

**REPORT TO:** Audit and Governance Board

**DATE:** 23 March 2022

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community & Resources

**SUBJECT:** Annual Governance Statement - 2020/21

**PORTFOLIO:** Resources

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report presents the final 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) to accompany the 2020/21 statement of accounts. The preparation and publication of an AGS is necessary to meet the statutory requirement set out in regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The format of the statement follows the 2016 best practice guidance issued by CIPFA / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Board is asked to consider and approve the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement subject to any changes or additions that members feel appropriate.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework, published by the CIPFA / SOLACE, sets the standard for local authority governance in the UK. The Council's AGS for 2020/21 has been developed with reference to this guidance and is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 3.2 The AGS provides an overview of the governance framework that was in place during 2020/21 and up to the date the financial statements are signed off by the Council's external auditor.
- 3.3 The 2020/21 AGS was originally presented to the Board on 7 July 2021. It is however important that the AGS is up to date when the statement of accounts are approved. As such, the document is presented again for the Board to the review.
- 3.4 No substantial changes have been made to the document presented to the Board in July. A few minor corrections have however been made following review of the document by the external auditor. Some additional detail has also been included in regard to the examples of how the Council demonstrated the principles of good governance during 2020/21.
- 3.5 The Council's Constitution delegates the responsibility to review and approve the AGS to the Audit and Governance Board. As such, the final version of the

AGS will take into account any feedback from the Board. Once approved, the AGS will be signed by the Council Leader and Chief Executive and published on the Council's website.

#### **4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Council is required to conduct an annual review of its system of internal control and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) with the annual statement of accounts. The process is a key mechanism for ensuring that the Council has an effective system of internal control and governance, and that any areas for development are identified and addressed.
- 4.2 The powers and duties of the Audit and Governance Board include responsibility for considering the Council's corporate governance arrangements and agreeing necessary actions to ensure compliance with best practice. The AGS provides a commitment to address the governance challenges identified by the Council.
- 4.3 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, although the AGS makes reference to the key financial challenges faced by the Council.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Good governance leads to good management, good performance and good stewardship of public money. It therefore enables the Council to implement its vision in accordance with its values and to engage effectively with its citizens and service users and ensure good outcomes for them.

##### **5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

See 5.1 above

##### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

See 5.1 above

##### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

See 5.1 above

##### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

See 5.1 above

#### **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 6.1 The AGS provides assurance that the Council has a sound system of risk management, control and governance. The document provides a public statement of how the Council directs and controls its functions and relates to its community.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 7.1 The Council has to have regard to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment and the promotion of equality under the Equalities Act 2010 and related statutes. Proper governance arrangements will ensure that equality and diversity issues are appropriately addressed.

## **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| Document  | Place of Inspection    | Contact     |
|---|------------------------|-------------|
| CIPFA / SOLACE – Delivering good governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)                             | Halton Stadium, Widnes | Merv Murphy |
| CIPFA / SOLACE - Delivering good governance in Local Government: Guidance note for English authorities (2016) |                        |             |