



Report to: Audit and Governance Committee, 15th July 2021

Report of: Deputy Director - Governance

Subject: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Committee approves the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 at Appendix 1 for sign off by the Leader of the Council and the Managing Director for inclusion in the Annual Statement of Accounts.

2. Annual Governance Statement

2.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In discharging these responsibilities, the Council must ensure that there is good governance and a sound system of internal control in place, which facilitate the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which include arrangements for the management of risk.

2.2 The Council's governance arrangements have been reviewed and an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) has been drafted and is attached to this report at **Appendix 1.**

2.3 The AGS is a document which provides the Council and its stakeholders with:

- Information about the arrangements in place for good governance and the robustness of those arrangements, and
- An assurance about the degree of compliance and the need for improvement in governance arrangements.

2.4 The AGS sets out the Council's assessment of how its own governance arrangements have fared this year, in light of the challenges of Covid but also the success in securing major new sources of capital investment into the City.

2.5 This year has been dominated by the management of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Being a provider of statutory services to communities in Worcester, many of which require onsite delivery, the Council had an obligation to maintain key service delivery while following all best practice and guidance on Covid secure working, to ensure that customers and staff remained safe. The Council moved swiftly into a remote meetings environment, ensuring that its councillors, through the Committee system, remained in control of the Council's decision-making processes. Internal audit work was completed against the planned programme, but the work programme of the external auditors has been significantly delayed.

- 2.6 Overall the Council's assessment of its governance performance is positive. The reasons for this, and the potential governance challenges ahead in the next year, are detailed in the AGS at Appendix 1.
- 2.7 Once approved, the AGS will be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Managing Director (Head of Paid Service) on behalf of the Council. The agreed statement will be published and will accompany the Council's Statement of Accounts when they are complete.
- 2.8 The Committee approved a substantively revised Local Code in 2019. The Committee is invited to note that the Local Code will continue in its current format for the coming year.

3. Implications

3.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

None directly arising from this report.

3.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control.

3.3 Risk Implications

Maintaining high standards of governance will help to protect the Council's reputation and its ability to deliver corporate and service priorities.

3.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The Council operates through a governance framework which brings together legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes. This framework defines the principles which underpin the Council's governance.

3.5 Equality Implications

None directly arising from this report.

3.6 Human Resources Implications

None directly arising from this report.

3.7 Health and Safety Implications

None directly arising from this report.

Ward(s): All
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Background Papers: Appendix1- Annual Governance Statement 2020/21