

Overview of Service Assurance Statements 2018/19

Background

All Assistant Directors were asked to complete the annual review and update of their Service Assurance Statements for 2018/19. This process involves the following elements:

- Review of the operation of the Council's system of internal control within their service area
- Assurance that the control environment operated effectively during 2018/19 in respect of the service areas for which they have responsibility
- Review of actions taken during the year to address any weaknesses and identification of any further areas for improvement in 2019/20.

Summary of progress against actions for delivery in 2018/19

Action identified for 2018/19	Progress	Service
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law		
Action carried over from 2017/18: Implement changes in Housing working practices to reflect the legal requirements of the Housing and Planning Act e.g. sale of high value voids, fixed term tenancies etc.	No longer applicable. The Government has now advised that the Higher Value Void Levy is not now going ahead. The Government has also advised that it will not be making changes to fixed term tenancies 'at this time'.	Housing and Investment
The results of the 'Big Knock' housing survey carried out in November 2017 identified an action to enhance communication with residents regarding Housing Investment activity	Complete. Resident consultation is carried out prior to Housing & Investment service changes which may have an impact for residents	Housing and Investment
Improvements in business intelligence to identify service weaknesses and enhance service delivery to form part of the SDS Future Council Business	In progress. Performance data is now being used to inform service scorecards. A case management system is being procured for the SDU's environmental functions which will provide end to end information exchange to enhance service intelligence. This action to carry over to 2019/20 to reflect the implementation and embedding of the new Case Management system once it is procured.	Stevenage Direct Services
Newly appointed Waste Operations Manager to carry out a review of contract management arrangements within Stevenage Direct Services	Complete. Contract management arrangements have been reviewed across the Business Unit and monitoring mechanisms are now in place. A new post of Commercial Contract Manager has been appointed in the Repairs Service.	Stevenage Direct Services

Action identified for 2018/19	Progress	Service
Procurement process within Stevenage Direct Services to be enhanced to secure contracts for subcontracted work	Complete. Contract management arrangements have been reviewed across the Business Unit and monitoring mechanisms are now in place A new post of Commercial Contract Manager has been appointed in the Repairs Service.	Stevenage Direct Services
Activity to further embed expected behaviours in Stevenage Direct Services to be carried out in 2018/19	Complete. A SDS Customer Charter has been developed aligned to the council's values as well as expected officer conduct and behaviour. The SDS Customer Charter model is to be rolled out corporately.	Stevenage Direct Services
SDS Business Review to include enhancement of communications to Stevenage Direct Services staff	Complete. There is now a new a SDS Change and Action Team, made up of operational staff and middle management. AD SDS meets with the whole unit every six months and sends out monthly blogs to staff. Managers receive fortnightly key messages from SLT meetings.	Stevenage Direct Services
Carry out a review of Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders to reflect organisational changes	In progress. A review of Contract Standing Orders to reflect organisational changes has been carried out. A review of the Council's Financial Regulations is scheduled for 2019/20.	Finance and Estates
Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement		
Phase One of the Housing All Under One Roof Programme to review and enhance computer generated documentation aimed at residents	In progress. To be carried over to 2019/20 due to rescoping of activity.	Housing and Investment
SDS Future Council Business Review to include enhancement of customer insight, customer interaction and competing customer demands	In progress. Phase one of the SDS Future Council Business Review has been carried out. Phase 2 to be carried out in 2019/20 to further enhance service delivery arrangements	Stevenage Direct Services

