

## Outline of Governance Enhancement Activity carried out in 2017/18

<p><b>Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law</b></p> <p><b>Governance for this principle is currently considered robust. The following scheduled governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A revised Local Code of Corporate Governance to reflect the principles of good governance included in the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework: 2016 was approved by Audit Committee</li> <li>• Regulation of Investigatory Power Act (RIPA) training was undertaken by the council's Authorising Officers (CE and Strategic Directors)</li> <li>• The council's Whistle-Blowing Policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect safeguarding changes and the Freedom to Speak Up report.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</b></p> <p><b>Governance for this principle is currently considered robust. The following scheduled governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Annual Report and Performance Review highlighting our achievements over the past year and plans for the next twelve months was approved by Executive and published on the Council's website.</li> <li>• A LGA Communications Peer Review was carried out. This review has informed a new Communications Action Plan to enhance strategic communications</li> <li>• The Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management programme was launched at Stevenage Day, giving the local community an opportunity to hear about the programme.</li> <li>• The 'Our Neighbourhood' webpage was developed that enables residents to find out what is happening in their local area</li> <li>• Residents were given an opportunity to provide feedback on housing services through the Big Knock and wider council services through a town-wide survey</li> <li>• The shared Legal Service went live and the Lead Lawyer for the shared Legal Service was appointed as Monitoring Officer and Borough Solicitor</li> <li>• A Social Media Policy was published to enhance the use of social media as part of a wider communications mix and reduce security risks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and environmental benefits</b></p> <p><b>Progress of significant governance actions (AGS) (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2017/18 AGS Action 1: Further commercial options to be pursued whilst meeting the regeneration and economic aims for Stevenage (by January 2018):</b> Council (<b>May 2017</b>) approved the allocation of £15M towards a Commercial Property Investment Strategy to enable economic growth in Stevenage with an added benefit of generating long term rental income streams to support the delivery of the Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) programme and council services. This initiative supports the 'Financial Security' priority and our ambitions for Stevenage. A property has been purchased with other sites being actively sought. In addition, to raise officer awareness of the council's financial security programme and its commercialism agenda, a financial newsletter was produced and events have taken place to encourage staff engagement in relation to identification of further commercial options.</li> <li>• <b>2017/18 AGS Action 2: Property Investment Strategy and Asset Management Strategy (by December 2017):</b> Council approved a Property and Investment Strategy (<b>May 2017</b>) to enable investment in commercial property that will contribute to long-term income streams to support delivery of the FTFC programme and council services. The draft General Fund Asset Management Strategy was considered by Executive on 14 February 2018. Officers and Members will now enhance the strategy with the incorporation of the Council's Co-operative principles to ensure that the Council's fundamental principle of working with the community to manage the Council's assets is reflected. (Appendices B and C reflect 2018/19 activity)</li> </ul> <p><b>The following scheduled governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new Equality and Diversity Policy, "Encouraging an Equal and Diverse town and Workforce to 2021" was published.</li> <li>• Comprehensive Equality and Diversity training was delivered to all staff at Cavendish Road</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b></p> <p><b>Progress of significant governance actions (AGS) (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2017/18 AGS Action 3: Repairs and Voids Improvement Programme (by March 2018):</b> The Repairs and Voids improvement programme approved by Executive (January 2016) has been implemented. The revised processes are now being reviewed to inform further improvement for implementation and embedding throughout 2018 to ensure that the new business unit management team have complete and informed ownership and accountability for enhanced service delivery. The review and embedding of enhanced service delivery has been reflected in activity outlined for 2018/19 (Improvement Programme <b>implemented March 2018</b>). (Appendices B and C reflect 2018/19 activity)</li> </ul> <p><b>The following scheduled governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of the FTFC Programme was carried out to ensure governance arrangements remain effective as programmes move from planning to delivery.</li> <li>• SLT received procurement and contract management training. Introduction to Procurement and Managing the Tender Process training was delivered to officers as required.</li> <li>• The Council's Strategic Leadership Team now has access to a new performance and governance system (InPhase). This system provides access to data and information that form strategic insight and is providing a clearer picture of performance, risk and governance.</li> </ul>

