

8. 2007/08 Annual Governance Statement

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Purpose of the Report

This report has been prepared for the Audit Committee to approve the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2007/08.

Recommendation(s)

To approve the 2007/08 Annual Governance Statement and action plan.

Background

As a local authority SSDC is required to demonstrate compliance with the underlying principles of good governance and that a framework exists to demonstrate this. One of the Council's requirements in demonstrating this is to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). This replaces the annual Statement of Internal Control.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) provides guidance on the processes for the establishment, operation and review of the system of internal control. Their guidance also provides help on the format and content of the AGS.

Annual Governance Statement

Regulation 4, of the Accounts and Audit Regulations includes a requirement to publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) (attached at appendix 2 – pages 40-44). Previously local authorities were required to include a Statement of Internal Control (SIC) with their statement of accounts. The new regulations now require authorities to carry out a review of the effectiveness of their system of **internal control** and to include an Annual Governance Statement in the annual accounts. The AGS extends the coverage of the Statement on Internal Control to reflect how the organisation conducts its business, both internally and in its dealings with others. It will also provide assurance that SSDC has a sound internal control framework in place to manage the risks that might prevent achievement of its statutory obligations and organisational objectives. A diagram of the framework used at SSDC is attached to this report at appendix 1 – page 39.

The Annual Governance Statement will continue to be signed by the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, and Section 151 Officer.

In October 2007 the Audit Committee approved a revised Local Code of Corporate Governance. This updated the Council's code to reflect best practice. In producing the Annual Governance Statement reports from the Audit Commission, South West Audit Partnership, a review of the effectiveness of internal audit, the annual review of the Group Auditor, and a review of all statements of Internal Operational Controls have been undertaken. The review has been completed by the Corporate Governance Group (the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, and S151 Officer). There are no significant issues to be addressed and a number of actions are planned to further strengthen the control framework. The actions are attached at appendix 3 (page 45) and will be monitored and reviewed by the Audit Committee in 2008/09.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with these recommendations.

Background Papers: *None*