Action identified for 2018/19	Progress	Service
Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits		
SDS Business Review to ensure service provision is sustainable within the resources available and that best value is achieved.	Complete. As part of the implementation of Phase one of the Future Council Business Unit review, a model has been developed to ensure the service can meet service requirements and customer demand.	Stevenage Direct Services
The Waste and Recycling Scrutiny Review will now be incorporated into the Overview and Scrutiny presentation on the SDS Future Council Business Review	In progress. A Waste Scrutiny Review has taken place and recommendations are currently being implemented. A new action to be added for 2019/20 to reflect the further enhancement activity which will be carried out as a result of the review.	Stevenage Direct Services
Service standards and a customer charter are to be developed for SDS with an annual service plan directing the efforts of all service areas	Complete. Service Plan and customer charter have been developed which sets out quality standards for each service element.	Stevenage Direct Services
A review of SDS policies to ensure services operate to approved standards	In progress. Further work is required to complete this action. This action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Stevenage Direct Services
Inclusive Play Policy to be developed to enhance access to services	On hold: This action is currently on hold due to review of service delivery offer. This action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Communities and Neighbourhoods
Communities and Neighbourhoods Business Review to consider more sustainable funding options to introduce more permanent and sustainable workforce arrangements and enhance long term service planning	Complete. The Future Council Business Review has been implemented and has enhanced the sustainability of service allowing enhanced long term service planning	Communities and Neighbourhoods
Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		
Business Review to inform service planning within the Communities and Neighbourhoods Service	Complete: Service Planning workshops were held for all staff in February 2019. All three Service areas have now produced service plans	Communities and Neighbourhoods

Action identified for 2018/19	Progress	Service
Implement the ITIL delivery programme for the Technology Shared Service	Complete. The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) practices and processes have been implemented.	Corporate Services
Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		
Training identified by the Housing and Investment Service training needs analysis carried out in 2017/18 to be implemented in 2018/19	In progress. Continued implementation of training identified by the Training Needs Analysis to be carried out in 2019/20. Action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Housing and Investment
Job descriptions for staff in Housing and Investment to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes identified during the Housing and Investment Business Review	In progress. Job descriptions for all Tier 4 posts have been reviewed and updated. Job descriptions to be reviewed and updated for all other posts below Tier 4 during the next phase of the Future Council Business Review. Action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Housing and Investment
SDS Business Review to ensure regular review of activities, outputs and outcomes takes place to inform future service delivery	Complete. Arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the review of activities, performance and outcomes are an integral part of SDS systems	Stevenage Direct Services
Benchmarking and collaborative working to be used more extensively to inform SDS service improvements and achieve added value	Complete. Benchmarking is carried out via information from APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence). Greater business intelligence and insight is being provided by the recent procurement of APSE LAMS (Land Audit Management System) which allows the service to monitor greenspace and street cleanliness quality levels in the borough.	Stevenage Direct Services
SDS Business Review to enhance workforce planning	In progress: A new SDS workforce plan has been developed but has not yet been implemented. This action is therefore carried over to 2019/20.	Stevenage Direct Services
Learning and Development programme for SDS to be reviewed and strengthened and forms part of the SDS Business Review	Complete. A Learning and Development review has identified staff training needs. A Business Unit Training Log has been developed and HR are assisting with implementation of the new arrangements.	Stevenage Direct Services

Action identified for 2018/19	Progress	Service
Job descriptions for staff in SDS to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes identified during the SDS Future Council Business Review	In progress. All Tier 4 posts have new job descriptions as part of the Future Council Business Reviews. All other job descriptions to be reviewed during the second phase of the business reviews. This action to therefore be carried over to 2019/20.	Stevenage Direct Services
A Health and Safety Specialist Company are currently undertaking a review of health and safety through the Business Unit. The review is expected to be completed by end of June 2018.	Complete: The review of Health and Safety has informed the development and implementation of a new SDS Health and Safety governance framework. AD SDS attends the Strategic Health and Safety Group and chairs the SDS Health and Safety Group. There is now an escalation route for high level service health and safety concerns to SLT.	Stevenage Direct Services
Review of Street Cleansing performance data collection and performance reporting	Complete. Street Cleansing performance data collection and performance reporting has been reviewed.	Stevenage Direct Services
Job descriptions for Finance and Estates staff to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes identified during the Finance and Estates Business Review	Complete: All job descriptions have been reviewed as part of the Future Council Business Review process.	Finance and Estates
Restructure of Accountancy Service to build capacity into the Finance section	Complete. The restructure of the Accountancy service is complete.	Finance and Estates
Job descriptions for staff in Communities and Neighbourhoods' Service to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes identified during the Communities and Neighbourhoods Business Review	Complete. All job descriptions for staff in Communities and Neighbourhoods were updated as part of the Future Council Business Review	Communities and Neighbourhoods
Consultants to be appointed to provide Project Management training to staff in Regeneration	Complete: Staff have now all attended Prince2 Project Management training.	Regeneration

