

DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2017-18 AND THE LOCAL CODE OF GOVERNANCE 2018.

Officer contact: Michael Howard 01494 421357
Email:mike.howard@wycombe.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Proposed decision

1. The Committee is advised to review and endorse the 2018 Local Code of Governance and the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2017/18 and the areas highlighted for improvement, prior to submission to the Leader and Chief Executive for formal sign off alongside the Annual Accounts.

Corporate Implications

2. The Council is required to review the effectiveness of its system of internal control and publish an Annual Governance Statement with their annual Statement of Accounts.
3. The Annual Governance Statement is scrutinised by External Audit. The External Audit function for Wycombe District Council is carried out by Ernst and Young.

Executive Summary

4. The publishing of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is the formal reporting of the Council's governance arrangements: it is an opportunity to report on the quality of our governance arrangements and identify actions to improve those arrangements.
5. The Council has adopted the guidance, issued by CIPFA/SOLACE "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016" to produce, both a Local Code of Governance and an Annual Governance Statement.
6. The Audit Committee terms of reference require it to review the "Council's Framework for Corporate Governance"

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities – Implications

7. This report directly relates to the Council's corporate priority 'pounds': delivering value for money in everything we do as a Council is the foundation to ensure all the Council's priorities comply with legislative and Council requirements.

Background and Issues

8. The Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) follows the guidance as issued in 2016 by CIPFA /SOLACE in its publication "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016"
9. The draft AGS for the year ending 31st March 2018 is attached at Appendix A, along with the new Local Code, Appendix B. These detail how the Council has had due regard to the guidance contained in the new framework and also meets the requirements of the Account and Audit regulations.
10. The Local Code and the draft AGS has been prepared by the Business Assurance Manager in consultation with the Strategic Management Board.
11. The draft AGS has been prepared based on the Annual Assurance Statements which are completed by each Head of Service and finally signed off by the Corporate Director or Chief Executive as appropriate.
12. The improvement areas highlighted are also included in the Council's Strategic Risk Register, where applicable, which is being used as the formal mechanism for recording the governance issues and the resultant improvement tasks, as it integrates the governance actions, thus avoiding duplication and provides consideration of issues together.
13. Detailed below are the 5 areas for improvement identified from the 2017/18 assurance process:

People

Partial compliance in that job descriptions (JD's) need to be reviewed in line with individual performance development plans.

Use of Resources

Partial compliance in regards to the Services being able to demonstrate performance levels across the range of services provided.

(Note - this was a theme from the 2016/17 AAS process).

Information Governance and Records Management

Partial compliance in that further work was required in relation to the management of paper and electronic records which would enable both the ease of location and disposal of records at the appropriate time.

(Note - this was a theme from the 2016/17 AAS process).

Business Continuity (BC)

Partial compliance in that further work is required in ensuring that Services have made adequate arrangements to ensure continued service delivery and that the arrangements have been communicated to all relevant staff.

In addition to the above, a test (dry run) should be undertaken to validate the process detailed in the BC Plan on a corporate or on a Service by Service basis.

(Note - this was a theme from the 2016/17 AAS process).

Project Management

Partial compliance in that Lessons Learnt reports are not produced and shared corporately for projects completed within a Service, during the year.

(Note - this was a theme from the 2016/17 AAS process).

Options

14. This is a statutory requirement.

Conclusions

15. The Council continues to operate within a sound corporate governance framework and the areas identified for improvement are seen as developmental actions, rather than having to tackle activities as a result of fundamental weaknesses.

Next Steps

16. The final version of the Annual Governance Statement will be submitted to the Leader and Chief Executive for formal sign-off as part of the Final Accounts process.
17. The approved Annual Governance Statement will be published on the Council's website along with the Council's Statement of Accounts.
18. Strategic Management Board continues to have clear oversight of the Strategic Risk Register through nominated Risk Owners whose role is to ensure that the risks for which they have operational responsibility are clearly identified, subject to a detailed evaluation process considering the control environment as mitigation and the identification of improvements tasks that are required to minimise the level of risk exposure faced by the Council.

19. Strategic Management Board monitors the progress of implementing agreed areas for improvement via the half yearly review of the Annual Governance Statement.

Background Papers

CIPFA/SOLACE: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016.