

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
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		
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

	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

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

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

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
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	
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	
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