

Overview of Service Assurance Statements 2019/20

Background

All Assistant Directors were asked to complete the annual review and update of their Service Assurance Statements for 2019/20. 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 2019/20 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 2020/21.

Progress Review of Service Governance Actions 2019/20

| Action identified for 2019/20 | Progress | Service Area |
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| 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 | Complete. The Policy has been circulated to all staff in the Corporate Services Business Unit | Corporate Services |
| Officers responsible for procurement in the Corporate Services Business Unit to attend Financial Regulations refresher training | Complete. Corporate Services staff responsible for procurement have attended 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. | In progress. There are currently three posts which need to be filled. Shortlisting is currently being carried out for the Head of Estates, Commercial Asset Manager and Surveyor Posts. Interviews for vacant posts in the Reconciliation Team have been taking place during April/May 2020. | Finance and Estates |
| Improvements in business intelligence to identify service weaknesses and enhance service delivery to form part of the SDS Future Council Business Review (carried over from 2018/19) | In progress. Work has been undertaken to optimise resource deployment for Refuse and Recycling and Streets and Grounds Maintenance functions. A new management system has been implemented following the Business Unit Review of Operations and will provide real time business intelligence in respect of the Operations functions. The new management system went live with Refuse and Recycling in March 2020. Unfortunately the back office side has been hindered with the current measures introduced because of the COVID-19 outbreak. The links with the new CRM system are not live yet so the full functionality is not being realised. | Stevenage Direct Services |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | |
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| IT Shared Service Board Partnership Agreement to be reviewed and changes agreed by the ICT Shared Service Partnership Board | In progress. The IT Shared Service Board Partnership Agreement has been reviewed. Agreement by East Herts District Council of the new Agreement is currently awaited. | Digital and Transformation |
| New Communications and Marketing Action Plan to be implemented and embedded | Complete: Communications and Marketing campaign plans are now in place. | Communications |
| Review and enhance computer generated documentation aimed at residents (carried over from 2018/19) | Complete. As part of the Housing All Under One Roof transformation programme, all letters produced through Desk Top Integration have been reviewed | Housing and Investment |
| Carry out a review of Financial Regulations (carried over from 2018/19) | In progress. Financial Regulations have been reviewed and were due to be agreed at March 2020 Audit Committee. This Audit Committee was however cancelled due to COVID-19. | Finance and Estates |
| Phase Two of the Stevenage Direct Services Future Council Business Review to further enhance service delivery | In progress. The Operations function review has been agreed. Phase One includes the review of supervisory/management roles. This was expected to be complete and go live on 1 st May 2020. Due to the COVID-19 situation, a slight delay has occurred though it is still progressing. Expected to now go live on 1 st June 2020. | 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 | In progress. Service Plans for the Planning and Regulatory Services Business Unit are being updated. | Planning and Regulation |
| New performance framework to be put in place for ICT | Complete. New performance indicators are being captured as part of the ICT strategy. KPIs set as 99% uptime, 70% staff satisfaction from customer satisfaction surveys, PSN and Cyber essentials certification | Digital and Transformation |
| New performance measures to be introduced for the Communications service | Complete. Local performance measures are now in place for Communication campaigns to assess reach and impact | Digital and Transformation |
| Carry out a review of customer satisfaction monitoring for the ICT service | Complete. Customer Satisfaction Surveys are going out and stats are being collected. | Digital and Transformation |
| A review of SDS policies to ensure services operate to approved standards (carried over from 2018/19) | Complete. New health and safety governance and monitoring mechanisms have been implemented and shaped the development of the overarching | Stevenage Direct Services |

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| | corporate governance framework. Each service has up to date risk assessments and action plans. Training and compliance reviews have been undertaken with appropriate training requirements highlighted and programmed into the Unit training matrix to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. | |
| Implementation of the recommendations from the Waste Scrutiny Review carried out in 2018/19 | In progress. This has been delayed due to COVID-19 as this is embedded within the service review which has been delayed. | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Development and implementation of an Inclusive Play Policy to enhance access to Play services | Complete. The Play Review was completed in March 2020 with the new operating model in place, enabling a more inclusive and responsive play offer as part of co-operative neighbourhood arrangements. | Communities and Neighbourhoods |
| 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 | Complete. Programme Office now in place to monitor the FTFC programme. | Corporate Services |
| Development of an ICT investment programme | Complete. ICT strategy together with investment programme to fund the strategy approved by Executive on 9 th October 2019. | Digital and Transformation |
| 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 | In progress. The majority of job descriptions for posts in Planning and Regulation have been reviewed as part of the Future Council Business Review. The outstanding two job descriptions will be updated soon. | Planning and Regulation |
| Recruitment to key vacant posts in Planning and Regulation | In progress. Key vacancies are currently being covered by temporary staff. Recruitment to these posts to commence soon. | Planning and Regulation |
| ICT officers' job descriptions to be reviewed to reflect new structure and practices | In progress. A number of key ICT posts have now been appointed. Three positions remain unfilled. One growth post is currently under review and should be completed in May. One post is being recruited to temporarily. Proposal is to fill the other post with a graduate trainee. | Digital and Transformation |
| Recruitment to key posts in the ICT Service Delivery Unit | In progress. See above. | Digital and Transformation |
| Recruitment to posts in the CSC to enhance capacity and performance | Complete. Recruitment to posts in the CSC to enhance capacity and performance is now complete. | Digital and Transformation |

