



Audit and Governance Committee

Date:	5 July 2023
Reference number:	N/A
Title:	Draft Annual Governance Statement 2022/23
Cabinet Member(s):	N/A
Contact officer:	Nick Graham, Director of Legal & Democratic Services Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer
Ward(s) affected:	N/A
Recommendations:	To consider and approve the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2022/23.
Reason for decision:	It is a statutory requirement to adopt an Annual Governance Statement.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report contains the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2022/23.
- 1.2 The purpose of an AGS is to comment on the effectiveness of a council's governance arrangements for the year in question. An AGS should be public facing. Guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) says it should be high level, strategic, meaningful and brief. It should be written in an open and readable style.
- 1.3 The AGS must be published alongside the Statement of Accounts and should reflect the governance in the year just concluded. The AGS is normally prepared alongside the timeline for producing the Statement of Accounts. While the Council's Accounts for 2022/23 are not scheduled to be completed during this year, our External Auditors nevertheless need to see an agreed version of an Annual Governance

Statement during the preparation of their assessment.

- 1.4 An AGS should contain an Opinion as to the effectiveness of the governance arrangements, signed by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. This draft AGS contains such an Opinion for 2022/23 based on the assurances contained within it:

“The Council’s governance arrangements in 2022/23 were sound and provide a robust and effective platform for achieving the Council’s priorities and challenges in 2023/24.”

- 1.5 Members of the Committee during 2022/23 were invited to submit their views on the key areas of governance during that year and on any areas of preferred focus for 2023/24. Comments received have been reflected in the draft.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The draft AGS complies with CIPFA guidance in containing:

- a) An assessment of effectiveness with examples
- b) An Opinion on that effectiveness
- c) An Action Plan for 2023/24, and comments on the actions for 2022/23
- d) A Conclusion

- 2.2 The draft also reflects various annual, and other, reports prepared for Council, Cabinet and Committees which relate to aspects of governance during 2022/23. This has included:

- a) Chief Finance Officer’s Statutory Reports to Budget Setting Council
- b) Corporate Plan Refresh Report to Council
- c) Buckinghamshire Council Annual Report to Annual Meeting in May 2023
- d) Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23
- e) Community Boards Annual Report May 2023
- f) Audit & Governance Committee Draft Annual Report

- 2.3 The Committee was of the view last year that the final version of this year’s AGS should receive a design in keeping with the Council’s other publications. This is in hand. The Council’s Design Team will accordingly create a design for the approved or revised content. A separate non-statutory Code of Governance, evidencing the Council’s governance arrangements, is being prepared for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 It is a legal requirement to produce an AGS and there is clear guidance from CIPFA as to the elements that an AGS should contain.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 The Council is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement under the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 The AGS reflects the effectiveness of the Council's governance during 2022/23 and sets out priority actions planned for 2023/24.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 N/A

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 N/A.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 Approval of an AGS by this Committee fulfils the legal requirement for members to adopt the AGS ahead of the required signature by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.
- 8.2 Once finalised, the AGS would sit alongside the Council's Statement of Accounts. It would also be made available on the Council's website and in hard copy form at each of the Council's offices and libraries.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 CIPFA's 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework' (2016 Edition).

