

Governance Enhancement Activity to take place in 2022/23

Corporate governance activity included in the peach text boxes are deemed significant. Activity is deemed significant if recommended for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement by the Shared Internal Audit Service following their review of control arrangements to meet the Audit Plan or identified as key to the management of 'very high/high' level strategic risks.

To provide a complete picture of governance enhancement planned for 2022/23 activity pertaining to best practice is also reflected.

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

To enhance existing governance arrangements the following activity pertaining to best practice has been identified:

- Member Code of Conduct to be updated and approved by Standards Committee
- Full review of the Council's Constitution to be carried out
- Review of the Council's Whistle-Blowing Policy
- IT Acceptable Use Policy to be rolled out to staff

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

To enhance existing governance arrangements the following activity pertaining to best practice has been identified:

- Commence discussions regarding an LGA Peer Review being carried out

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and environmental benefits

Annual Governance Statement Actions: To ensure that the General Fund Asset Management Strategy can deliver an effective mechanism to manage incoming investment as well as disposal of the Council's assets, the following activity is planned:

- Upload of asset management data onto property data management software to enhance the management of the Council's assets
- Continue the review of the council's commercial portfolio
- Recruitment of staff within the Estates Service
- Governance structure to be put in place to deliver the Corporate Landlord function

Annual Governance Statement Actions: Making Your Money Count: To ensure that the Council has sufficient resources to fund its medium and long term service plans and corporate priorities the following activity is planned:

- Complete the refresh of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
- Carry out a review of the Council's reserves
- Development of a Capital Funding Plan to identify and progress funding sources to ensure suitable capital funding is in place to deliver the Council's priorities
- Report to Executive outlining further Making Your Money Count savings options totally £500K to increase the Council's financial resilience

To enhance governance further the following activity pertaining to best practice has been identified:

- Development of a new five year Corporate Plan

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Annual Governance Statement Actions: Commercialisation: To ensure that the Council's ambitious Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy can be achieved, a programme of work is required:

- Continue the improvement programme in relation to garages, e.g. application of charges for garage freeholders, changes to termination periods, move to any day tenancies and transition to Choice Based Lettings.
- Review of charging arrangements across the Council
- Investigate further opportunities for grant funding
- Creation of a Disability Resource Centre and hosting parcel lockers on Council land.
- Review of the Council's skips offer
- Continue the review of concessions and fees and charges for 2023/24.
- Insourcing of day to day repairs and weed spraying
- Consider measures to drive down debt across the organisation
- Further develop the commercial culture in the Council through a combination of communications and learning and development opportunities.

Annual Governance Statement Actions: COVID-19: In response to the COVID-19 crisis and to ensure the Council can continue to deliver services, continue to meet its FTFC ambitions and enable recovery from the effect of the virus in the town, the following action is planned:

- Review the General Fund and HRA Medium Term Financial strategies in light of the financial pressures arising from the COVID-19 response
- Continue to implement the agreed town wide Recovery Plan

Annual Governance Statement Actions: Council Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme: To ensure the Council can deliver new council owned homes as programmed the following action is planned:

- Carry out viability assessments prior to lending being approved for the Wholly Owned Company to demonstrate they meet key targets as outlined in the Business Plan
- Explore grant funding opportunities with Housing Associations in the local area to secure nomination rights to properties
- Ongoing governance and review by the Housing Development and Regeneration Working Group
- Key Performance Indicators to be determined and monitored for the Wholly Owned Company regarding key financial performance indicators
- Identify future schemes for development

Annual Governance Statement Actions: Socio-Economic Impacts: As a result of the combined socio-economic impacts of welfare reform, the Covid-19 pandemic, and an economic downturn the following action is planned:

- Continue to be involved with Community Wealth Building and Social Value initiatives
- Contribute to the Planning and Procurement working groups which will be looking at community wealth building and social value in relation to all district and borough councils throughout Hertfordshire.
- COVID-19 recovery to remain a key theme for Stevenage Together
- Complete the review of the Arrears Action

Annual Governance Statement Actions: Stevenage Leisure Limited:

- Continue with regular meetings between SBC officers and Stevenage Leisure Limited
- Carry out the work programme to enable the Council to determine the strategic delivery of its leisure and cultural offer post March 2023 when the current leisure contract ends
- Carry out the procurement process for leisure and cultural services contract

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

Governance for this principle is currently considered robust and no further governance activity is scheduled at this stage

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

Annual Governance Statement Actions: IT Resilience and Cyber Security: The Shared IT Service to continue to implement the IT Strategy and Action Plan to enhance IT infrastructure, cyber security, IT resilience by:

- Complete the replacement of all the Council’s firewalls
- Migrate services over to the new IT network
- Complete the upgrade from Windows 7 to Windows 10
- Complete the roll out of VDI
- Roll out of Microsoft Office 365
- Review and update the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan.
- Carry out a Cyber Security awareness campaign
- Implementation and roll out of meta-compliance
- Consider the recommendations made by the SOCITM quality assurance review of the ICT strategic programme and operation.

Annual Governance Statement Actions: Health and Safety: Continue to enhance and embed health and safety compliance and performance by:

- Continue the rolling programme of internal and external audits for medium and high risk services
- Complete the implementation of health and safety enhancements for the Council’s identified health and safety risks

Annual Governance Statement Action: Building Management – General Fund Assets: To ensure there is a clear governance structure through a corporate landlord function and ensure compliance of the Council’s non-housing property the following action is planned:

- Procurement and implementation of a new Facilities Management System to integrate operational compliance work within a single system
- Implementation of the Corporate Landlord Function
- Procurement of compliance services, covering Fire, Gas/Water and Electrical contracts

Annual Governance Statement Action: Payment Cards Industry Data Security Standard: To ensure compliance the following action is planned:

- Review the current ICON system to ensure the system is being optimised to its full capability and any additional systems/functionality is added to supplement its current capability.

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 governance activity is scheduled at this stage.