Action identified for 2018/19	Progress	Service
The Regeneration Future Council Business Review has identified additional staffing resources are required to provide sustainable service provision. Anticipated additional staff will be appointed by July 2018	Complete. The Regeneration Future Council Business Review has been completed and staff have been appointed.	Regeneration
Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
Action carried over from 2017/18: Following an independent compliance review of the Council's Housing Stock (mechanical and electrical), delivery of a five year action plan is underway. Various procurement activities are in progress, along with preparation of compliance programmes ahead of the delivery phase	In progress. A programme of work to improve compliance across all the Council's housing stock has commenced. Inclusion of corporate properties and the compliance contract along with the retro-fitting of sprinklers has resulted in some slippage to this programme of work. This action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Housing and Investment
Action carried over from 2017/18: A new post of Compliance Manager is required to carry out compliance activity arising from the transfer of services as part of the recent Senior Management Review and to manage delivery of the five year compliance action plan. Recruitment to this post is outstanding due to difficulties of recruit. A review of this role is required to attract suitable candidates.	In progress. Applications for this post are currently being considered. Recruitment to this post has been delayed due to difficulties to recruit to this post. A review of this role has been carried out to attract suitable candidates. This action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Housing and Investment
Communities and Neighbourhoods Operational Risk Registers to be updated to reflect Business Review service structure	Complete. The Operational Risk Registers now reflect the new structure of the Business Unit	Communities and Neighbourhoods
Membership of IT Partnership Board to be reviewed and aligned to the new council management arrangements and structure	Complete. An Information Technology Steering Group now meets on a monthly basis and oversees the operation of the Shared IT Service. In addition a shared service ICT Partnership Board meets on a monthly basis and is responsible for the strategic direction of the service. Both groups include senior members of staff from both Councils.	Corporate Services

Action identified for 2018/19	Progress	Service
Legal Shared Service Partnership Risk Register to be produced	In progress. Consideration of operational risks associated with the Shared Legal Service Partnership to be discussed at the next Shared Legal Service Partnership Board meeting. This action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Shared Legal Service
Shared Legal Service Partnership Agreement to be updated to reflect GDPR requirements	In progress. This needs to be finalised by the Shared Legal Service Partnership Board and is due for consideration at the next meeting of the Board. This action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Shared Legal Service
An archivist to be appointed to review documentation dating back to before the transfer to the new Shared Legal Service (i.e. pre August 2017)	In progress. Arrangements to buy in archiving service are currently being pursued. This action to be carried over to 2019/20.	Shared Legal Service
Principle G: Implementing good practice in transparency		
CCTV Partnership Governance review to be carried out and reported to June Joint CCTV Executive meeting. Completion date for governance review expected October 2018.	In progress: Work is well underway on the review of CCTV governance arrangements and the establishment of a five year business plan. The timescale for completion of this work has been extended to enable members to fully consider the legal review of partnership and trading options. This action to therefore be carried forward to 2019/20.	Communities and Neighbourhoods
Monitoring of the new Building Control Shared Service arrangements throughout 2018/19 to check the effectiveness and governance of the new arrangements.	Complete. The Building Control Shared Service arrangements have now been fully implemented and embedded. Monitoring arrangements are ongoing as required.	Planning and Regulatory Services

Actions for completion in 2019/20

Action identified for 2019/20	Service Area
Principle A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law	
Dignity at Work Policy to be circulated to all staff in the Corporate Services Business Unit	Corporate Services

