

Appendix B

Annual Governance Statement – Head of Service Assurance Statement

Guidance note for officers and Members completing the Statement

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006 requires the Council to publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS is prepared annually by the “Finance and Governance Group” and is signed by the Leader and Chief Executive. In summary the AGS is a statement of assurance to the effect that:

- The Council has followed the 6 principles of Corporate Governance, outlined in the CIPFA / SOLACE publication “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government” and confirmed in the Council’s own Local Code of Corporate Governance
- the Council has an effective Internal Control Framework (ICF) in place
- the ICF has been reviewed in the preceding year. (It must be reviewed annually)
- that any weaknesses that have been identified in the ICF are being dealt with through an appropriate action plan.

Each Head of Service is responsible for delivering the objectives set out in their service plan. Heads of Service are responsible for identifying and managing the risks that may affect delivery of service objectives. This work includes monitoring the effectiveness of controls put in place to mitigate the risks and carrying out remedial action where controls are weak or not in place.

Each Head of Service is required to assist the preparation of the AGS for the Council by providing an assurance statement for the internal control framework within their service. Taken together the assurance statements from the Heads of Service will form a key part of the evidence that supports the signing of the AGS by the Leader and Chief Executive.

An outline recommended Statement of Assurance is attached.

The Head of Service should read and **amend as appropriate** the Statement before signing the statement.

The signed statement should be passed to your Corporate Director to be countersigned, along with a copy of your up to date risk register.

An electronic copy of the Statement, with an electronic copy of the up to date service risk register should be emailed to jpriestley@westberks.gov.uk.

The Corporate Director should confirm the accuracy of the statement – including their regular review of the service risk register and pass the statement, and risk register, to the Portfolio Holder for the Service to review and sign.

The completed statement, with a copy of the risk register should be returned, to Ian Priestley – Chief Internal Auditor – Finance Service - Market St, by 31st May 2012 at the latest.

Statement of Assurance forService

1	<p>Statutory obligations & Local Code of Corporate Governance</p> <p>I have identified all principal statutory obligations and these are identified in my Service Plan. The Service Plan clearly sets out how the statutory obligations will be delivered. The principles of Corporate Governance outlined in the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance have been consistently applied in the delivery of this Service.</p>	
2	<p>Service Risk Register</p> <p>I have identified all risks that may affect the delivery of the service plan objectives. My Service Management Team has reviewed the register each quarter. I have reviewed the risk register with my Corporate Director each quarter. A copy of the Risk Register is attached to this statement.</p>	
3	<p>Internal Controls</p> <p>I have identified controls that are designed to mitigate the risks identified in 2 above. I have assigned responsibility for the effective operation of each control to a nominated officer. I have, through the 1.2.1 process, obtained assurance and evidence from each nominated officer that the controls have been tested and are operating effectively. I confirm that all my Budget Holders are aware of and have read the Council's Financial and Contracts Rules of Procedure that are available as part of the Council's Constitution on the Intranet.</p>	
4	<p>Control Weaknesses</p> <p>I have identified risks that are considered to be significant (Red) and that do not at present have effective controls to mitigate the level of risk. I have put in place action plans to provide effective controls going forwards where resources allow. I have through 1.2.1's and my Service Management Team, ensured continuous review of the progress of action plans. Where action plans have fallen behind schedule the Corporate Director has been informed Where resources are not available to deliver the required controls the Corporate Director has been informed.</p>	

Statement of Assurance forService

5	<p>Major Projects</p> <p>A risk register and action plan has been prepared for all major projects. The Corporate Board has been kept up to date on all issues relating to the risks to the delivery of each project. The Council’s Project Management Methodology has been applied for all projects.</p>	
6	<p>Overall Assurance from Head of Service</p> <p>In my opinion the internal control framework of theservice is soundly based. All significant risks to the service objectives have been identified and controls are in place to mitigate those risks. The exceptions to this are listed in the Action plan to the Service Risk Register which also outlines progress towards implementing outstanding controls.</p> <p>Signed byHead of.....Service</p> <p>Date</p>	
7	<p>Corporate Director Review</p> <p>I have reviewed the processes set out above and the Service Risk Register and Action Plan, copy attached, with the Head of on an ongoing basis during the year both at 1.2.1’s and at Service Group Management Team meetings.</p> <p>I agree with the opinion of the Head ofService set out in 6 above.</p> <p>Where actions to remedy weaknesses have fallen behind schedule, or resources available to deliver effective controls are inadequate I have drawn this to the attention of Corporate Board and the relevant portfolio holder.</p> <p>Signed byCorporate Director</p> <p>Date</p>	
8	<p>Portfolio Holder Review</p> <p>I have reviewed the statements contained above and the copy of the Service Risk Register and Action Plan which is attached.</p> <p>Signed byPortfolio Holder</p> <p>Date</p>	