheme was submitted in March 2016.
- Shared Procurement Partnership with Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise' (iESE). A special purpose vehicle established to deliver savings through improved procurement.
- Aylesbury Vale Estates (AVE) (50% share). AVE is a limited liability partnership between AVDC and Akeman LLP, a private sector organisation with considerable experience of estates management and property development. The main aims are to improve AVDC's commercial estate and support the local economy, whilst maintaining a future income for the Council.
- Aylesbury Vale Broadband (95% share). Its aim is to develop a future proof fibre network to deliver superfast broadband in hard to reach, rural areas of Aylesbury Vale.
- Vale Commerce (100% share) is a limited liability company wholly owned by Aylesbury Vale District Council which aims to:
  - generate a substantial income stream for the Council
  - support improvement in the local economy
  - help foster an enterprise management perspective within the Council
  - showcase the Council's determination to become more self-sufficient

Vale Commerce will market and deliver services under two distinct customer brands; Limecart for consumers and Incgen for businesses.

- Novae Consulting (100% share) delivering the Council's commercial consultancy work.

During the spring of 2016, a guide to working with our companies was approved by Cabinet. This clearly sets out the working arrangements between the Council and the companies in which it owns or holds shares, including for example, processes for company set up, how directors should be appointed and how Council staff should work with the companies.

#### **4. Review of Effectiveness**

Aylesbury Vale District Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers

within the authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Business Assurance Manager's (internal audit) annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The governance framework described above facilitates the identification of any areas of the Council's activities where there are significant weaknesses in the financial controls, governance arrangements or the management of risk. The annual review of effectiveness has considered the following areas:

- the authority
- the executive
- the audit committee / finance and scrutiny committees
- the standards committee
- Internal audit
- Chief Financial Officer
- other explicit review/assurance mechanisms

#### **4.1 Internal Audit**

The Council's internal audit (known as Business Assurance Service) operates under regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations and in accordance with the CIPFA Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

The Head of Internal Audit (Business Assurance Services Manager) is required to deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its Annual Governance Statement. The annual internal audit opinion must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control (i.e. the Council's system of internal control).

This is achieved through the completion of a risk-based plan of work, agreed with management and approved by the Audit Committee, which is designed to provide a reasonable level of assurance. The opinion does not imply that Internal Audit has reviewed all risks relating to the organisation.

Where recommendations for the improvement of controls or systems are made at the end of an internal audit review, these are agreed with the responsible managers together with details of the required action and an expected date for implementation. Any concerns regarding overdue actions are reported to the Audit Committee as part of the regular progress reports.

Based on the results of the work undertaken during the year, the Head of Internal Audit's overall opinion is that governance, risk management and control in relation to business critical areas is generally satisfactory. However, there are some weaknesses in the framework of governance, risk management and control which potentially put the achievement of the Council's objectives at risk. Improvements are required in those areas to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control.

The weaknesses identified relate to design and operation of financial controls following the implementation of a new financial system during the year. Action is being taken to address the weaknesses and improve the Council's financial control environment.

**5. Significant Governance Issues and Action Plan**

During 2015 the Council implemented a new finance system. The objective was to improve automated work-flow and establish a system which was widely used by budget managers across the Authority. The system went live in June 2015.

Internal audit work highlighted a number of weaknesses relating to the design of financial controls and processes and the way they were operating within the new financial system. Some of the issues identified were relevant to the overall financial control environment. Weaknesses were also identified in the reconciliation processes between the corporate finance and other systems, such as the revenues and benefits system.

A detailed plan has been developed to address the weaknesses identified and prompt action has been taken by management. Progress is being monitored by the Financial Review Programme Board and is reported to the Audit Committee.

**6. Approval of the Annual Governance Statement**

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by Audit Committee and plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the systems in place.

Signed:.....

Leader

Signed:.....

Chief Executive

On behalf of Aylesbury Vale District Council