

## **REPORT TO AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE**

Date of Meeting: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Report of: Chief Executive

Title: Corporate Governance Audit Report

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

#### **1. What is the report about?**

1.1 This report presents the recommendations from a recent audit of the council's corporate governance arrangements. It includes the actions that will be taken in response to the recommendations and sets out how progress will be monitored and reported going forward.

#### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That the Audit and Governance Committee:

2.2.1 Note the content of the audit report contained at Appendix A and the actions that will be taken in response to the recommendations.

2.2.2 Agree that a 6 monthly progress update against the Corporate Governance Audit Recommendations is reported to Audit and Governance Committee. To include an update against the recommendations made by the External Auditors.

#### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 To ensure that the council's business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, used economically, efficiently and effectively.

3.2 To provide assurance to the Audit and Governance Committee that the council is reporting against its corporate governance responsibilities.

#### **4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources**

4.1 The Strategic Management Board has taken ownership of the recommendations contained in the Corporate Governance Audit Report and the respective actions. Delivery of the agreed actions will result in resource implications, but this will be managed through Directorate work plans.

## **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 Members should note the progress that has been made in respect to this important Audit. Progress will continue to be reported as the Council seeks to strengthen its Corporate Governance processes.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 The Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This is known as the Best Value duty. The duty requires the Council to make arrangements that ensure services are delivered in a cost-effective manner while meeting the needs of the community. In discharging this overall responsibility, the council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk. The Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/Solace 2016).

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 This report sets out the actions that will be taken in response to the recommendations of a recent audit of the Council's corporate governance arrangements. The importance of ensuring high standards of corporate governance is paramount.

## **8. Report details:**

8.1 Earlier this year the council's auditors undertook an audit of the council's corporate governance arrangements (see Appendix A).

8.2 The report and recommendations have been reviewed by the Strategic Management Board and Members are asked to note the following progress in relation to the recommendations made:

- The Code of Corporate Governance has been published on the council's website;
- a recruitment process to appoint a Consultation and Engagement Officer is underway;
- work is in progress to review the council's corporate priorities and outcomes as part of the work to develop a new Corporate Plan;
- a corporate performance management dashboard is being developed to measure progress against the corporate priorities;
- an HR Improvement Plan has been developed which includes work to develop a Workforce Plan;
- a new Performance and Development Review process has been implemented;
- The Risk Management Policy has been approved by Executive; and
- an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge has been arranged for March 2025.

8.3 This work is due for completion within the next 12 months.

8.4 Given the significance of the report and recommendations, it has been agreed that all of the recommendations contained in the report are owned and implemented by the Strategic Management Board and that quarterly updates are reviewed at the Strategic Management Board meeting.

8.5 It is also proposed that half-yearly updates are reported to Audit and Governance committee to provide assurance to Members that the audit recommendations are being addressed and to allow Members the opportunity to scrutinise and understand the work that is taking place.

## **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1 Good governance contributes to the Council's purpose of a "Well Run Council."

## **10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 N/A

## **11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies, and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage, and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for information only.

## **12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

12.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

12.2 Actions to mitigate the risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register may result in some future impact, however, any actions proposed would be subject to a specific report and the impacts would be considered in that report.

## **13. Are there any other options?**

13.1 N/A

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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