

Audit and Standards Committee

28 November 2024

Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Recommendation

That the Committee endorses the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24, attached at Appendix 1, and recommends its approval by full Council at their meeting in December 2024, and its subsequent inclusion in the Council's 2023/24 Annual Report and Accounts.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to conduct a review, at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and to prepare an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).
- 1.2 The Draft AGS has been informed by input from colleagues from across the Council. The statement represents the governance framework and how it operated throughout 2023/2024. The Draft AGS was considered by Corporate Board and by the Audit and Standards Committee. It was published for a period of public consultation and has been considered by our external auditors, Grant Thornton. No comments from members of the public have been received and no amendments are required by the External Auditors.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 None arising directly from this report.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 None arising directly from this report.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The AGS is produced in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016). The Council's Code of Corporate Governance underpins the AGS and sets out the seven core principles of governance and the Council's arrangements against each principle.

- 4.2 The Council's Code of Corporate Governance was updated in 2021 and approved by Cabinet in April 2021 and has been in operation throughout 2023/24. The full details of our current code and how we meet the seven Principles of Good Governance can be found on our website here: <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/corporategovernance>.
- 4.3 The AGS aims to compliment the governance arrangements detailed in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. It presents an open and honest self-assessment of the Council's performance over the year and key challenges against these principles. The AGS provides an update against improvements which were required during the year. Improvement action that the Council plans to take in 2024/25 is also included for the Committee to view.
- 4.4 In line with good practice, Directors have completed assurance statements at the year end, confirming their understanding and compliance with the Council's approach to the management of risk and good governance in their services.
- 4.5 The Draft AGS was initially presented to the Audit & Standards Committee in May 2024. Since then, there have been no questions or comments received from members of the public and no amendments falling due from the external audit work.
- 4.6 Two amendments have been made to the draft statement:
- The addition of the final audit opinion for the 2023/24 financial year, which was assessed to be able to provide "Moderate" assurance on the authority's control environment and this was reported to the Audit and Standards Committee in July 2024.
 - Updated commentary on the timescales for the introduction of new procurement regulations (see procurement related commentary on Page 9 and Page 30 of Appendix 1).

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 The final Annual Governance Statement, taking account of any amendments arising from comments from this Committee or from the external auditors will be presented to full Council in December 2024 for approval.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

Background Papers

None

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Chris Norton, Head of Investments, Treasury and Audit	chrisnorton@warwickshire.gov.uk
Director	Purnima Kandula, Director of Finance	purnimakandula@warwickshire.gov.uk
Executive Director	Rob Powell, Executive Director for Resources	robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property	peterbutlin@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local member(s): not applicable

Other members: Councillor Peter Butlin