

**GOOD GOVERNANCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Report of the Corporate Leadership Team

**Recommendation:**

that the draft Governance Statement be approved;

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1. The Council is required, annually, to prepare and publish a governance statement in accordance with CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and comply with Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011. The Council is required to publish the statement alongside the Annual Statement of Accounts.
2. This is the eighth year for which the Council has been required to produce a Governance Statement and the attached draft has, as is usual, been produced in line with the previous year's versions, focusing on the six core principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance which form the basis of the accompanying, detailed, schedule. The County Council's External Auditors, Grant Thornton, may be able to provide the Committee with a view as to whether the draft Annual Governance Statement is appropriate in terms of its length or whether it would be advantageous to provide the report in a more abbreviated format in the future.
3. In line with advice from the External Auditor the Annual Governance Statement should be considered and signed-off by this Committee in parallel with the Council's Statement of Accounts.
4. In recommending the adoption of the attached Annual Governance Statement the Corporate Leadership Team and Heads of Service confirm that the organisational, financial, compliance and operational key controls referred to therein and the accompanying schedule continue to be appropriate and that statements of internal control which support the content of this Statement have operated, effectively, during 2014/15.
5. This Report and the accompanying Statement have no specific equality, sustainability, public health or legal implications that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

[Electoral Divisions: All]

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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| <u>Background Paper</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>File Reference</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Nil                     |             |                       |

# **DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL Annual Governance Statement 2014/15**

## **Scope of Responsibility**

Devon County Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Devon County Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs so as to facilitate the effective exercise of its functions and manage risk.

The County Council has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

A copy of these codes can be obtained from the County Treasurer. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011.

## **Purpose of the Governance Framework**

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes and culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled; also the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks not being realised - and the impact should they be realised - and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2015 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Satisfactory controls to support statements made in this Annual Governance Statement are essential and in endorsing it the Council's officers confirm that input to systems and processing of transactions is complete for the financial year ended 31 March 2015 and that there were no material or significant delays or backlogs of either input or processes that would result in financial or other records being incomplete.

The Council's financial management arrangements also conform with the CIPFA/Solace guidance on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010), enabling the County Treasurer to operate in line with the 5 principles set out in the 'Application Note Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: A Framework' to operate effectively and perform her core duties demonstrating commitment to good practice in governance and financial management.

## **The Governance Framework – The Council's Constitution**

The Constitution is fundamental to the working of the County Council, transcending the six core principles of corporate governance in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework which form the basis of the response set out in the attached schedule.

The Constitution is the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. Framed in accordance with statute and Government guidance and evolved in the light of experience and subsequent legislation, it sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

The Constitution is the guarantor of the continuing openness, accountability and integrity of the Council's decision-making processes and sets a series of exacting standards against which the Council's actions can be judged and, if necessary, challenged.

The Constitution is at the heart of the Council's business:

- it allocates power and responsibility within the Council and between it and partner organisations;
- it delegates authority for specific issues to act to the Leader, Committees, Cabinet Members and officers;
- it enables the people of Devon to ask questions at certain meetings and to have them answered or submit petitions;
- it sets down the procedures by which the people of Devon may give their views on the key decisions which the Council's Cabinet is to take;
- it regulates the behaviour of individuals and groups through codes of conduct, protocols and standing orders.

The Constitution comprises 16 Articles setting out the basic rules governing all aspects of the working of the Council (Part 2) and is then divided up into:

- the elements which define the Council's internal organisation, standing orders, financial regulations, schemes of delegation and terms of reference, procedures covering Cabinet and Scrutiny, Risk Management and Codes of Conduct (Parts 3–9);
- working practices which supplement these formal rules (Part 10);
- documents which focus on the Council's external operation through service delivery, community engagement and partnership working (Part 11).

In formulating its Constitution in 2002, the Council adhered closely throughout to the framework presented in Government's *Modular Constitutions for English Local Authorities*, enabling it to produce a constitution which was logical, integrated and accessible to members, officers, citizens and others interested in the way a local authority makes decisions and governs itself and its area. Then and subsequently, wherever legislation permitted local choice, the Council has framed its Constitution to take advantage of the most open and inclusive of the available options.

The Constitution is designed to meet all the necessary statutory requirements for instruments of governance and to include matters traditionally covered by local authority standing orders, financial regulations, schemes of delegation and terms of reference. It also contains the elements necessary to describe the Council's executive arrangements in a single, coherent document which can be used as a comprehensive point of reference by individuals and organisations inside and outside the Council. All the familiar elements can be found in the Constitution and the Council has sought to use the model format to create a genuinely accessible, meaningful instrument of governance.

