

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Audit & Governance Committee 23 July 2024
SUBJECT:	Draft Annual Governance Statement 2023/24
LEAD OFFICER:	Antony Baden – Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Matt Stanley
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: The Council is required by the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 to produce and approve an Annual Governance Statement, to accompany the annual accounting statements.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: The Council's draft Accounts and the draft Annual Governance Statement are required to be published on the Council's website and be provided to the external auditors.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: n/a	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To present the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2023/24 to the Committee, supported by the local Code of Corporate Governance, pending approval of the final version at a future meeting when the audited Statement of Accounts are presented.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Members of the Audit & Governance Committee are requested to note the draft version of the Council's AGS for 2023/24.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1. This report presents the draft AGS for 2023/24 which is required to accompany the unaudited Annual Accounts.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1. The Council is required by the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 to produce and approve an AGS, to accompany the annual accounting statements.
- 4.2. The current Regulations require that the Council's draft Accounts are available for audit by 31 May and that the final audited Accounts are approved and published by 30 September. The Council's external auditors have advised that there will again be delays in the completion of their audit and

their report on the Accounts will not be available until early 2025. In view of this, an appropriate explanatory notice will be published on the Council's website to accompany the draft unaudited Statement of Accounts and the draft Annual Governance Statement.

- 4.3 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is based upon Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) best practice to meet the requirements of the Regulations. As reported to the Committee in previous years, CIPFA issued its new 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework and associated Guidance Note' in 2016 and this Framework now forms the basis for AGS reporting and for the Council's local Code of Corporate Governance.
- 4.4 The AGS document has been prepared with input from officers and considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team. It is based upon the Council's local Code of Corporate Governance and other supporting documentation, including the Council's Corporate Risk Register and the annual internal audit opinion provided by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP).
- 4.5 In preparing the current document, previously agreed wording has been used from the last AGS and additional wording / updates have been applied to reflect relevant changes and progress made by the Council in 2023/24. Sections where new / amended wording has been included are highlighted (shaded) in the document. While it is primarily a backward-looking document over the period of the accounts, consideration is also given to any significant governance issues affecting the Council while the accounts are being finalized.
- 4.6 The document is signed by the Chief Executive Officer and the Leader of the Council and will accompany the draft Annual Accounts of the Council, which will be published on the Council's website.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. The document has been provided to the Leader of the Council for comment and approval.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1. The Committee could request further information or changes to the final document prior to its approval and publication.

7. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.1. The AGS is a statutory document, which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The Annual Governance Statement is a mandatory document and non-publication could lead to negative regulatory or reputational issues. As the audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts is again subject to delay, an appropriate explanatory notice (as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015) will be posted on the Council's website with the draft Accounts and draft Annual Governance Statement.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1. The Annual Governance Statement is a statutory document which explains the processes and procedures that are in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively. Local authorities in the UK are required to prepare the Statement in accordance with proper practices and the council has followed relevant CIPFA and other guidance in its preparation.
- 9.2. The necessity to confirm with Regulations and the governance framework is recognised accurately in this report.
- 9.3. There are no legal and procurement implications arising directly from this report. Where further work is required to respond to any issues identified these will be subject to review by the Finance and Legal teams, and in particular will require consideration of the Council's standing orders.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1. There are no impacts.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1. There are no impacts.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1. There are no impacts.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

- 13.1. There are no impacts.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

- 14.1. There are no impacts.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 15.1. There are no impacts.

16.HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1. There are no impacts.

17.FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1. There are no specific FOI or Data Protection implications.

CONTACT OFFICER:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None