



Audit & Governance Committee
27 July 2015

Annual Report of Surrey County Council

Purpose of the report:

To formally consider the Annual Report for the authority.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the committee note and endorse the Annual Report (Annex A) for the authority.

Introduction:

1. Since the 2013/14 Annual Report included a summary of the financial statements, improvement emphasis has been on how information is presented within the report. This is just the beginning of the journey on presentational improvements.

Changes to the annual report

2. *"If I had more time I would have written you a shorter letter"* Winston Churchill.

2013/14 Annual Report feels like the long letter. Whilst 2014/15 has been the time to write the shorter letter. For 2013/14, Annex A was 72 pages (when laid-out and published the report was 147 pages). Condensing and making information more succinct and adding workforce and diversity information, energy consumption and Member leadership attendance have overall reduced Annex A to 56 pages.

3. This year, accountability and governance has been widened to include the officers from the Continuous Improvement and Productivity Network. This involvement has just commenced and the network will review this year's report in October to precede the 2015/16 report and inform how the future annual reports are disseminated to maximise residents' experience.

4. At the front of the report, there is now a brief glance at 2014/15. These items have all been in the press at some time another. There is a one page financial highlights that links to the Director of Finance review. Also one page highlighting our performance measures. The performance measures link to the performance measures website.
5. The Environmental Sustainability Review now comes from the Strategic Director of Environment and Infrastructure. Instead of just noting the greenhouse gas emissions, infographics now illustrate our corporate consumption and includes our corporate waste information. Adding this information within the section provides a more balanced position of our consumption and energy usage. There are links to the fuller reports on greenhouse gas emissions for readers who would like to know more.
6. The governance review is now from the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and contains a summary of the Annual Governance Statement and our governance arrangements. Member attendance has been included at only Member Leadership and Cabinet level.
7. The report now includes a review from the Chairman of the People, Performance and Development Committee on remuneration, workforce and diversity information and members' allowances. The review is based on the corporate annual report from remuneration committee and brings together Officers' and Members' workforce information.
8. The Annual Report contains links to key transparency information. For example: instead of individual member allowances being presented in full, there is a link to where the full information is held. This means that readers who would like further details can retrieve the information directly from our website. It also allows a more succinct message to be reported.
9. The endorsement of the Audit & Governance Committee will formalise the completion of the 2014/15 Annual Report. Council delegates responsibility to the Audit & Governance Committee to receive the audited Statement of Accounts and the result of the external audit, and approval of the Annual Report supplements this process.

Conclusions:

10. The County Council's Annual Report, set out in Annex A, includes:
 - reviews from relevant areas that draw together distinct information;
 - wider corporate information on energy consumptions and workforce diversity;
 - financial highlights; and
 - summarised information with clear links for further information.
11. The Annual Report 2014/15 will be available and published (external website and paper) in August.

Financial and value for money implications

12. There are no direct financial implications of this report, all financial implications in the accounts have been made in line with the Code of Practice and any impact on the 2014/15 budget has been considered in the outturn report to the Cabinet.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

13. There are no direct equalities implications of this report.

Risk Management Implications

14. There are no direct risk management implications of this report.

Next steps:

The Annual Report 2014/15 will be available and published (external website and paper) in August.

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Sources/background papers:

Financial Outturn 2014/15 – Report to Cabinet 28 April 2015.

Statement of Accounts 2014/15 – Report to Audit & Governance Committee
27 July 2015

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