

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 11 AUGUST 2009

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

7. DRAFT 2008/09 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATION - that Members consider the draft 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement as part of the wider consultation process.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 This report presents the draft 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement (Appendix 'A7', pages 7.5 - 7.23). The Audit Committee on 29 June 2009 considered the statement and it is submitted to this Committee as part of the wider consultation process.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 **Fit for purpose, services fit for you**

Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Annual Governance Statement is necessary to meet the requirements set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.

4.0 Report

4.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, used economically, efficiently and effectively.

4.2 The Council should undertake regular, at least annual, reviews of its governance arrangements by means of an Annual Governance Statement, to ensure continuing compliance with best practice. It is important that such reviews are reported both within the Council, to the Audit Committee and externally with the published accounts, to provide assurance that:

- governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively in practice, or
- where reviews of the governance arrangements have revealed gaps, action is planned that will ensure effective governance in the future.

4.3 The process of preparing the governance statement should itself add value to the corporate governance and internal controls framework of the Council.

4.4 A governance statement should include the following information:

- an acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control)
- an indication of the level of assurance that the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements can provide
- a brief description of the key elements of the governance framework, including reference to group activities where those activities are significant.
- a brief description of the process that had been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance arrangements, including some comment on the role of:
 - The Council
 - The Executive
 - The Audit Committee/overview and scrutiny function/ Standards Committee
 - Internal Audit
 - Other explicit review/assurance mechanisms.
- an outline of the actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance issues.

4.5 It is important to recognise that the governance statement covers all significant corporate systems, processes and controls, spanning the whole range of the Council's activities, including in particular those designed to ensure that:

- the authority's policies are implemented in practice.

- high quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively.
- the authority's values and ethical standards are met.
- laws and regulations are complied with.
- required processes are adhered to.
- financial statements and other published performance information are accurate and reliable.
- human, financial, environmental and other resources are managed efficiently and effectively.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 Appropriate Consultations have taken place with senior Council Officers. The intention is to consult with Members of the Audit Committee, the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee, the Standards Committee and the Executive before bringing back a final Annual Governance Statement to Audit Committee on 2 September 2009. The External Auditor will also be consulted within this timeframe.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 Contained within the report and Statement.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 None.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 Contained within the report and statement.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 The Governance Statement reflects the Council's risk management system.

Background Papers

Draft 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement 2008/09 – Audit Committee
29 June 2009.

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