The Council is committed to involving the community in setting its priorities, enabling citizens to raise matters with and convey their concerns to the Council and to considering the needs of all groups in the community and promoting democratic understanding and participation. The Council's Constitution provides that framework.

### **Review of Effectiveness**

The County Council's Constitution has been in force since 2002 and is regularly reviewed having been substantially amended in 2012/13 reflecting the requirements of the Localism Act and revised Standards arrangements. Minor changes were made in 2014/15 to reflect new regulations affecting, inter alia, the issuing of summonses at Council meetings electronically, dismissal of statutory chief officers and recording of officer decisions and also to the Council's public participation scheme

The Constitution is published on the County Council's website at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/constitution.htm> and is also available for Inspection at the Council's offices.

The County Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including systems of internal control. This review of effectiveness is informed by the work of managers within the authority who have a responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

Details of processes applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework are summarised below.

### **The Constitution**

The roles and responsibilities of the Council, its Cabinet and non-Cabinet Members are set out more fully in Articles 6 and 7 of the Constitution and in Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions). These have been regularly reviewed and revised since the County Council elections in 2009 and are themselves balanced by the Codes of Personal Conduct set out at Part 6 of the Constitution.

The Council currently comprises 62 councillors<sup>1</sup>, meeting together as the full Council for specific purposes, to decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year. Meetings of the Council and its Committees are normally open to the public. The Council appoints the Leader, Scrutiny Committees, the Standards Committee and all other committees. The Council receives the minutes of committees, and has power to vary or refer back decisions which are outside established policy. From time to time it also debates issues of particular relevance or topicality for the County.

The Council had previously anticipated the potential impact of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 for its governance framework, including the new power of general competence for local authorities, governance arrangements, the abolition of the standards regime, enhanced community empowerment and availability of local referenda, community involvement in provision of services and potential acquisition of assets and reformation of the planning system including more localised neighbourhood plans and has made appropriate revisions as elements of that Act were brought into force.

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<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Boundary Commission is currently reviewing the County Council's electoral boundaries upon which recommendations are expected to be published in May 2015. The Council's views on the review may be seen at:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/elections-and-voting/electoral-review-of-devon-county-council/>

## **The Cabinet**

The Cabinet is the part of the Council responsible for most day-to-day decisions. It is made up of a Leader and no more than nine other members (Cabinet Members), appointed by the Leader from amongst the membership of the Council. When major decisions are to be discussed or made, these are published in the Cabinet's Forward Plan in so far as they can be foreseen. These major decisions will be taken with council officers present at meetings of the Cabinet which will be open to the public except where personal or confidential information is discussed. The Cabinet has to make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision which is outside the budget or policy framework, this matter must be referred to the full Council to decide.

## **The Scrutiny Function**

Scrutiny Committees support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole. They look at the effectiveness of the Council's own policies and inquire into matters of local concern. These investigations lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council on its policies, budget and service provision. Scrutiny Committees also monitor the Cabinet's decisions. They may "call in" a decision which has been made by the Cabinet but not implemented. This enables them to consider whether the decision is appropriate and they may recommend that the Cabinet reconsiders it. They may also be consulted by the Cabinet or the Council on forthcoming decisions and the development of policy. An Annual Scrutiny Report is also prepared for and considered by the County Council.

The Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee also monitors the function and activity of the Devon Health & Wellbeing Board and its statutory responsibility for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment.

Scrutiny Committees aim to operate in a non-partisan way which it is believed has served both the electorate and the Council well in line with the Constitution and the Council's protocol governing relationships between the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. Members of the Council may place items on the agenda of any Scrutiny Committee, a right which has always effectively existed in the Constitution since it was first adopted in 2002, reflecting the requirements of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act and its definition of '*any local government matter*'.

It is widely acknowledged that, in order to be effective, call-ins must be used only in exceptional circumstances, sparingly and appropriately. In the year in question there were only two instances as summarised below and while these may not have resulted in any significant changes to decisions they reinforce the independence and value of scrutiny in applying an 'external' view on decisions.

During 2014/15 there were two instances of decisions of the Cabinet or Cabinet Member being 'called-in' as indicated in the Scrutiny Annual Report (<https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/committee-meetings/scrutiny-committees/scrutiny-annual-reports/>) which contains in more detail the work of scrutiny at the County Council in 2014/15.

