

Committee: **Governance and Audit Committee**

Date of meeting: **17<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Report Subject: **Annual Governance Statement**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Steve Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member  
Corporate Overview and Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance  
and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	24/08/23	06.01.24	17/01/24					

1. **Purpose of the Report**  
To present to the Governance and Audit Committee the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2022/23 (attached at Appendix 1).
2. **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 The report provides the draft AGS for 2022/23, providing an assessment of the effectiveness of the Authority's governance arrangements.
  - 2.2 Responsibility for reviewing the AGS has been delegated to the Governance and Audit Committee as 'those charged with Governance'. In line with the principles of good practice, the statement has also been reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), confirming that it reflects their understanding of the governance arrangements in place for Blaenau Gwent CBC during the 2022/23 financial year.
  - 2.3 The statement is collated following an evidence gathering exercise which calls upon a number of sources including:
    - Internal and external regulatory reports;
    - Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Manager; and
    - Senior Manager Assurance Statements.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
  - 3.1 For the Governance and Audit Committee to:
    - Option 1  
Approve and adopt the Draft AGS having considered and challenged the content, ensuring it is consistent with their knowledge and understanding of the wider issues affecting the Council.
    - Option 2  
Propose amendments / alterations to the Draft AGS, having considered and challenged the content, and deeming it to be consistent with their

knowledge and understanding of the wider issues affecting the Council, subject to the proposed amendments.

#### Option3

Not approve the Draft AGS having considered and challenged the content, deeming it not to be consistent with their knowledge and understanding of the wider issues affecting the Council.

#### 4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 Production of an AGS assists the Authority in achieving its Corporate Plan Priority, '*An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place*', by providing an assessment of the governance arrangements in place for Blaenau Gwent CBC.

4.2 Production of the AGS is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations (Wales) 2014 to accompany the Statement of Accounts.

#### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

##### 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no direct financial implications arising from the production of the AGS.

##### 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Options 1 and 2 are compliant with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (Wales) 2014.

Option 3 would result in non-compliance with these regulations and could affect the opinion of the external auditor. on the Statement of Accounts and require additional regulatory work to be undertaken.

##### 5.3 ***Legal***

There are no direct legal implications arising from the production of the AGS.

If option 3 is selected, we would not comply with legislation.

##### 5.4 ***Human Resources***

The production of the AGS involves the investment of Senior Management time from across the Authority. The commitment is met from existing resources.

#### 6. **Supporting Evidence**

##### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The production of the AGS is an element of the governance framework of the Authority.

- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***  
The AGS sets out how the Council's governance framework has operated for the ultimate benefit of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***  
The AGS informs the reader of the Authority's consultation and engagement activities during 2022/23. Officers from all directorates have contributed to the production of the AGS and Members consider & confirm that the AGS reflects their understanding of the Council's position for the previous year.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***  
The statement provides a comparison of the governance activity for 2022/23 with the Code of Governance and identifies development activities for 2023/24 and future years.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***  
The AGS outlines how the Authority's governance arrangements have operated in the context of risk management and internal control, identifying weaknesses and developments for the future.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***  
The AGS acknowledges the Authority's collaborative working approach as part of the Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board and other partners
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***  
Officers from all directorates have contributed to the production of the AGS and the document reflects a whole Authority perspective.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***  
The production of the AGS has no direct impact on decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions.
- 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***  
The production of the AGS does not require for the completion of an IIA.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The AGS provides the assessment of the Authority's governance framework against the Code of Governance. Recommendations for development are made in the statement and will be actioned throughout 2023/24. Progress against these recommendations will be reported via the 2024/25 AGS.

#### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix A – Annual Governance Statement