



AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Monday, 14 December 2020

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Annual Governance Statement is a key document which helps provide assurance to Members and other stakeholders as to how the governance of the Council is conducted, how effective it has been for the year, and identifies any major issues of improvement raised by the Corporate Management Team and Head of Internal Audit together with emerging issues upon which the Council will need to focus over the coming year.
2. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require councils to produce an Annual Governance Statement, in line with the conclusion of the audit of the Statement of Accounts.
3. For 2019/20, the External Audit results report for East Suffolk Council has been delayed from August 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and changes to the Accounts and Audit Regulations, and this Annual Governance Statement has consequently been produced before the conclusion of the audit. External Audit work commenced in November 2020.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	All Wards within the District
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Cabinet Member:	Councillor Maurice Cook Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources
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Supporting Officer:	Brian Mew Interim Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer (01394) 444571 Brian.Mew@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Lorraine Rogers Deputy Chief Finance Officer (01502) 523667 Lorraine.rogers@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has a duty to ensure that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and is used economically, efficiently and effectively. It also has a duty under the Local Government Act 2000 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is required to put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements of the management of risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate all risk of failure to achieve the Council's policies, aims and objectives.
- 1.3 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a key document that helps provide assurance to Members and other stakeholders as to how governance of the Council is conducted, how effective it has been for the year and identifies major issues of concern raised by the Corporate Management Team and Head of Internal Audit together with emerging issues upon which the Council will need to focus over the coming year. The Council's AGS for 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 is appended to this report.
- 1.4 The AGS is designed to give stakeholders greater assurance that the Council has a systematic strategy, framework and processes in place for the effective management of risk.
- 1.5 The Council's AGS embraces the seven core principles set out in the CIPFA framework: *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*.
- 1.6 The overall effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements continued to improve, with positive assessments and feedback by Internal Audit, the Council's external auditors Ernst and Young LLP and other external bodies. However, there continue to be areas to address and improvements are required to strengthen those overall controls.
- 1.7 The areas to address in the AGS (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020) within the Statement have been informed by:
- the outcomes of internal and external review bodies that report on the Council's effective governance performance during the year;
 - Corporate Management Team review and assurance (Corporate Governance arrangements);
 - the AGS Steering Group assessment and progress monitoring; and
 - changes in Government policy that impact across a wide range of Council's activities.
- 1.8 The Council's Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) has a statutory obligation to ensure that the Council has an adequate and effective system of internal control in place (Local Government Act 1972). The Council's systems of internal control are independently assessed by the Head of Internal Audit.
- 1.9 Risk management is also an integral part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements, which is also independently assessed by the Head of Internal Audit. Recommendations made to improve the control environment and ensure good governance are assessed by External Audit and Audit and Governance Committee.
- 1.10 Section 5 of the AGS provides a review of effective governance measures undertaken in the year.

2 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK STRATEGIC PLAN?

2.1 The AGS is a statutory requirement by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The AGS will help to deliver the East Suffolk Strategic Plan through securing good governance.

3 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Evidence of good governance in the AGS is fundamental in supporting public purse stewardship related to all financial and policy making decisions.

4 CONSULTATION

4.1 There is no requirement upon the Council.

5 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 No other options were considered.

6 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

6.1 To strengthen the Council’s governance arrangements and to ensure any issues or risks are appropriately managed and resourced.

6.2 To provide further assurance to stakeholders that the Council’s Statutory Statement of Accounts accurately represents the Council’s overall financial position for the year.

RECOMMENDATION
That the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020) be reviewed and approved.

APPENDICES	
Appendix A	East Suffolk Council Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020)

BACKGROUND PAPERS – None