In responding to the LGA Peer Group Review, referred to elsewhere in this report, the People's Scrutiny Committee looked afresh at its ways of working to ensure sufficient focus is routinely placed on safeguarding issues, while acknowledging that the Peer Group reviews were looking primarily at children's safeguarding. Members welcomed the acknowledgement that scrutiny was recognised as being effective, with Members regularly demonstrating their willingness to challenge and act as a critical friend, although it needed to demonstrate its impact even more and continue to identify trends and themes and ask even more awkward questions.

It is pertinent to note that the Safeguarding Children Task Group (People's Scrutiny) undertook a review into Child Sexual Exploitation following the publication of the Alexis Jay

report on failings in Rotherham. The Task Group sought to understand the scale of the issue in Devon and the work of the County Council and partners to combat the threat. It published an interim report on 8 January 2015, where members identified the need for the County Council to take the lead in developing a smarter approach to intelligence gathering and data mapping on child sexual exploitation as a matter of great urgency. People's Scrutiny continues to review this major cultural and societal issue. The People's Scrutiny Committee also undertook a significant piece of work relating to pupil performance referred to more fully later in this report but which identified a number of key issues to be addressed.

The Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team remain appreciative of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees and acknowledge that it has made a major contribution to the work of the Council, especially in areas where detailed objective research and analysis needed to be done.

More detailed information on the work of the County Council's scrutiny committees may be found in the various scrutiny annual reports available at <http://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/committee-meetings/scrutiny-committees/scrutiny-annual-reports/>.

### **Organisational Performance**

The continuing impact of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, the Council's financial settlement for 2015/16 and beyond, and the general direction of travel indicated by Government for the reform of the public realm services has influenced the Authority's current and future performance. It is likely that a more flexible organisational structure to respond to those challenges and better equip and position the Council to focus on its future strategic commissioning responsibilities will be required, as Government policy decisions impact on the Council.

As part of the budget setting process for 2015/16, Scrutiny Committees highlighted the need for a fairer financial settlement for Devon and expressed concern that the ability of the Council to plan for the future was severely restricted as a result of no indication by Government of funding levels for future years. The Council, having already reduced budgets by £100 million over the last six years, has to produce further budget reductions of at least £110 million over the next three years to set balanced budgets due to cuts in Government funding. These cuts will inevitably lead to changes to the way in which services are delivered in the future.

The County Council had previously received an inadequate judgement from Ofsted following an unannounced inspection under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 on the overall effectiveness of the arrangements in Devon to protect children. As part of its response to that judgement and subsequent actions the Council invited the LGA to undertake two Corporate Peer Challenges on Devon's child protection arrangements in October 2014 and February 2015, both of which indicated a positive response to and improvement in the way in which the Council was working. Following these visits, on 25 February 2015 Ofsted undertook a month long unannounced inspection of the County Council's children's services. This included child protection, fostering and adoption, Integrated Children's Services (ICS) and the Devon Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB).<sup>2</sup>

The Council also agreed to the following changes which will impact on future performance:

- (a) to consider the establishment of a new independent organisation to deliver a new Devon Library Service;
- (b) to explore the potential similarly to establish a new Devon Youth Service.

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<sup>2</sup> The outcome of the inspection was published in May 2015, and will be included in the 2015/16 AGS.

The Council agreed the following measures as part of its continuing commitment to managing waste efficiently and promoting renewable energy:

- (a) to support the underlying aim of the Energy Bill Revolution campaign to further improve the energy efficiency of UK homes and so help to reduce the proportion of households affected by fuel poverty;
- (b) support the Cosy Devon branded ECO Delivery Partnership as a practical approach to addressing fuel poverty issues across Devon;
- (c) adoption of the Devon Waste Plan.

and also adopted:

- (a) Devon Flood Risk Management Plan;
- (b) A revised Strategic Plan for 2014-2020.

The County Council's Adoption Team which had recently been named as the 'Local Authority Adoption Team of the Year' for 2014 by the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF).

### **The Standards Committee**

The Standards Committee continued to exercise its role in monitoring complaints and standards. The number of complaints received against Councillors remains small. There were no cases locally where a councillor was found to have been in breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Efficient, effective and ethical governance protects the public interest and the Council itself. Members and Officers are supported by a wide range of policies and Codes of Practice enunciated in the Council's Constitution and also by a wide range of training opportunities tailored to meet their needs. The Council's Governance Framework is reviewed annually and any issues for the future governance of the Council are highlighted and addressed at that time.