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

### Progress of significant governance actions (AGS) (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable):

- **2017/18 AGS Action 4: Business Unit reviews to increase corporate capacity (by March 2018):** The approval and principles to support implementation of the restructure of services through Future Council – Business reviews was approved by Executive in November 2017. The model is focused upon delivering the right services, to the right standards, at the right time for the town's residents and businesses, using the most cost/resource effective delivery models. Business reviews will continue with phased implementation through 2018/19. (Appendices B and C reflect 2018/19 activity)

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

- Members received training on reviewing the 'big three' financial reports (Budget, MTFS and Statement of Accounts) and the Chair and Vice Chair of Audit Committee attended a training session facilitated by external auditors Ernst and Young
- The programme of training for Members (Modern Members Programme) was relaunched.
- Assistant Directors were appointed to all Business Units
- A new Human Resources Management system to support workforce planning, training, development and the implementation of the council's new competency framework went live
- A bite-size manager training programme was launched to develop management capability through shared knowledge and good practice
- A new approach to Senior Leadership Team induction was introduced to build strong bonds within the leadership team.
- A new staff Performance and Improvement Policy and Manager Toolkit was developed, along with a review of associated policies (Absence Management, Dignity at Work, Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals policies) to encourage all employees to personally deliver the highest standards of service possible and for managers to proactively address performance issues.
- A review of the Performance and Development Appraisal process is now complete resulting in high level strategic proposals being agreed with the aim of a new corporate appraisal process being available for 2019/20
- The initial suite of e-learning modules to provide training and development matching individual and organisational requirements was made available to council staff

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

### Progress of significant governance actions (AGS) (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable):

- **2017/18 AGS Action 5a: Data Protection and Cyber Security training (by December 2017):** A new corporate e-learning package was launched in December that will help to develop staff knowledge and capability. Data Protection, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Cyber Security e-learning modules have been developed for use on the e-learning platform. The Data Protection and GDPR modules are now live and the Cyber Security module will be available by the end of March 2018. **(Expected to be complete by March 2018)**
- **2017/18 AGS Action 5b: Cyber Security Action Plan (by March 2018):** Cyber Security initiatives are an integral part of the Technology Shared Service Improvement Plan which now supersedes the Cyber Security Action Plan. The new plan sets out improvements to ensure that services are delivered to meet customer needs and are fit for purpose. Initial improvement activity is now being provided with further enhancements identified to ensure the Council continues to provide a secure and high performing IT environment. This ongoing enhancement activity is reflected for delivery in 2018/19. (Appendices B and C reflect 2018/19 activity)
- **2017/18 AGS Action 5c: Data Protection Guidance (by July 2017):** The Council's Data Protection Policy and document retention guidance have been reviewed and updated to enhance information management arrangements **(completed November 2017)**.
- **2017/18 AGS Action 6a: Increase data centre capacity (by June 2017):** To increase capacity across the council's two data centres and enhance ICT resilience that will enable the Council to continue to provide a secure and high performing IT environment, additional server hardware has been installed and is now operational **(completed June 2017)**.
- **2017/18 AGS Action 6b: Increase resilience of the council's IT and telephone arrangements (by September 2017):** Business continuity activity to increase the resilience of the council's IT and telephony arrangements now forms part of the new Technology Shared Service Improvement plan and is scheduled for completion by September 2018. (Appendices B and C reflect 2018/19 activity).
- **2017/18 AGS Action 7: Corporate Information Group to be established (by September 2017):** An action plan to enhance information management arrangements across the council is being implemented. In addition an Information Officer has been appointed, Information Asset Owners assigned and a Corporate Information Governance Group has been established to embed best practice records management across the council and ensure that customer data is appropriately managed **(completed September 2017)**.

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

- SAFS has launched a county-wide framework to enhance processes to identify Council Tax Fraud.
- The Council's business continuity arrangements have been reviewed to reflect the Senior Management Review.

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

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

- SIAS was restructured to provide a more responsive service in light of changing customer demand and implemented a new system for time-recording to ensure that performance issues are highlighted and addressed at the earliest opportunity
- Ernst and Young were appointed as the Council's external auditors for a five year period from 2018/19