

**2007/08 ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT ON GOVERNANCE AND CONTROLS**

*To be signed by the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors*

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively, and that services and practices are continually improved for the benefit of the service recipients and the taxpayers of Luton. In discharging this accountability, members and senior officers are responsible for defining and communicating the culture, values, objectives and priorities of the organisation, measuring reviewing and improving performance, and putting in place proper risk management processes and internal controls to ensure the proper stewardship of the resources at its disposal.

As a member of the Corporate Leadership Management Team over the past financial year, I had responsibility for defining, reviewing and improving service and performance standards in line with the objectives, vision, corporate values, corporate standards and policies of the council, and maintaining a system of sound internal controls and risk management processes within the services for which I was responsible. The controls are aimed at safeguarding all the Council's assets, ensuring it achieves its stated objectives, operates efficiently, effectively and economically and meets its statutory requirement to continuously approve.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risks rather than eliminate all risks. It therefore provides reasonable but not absolute assurance.

My review of the effectiveness of the governance framework and systems of internal control has taken into account

- a review of the issues set out in Appendix 1;
- relevant internal audit reports and the follow-up to previous audit recommendations;
- external reports by other bodies including, where applicable, inspections and external auditor's comments.

I am satisfied that, except for the matters identified in my list of comments attached, a system of sound governance and internal control was in place throughout the financial year and, as far as I am aware, is on-going. I confirm that my evidence to substantiate this will be available for audit.

I confirm that action is being taken to address the matters identified as needing attention in Appendix 1 and that my improvement plan will be incorporated into the Service Plan.

Signed: .....

Print Name: .....  
(IN BLOCK CAPITALS)

Date: .....

**The deadline for completing this form is 31 March 2008**

If you have any questions or comments concerning this, speak to your departmental Risk and Innovation Champion:

Chief Executives – Geoff Bocutt  
Children & Learning – William Clapp  
C&CS / Resources – Angela Claridge  
Environment & Regeneration – Les Gibbings  
Housing & Community Living – Pam Garraway

This statement, including Appendix 1, should be returned to your departmental Risk and Innovation Champion. Keep a copy for your own reference, and copy improvement action tasks into your service plan.

*Please answer YES or NO to the following questions. If you answer NO to any question, you will need to specify the remedial action you will take to ensure that the question can be answered YES in future. Use the table at the end of this section.*

## **ASSURANCE STATEMENT ON GOVERNANCE AND INTERNAL CONTROLS**

### **Questions To Be Considered When Assessing Effectiveness Of Governance and Controls Operating In the Council.**

<b>ORGANISATIONAL / STAFFING ISSUES</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>
1. Is there an up-to-date organisational chart for your department?	
2. Have you systems in place to ensure that all staff have clearly defined job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities?	
4. Does your department have procedures in place to ensure that all staff are part of an annual appraisal process?	
5. Have you systems in place to ensure that all staff are made aware of the council's values and objectives, and how those values and objectives relate to their work?	
6. Are you and relevant staff aware of your delegated powers and responsibilities?	
7. Have you systems in place to ensure that services are carried out by appropriately trained and skilled staff, and that training needs are identified and acted upon to ensure those skills remain up to date?	
8. Have the development needs of relevant members and senior staff been identified, and are there programmes in place to ensure that those needs are addressed, and will continue to be identified and addressed in the future?	
9. Are there systems in place to ensure that the council's strategic direction, objectives and values are reviewed and updated on a regular basis?	
<b>FINANCIAL ISSUES</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>
10. Are there controls to ensure all expenditure is properly authorised?	
11. Are there controls to ensure all income is collected and banked and that charges are in accordance with the Council's approved scale of charges?	
12. Are there controls to ensure that all income available to the council is claimed promptly, and can you provide assurance for your department that grant claims have been made on a prompt basis and no significant sums that could have been claimed remain outstanding?	
13. Are there controls to ensure the accuracy of any financial information held within your department?	
14. Does monthly budget monitoring and review take place and are any material under or overspends identified by cost centre managers in a timely fashion and dealt with in accordance with corporate requirements?	
15. Do reports to Executive/Committees include relevant and accurate financial information?	

16. Are there controls in place to ensure that all transactions are processed accurately, completely and on a timely basis?	
17. Have all audit reports issued in the year been at least adequate, and have all external audit reports (if issued for the service) been unqualified?	
18. Are there controls in place to ensure the reliability of key systems, including regular bank/system reconciliation where necessary?	
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>
19. Are procedures in place to ensure risks are assessed, recorded and managed in accordance with the Council's risk Management Strategy?	
20. Does your department have a member of staff specifically responsible for maintaining and updating the risk register in accordance with corporate requirements?	
21. Are procedures in place to ensure risks are regularly reviewed and that agreed mitigating action is taking place?	
22. Have you systems in place to ensure that each new project entered into by your department is risk assessed, and are all appropriate major projects reported to the Council's Major Projects Sub Group?	
23. Does the departmental management team review service plan and project performance at least quarterly, assessing the risks that are arising and how they are being managed?	
24. Do CIB/CLMT review corporate and departmental performance at least quarterly, assessing the key risks arising that might impinge on achieving objectives, how those risks are being managed effectively, and what lessons can be learnt and applied elsewhere?	
25. Are there corporate systems in place to ensure that the combined and cumulative impact of major projects is effectively risk-managed?	
26. Are well-communicated and tested contingency procedures, including a fully documented business continuity plan, in place to ensure the maintenance of your essential services? Have you reviewed the procedures in the past year?	
<b>PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND VALUE FOR MONEY</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>
27. Are systems and procedures in place to ensure a culture of continuous improvement throughout all the services for which you are responsible?	
28. Has the department defined the expected standards of all its key services, and set performance indicators/targets to measure all the key outcomes?	
29. Are agreed performance indicators/targets regularly reviewed and significant variations in performance from targets reported to CLMT/CIB and/or members?	
30. Are complaints from customers regularly dealt with in accordance with Council's complaints procedures, reviewed to assess what can be learnt from them, and used to inform service standard setting and performance targets ?	
31. Are all the services for which you are responsible showing consistent and continuous improvement?	
32. Are recommendations from auditors/inspectors and other external reviewers implemented on agreed timescales?	
33. Are procedures in place to ensure a timely response to customer and	

**APPENDIX D**

stakeholder queries?	
<b>COMPLIANCE</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>
34. Do you have effective controls in place to ensure that all services and activities comply with relevant legislation, Council policy and best practice guidance?	
35. Are there effective systems in place to ensure that all service providers (internal or external) understand the council's corporate aims, values and priorities, and work corporately together to achieve the council's objectives in an effective and efficient manner?	
36. Do you have processes in place to identify changes in legislation and to review services and activities if necessary?	
37. Do you have controls in place in your service to ensure that the Council's Constitution, including standing orders and financial regulations, is complied with?	
38. Do you have controls in place to ensure that all information is held in accordance with relevant legislation, e.g. Data Protection/Freedom of Information Acts?	
39. Are you able to certify that all issues involving breach or potential breach of financial regulations, standing orders or other parts of the Council's Constitution that have been brought to your attention have been thoroughly investigated and referred to the Head of Corporate Finance (for issues relating to Financial Regulations) or to the Head of Legal Services (for issues relating to standing orders and other parts of the Council's Constitution).	

**GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (to be incorporated into the Service Plan)**

<b>GOVERNANCE QUESTION NO.</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENT ACTION</b>	<b>OFFICER RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>DATE FOR COMPLETION</b>