During the course of 2014/15 the Committee inter alia considered,

- (a) the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Report for 2013/14 and Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter on the outcome of complaints lodged and/or determined during 2013/14; Members welcomed the fact that none of the complaints received had resulted in any finding of maladministration against the County Council or any question of probity raised by a complainant, nor had the Ombudsman raised any significant areas of concern in relation to the handling of cases;
- (b) the Local Government Ombudsman's review of complaints about adult social care; members again welcomed the fact that there were no issues raised within this report in terms of the Council's performance;
- (c) the outcomes of the second ethical governance audit and self-assessment survey of County Councillors and Officers;
- (d) the second annual feedback report covering both corporate and social care services, relating to compliments, representations and complaints received and handled by the Council in 2013/14;
- (e) the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2014/15 may be found at:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillor/committee/standards/>

## **The Audit Committee / Devon Audit Partnership**

The Devon Audit Partnership was established by the Council in conjunction with Plymouth City and Torbay Councils in 2009 to provide shared internal audit services (as a means of improving services through joint working and maximising efficiencies and economies of scale) reporting to the new Devon Audit Partnership. The Devon Audit Partnership currently undertakes audit work for a number of District Councils, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Devon and Cornwall Police, the University of Plymouth and many other public authorities and planned to continue expanding on their work with external partners. The Partnership and democratic arrangements are working well and will continue to be reviewed.

The Audit Committee remains vigilant in monitoring the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources including the work of the Council's Internal Audit team and the External Auditor and the application of the Council's Risk Management policy.

The Audit Committee will also review separately, and on a regular basis, progress with and implementation of any recommendations made in Audit Reports into specific areas of activity to ensure they have been adhered to and appropriate management action taken.

In the 2013/14 Annual Audit letter of the Council's external auditors, it was confirmed that there was an unqualified opinion on the Council's 2013/14 financial statements, an unqualified opinion on the Pension Fund financial statements and a qualified value for money conclusion 2013/14 due to, in the external auditors view, to insufficient progress having been made in addressing the issues raised by Ofsted in 2013 relating to children's services.

The external auditors reported that the Council is addressing the major financial challenge of significantly reduced financial resources which will require changes to many services over the next few years. Plans are developed for the financial year 2015/16 and beyond, but there remain some significant areas of review to identify budget reductions. Transformation of the way that key services are being provided is underway but will take time to deliver the necessary change. There remain risks to the Council's future financial position until these transformational projects are delivered and the savings are realised.

## **The Investment and Pension Fund Committee**

Accounting arrangements require separate accounts to be prepared for the County Council and the Devon Pension Fund. Recognising the need for clear governance arrangements for managing these Accounts the Council's Investment & Pension Fund Committee undertakes the role of reviewing and approving the Pension Fund Annual Report, which incorporates the Statement of Accounts. The Devon County Council Audit Committee undertakes the role to review and approve the accounts of the Devon Pension Fund to ensure appropriate accounting policies were introduced in the same way as it is responsible for monitoring and approving the Council's main accounts.

## **Engagement and Participation**

The County Council has always prided itself on the work it does, over and above statutory consultations, to encourage individuals from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the Council. Examples of this are the Council's Communications Strategy, the Devon Voice (Residents Panel), Parent Carers Voice, and the Tough Choices events held by the Leader of the Council across the County as part of a wider exercise by the County Council to consult and involve local people in determining the Council's priorities.

## **Education**

The County Council is committed to improving the life-chances of all Devon's children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. Local authorities have a democratic mandate to champion the interests of their local communities and ensure that services work effectively for



children, young people and families, regardless of whether they attended local authority-maintained schools and settings or others, such as academies, free schools and independent specialist settings. The County Council acts as Corporate Parent for all children in care and therefore has a particular interest in the progress and attainment and hence achievement of all looked-after children.

The County Council's ambition is that no Devon child, regardless of their circumstances, is allowed to underachieve or their progress fall behind. For this reason, the County Council is committed to on-going commissioning of robust challenge and effective support for schools. Devon schools must enable vulnerable children and young people to achieve better by securing and sustaining improved standards of achievement for all children at all levels of ability and maximising outcomes at Key Stages 4 and 5. As well as developing a broader range of strategies to expand schools' universal offer especially for the most vulnerable and challenged children.

