

Meeting:	Audit & Governance Committee	Date:	25th November 2013
Subject:	Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2013-14		
Report Of:	Corporate Director of Resources (on behalf of the Corporate Governance Group).		
Wards Affected:	N/A		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2013-14		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of action taken on the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2013-14.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Audit & Governance Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that
- (1) Members endorse the action taken on the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2013 -14

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The 2012 - 13 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) was approved by the Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting held on 23rd September 2013. The purpose of the AGS is to provide assurance that the Council's Governance Framework is adequate and effective.
- 3.2 As part of the AGS, the Council is required to identify any Significant Governance Issues faced by the Council and to set out the proposed actions to be taken to address those issues, and the timescale within which those actions will be taken. The role of the Audit & Governance Committee is to formally monitor progress on actions arising from the Significant Governance Issues identified in the AGS.
- 3.3 It was agreed at the September 2013 Audit & Governance Committee meeting that a monitoring report on the achievement of the Annual Governance 2013 -14 Action Plan would be presented to the next meeting.

4.0 Progress

- 4.1 A copy of the Annual Governance Action Plan is produced in Appendix A. The proposed actions to be taken have been identified in the table.

4.2 Assurances have been obtained that the required actions either have been, or are in the process of being implemented.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 The lack of any formal monitoring of action taken to implement the Significant Governance Issues identified in the AGS Action Plan 2013 – 14 could lead to the risk of these issues not being addressed, resulting in weaknesses in governance arrangements continuing to exist

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The role of the Audit & Governance Committee is to formally monitor progress on actions arising from the Significant Governance Issues identified in the AGS.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

6.1 The 2012 - 13 Annual Governance Statement included an Action Plan detailing actions to be undertaken during 2013 -14 to improve the governance arrangements. Assurances have been obtained that the required actions either have been, or are in the process of being implemented. A further report on action taken on the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2013-14 will be presented to the March meeting of this Committee.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Covered in the report.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 None specific to this report.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

9.1 The Annual Governance Statement is the formal statement that recognises, records and publishes the Council's governance arrangements as defined in the Local Code of Corporate Governance. The preparation of an Action Plan to further enhance the Council's governance arrangements and its subsequent disclosure in the Annual Governance Statement delivers assurance that these issues have been, or are being addressed. Any significant governance issues that have not been addressed will result in weaknesses in governance arrangements continuing to exist.

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

10.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

11.1 There are no Community Safety implications to the recommendation made in this report.

Sustainability

11.2 There are no Sustainability implications to the recommendation made in this report.

Staffing & Trade Union

11.3 There are no Staffing and Trade Union implications to the recommendation made in this report.

Background Documents: Annual Governance Statement 2012/13
Local Code of Corporate Governance

APPENDIX A

Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2013-14

No.	Core Principle	Governance issue	Responsible Officer	Action Required	Action Taken	Target Date for Completion	RAG Rating
1	Promote values for the authority and demonstrate the values of good governance through the upholding of high standards of conduct and behaviour.	Governance issues arising out of the investigation of anonymous allegations.	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer	Commission a review of the Council's corporate governance arrangements, as part of a peer review process during 2013/14.	The Peer Challenge process is currently underway. A financial health check/diagnostic has taken place on site, which will be used to inform the main peer Challenge visit - which is scheduled for week commencing 9 th December 2013. An update following the review will be given to Audit and Governance Committee.	31/01/13	GREEN
2	Take informed and transparent decisions, which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.	Essential and ongoing improvements in financial management are necessary, as identified in the Annual Governance Statement by the Director of Resources, and detailed within	Corporate Director of Resources/ Head of Financial Services	2a) Improve the ongoing technical accounting skills within the financial services team.	Qualified & experienced appointments have been made to the Head of Financial Services and Management Accountant posts. Recruitment is currently underway for the Financial Accountant role. 2 members of staff at technician level have recently qualified for the Association of Accounting Technicians.	31/01/13	GREEN

No.	Core Principle	Governance issue	Responsible Officer	Action Required	Action Taken	Target Date for Completion	RAG Rating
		the Financial Services Improvement Plan			Professional Accountancy training will be delivered to further staff as necessary. The proposed revised structure for financial services emphasises the importance of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.		
				2b) Further implementation of the LEAN process review across the council to embed ongoing improvements.	Ongoing improvements to processes within Financial Services are embodied in detail within the financial services improvement plan	Ongoing throughout 2013/14.	GREEN
				2c) Restructure of Financial Services to help embed improvements and to ensure an overlap between the interim team and recruitment to new roles within financial services.	Appointment to key posts to ensure appropriate overlap with interim staff has been made as per (2a) above. A revised staffing structure for the whole service is currently out to consultation with staff, with a view to implementing the final structure from 18 th December.	31 st December 2013	GREEN

No.	Core Principle	Governance issue	Responsible Officer	Action Required	Action Taken	Target Date for Completion	RAG Rating
				2d) Implement improved reporting arrangement to ensure key routines are delivered within financial services.	These routines are included in the Financial Services Improvement Plan and are monitored on a monthly basis.	Ongoing throughout 2013/14.	GREEN
				2e) Implementation of the Financial Services Improvement Plan.	The plan is being implemented through the year – and is being monitored by GLT, cabinet members, Audit and Governance Committee and Group Leaders.	Ongoing throughout 2013/14.	GREEN
3	Develop the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.	Take-up levels for Member development opportunities.	Monitoring Officer	Investigate options for increasing take-up of Member development opportunities.	Officers from Democratic Services are working on a report to go to Constitutional and Electoral Working Group on 28 January, setting out historical levels of take-up for Member development and options for increasing future take-up of development opportunities and the range of development offered for Members to consider.	End of January 2014	GREEN