

Annual Governance Statement – Mid-Year Update

Final Decision-Maker	Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report provides the Committee with an update on those matters identified in the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21 as requiring action.

Purpose of Report

For noting.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the update on progress with the current Annual Governance Statement Action Plan, at Appendix A, be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Audit, Governance and Standards Committee	15 November 2021

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1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Effective corporate governance arrangements ensure the Council’s priorities are understood and delivered.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Effective corporate governance arrangements ensure the Council’s cross cutting objectives are understood and delivered.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	The most significant risks from the Corporate Risk Register are included within the action plan in the Annual Governance Statement.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	Carrying out the actions identified in the action plan helps to ensure that the Council maintains high governance standards.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The action plan will be delivered within current staffing resources.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	<p>Section 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires all local authorities to:</p> <p>a) conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control required by</p>	Mid Kent Legal Partnership

	regulation 3; and (b) prepare an annual governance statement; Under the Council's Constitution one of the functions of the Committee is to oversee the production of the Council's Annual Governance Statement. The Annual Statement demonstrates measures are in place to ensure good governance arrangements which enable the Council to meet its statutory requirements.	
Privacy and Data Protection	Maintaining high standards in relation to privacy and data protection have been identified in the Annual Governance Statement as a key part of the governance framework and carried forward into the action plan and update.	Corporate Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Equalities	Good governance will ensure the Council is adhering to the public sector equality duty.	Corporate Insight, Communities and Governance team
Public Health	No implications.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No implications.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	No implications.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Environmental impact is included in the review of the governance arrangements	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Annual Statement of Corporate Governance for 2020-21 was considered and approved by the Committee in July 2021. The statement contained an Action Plan for 2021-22. This report provides an update on the progress made against the Action Plan as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 The actions outlined in Appendix A arose from areas identified in the corporate governance statement as requiring additional action to maintain the Council's governance standards.

2.3 A number of areas were identified for action including:

- Data Protection Action Plan
- Significant risks as identified from the corporate risk register
- Increasing transparency of data and information on the council's website
- Actions to ensure compliance with the Financial Management Code
- Review of Church Road Otham
- Change to Executive Model of Governance
- Raising awareness of the local code of corporate governance and the Nolan Principles
- Promoting decision making on Garden Communities

2.4 Progress has been made across all areas as outlined in Appendix A. A full report on data protection and the Action Plan previously reported to this Committee is included as a full agenda item at this meeting. As identified in the report the Council has worked proactively to improve how we manage and hold personal data in-line with the Data Protection Act. Whilst there have been additional burdens in terms of the work required to meet the Act the actions taken have improved how the Council operates and how we manage and use personal data. Colleagues across the Council have been receptive to change and training to increase understanding and awareness of data protection and effective data management across the Council.

2.5 The key corporate risks are regularly updated and monitored by the Audit Governance and Standards Committee the update sets out the actions that have been taken in respect of these risks.

2.6 A number of actions were identified to ensure the Council's compliance with the new Financial Management Code, actions are planned for the work on social value and commissioning later this municipal year and progress is reported for the actions for budget monitoring and the capital strategy.

2.7 Work continues on the new Executive Model of Governance which will be introduced at the Annual Meeting in May 2022. Having agreed the new structure the next phase of work is drafting the new constitution, an expert legal advisor has been appointed to assist with this task as it will be a substantial and critical piece of work. The working group of Democracy and General Purposes Committee will be supported by the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance as well as the democratic services team. Meetings are scheduled from November to March to complete the work required. Training is planned for Councillors and Officers on the new arrangements prior to their commencement in May.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Committee could decide not to consider the Action Plan update provided at Appendix A, however the Action Plan is a key part of the Committee's

governance remit. The Committee can also request further information to seek assurance on the progress of the Action Plan if required.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 As stated in section 3.1 considering the Action Plan is a key part of the Committee's governance remit. The Committee is asked to note the update provided on the actions developed as a result of the annual review of governance.

5. RISK

5.1 This report is presented for information only. An update on the Key corporate risks has been included in the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 The Committee is invited to provide feedback on progress with the Action Plan.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 This report has been provided to update the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee and will be publicly available via the Committee papers on the Council's website. Any recommendations for further action by the Committee in regard to the Action Plan will be carried forward.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.