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| Appointment to interim posts in Human Resources to support Business Units to implement their Future Council Business Reviews | Complete. The HR restructure is complete and posts have been appointed | Human Resources and Organisational Development |
| Recruitment to new/vacant posts in the recently established Corporate Policy and Business Support unit | Complete. All posts have now been recruited. | Corporate Services |
| Implementation and embedding of the new SDS Workforce Plan | In progress. New workforce arrangements have been integrated into the service review proposals and are scheduled for implementation in 2020/21. | 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) | In progress. Service reviews for Housing Repairs & Maintenance and Environmental Performance & Development have commenced and initial proposals have been considered by the Senior Leadership Team. Work is being undertaken to finalise proposals and complete consultation documents and processes with a view to implementation in 2020/21. | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Lone working arrangements for Estates Officers when undertaking enforcement duties to be reviewed and new working practices to be implemented. | Complete. Health and Safety training has been completed by all Estates staff and practices have been enhanced. Use of enforcement officers and change to arrears process and letters has been 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) | Complete/Ongoing. Violence and Aggression training is being rolled out to all Housing and Investment staff through a programme. In addition to this a number of the team are undertaking professional qualifications as well as further Customer First training programme for new starters. | 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) | In progress. All job descriptions have been reviewed and are up to date. The Business Unit Review concluded on 5 April and the new structure is in place with current job descriptions from 6 April 2020. There are a number of vacancies to be filled. | Housing and Investment |
| 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 | On hold. Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy requires review prior to distribution to staff. | Corporate Services |
| Business case to be produced outlining how ongoing GDPR monitoring/ information governance is going to be resourced. | In progress. Business Case is complete. Currently with East Herts for consideration. | Corporate Services |
| Enhance Communities and Neighbourhoods staff awareness of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and arrangements | On hold. Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy requires review prior to distribution to staff. | Communities & Neighbourhoods |

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| 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 | In progress. Awaiting timetable for new website to allow refined and relevant pages for C& to be built | Communities and Neighbourhoods |
| Shared Legal Service Partnership Risk Register to be produced (carried over from 2018/19) | Not started. This was scheduled to be discussed at the Legal Partnership Board meeting in March which due to COVID-19 did not go ahead. To be considered at the June 2020 meeting. | Shared Legal Service |
| Shared Legal Service Partnership Agreement to be updated to reflect GDPR requirements (carried over from 2018/19) | Not started. This was scheduled to be discussed at the Legal Partnership Board meeting in March which due to COVID-19 did not go ahead. To be considered at the June 2020 meeting. | 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). | In progress. Significant progress on this has been made with a substantial amount of material disposed of or archived. This work will resume when staff are able to return to the office. | 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) | In progress. The Compliance Manager post remains difficult to recruit. This post continues to be covered by an agency worker who has indicated that he wishes to leave. Having added market supplements to this role, a number of applications have been received and interviews are being arranged. | 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) | In progress. The five year compliance action plan for HRA properties is underway. | 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 | In progress. A recent SIAS audit has identified a number of recommendations for improvement of the new shared service and action is being taken by Hertfordshire County Council who is responsible for the delivery of this shared service to implement these recommendations. Formal update to Executive in the Autumn. | 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 | In progress. Draft report has been received. Consideration of the report has been delayed due to Covid-19. | Constitutional Services |

