

## **Overview of Service-Based Governance Statements 2011/12**

### **Background**

All Heads of Service were asked to complete the annual review and update of their Service Based Governance Statements for 2011/12. This process involves the following elements:

- Assurance that the control environment operated effectively during 2011/12 in respect of the service areas for which they have responsibility
- Review of the operation of the Council's system of internal control within their service area and identification of supporting evidence
- Review of actions taken during the year to address any weaknesses and identification of any further areas for improvement in 2012/13.

When reviewing arrangements last year, Heads identified 40 actions to improve governance arrangements during 2011/12. Of these, 27 have been fully completed, 9 are currently in progress and 4 have been deferred to 2012/13. The action relating to the development of the People Strategy has been deferred until the after implementation of single status.

### **Summary of progress against actions for delivery in 2011/12**

#### **Strategic direction and statutory obligations**

Out of a total of 15 actions, 10 have been completed 3 are in progress, one action is deferred for completion in 2012/13 and an action relating to the development of the People Strategy has been deferred until after the implementation of Single Status.

A number of actions for delivery in 2011/12 related to corporate consideration of the organisation's approach to service planning. In September 2011, SMB determined that Service Plans are not mandatory but may be used at the discretion of the Head of Service, as other corporate procedures are in place for service planning including:

- The Corporate Improvement Programme – identifying projects for the delivery of key objectives
- The Risk Management Framework
- The Balanced Scorecard – to monitor service delivery.

#### **Performance framework**

All of the 9 actions were completed in 2011/12.

Heads of Service took part in risk identification training in May 2011 which has resulted in more effective reviews of Operational Risk Registers and the completion of a number of outstanding actions related to operational risk.

#### **Stakeholder communication & engagement**

Just over half of the five actions have been completed in relation to stakeholders.

Risk mitigation strategies for insurance excesses have been implemented and actions relating to the Officer Code of Conduct were completed in December 2011.

Grievance and new Capability procedures will now be launched in 2012 as part of the integration of Stevenage Homes Project. Communication and Consultation and Engagement Forward Plans are now in place.

The Customer Focus Strategy has been rescoped and prioritised during 2011/12 following lengthy discussions with senior members and with FOSTA. Implementation of

the strategy will include projects to complete a customer survey and to gain insight into what is important to our customers when they contact the Council through a series of customer access reviews planned for the summer of 2012/13.

A review of the corporate complaints policy has been deferred and will begin in the first quarter of 2012/13 so that the system used by Housing Services can be incorporated into the review and the review can be carried out by the new Corporate Customer Focus Team, which was formed in the last quarter of 2011/12.

### **Staff performance & conduct**

One of the two actions has been completed. Training identified for Environmental Services will now be carried out in 2012/13.

### **Business continuity**

Six actions were identified for delivery during 2011/12. Progress has been made against delivery of some of the actions, particularly in relation to the development of an alternative site for the ICT Business Continuity solution. The site will go live in the first quarter of 2012/13. The majority of outstanding actions relate to the review of service business continuity plans and reviews will be complete by July 2012 as update of all plans is required to ensure Olympics compliance.

### **Partnerships**

Actions to raise awareness of the Partnership Toolkit have been completed.

### **Audit Recommendations**

The action in relation to the creation of a database to record all recommendations agreed with Internal Audit is complete.

### **Overview of the actions for completion in 2012/13**

A total of 16 actions are identified for delivery in 2012/13, some of which are actions deferred from 2011/12. Many of these are already in progress, and others tie in with corporate activity, e.g. business continuity planning, integration of Housing Services back into the Council, implementation and embedding of co-operative council principles and the review of customer focus.