

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Audit Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 October 2022

Report Title: Annual Governance Statement – Progress on Remediating Exceptions

Report Author & Job Title: Charlotte Hammersley, Head of Policy and Performance

Portfolio Holder The Leader
Portfolio Holder for:



Summary:	This report updates on the progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the 2021-2022 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 2021-22 Annual Governance Statement as detailed in this report.**

Policy Overview: Each year the council must produce and approve an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The production of an AGS is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1).

The AGS sets out how we are delivering governance arrangements in accordance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance, which follows principles contained in national guidance and produced by CIPFA and SOLACE. Any areas for review are identified in the AGS and progress reported upon through this report during the course of the year.

Financial Implications: None

Legal Implications None

Equalities Impact Not required as this is a monitoring report which doesn't

Assessment	propose any change to the council's processes or procedures.
Data Protection Impact Assessment Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement)	Not required. The council has a low risk appetite towards compliance matters. The Annual Governance Statement makes recommendations for improvements to ensure that any potential risks highlighted are mitigated against.
Other Material Implications:	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 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. The AGS draws conclusions, based on evidence throughout the past year, about the effectiveness of the council's arrangements.
2. The 2021-2022 AGS was agreed at the March 2022 meeting of the Audit Committee. The AGS identified eight 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
Provide further training sessions to support staff in using competency framework during the appraisal process.	HR Manager	April 2022
<p>Latest position: In January, five sessions were held explaining how to complete appraisals including the competency framework. 102 people attended.</p> <p>An on-demand simulation to walk staff through how to evidence competencies was also created which has been well used. The new system has also allowed us to build in a manual with step by step guides. 318 people have used these guides. In addition regular updates are provided on the Smarthub (the council's Intranet) and a dedicated section for these updates was launched over the summer.</p>		

Governance Area no 2	Responsible	To be delivered by
Complete the review of the Executive arrangements within the constitution and commence a wider review of the whole document.	Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer	March 2023
Latest position: the review of the Executive arrangements has concluded and Members will shortly be provided with information about this and a link to the council's constitution. The wider health check of the constitution is ongoing and expected to complete in time for the new Council Year in May 2023.		

Governance Area no 3	Responsible	To be delivered by
Deliver an upgrade to the technology supporting council meetings to facilitate different ways for the public to engage for example through streaming and hybrid meetings.	Member Services Manager and IT Manager	September 2022
Latest position: after successful user testing, equipment has been purchased and installed in the two council committee rooms. Whilst already in use, there are some final tasks to complete the works including adoption by the software company; and changes to the layout of the committee rooms to ensure that the hybrid solution is of maximum benefit. Once these steps have been implemented, a significant improvement to the hybrid meeting arrangements is expected. Work is also underway to explore the best technological solutions for the council chamber and a site visit to another council is planned for October 2022 to view a system already installed.		

Governance Area no 4	Responsible	To be delivered by
Develop an action plan for improving the council's Section 106 process in order to deliver the agreed actions set out in the report of the Mid Kent Audit Partnership (MKAP).	Assistant Director of Planning and Development	March 2023
Latest position: Since May, officers have been working hard to respond to the MKAP actions in addition to those identified by an Overview and Scrutiny Task Group. An action plan has been prepared and a report made to 13 September 2022 <u>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u> detailing progress made to-date.		

Governance Area no 5	Responsible	To be delivered by
Develop a comprehensive Member Induction Programme in 2022 ready for the new Council in 2023. In addition to legislative and committee role training, the induction should reflect learning from the current council membership and include practical information about what to expect when becoming a councillor.	Member Services Manager	May 2023
Latest position: The Training Panel will be meeting in October to begin work on developing a comprehensive Member Induction Programme ahead of the new Council being elected in May 2023.		

Governance Area no 6	Responsible	To be delivered by
Deliver an Ashford Manager Programme and wider suite of management development training during 2022/23 to develop the skills of individuals and to assist with succession planning across the organisation.	Assistant Director of HR, Customer Services, Communications and Digitalisation	March 2023
Latest position: This action is complete with the Ashford Manager Programme delivered over the summer period. The Programme is designed to focus on leadership techniques to help develop the skills of managers across the organisation.		

Governance Area no 7	Responsible	To be delivered by
Review the Corporate Risk Register to ensure it reflects the council's strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-24	Head of Policy and Performance	September 2022
Latest position: This action is complete. The council's Management Team held a dedicated session to review the council's risk register taking account of the council's priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and other national and international issues affecting the council's risk environment. Further details are provided in the Corporate Risk update elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.		

Governance Area no 8	Responsible	To be delivered by
Review the council's suite of Data Protection Policies and service's in updating their Records of Processing Activities	Head of Policy and Performance	September 2022
Latest position: A review of the council's overarching Data Protection Policy and sub-policies is underway and on target to be submitted to the November meeting of the Cabinet for approval. There is a planned review of the Records of Processing Activity to coincide with the launch of the new policy once adopted.		

Governance Area no 9	Responsible	To be delivered by
That the Terms of Reference of the Trading and Enterprise Board be amended to include oversight of the Ashford International Development Company.	Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer	September 2022
Latest position: The governance arrangements of the Ashford International Development Company were included in the Chief Executive's delegated decision (granted at the Cabinet meeting on 27 January 2022) regarding the purchase of the Company. The decision set out how the Company would brought within the oversight of the Trading and Enterprise Board as per the recommendation of this Audit Committee. Therefore, this action is complete.		

Conclusion and Next Steps

3. Good progress has been made towards completion of the actions arising from the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement. Further updates will be provided in the annual review of the Annual Governance Statement in March 2023.

Contact and Email

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