The County Council robustly challenges any underperformance and statutory non-compliance with an emphasis on vulnerable groups. An Academies Protocol is used to open a dialogue about underperformance in relation to state-funded independent schools such as academies and free schools. The protocol sets out the responsibilities for both Academy Schools and the County Council so that both parties share the same understanding of their respective roles in enabling the children and young people attending Devon schools achieve their potential. There is also an increased focus in monitoring children placed in independent specialist provision to ensure sharper accountability of these settings for the achievement of children.

As mentioned above, the People's Scrutiny Committee undertook a major piece of work on pupil performance and made a number of recommendations which were subsequently endorsed and actioned by Cabinet aimed to improve the academic achievement of vulnerable children in Devon and in particular the under-performance of children in care. These included:

- work to restructure the Virtual School;
- strengthening the role of the corporate parent in terms of monitoring the educational progress and fostering arrangements of Children in Care;
- that good practice in the effective use of pupil premium is shared across schools and key practitioners;
- placement stability for Children in Care being given an even higher priority and every effort being made to reduce the number of changes a young person has of foster carer, social worker and school;
- further work and reporting is undertaken to ensure that vulnerable children are not disadvantaged through school absence, part-time schooling and children being outside of mainstream schooling.

More information on the County Council's role and support to schools may be found at:

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/learningschools>

### **Significant Governance Issues**

One of the biggest issues addressed by the Council in 2014/15 was perhaps the setting of the budget for 2015/16 and in making sure that appropriate steps were taken and measures put in place to ensure that services delivered or commissioned by the County Council remained accountable and properly managed.

The impact of the next Government's spending plan on future financial settlements will also be a key issue for the Council to address in 2016/17 and beyond. Moreover and in addressing the findings of the 2015 Ofsted inspection, the Council will need to focus on its future strategic responsibilities.

Additionally and in the move towards a commissioning authority, scrutiny needs to continue to exercise influence through asking questions about delivery mechanisms, quality, monitoring,

safety and responsiveness as an appreciative inquiry where problems are analysed and understood as a precursor to improvement and change rather than punitive action.

Other significant issues which have and will continue to impact on the Council are:

- (a) The challenge of extending superfast broadband across Devon as part of the Devon and Somerset Partnership ([Cabinet Minute 222\\*](#));
- (b) The operation of the new Devon Pension Board which had to be established by 1 April 2015 to oversee the activities of the Council's Investment & Pensions Committee.

The County Council continues to adopt a very prudent approach to its treasury management practices. The Council's strategy is soundly based on the principle that when balancing risk and return the security and liquidity of an investment is given a higher priority than the yield.

Throughout the year, the Council has been active in managing investment and interest rate risk. Active treasury management and the maintenance of levels of liquidity aim to avoid the need for short term borrowing. However, a temporary shortfall in available cash meant that short-term borrowing was required for a brief period during mid-October (a sum of £15m was borrowed for a period of 30 days, but was not required for the whole period and the surplus funds were invested at a higher rate resulting in a small net gain to the authority). No long term borrowing was undertaken during the financial year with any borrowing required to finance capital expenditure being met from internal cash balances.

The Council also regularly reviews and updates its Investment Strategy and its Treasury Management Policy and Practices to ensure that they reflect best practice guidance as issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). In line with that guidance, the policies were first scrutinised - as indicated above - by the Council's Policy & Resources Scrutiny prior to consideration by the Council's Cabinet.

The Treasury Management Stewardship Annual Report for 2014/15 had not identified any significant issues to highlight, confirming that there had been: no long term borrowing requirements at that stage; that investment income targets would be achieved and all lending had been carried out in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

At the time this Annual Statement was in preparation – and over and above the impact upon the organisation and services of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and financial settlements for 2015/16 and beyond – a degree of uncertainty remains over the impact upon the Council's governance framework of the Government's intentions for and direction of travel of public realm services post general election 2015. The CSR published in October 2010 outlined real terms cuts of 28% in local authority expenditure over four years to 2014/15. The Spending Review in June 2013 and the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in December 2013 continue to indicate significant reductions in public expenditure into the medium term.

The Council formally places on record and expresses its appreciation to its entire staff for their continuing commitment to the delivery of high quality services for the people of Devon throughout this period.

### **Certification**

We have been advised on the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework undertaken by the Cabinet, the Standards Committee, the Audit Committee, the Investment & Pension Fund Committee and by Scrutiny Committees and the plans, as summarised above, to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of systems is in place.

We will over the coming year continue to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for

improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

**Signed**.....

Chairman of the Audit Committee, on behalf of Devon County Council

**Signed**.....

Chief Executive, on behalf of Devon County Council

30 June 2015