

PROGRESS REPORT ON SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022-23

AGS Issue No.	Issue identified	Responsible Officer	Summary of action proposed	Update Sept 2023	Update December 2023	Update March 2024	Notes
1	<p>Financial position – Significant inflation fuelled by high energy prices, a higher than anticipated national pay settlement and income streams still struggling to reach the budget meant that the Council had to take action to address significant issues during 2022/23. The unprecedented cost pressures also meant that significant reductions and additional income were required to deliver a balanced budget for 2023/24.</p> <p>The Council's medium term financial plan anticipates reserves being reduced to the minimum required by 2024/25 and further budget reductions of £5.1m are required by 2028.</p>	Director Finance	<p>One Exeter plan is operational and being progressed. Specific reduction targets have been set for each year of the plan. This is being monitored monthly by SMB. Clear programmes of work are in place and are being actioned. It is imperative that strong financial discipline is maintained across the Council to ensure that the reductions are delivered. It should also be noted that areas of concern around income targets; business rates, parking, trade waste, Civic Centre rental will be subject to close monitoring during the year.</p>	<p>Income remains below target in a number of areas. As a result the budgets have been amended for 2024-25.</p>	<p>The position remains the same as it was in September.</p>		
2	<p>Debt Collection – The Council has actively been seeking to identify new income streams as part of the 'One Exeter' project. Whilst this is good news, our work has identified that there are significant weaknesses within service areas around raising invoices and the subsequent collection of debt for all income streams. For example, services are being provided but invoices are not always raised, or not raised promptly, to collect fees for services provided. It should be noted that this weakness relates only to service areas and does not apply to the Council's Income Collection Team.</p>	Service Lead - Revenues, Benefits and Customer Access	<p>An external review of debt collection has been already been commissioned the results of which are due to be presented to the Council shortly. As debt management is also one of the themes for the cross cutting review this report will feed into that review.</p>	<p>The external review of debt collection has been completed and a report will be going to the Strategic Management Board for consideration at their meeting of 26 September 2023.</p>	<p>The report has been agreed and two further posts will be added. A supplementary budget request has been included in the report to Executive (Nov 28). It is envisaged that at least in the short term the reductions in bad debt provision will cover the costs of the new post.</p>		
3	<p>Change Management – the current scale and pace of change due to a number of factors presents a risk to achieving objectives and may impact the extent to which the organisation is capable of maintaining acceptable levels of compliance amid the shake-up of operations and control systems. These factors include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> external factors e.g. regulatory change and compliance, climate change internal factors e.g. The One Exeter project to deliver the digitalisation/transformation of service delivery 	Audit Managers	<p>The Audit Managers have been involved in a number of the One Exeter work streams, including the cross cutting theme reviews. Involvement at this early stage should help identify risks to the internal control environment that could arise due to any changes being brought about by the program and this work will continue as the project develops.</p> <p>Internal Audit have also been asked to input into the development of service plans advising on governance and risk assessment processes</p>	<p>We are continuing to provide support as needed and requested.</p>	<p>We are continuing to provide support as needed and requested.</p>		