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| Complete the review of CCTV governance arrangements and the establishment of a five year business plan (carried over from 2018/19). | Complete. The governance review was concluded on 25 September 2019 with all completed audit actions being signed off by the Joint Executive and SIAS. | Communities & Neighbourhoods |
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Actions identified by Service Assurance review for completion in 2020/21

| Action identified for 2020/21 | Service Area |
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| Principle A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law | |
| Continue to implement the new management system for SDS Operations to provide real time business intelligence in respect of the Operations functions. Links with the new CRM system need to be made live so the full functionality can be realised. | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Induction process to be carried out for all staff in Housing and Investment when the Housing and Investment Business Unit Review is launched (postponed from the 6 April due to COVID-19 response). The induction process to include awareness of Employee Code of Conduct and Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders. | Housing and Investment |
| Review of Council's pay and reward arrangements to attract and retain staff and consider special arrangements to attract staff for hard to recruit posts. | Human Resources and Organisational Development |
| Data to be added to HouseMark to enhance data analysis, insight and business intelligence | Housing and Investment |
| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | |
| The IT Shared Service Board Partnership Agreement to be reviewed and agreed by East Herts District Council | Digital and Transformation |
| Financial Regulations to be approved by Audit Committee and staff to be informed of changes | Finance and Estates |
| Complete the review of supervisory/management roles in Stevenage Direct Service Business Unit to further enhance service delivery. This was expected to go live on 1st May 2020 but due to COVID-19 has been delayed until June 2020. | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Produce and implement a Customer Strategy and Customer Service Model for the Customer Service Centre | Digital and Transformation |
| Update the Council's Communications Strategy, including a review of the Council's branding and corporate identity | Communications |
| Carry out a review of staff engagement | Human Resources |

| Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits | |
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| Service Plans for the Planning and Regulatory Services Business Unit to be reviewed and updated | Planning and Regulation |
| Implementation of the recommendations from the Waste Scrutiny Review | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | |
| An inclusive Economy Charter to be produced alongside an action plan to ensure the council drives social value through its activities and those of other partners working in Stevenage. | Communities and Neighbourhoods |
| Recommendations from the peer review of Constitutional Services to be implemented | Constitutional Services |
| Principle E – Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | |
| Recruit to the Head of Estates, Commercial Asset Manager and Surveyor posts in the Estates service to enhance capacity and implement the Corporate Landlord function | Finance and Estates |
| Recruit to the vacant roles in Reconciliation and the Paralegal Service as a result to the recent restructure of these services | Finance and Estates |
| Recruitment to a Graduate post in Accountancy and a Corporate Graduate post to be assigned to Estates to enhance succession, capacity and workforce planning. Recruitment to these posts is currently being delayed due to the COVID-19 response. | Finance and Estates |
| Corporate Governance Group to consider the implementation of induction training for Interim Staff | Finance and Estates |
| Update the final two job descriptions in the Planning and Regulatory Services unit | Planning and Regulation |
| Recruit to vacant ICT posts. Three positions remain unfilled. One growth post is currently under review and should be completed in May. One post is being recruited to temporarily. Proposal is to fill the other post with a graduate trainee. | Digital and Transformation |
| Implementation and embedding of the SDS Workforce Plan | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Finalise proposals, implement and embed the service reviews for Housing Repairs and Maintenance and Environmental Performance and Development | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Recruit to the vacant posts which have been created as a result of the Housing and Investment Future Council Business Review | Housing and Investment |
| Review of job descriptions for all posts within the scope of the second phase of the Stevenage Direct Services Business Unit review | Stevenage Direct Services |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | |
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| Business Case which outlines how ongoing GDPR monitoring/information governance is going to be resourced and proposals for a shared service with East Herts to be agreed and implemented. | Digital and Transformation |
| 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 | Community and Neighbourhoods |
| Shared Legal Service Partnership Risk Register to be produced | Shared Legal Service |
| Shared Legal Service Partnership Agreement to be updated to reflect GDPR requirements | Shared Legal Service |
| Complete the review of documentation dating back to before the transfer to the new Shared Legal service under the advice of the Borough Solicitor and Lead Lawyer for the Shared Legal Service. | Shared Legal Service |
| Appointment of a Compliance Manager to carry out compliance activity as outlined in the five year Compliance Action Plan | Housing and Investment |
| Delivery of the five year Compliance Action Plan, incorporating actions identified following an independent compliance review of Housing Revenue Account properties | Housing and Investment |
| Stevenage Direct Service budgets to be reviewed as part of SDS Business Unit Review to ensure they support both long term and short term outcomes | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Bribery Policies to be launched and staff made aware. | Finance and Estates |
| Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders to be agree by Council and published | Finance and Estates |
| Complete the actions identified by the recent SIAS follow-up audit of the Street Cleansing Service | Stevenage Direct Services |
| Review of Operational Risk Registers to reflect new corporate services structure and reporting arrangements | Various Services |
| Principle G – Implementing good practice in transparency | |
| Continued monitoring of the new Shared Home Improvement Agency Function to ensure its effective implementation and medium term financial viability. | Planning and Regulation |