

Agenda Item No: 10 **Report No: 154/12**

Report Title: Annual Governance Statement 2012

Report To: Audit and Standards Committee **Date: 27 September 2012**

Ward(s) Affected: All

Report By: Director of Finance

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Purpose of Report:

To seek Councillors' approval of the draft Annual Governance Statement 2012

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1** To approve the draft Annual Governance Statement 2012 (shown at Appendix A).

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1** To meet the Council's legal requirement to produce an Annual Governance Statement.

Information

2 Background

- 2.1** Lewes District Council is required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) each year in accordance with proper practices to meet the statutory requirement set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations the most recent reference being Regulation 4(3) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011. The AGS covers the whole control framework of the Council rather than those controls which simply have a financial aspect. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (CIPFA/SOLACE) in their report, Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2007), issued guidance on the form and content of the AGS. This guidance has been followed in compiling the statement.
- 2.2** The AGS is presented to this meeting as CIPFA best practice recommends that it should be approved at the same time as the Statement of Accounts is approved. The Accounts and Audit Regulations require that the AGS accompanies the Statement of Accounts.

Accordingly the AGS is inserted after the Independent Auditor's report at the end of the Statement of Accounts.

3 Form and content of the Annual Governance Statement

3.1 The CIPFA/SOLACE framework defines the form and content of the AGS and recommends that the following information be included:

- **Scope of responsibility:** An acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control).
- **The purpose of the governance framework:** An indication of the level of assurance that the systems and processes that comprise the authority's governance arrangements can provide.
- **The governance framework:** A brief description of the key elements of the governance framework including reference to group activities where those activities are significant.
- **The review of effectiveness:** A brief description of the process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance arrangements including some comment on the role of:
 - (i) the Authority
 - (ii) the Executive (the Cabinet)
 - (iii) the Audit and Standards Committee/Scrutiny Committee/risk function
 - (iv) Internal Audit
 - (v) other explicit review/assurance mechanisms
- **Significant governance issues:** An outline of the actions taken or proposed to deal with significant governance issues, including an agreed action plan.

4 Assurance and the Annual Governance Statement

4.1 Best professional practice recommends that a system of management assurance is in place to underpin the AGS. The Council's assurance framework was adopted in 2006 and was updated in 2008 and is subject to review and update (as appropriate) by the Head of Audit and Performance. With reference to the assurance framework the Director of Finance, Corporate Head - Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Audit and Performance draft the AGS. The AGS is then approved by the Audit and Standards Committee at the same time as the Statement of Accounts and is then signed off by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive.

4.2 The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2011/12 includes a new requirement to be included in the AGS. A specific statement is

required to confirm whether the Council's financial arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010), and where they do not, provide an explanation of how they deliver the same impact. This statement is included in the AGS for the first time.

5 Financial Appraisal

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 Failure to produce an AGS and maintain proper assurance arrangements to support its production can reduce the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and attract criticism from the Council's stakeholders and the Council's external auditor. The Audit and Standards Committee review of the AGS significantly reduces these risks.

7 Sustainability Implications

7.1 I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report.

8 Equality Screening

8.1 I have given due regard to equalities issues and, as this is an internal monitoring report, screening for equalities is not required.

9 Background Papers

9.1 Delivering Good Governance in Local Government – A Keystone for Community Governance – Framework and guidance note for English authorities (CIPFA/SOLACE) 2007.

9.2 Lewes District Council Assurance Framework.

9.3 Lewes District Council Local Code of Corporate Governance (Updated July 2012)

10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix A: Annual Governance Statement 2012.