

## **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24**

### **1. Purpose**

To seek Members' approval of the audited Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24.

### **2. Context**

**2.1** Each year the Authority reviews its performance against the Code of Corporate Governance and in doing so this reviews the effectiveness of its governance arrangements including the system of internal control. The results of this feed into the Authority's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is set out in Appendix 1. The review takes into account 'assurances' received during the year.

**2.2** The AGS highlights areas for further action in accordance with our approach to achieve continuous performance improvement.

**2.3** The review of effectiveness of our governance framework, including the system of internal control, is informed by assurances from Officers and Members within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment (including financial controls, risk management and performance management processes, compliance with advice on legislation and regulations), Internal and External Audit reports and opinions, comments made by other agencies and inspectorates as well as feedback from customers and stakeholders.

**2.4** The External Auditor, in their annual report for 2023/24, gave a satisfactory conclusion to their assessment of the AGS, with no issues highlighted and stated they "did not identify any matters where, in our opinion, the governance statement did not comply with the guidance issued by CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting". The External Audit annual report was presented to the Authority at its last meeting on 7 February 2025.

### **3. Proposals**

**3.1** The audited Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 is given in Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and approval.

**3.2** As part of reviewing performance and assurances received, no significant issues have been identified and the arrangements in place continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. However, a number of issues identified from our review of effectiveness to further enhance our governance arrangements were identified and these are set out against the 7 core principles of our Code of Corporate Governance at the end of Appendix 1. The issues identified have been monitored and reviewed during 2024/25 as part of our preparation for the next AGS for 2024/25.

**3.3** Due to recent/proposed organisational changes authorisation for the Monitoring Officer to make minor changes to the Code of Corporate Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority is also requested.

### **4. Recommendations**

**1. To approve the audited Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 for sign off by the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Authority as set out in Appendix 1.**

**2. To authorise the Monitoring Officer, following consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to make minor changes to the Code of Corporate Governance following publication of the Annual Governance Statement.**

## 5. Corporate Implications

### a. Legal

Pursuant to Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Authority must conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and Members must approve an AGS, prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to internal control, when the statement of accounts is approved under Regulation 12(2). In compliance with Regulations the Authority published an unaudited version of the AGS before the required deadline of 31 May 2024. This report now asks Members to approve the audited version before it is published with the Statement of Accounts.

### b. Financial

There are no financial implications to consider.

### c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

A review of our performance against the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance feeds into this AGS and is part of our work to ensure the Authority has a solid foundation supporting achievement of our aims and objectives, as set out in the Authority Plan. We aim to obtain a satisfactory External Audit conclusion on value for money through an assessment of the Annual Governance Statement.

### d. Risk Management

There are no issues to highlight other than already included in the AGS and Code. Having a Code in place, implementing it and reviewing action each year helps us to follow good practice and reduces the risk of failing to address any weaknesses in our corporate governance arrangements

### e. Net Zero

There are no issues to highlight.

## 6. Background papers (not previously published)

None.

## 7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement.

### Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Ruth Crowder, Customer and Democratic Support Manager, 13 February 2025.

### Responsible Officer, Job Title

Angela Edwards, Authority Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.