

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Scope of Responsibility

North Dorset District Council is required to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 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.

In discharging this overall responsibility the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

North Dorset District Council has approved a code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government updated in 2016. A copy of the code is on our website at www.dorsetforyou.com or can be obtained from the council offices. This statement explains how North Dorset District Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of Part 2, regulation 6 of Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires authorities to carry out an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control. Having considered the findings of the review, Members are required to approve an annual governance statement, prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to internal control. The statement must then be included with the Statement of Accounts. The 2016 Framework is to be treated as proper practice, making publication of an AGS mandatory.

In addition to this, CIPFA has published its 'Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010)'. The Annual Governance Statement should therefore reflect compliance with the statement for reporting purposes.

Purpose of the Governance Framework

The purpose of the framework is to ensure the organisation is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in an open, honest, inclusive and timely manner.

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievements of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

This will include focusing on outcomes for the area and its community, engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability, provide leadership in the community and promoting values and behaviours for the Council that will demonstrate how it plans to uphold good governance and maintain high standards of conduct.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and therefore only provides reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of North Dorset District Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them effectively and economically. The governance framework has been in place at North Dorset District Council for the year ended 31st March 2018 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

The Constitution, Council structure, Organisational structure and other documents that comprise the governance framework are available on the Councils website, www.dorsetforyou.com

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Review of Effectiveness

North Dorset District Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. This is achieved by the following work:

a) Management Assurance

Review of compliance with the adopted Local Code of Corporate Governance
Review of the implementation of the Risk Management Strategy every 2 years
Review of SWAP audit report findings and recommendations
Review of fraud and special investigations completed during the year
Review of external audit report and Annual Audit Letter
Review of performance management software to identify performance against corporate plan
Corporate management team review of service governance issues

b) Statutory Officer Assurance

Consultation with the Council's statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Director of Resources) to discuss their responsibilities and any issues identified during the year.

c) Service Assurance

Consultation with the Council's statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Director of Resources) to discuss their responsibilities and any issues identified during the year.

d) Performance Reporting

Review of performance management reporting in Business Review.
Review of financial management reporting in Business Review.

e) External Review Assurance

Examination of external audit reports and Annual Audit Letter.
Review of complaints, if any, considered by Local Government Ombudsman

f) Other Sources

Examination of the minutes of the Audit Committee
Review of any action taken by Monitoring Officer
Review of the adequacy of the complaints procedure including handling, monitoring and outcomes.
Review of Management Team minutes
Scrutiny & Performance Committee minutes holding Management Committee to account.

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Significant governance issues for 2017 - 18

Local Government Reorganisation

Overview

On 26 February Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government gave his approval for plans to create two new unitary councils in Dorset, replacing the existing nine councils. Subject to legislation, the new councils will come into existence in April 2019.

One council will cover Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, with the other serving the rest of Dorset. The parliamentary process has begun to establish the new authorities and two separate, Joint Committees are leading the development of the new councils. Legal orders should be concluded in June 2018 and Shadow Authorities will then be formed. Each Shadow Authority will include the councillors from within the areas covered by the new authority and each will elect a Shadow Executive responsible for making decisions until the first, direct elections for the new councils take place in May 2019. A LGR programme team has been appointed to manage the LRG workstreams

OWNER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Comment

The timescale to ensure a smooth transition on 1st April 2019 is extremely tight.

Statement of Assurance

To the best of our knowledge, the governance arrangements, as defined above, have been effectively operating during the year with the exception of those areas identified as significant issues. We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next review.

Signed

Date

Matt Prosser, Chief Executive

Signed

Date

Cllr G Carr-Jones, Leader