

Agenda item 6
AGS/21/23

Report title: Annual Report of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee	
Report to: Audit, Governance and Standards Committee	
Report author: Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance	
Date: 5 June 2023	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance, paul.turner@essex.gov.uk or Paula Clowes, Head of Assurance paula.clowes@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In order to effectively discharge its responsibilities, the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee should report annually on its work to those charged with governance. As such, an annual report is presented to Full Council outlining the committee's purpose and role as well as the activities that it has undertaken throughout the preceding financial year to support good governance and strong public financial management.
- 1.2 The 2022/23 report has been drafted on behalf of the Committee and the draft is attached at appendix 1 for the committee's consideration and approval.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Audit, Governance and Standards committee review and approve the draft Annual Report of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee in the form appended to this report.
- 2.2 Agree that the report will be presented to Full Council at its July 2023 meeting.

3. Background

- 3.1 The report provides Full Council with the following:
 - Committee Membership
 - Terms of Reference and Purpose of the Committee
 - Details of the Committee's work during the financial year ending 31 March 2023.

- 3.2 It should be noted that the annual report provides the council with information about the difficulties with the audit of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 accounts, a situation with which all members of the committee will be familiar.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 The work of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee is critical in ensuring that the Council successfully mitigates its risks in all areas of work, and that the public purse is protected to ensure that available resources reach those most in need. This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision.

- Enjoy life into old age
- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Strengthen communities through participation
- Develop our County sustainably
- Connect us to each other and the world
- Share prosperity with everyone

- 4.2 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee is a key way in which the Council provides assurance that it is providing value for money and has proper systems of control. Without effective assurance Councillors will not know that the Council is effectively carrying out its statutory duties. Whilst the production of an annual report is not a legal requirement it is considered best practice and provides assurance that the Committee is fulfilling its function effectively.

7. Equality and Diversity Considerations

- 7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when ECC makes decisions it must have regard to the need to: (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

and other behaviour prohibited by the Act (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. Equality and diversity matters have been considered in the production of the progress report.

8 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Annual Report of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

9 List of Background papers

CIPFA's Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022