

SUBJECT: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT MONITORING

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S

LEAD OFFICER: HEATHER GROVER, PRINCIPAL POLICY OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present a progress update on the areas identified as 'significant governance issues' as set out in the 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Audit Committee has a role to review the Council's governance arrangements including the production of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 2.2 This report provides details of the monitoring arrangements for the significant internal control issues raised in the latest AGS.

3. Background

3.1 Monitoring of 2019/20 AGS issues

- 3.2 The updates on the significant issues identified within the 2019/20 AGS are included within **Appendix A**.
- 3.3 These are monitored by the Service Manager's Group and overseen by Corporate Leadership Team as well as monitored at the Audit Committee.

4 Summary of findings

- 4.1 Of the three significant issues, one is considered by the responsible officer to remain red.
- 4.2 **The Disaster Recovery plan in place for IT arrangements**
"The IT Disaster Recovery plan is not sufficiently aligned with the Business Continuity plans that are currently in place for restoring key services, in terms of IT needs"
- 4.2.1 This issue was carried forward from the previous AGS and has one action remaining. The delay has been in part due to the pandemic, and in part due to the need to construct a purpose-built facility. Whilst this has been largely completed there remain some technical compatibility issues which are currently being worked on to find options to resolve these issues.
- 4.3 Two new significant issues were identified for the first time in the 2019/20 AGS, the first of which is considered by the responsible officer to turn green from amber, and the second to remain amber.

4.4 Review of impact of Coronavirus on the council's service delivery and embedding new ways of working for staff

"COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the council's budget resulting in the need to undertake a comprehensive review of how and what services are delivered ensuring our statutory requirements are met. The council was already undertaking a pilot to enable more agile working and with the lockdown the council fast tracked this approach and the council now needs to review the effectiveness of working conditions for staff and members and look to the future. The issue is that we will need to ensure that as the council develops its different approaches to service delivery and new ways of working it ensures governance is at its heart, recognising that governance arrangements may need to adapt and change in order that they remain fit for purpose in the new world."

4.4.1 One of two significant issues which is a direct result of the pandemic. Whilst we had already launched and were developing the One Council approach, the pandemic accelerated the need to do this and work has been undertaken to understand what our future workforce and workspace needs are.

4.4.2 As part of our annual review of our local Code of Corporate Governance we are currently reviewing our governance arrangements in line with the way we are currently working and plans for the future. We recognise that governance arrangements may need to adapt and change further in order that they remain fit for purpose and procedures for timely review of documents and processes are included within the code.

4.4.3 This issue is considered to be at green status.

4.5 Vision 2025 needs to be re-profiled and communicated to a wider audience in the light of COVID-19

"The strategy was adopted but there was no formal public launch due to COVID-19. The council's response to the pandemic was to proactively divert resources to tackle the emergency and all projects and programmes that could be paused/had not already commenced were stopped in a planned way. Tackling the emergency situation and resulting recovery phase has been a long process due to the prevalence of COVID-9 nationally and there is now a need to review Vision 2025 in light of COVID-19, re-profile the commitments in the strategy and then communicate it widely."

4.5.1 This is the second issue which has arisen as a result of the pandemic. Our strategic plan, Vision 2025 was approved in February 2020 and due to be launched in March 2020. However, due to the pandemic not only was the launch delayed, but many of the projects within the plan have had delayed starts, been put on hold or in some cases needed complete review. Good progress has been made on this issue since the last update, although there has been a further delay due to the longer effect of Covid-19.

4.5.2 This issue is considered to be at amber status.

5. Strategic Priorities

This report does not focus specifically on any of the five Vision 2025 priorities but does contribute significantly towards One Council which underpins these aspirations.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report

6.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

There are no direct Equality and Diversity implications arising as a result of this report.

7 Risk Implications

7.1 (i) Options Explored - n/a

(ii) Key risks associated with the preferred approach n/a

8 Recommendation

8.1 The Audit Committee is asked to note the report and consider whether any of the following options are relevant:

- Report and make recommendations to the Executive if appropriate.
- Refer any matter under review they feel appropriate to the relevant Portfolio Holder, Scrutiny Chair or Committee.
- Accept the report and continue to monitor arrangements.

Key Decision

No

Do the Exempt Information

No

Categories Apply?

Call in and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

No

How many appendices does the report contain?

One

List of Background Papers:

None

Lead Officer:

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