Action identified for 2019/20	Service Area
Officers responsible for procurement in the Corporate Services Business Unit to attend Financial Regulations refresher training	Corporate Services
Restructure and recruitment of permanent staff and graduate trainees in the Estates, Reconciliation and Paralegal service units to enhance capacity and workforce planning.	Finance and Estates
Improvements in business intelligence to identify service weaknesses and enhance service delivery to form part of the SDS Future Council Business (carried over from 2018/19)	Stevenage Direct Services
Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
IT Shared Service Board Partnership Agreement to be reviewed and changes agreed by the ICT Shared Service Partnership Board	Corporate Services
New Communications and Marketing Action Plan to be implemented and embedded	Corporate Services
Review and enhance computer generated documentation aimed at residents (carried over from 2018/19)	Housing and Investment
Carry out a review of Financial Regulations (carried over from 2018/19)	Finance and Estates
Phase Two of the Stevenage Direct Services Future Council Business Review to further enhance service delivery	Stevenage Direct Services
Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	
Service Plans to be produced for the Planning and Regulatory Services Business Unit	Planning and Regulation
Internal review of the Council's Customer Service model	Corporate Services
New performance framework to be put in place for ICT	Corporate Services
New performance measures to be introduced for the Communications service	Corporate Services
Carry out a review of customer satisfaction monitoring for the ICT service	Corporate Services
A review of SDS policies to ensure services operate to approved standards (carried over from 2018/19)	Stevenage Direct Services
Implementation of the recommendations from the Waste Scrutiny Review carried out in 2018/19	Stevenage Direct Services

Action identified for 2019/20	Service Area
Development and implementation of an Inclusive Play Policy to enhance access to Play services (carried over from 2018/19)	Neighbourhood and Communities
Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	
Establish a FTFC Programme Office to monitor performance of the FTFC Programme	Corporate Services
Development of an ICT investment programme	Corporate Services
Principle E – Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
Job descriptions for posts in Planning and Regulation to be reviewed as part of the Future Council Business Review process	Planning and Regulation
Recruitment to key vacant posts in Planning and Regulation	Planning and Regulation
ICT officers’ job descriptions to be reviewed to reflect new structure and practices	Corporate Services
Recruitment to key posts in the ICT Service Delivery Unit	Corporate Services
Recruitment to posts in the CSC to enhance capacity and performance	Corporate Services
Appointment to interim posts in Human Resources to support Business Units to implement their Future Council Business Reviews	Corporate Services
Recruitment to new/vacant posts in the recently established Corporate Policy and Business Support unit	Corporate Services
Implementation and embedding of the new SDS Workforce Plan	Stevenage Direct Services
SDS job descriptions for staff below Tier 4 to be reviewed during the second phase of the business reviews (carried over from 2018/19)	Stevenage Direct Services
Lone working arrangements for Estates Officers when undertaking enforcement duties to be reviewed and new working practices to be implemented.	Finance and Estates
Continued implementation of training identified by the Training Needs Analysis to be implemented during 2019/20 (carried over from 2018/19)	Housing and Investment
Job descriptions for posts in Housing and Investment to be reviewed and updated as required during the next phase of the Future Council Business Review (carried over from 2018/19)	Housing and Investment

Action identified for 2019/20	Service Area
Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
Enhance Corporate Services staff awareness of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and arrangements	Corporate Services
Business case to be produced outlining how ongoing GDPR monitoring/information governance is going to be resourced.	Corporate Services
Enhance Communities and Neighbourhoods staff awareness of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and arrangements	Communities and Neighbourhoods
Complete the review of the Communities and Neighbourhood web pages to ensure that information is still valid and up to date for the launch of the Council's new website	Communities and Neighbourhoods
Shared Legal Service Partnership Risk Register to be produced (carried over from 2018/19)	Shared Legal Service
Shared Legal Service Partnership Agreement to be updated to reflect GDPR requirements (carried over from 2018/19)	Shared Legal Service
An archivist to be appointed to review documentation dating back to before the transfer to the new Shared Legal Service (i.e. pre August 2017) (carried over from 2018/19).	Shared Legal Service
Appointment of a Compliance Manager to carry out compliance activity and to manage delivery of the five year compliance action plan (carried over from 2018/19)	Housing and Investment
Delivery of the five year action plan incorporating actions identified following an independent compliance review of the Council's Housing Stock (mechanical and electrical) (carried over from 2018/19)	Housing and Investment
Principle G – Implementing good practice in transparency	
Continued monitoring of the new Shared Home Improvement Agency Function to ensure its effective implementation	Planning and Regulation
Recommendations from the peer review of Constitutional Services to be implemented as part of the Future Council Business review of this service	Corporate Services
Complete the review of CCTV governance arrangements and the establishment of a five year business plan (carried over from 2018/19).	Communities and Neighbourhoods