

Audit and Standards Committee

15 July 2021

Annual Governance Review and Draft Annual Governance Statement

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Governance
Funding Stream:	Not applicable
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	No - Not a Key Decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Executive Summary

This paper reports on the findings of the 2020/21 Annual Governance Review and presents the draft Annual Governance Statement (Appendix A) which includes the proposed Governance Improvement Plan for 2021/22.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

Good governance enables the Combined Authority to pursue its ambitions and objectives in the most effective and efficient way, bringing about better outcomes for residents and businesses in South Yorkshire.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider the draft Annual Governance Statement and Governance Improvement Plan and recommend any amendments or additions ahead presentation to the Combined Authority meeting on 26th July.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

Not applicable

1. Background

- 1.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Authority to review its systems of governance and internal control at least once each year, and to publish an Annual Governance Statement, (Appendix A) with its Statement of Accounts
- 1.2 In addition, there is a requirement to have in place a Governance Improvement Plan (GIP) which highlights any identified governance issues, their current status and timelines for completion. The proposed Governance Improvement Plan for 2021/22 can be found at section 3.2 of the Annual Governance Statement.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 An annual review of the effectiveness of systems of internal control is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 2.2 In January, the Audit and Standards Committee endorsed the approach to the Annual Governance Review.

During February and March 2020, an initial review was undertaken, carried out in line with the CIPFA guidance note 'Application of the Good Governance Framework 2020/21' which recommends that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic should be taken into account when conducting the annual review for 2020/21. In particular, it recommends that the review should identify the impact of the pandemic on governance arrangements in place and, changes to existing arrangements that have resulted from the pandemic. The findings of this initial review were considered by the Audit and Standards Committee.

- 2.3 During May and June work has continued to conduct an assessment of compliance with the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance, to gain assurance of the effectiveness of current arrangements and to identify any opportunities for improvement. A series of interviews were undertaken with key officers and a workshop was held with the Management Board.
- 2.4 The outputs from the Annual Governance Review process have assisted in the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement which has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016' and the guidance note 'Application of the Good Governance Framework 2020/21'. The main principle underpinning this guidance from CIPFA continues to be that local government should develop and shape its own approach to corporate governance, taking into account the environment in which it operates.

CIPFA guidance also advises that the statement should be a meaningful but brief communication regarding the review that has taken place and should be high level, strategic and written in an open and readable style.

2.5 Conclusion of the Review

As outlined in the draft Annual Governance Statement, the outcome of the Annual Governance Review has concluded that arrangements during the year were fit for purpose and robust yet flexible enough to respond to the challenges presented.

3. Timetable and Accountability for Implementation

3.1 The Annual Governance Statement outlines the effectiveness of the Authority's governance arrangements over the previous financial year. The Governance Improvement Plan sets out the improvement activity for the year end 31st March 2022. Timescales are identified for the governance improvement activity in the plan.

4. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

4.1 There are no financial or procurement implications associated with this report.

5. Legal Implications and Advice

5.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires Combined Authorities to prepare an Annual Governance Statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with their own code of governance.

6. Human Resources Implications and Advice

6.1 There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

7.1 There are no equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

8. Climate Change Implications and Advice

8.1 There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

9. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

9.1 There are no information and communication technology implications associated with this report.

10. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice.

10.1 There are no communications or marketing implications associated with this report, however, the report will be published on the Authority's website.

List of Appendices Included

A Draft Annual Governance Statement

Background Papers

Audit and Standards Committee paper 18th March 2021 and 10th June 2021 'Annual Governance Review – initial findings' – Agenda item 17

<https://governance.sheffieldcityregion.org.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=384&Ver=4>

Audit and Standards Committee paper 21st January 2021 'Governance Review Process and Improvement Plan Progress' – Agenda item 13

<https://governance.sheffieldcityregion.org.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=393&Ver=4>