

# Audit and Governance Committee

## 15 April 2024

### Annual Governance Statement – 2023/24

#### For Review and Consultation

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council

**Executive Director:** J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

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**Report Status:** Public

**Brief Summary:** The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require a body such as the Council to “approve an annual governance statement, prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to internal control.” The attached draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) covers financial year 2023-24 and sets out key features of the governance framework in place in the Authority and provides a review of its effectiveness. It has been prepared in line with the recommendations published by CIPFA and SOLACE, which were revised in 2016. Much of the evidence supporting the AGS is found within our Local Code of Corporate Governance which is included as an appendix. The AGS also sights the extreme risks noted within the Council’s risk register.

Under the regulations, the accounts are not approved by the Council (or the Committee to which the responsibility is delegated) until after the external audit has been carried out. At this stage this draft allows members an early view and an ability to inform the content. Final adoption of the AGS will take place alongside the accounts, signed off by both the Council Leader and Chief Executive. As the AGS must reflect any significant issues that arise prior to its final approval, if necessary, subsequent amendments will be made to the draft document to reflect them and reported to this Committee.

At previous meetings, the Committee has challenged the report author to explore how this document can be made more accessible to the reader. This draft therefore adopts a different style to previous years’ statements.

**Recommendation:** The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2023-24.

**Reason for Recommendation:** Approval and publication of an Annual Governance Statement by the Council is a statutory requirement and provides evidence that Dorset Council maintains high standards of governance and addresses significant shortcomings and risks.

1. **Financial Implications**

There are no budget requirements arising directly from this report. The overall financial position of the Council is one of the significant issues covered in the AGS. Addressing other issues identified in the compliance assessment or the AGS may have budgetary implications, which will be considered in the relevant action plans.

2. **Environmental Implications**

None

3. **Well-being and Health Implications**

None

4. **Other Implications**

None

5. **Risk Assessment**

The AGS references risks on the Council's corporate risk register which have been assessed as being "High" or "Extreme".

6. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Considering equalities issues is a key aspect of good governance, but there are no equalities issues arising directly from this report.

7. **Appendices**

Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Local Code of Corporate Governance

8. **Background Papers**

None