

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Audit Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 October 2021

Report Title: Annual Governance Statement – Progress on Remediating Exceptions

Report Author & Job Title: Charlotte Hammersley, Compliance and Data Protection Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Neil Shorter
Portfolio Holder for: Finance & IT

Summary:	This report updates on the progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the 2020-2021 Annual Governance Statement
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Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: N/A

Recommendations: **The Audit Committee is asked to note the progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the 2020-21 Annual Governance Statement as detailed in this report.**

Policy Overview: Each year the council must produce and approve an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS is designed to summarise for Members and residents, the council's approach to governance and show how the council fulfils the principles for good corporate governance in the public sector.

Financial Implications: None

Legal Implications None

Equalities Impact Assessment Not required as this is a monitoring report which doesn't propose any change to the council's processes or procedures.

Data Protection Impact Assessment Not required.

Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement) The council has a low risk appetite towards compliance matters. The Annual Governance Statement makes recommendations for improvements to ensure that any

Other Material Implications:	potential risks highlighted are mitigated against. None
Exempt from Publication:	NO
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Introduction and Background

1. Each year the council must produce and approve an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The ASG is designed to summarise for Members and residents the council's approach to governance and show how the council fulfils the principles for good corporate governance in the public sector. The AGS draws conclusions, based on evidence throughout the past year, about the effectiveness of the council's arrangements.
2. The 2020-2021 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) was agreed at the March 2021 meeting of the Audit Committee. The ASG identified five areas for continued work and review which are set out in this report together with an update on their progress towards completion.

Progress to Date

Governance Area no 1	Responsible	To be delivered by
Develop a Digital Communication Strategy which builds on the successful digital communications campaigns delivered during 2020.	Communications Manager	March 2022
<p>Latest position: Social media has been increasingly used to accurately target specific groups of people, increase our reach and engagement with residents and understand and demonstrate the impact of council activity by using metrics and analytics. It has also enabled swift two-way dialogue between the council and individuals. The next step will be to draw on the learning gained through the pandemic and develop a Digital Communication Strategy which will provide a framework for delivering a digital plan that maximises the reach of our campaigns so they are as inclusive as possible. The development of the strategy is planned for delivery towards the end of 2021 with a target completion date of March 2022.</p>		

Governance Area no 2	Responsible	To be delivered by
Develop an equalities policy which reflects the council's objectives and explains how it intends to deliver them.	Compliance & Data Protection Manager	March 2022
<p>Latest position: In line with Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, the council has recently reviewed and adopted new Equalities Objectives in 2020. A policy setting out planned actions for delivery over the new Corporate Plan period is being developed through a newly created Health and Wellbeing Group chaired by the Chief Executive.</p>		

Governance Area no 3	Responsible	To be delivered by
Review the council's risk appetite statement as set out in the Risk Management Framework	Compliance & Data Protection Manager	November 2021
<p>Latest position: The risk appetite statement has been reviewed to reflect the council's ambitions as set out in the draft Corporate Plan to 2025. A risk appetite statement will be included as part of the Corporate Plan report to Cabinet in November 2021. Reviewing the council's risk appetite statement in conjunction with the development of the Corporate Plan ensures our appetite is aligned to our strategic aims. The Risks Management Framework will be updated to reflect the appetite statement once approved.</p>		

Governance Area no 4	Responsible	To be delivered by
Review cyber security and data protection arrangements in light remote of working during 2020 and continue to communicate cyber security and data protection advice to staff.	IT Manager/ Compliance & Data Protection Manager	November 2021
<p>Latest position: In addition to the range of software and systems we deploy to stop threats, a key element in the fight against the growing and changing threat of cyber-crime is staff awareness. Online training modules have been made available to all staff and Members and have been developed in association with the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre). This has helped to reduce staff engagement with phishing attacks and heighten awareness.</p> <p>Regular communications and training have promoted the increased importance of data protection whilst working from home stressing the importance of integrity, security, purpose limitation, data minimisation and the accuracy of all personal data held. Aided by the utilisation of council issued equipment and appropriate two factor authentication mechanisms, cyber security and our data protection obligations are at the forefront of our working from home arrangements.</p>		

Governance Area no 5	<i>Responsible</i>	To be delivered by
Reviewing the Executive arrangements in the constitution to ensure they present in a clear fashion the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and to capture the new port health service.	Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer	March 2022
<p>Latest position: The Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer is working with specialist lawyers to review the constitution provisions in relation to executive arrangements and to undertake a wider health check to identify other necessary improvements and clarifications. The scoping for the health check is still being carried out. The progress is being monitored by the Office of the Executive Leader and any proposed changes will need to follow due process including the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee (S&CR). The inclusion of Ashford Port Health is being dealt with separately and will be reported through S&CR as a constitution update in the normal way in October or December 2021.</p>		

Conclusion and Next Steps

3. Good progress has been made towards completion of the actions arising from the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement. Further updates will be provided in the annual review of the Annual Governance Statement in March 2022.

Contact and Email

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