

Outline of Planned Governance Enhancement Activity 2017/18

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 and no further activity pertaining to best practice is scheduled at this stage.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Governance for this principle is currently considered robust, however the following scheduled Governance activity pertaining to best practice has been identified:

- To ensure the continuing effectiveness of the council's consultation and engagement arrangements, the Consultation and Engagement Strategy is scheduled for review by September 2017.
- To obtain feedback that will facilitate enhanced internal and external communication practices, a Local Government Association Peer Group will be carrying out a Peer Review of Strategic Communications in June 2017.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and environmental benefits**Significant Governance activity (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable)**

- Commercialism has been incorporated into strategic objective thinking by the Council. Internal Audit recommended activity in relation to the promotion of commercial thinking and income opportunities over the wider organisation. A communication strategy to facilitate this has been developed and plans are in place for the initial assessment of income streams proposed in January 2018.
- The development of a new Property Investment Strategy and Asset Management Plan is required to support delivery of the Future Town, Future Council Programme. Delivery of the strategy will also mitigate risk associated with effective management of the Council's assets. The Strategy is scheduled for development by May 2017.

In addition, ongoing monitoring is planned in mitigation of risks relating to the delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable:

- Delivery of the HRA Business Plan. The Business Plan, agreed by Executive November 2016, is designed to ensure a balanced HRA financial plan for the next 30 years, and to ensure there are sufficient HRA funds to fund the council's Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy is under ongoing review to ensure a clear financial situation can be demonstrated. The Strategic Director (Environment) has implemented an Officers' Capital Group to ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the design and delivery of capital projects, which has resulted in a reduction in the associated risk. Governance arrangements are subject to ongoing monitoring to ensure they remain effective and mitigate risk associated with Capital Programme delivery.

Scheduled Governance enhancement activity (pertaining to best practice):

- To improve access to council services for our customers, a new customer focused Digital Strategy ('Connected to our Customers') and a Customer Focus Strategy are to be introduced by June 2017. The review of the council's Equality and Diversity Policy is scheduled for completion by March 2018.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes**Significant Governance activity (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable):**

- The action identified in the June 2016 Annual Governance Statement to review the Repairs and Voids function has been applied during 2016/17 to facilitate alignment of strategic focus and refocus operations on core activities, which has resulted in productivity gains. Full implementation and embedding of the full improvement plan is scheduled for March 2018.

In addition, ongoing monitoring is planned in mitigation of risks relating to the delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable:

- Risks associated with the impact of Welfare Reform on the community and Council have been identified. The Council is continuing to assess potential impacts through business insight. The current advised 'go live' date for roll out of the remainder of claimants for Universal Credit for Stevenage is June 2018.

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it**Significant Governance activity (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable):**

- Corporate capacity to deliver business as usual alongside the scale and breadth of corporate change projects has been recognised as currently insufficient. A restructure of services through Future Council – Business reviews is scheduled for initial outline by April 2017 to improve capacity and facilitate delivery to meet any future challenges.

- Arrangements to enhance corporate oversight of Health and Safety compliance are currently being introduced to address concerns identified during the year. A new corporate Health and Safety group has been established that aims to report on compliance status bi-annually. In addition, to enhance understanding and awareness, Directors will be trained on their corporate health and safety responsibilities by April 2017, and peer reviews are planned for high risk services by June 2017.

Scheduled Governance activity (pertaining to best practice):

- In response to the results of the staff survey carried out in June 2016, a review of the officer Performance and Development Appraisal Review process was carried out which resulted in Corporate and Service Delivery Unit action plans. Work will continue to implement identified actions throughout 2017/18.
- To support workforce planning, training, development and the implementation of the council's new competency framework, a new Human Resources Management system will go live in April 2017. A suite of e-learning modules will also be used to provide training and development which matches individual and organisational requirements. A new Capability Policy is also scheduled for implementation by June 2017. HR will also be reviewing the use of agency workers to ensure compliance with new intermediaries' legislation by 6 April 2017 when the new legislation comes into force. In addition a review of the use of agency workers to facilitate value for money is scheduled for completion by September 2017.

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

Significant Governance activity (governance controls identified to facilitate delivery of agreed outcomes that are sustainable):

- Though legislation is being met, the council currently has Internal Audit recommended activity outstanding to deliver updates to the currently available Data Protection and Cyber Security guides and the implementation of e-learning training to officers in relation to Data Protection and Cyber Security. A programme to identify a schedule of work to deliver cyber security enhancements is also being developed. Data Protection E-learning training to commence once the council's new e-learning system goes live in June 2017.
- Business continuity activity to increase the resilience of the council's IT and telephone arrangements in mitigation of risk has been delayed. A solution is being sought and implementation is expected by September 2017.
- To ensure sufficient capacity across the council's two data centres, activity is scheduled to increase Data Centre capacity through the 'Connected to our Customers' programme by March 2017.

Scheduled Governance activity (pertaining to best practice)

- To enhance counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements, the Shared Anti-Fraud Service's fraud online reporting tool to be improved as part of the County Council's new website implementation. The Shared Anti-Fraud Service also plans to develop a consistent partner-wide Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. In addition the Whistle-Blowing Policy is currently being reviewed by the Shared Internal Audit Service.
- The new Global Data Protection Regulation, by which the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission intend to strengthen and unify data protection for individuals within the European Union, comes into force on 25 May 2018. The council is already preparing for these regulations and it is acknowledged that ongoing activity during 2017/18 will be required to ensure the Council is prepared.

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

Governance for this principle is currently considered robust and no further activity pertaining to best practice is scheduled at this stage.