

## Governance Enhancement Activity carried out in 2018/19

Corporate governance activity included in the peach text boxes below are deemed significant. Activity is deemed significant if recommended for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement by the Shared Internal Audit Service following their review of control arrangements to meet the Audit Plan or identified as key to the management of 'very high/high' level strategic risks.

To provide a complete picture of governance enhancement carried out in 2018/19, activity pertaining to best practice has also been reflected below.

### Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

Governance for this principle is currently considered robust. The following governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered:

- Regulation of Investigatory Power Act (RIPA) training was undertaken by the Council's Authorising Officers (CE and Strategic Directors)
- An Independent Person for the Audit Committee was appointed
- Revised arrangements for decision making (the Council's Scheme of Delegation) were approved by Council which better reflect the senior officer structure and will improve the speed, clarity and transparency of decision making.
- The Council's Contract Standing Orders and Constitution were reviewed

### Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Governance for this principle is currently considered robust. The following governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered:

- The Annual Report and Performance Review highlighting the Council's achievements over the past year and plans for the next twelve months was approved by Executive and published on the Council's website.
- To ensure staff are optimally engaged and motivated in delivering the Council's priorities, a staff survey was carried out to gauge levels of staff satisfaction/engagement and perception of organisation performance and delivery.
- Two Neighbourhood Action Groups have been established to bring together a range of public sector services, voluntary organisations and local residents to develop neighbourhood plans outlining community priorities and associated neighbourhood enhancement projects.
- A new Statement of Community Involvement was approved, setting out the Council's vision and strategy for effective community engagement through all stages of the planning process
- Consultation on the review of community centres to develop a more sustainable model of operation for the future was implemented. The consultation explored options relating to community association participation and structure under a new Cooperative Compact together with wider community consultation and focus groups on the future model for the delivery of community building services.
- The Community Select Committee has carried out review of resident involvement to enhance consultation and engagement arrangements to inform the development of a wider Community Engagement Framework and toolkit for the Council.
- Following consultation with children and young people, improvements to play areas in Longmeadow and Bedwell were delivered.

### Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and environmental benefits

#### Progress of significant governance actions to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

**Housing Asset Management Strategy:** A new five year Housing Asset Management strategy (2019-2024), with an action plan for implementation of the strategy over the next five years has been developed for consideration at the March Executive meeting

**General Fund Asset Management Strategy:** Executive approved the adoption of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy and a rolling five year Action Plan which will act as a monitor to report progress and achievement.

### Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

#### Progress of significant governance actions to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

**Repairs and Voids Improvement Programme:** New delivery and case management arrangements have been implemented ensuring ownership and accountability for delivery from the point of receipt through to closure. These arrangements for the Repairs and Voids service have had a positive impact on service performance.

The following governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered:

- Approval and publication of a new Corporate Procurement Strategy.
- The Performing at Our Peak Programme has delivered a performance and governance system which provides the Senior Leadership Team access to data and information that form strategic insight and is providing a clearer picture of performance, risk and governance.
- Enhancement of Housing IT systems to support customers to self-serve in the future, enabling customers to take responsibility for their Personal Housing Plans, enable better casework monitoring and improved customer communication, capture customer information in one place and enable officers to make more informed decisions and provide a more effective response to customer enquiries.
- The corporate performance guide has been reviewed to incorporate changes to reflect the monitoring and management of business insight through the new corporate insight system.

- A new approach to the identification and implementation of local improvement priorities is now being taken, informed by learning attained as a result of the partnership with two universities and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.
- The Shared IT Partnership governance arrangements continue to be enhanced. The Shared Services Partnership Board is overseeing the development and implementation of a single IT strategy that will deliver the Council's digital transformation ambitions and ensure that services are delivered that meet customer needs and are fit for the future.

### Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

#### Progress of significant governance actions to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

**Corporate Capacity:** Recruitment is underway for a number of key posts across the Council that will enhance capacity and key skills. The Fourth Tier Management reviews are now nearing completion.

#### The following governance activity pertaining to best practice was delivered:

- A new corporate staff appraisal process (REAL Conversation) was implemented. REAL Conversation is a rolling appraisal process with regular meeting arrangements providing a framework for achieving the best performance on a day to day basis.
- A new intranet went live providing staff with the vital information and tools to help them in their role.
- Working collaboratively with the Council's recognised Trade Unions, staff have been offered the opportunity to develop their literacy, maths and computing skills and attain formal qualifications.
- A training programme for all housing advice staff was implemented.
- Training on the Homelessness Reduction Act which came into force 3 April 2018 was provided for Housing teams and services.
- The Competency Framework for officers below Level 10 is in development. This will sit alongside the competency framework for grades 10 and above which was implemented in 2017.
- A Fourth Tier Leadership Network has been established with its inaugural meeting held in December 2018.

### Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

#### Progress of significant governance actions to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

- **Cyber Security and IT Resilience:** Improvement activity has taken place to ensure the Council's IT and telephone systems continue to provide a secure and high performing IT environment. A new generator has been installed to improve power resilience at the Daneshill House Data Centre. Migration of the Council's telephone system is complete for East Herts and work has commenced on Stevenage Borough Council's migration with work expected to be complete early in 2019/20. A series of IT infrastructure enhancements have also been implemented to provide a more reliable and secure service that supports delivery of more digital solutions for customers and staff. The Shared IT Service is working with Microsoft to develop a programme of activity to further enhance IT infrastructure and resilience. A draft strategy and road map is being developed which will further inform 2019/20 activity.
- **Information Management:** Substantial progress has been made to ensure the Council is General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant and to make sure staff are aware of their responsibilities with regards to the management of customer data. Training to help service teams understand the importance of good customer information handling has included: mandatory GDPR e-learning; bespoke training delivered to field-based operatives at Cavendish Depot and bitesize lunchtime learning sessions for other Council staff. Data Protection policies and guidance have also been updated. Enhancement activity has been reflected in a follow-up SIAS audit report on GDPR Preparedness which provided a 'Good' level of assurance.
- **Corporate Health and Safety:** To ensure and maintain corporate wide oversight and clarity on health and safety compliance and performance across the Council, a new corporate health and safety governance structure has been put in place that provides assurance to senior management that health and safety assessments and activity across the Council are being effectively managed. The Council has a complete database of health and safety risk assessments for all services. Health and safety training arrangements are under review. Arrangements for the monitoring and follow-up of key risk action plans to be embedded throughout the Council.

#### The following governance activity pertaining to best practice has also been delivered:

- The Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) have delivered a number of training sessions for staff and a plan has been developed to deliver additional sessions to front line customer service staff to assist in the identification and reporting of false documents
- Working with HR Teams across the County, SAFS have developed and published an e-learning package for staff and Members linked to the Council's policies and fraud reporting processes.
- SAFS have worked closely with senior officers to ensure that the Council is able to comply with the statutory National Fraud Initiative (NFI).
- GDPR compliance has been enhanced with the implementation of an electronic document management system which allows the Housing and Investment service to process and store fewer documents..
- A new Compliance Manager has been appointed to monitor the health and safety of Council buildings
- Enhanced IT Shared Service Partnership arrangements have been implemented and are now embedded.
- A BREXIT impact assessment to assess operational risks and mitigation actions to ensure vital services continue to work effectively in the event of a no deal EU withdrawal was considered by Executive in January 2019.
- SIAS provided 'Good' assurance for the Council's Corporate Governance and Risk Management arrangements for 2018/19.

### Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

**Governance for this principle is currently considered robust.**