

REPORT OF **Service Improvement Officer**
 To: **Audit & Governance Committee**
 Subject: **Draft Annual Governance Statement**
 Date: **24th March 2020** Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:
 To provide an opportunity for Members to comment on the draft 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Paragraph 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2016) requires the Council to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its control environment and to publish this in the Annual Governance Statement.

The Annual Governance Statement refers to a Code of Corporate Governance which was last approved by the Audit & Governance Committee on 21 January 2020.

The Annual Governance Statement should be a holistic assessment of the check and balance arrangements that are in place to ensure that public money is properly spent and compliance with the principles for the conduct of individuals in public life.

Members are asked to review and comment on the draft 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement set out at Appendix A. The Annual Governance Statement will then be updated and presented for approval to the Audit & Governance Committee on 28th July 2020.

2. REPORT

The Council's aim is to produce an Annual Governance Statement which complies with published guidelines, is easy to read and is as succinct as possible.

Ideally we would like our Annual Governance Statement to be 'best practise'. In 2019/20 we reviewed a sample of Annual Governance Statements produced by other Local Authorities and we concluded that the format used by Torridge provides a clear, concise, and accessible summary of our governance arrangements.

The draft report is attached to this report as Appendix A. The three areas of red text (Senior Manager Assurance Statements, Complaints, Risk Management Audit Opinion) indicate the areas which will be updated in April 2020 when the required information is available. The table of Significant Governance Issues will also be completed in April 2020.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

There is a legal requirement to publish an Annual Governance Statement as part of the approval of the annual statement of accounts.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Human Resources Implications

None



Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

N/A

Equality/Diversity

None

Risk Management

Evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement has been and will continue to be reviewed on an ongoing basis. This will include reviews of the Council's governance and risk management arrangements. Any significant areas for improvement will be set out in the action plan.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Reviewing the effectiveness of the control environment and reporting on the findings of the review is a key aspect of demonstrating that Torridge District Council has a formal and established response to the Corporate Governance requirements.

Ward Member and Leader Member Views

Chair of Audit & Governance, Councillor Philip Hackett said 'The purpose of the AGS is to confirm that the Council's business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money allocated to it is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This year's AGS demonstrates that this approach has been robustly pursued at Torridge to ensure we have satisfactory outcomes and comply with legislation.'

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Draft Annual Governance Statement is provided for consideration by Members and will be updated in April 2020. It will include an action plan to address any significant weaknesses highlighted by the Senior Managers Service Assurance Statements, the Audit Manager's Opinion, and through the reviews of the AGS evidence database.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members consider the draft Annual Governance Statement and bring forward suggestions for discussion.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:	Governance Manager Statutory Finance Officer Head of Paid Service Monitoring Officer Councillor Philip Hackett DAP Partnership Manager
Contact Officer:	Chris Dobbs, Service Improvement Officer
Background Papers:	Code of Governance 2020

