

Agenda Item No: 4
Report To: Audit Committee
Date of Meeting: 3rd December 2019



Report Title: Annual Governance Statement – Progress on Remediating Exceptions

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

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

Summary:	This report updates on the progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the 2018-2019 Annual Governance Statement
-----------------	---

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 2018-19 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.

Other Material Implications: None

Exempt from Publication: NO

Contact: charlotte.hammersley@ashford.gov.uk (01233 330878)

Report Title: Annual Governance Statement – Progress on Remediating Exceptions

Introduction and Background

- 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.
- The 2018-2019 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) was agreed at the March 2019 meeting of the Audit Committee. The ASG identified four areas for continued work and review which are set out in the table below:

	Governance Area	Responsible	To be delivered by
1.	Development and adoption of Social Media Guidance for Members.	Director of Law and Governance	June 2019
2.	Introduce Member/Officer Protocol at Member Induction in May 2019 and as part of the officer induction programme	Director of Law and Governance	June 2019
3.	Develop a Consultation Toolkit for use across the organisation.	Corporate Policy	September 2019
4.	Development of a culture of cyber security through training, phishing exercises and internal communications campaigns	IT Operations Manager	March 2020

- This report provides updates on the progress made towards these areas of review highlighted by the 2018-2019 Annual Governance Statement.

Progress to Date

4. Development and adoption of Social Media Guidance for Members

The Social Media Guidance was approved by Standards Committee on 18 March 2019 and adopted by Council on 25 April 2019. This action is therefore considered complete.

5. Introduce Member/Officer Protocol at Member Induction in May 2019 and as part of the officer induction programme

The new Protocol for an Effective Councillor/Officer Relationship was approved by Selection and Constitutional Review Committee on 11 April 2019 and adopted by Council on 25 April 2019. This action is therefore considered complete.

6. **Develop a Consultation Toolkit for use across the organisation**

A draft consultation toolkit has been developed and will shortly be taken to the council's Management Team as part of a suite of actions aimed at improving consultation processes council-wide. The toolkit contains guidance for officers conducting consultations both with the public and in-house such as tips for good practice, advice for stakeholder selection and engagement and advice on the processes that should be followed. At the same time, officers are reviewing the council's online consultation presence with an aim of utilising a tool that suits both statutory planning consultations and corporate topics. Widening the scope of this consultation work has meant a slightly extended timescale for delivery but proposals are currently expected to come forward this year.

7. **Development of a culture of cyber security through training, phishing exercises and internal communications campaigns**

In the last 12 months the council has enhanced its Cyber Security measures with a range of initiatives including the traditional technical measures expected. There have been three "Phishing campaigns" with the first across all staff and councillors, followed by two targeted campaigns aimed at Senior Management, Councillors and those staff that had fallen for the initial campaign.

There have been a range of posters issued by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the cyberaware.gov.uk website to promote staying safe online posted around the building at various times.

Also to help the council gain a better understanding of the Cyber landscape and issues affecting other public organisations, the IT Manager has attended all five of the NCSP's Cyber Pathfinder Training Seminars, from which we now have setup further links to the national Warning Advice and Reporting Point (WARP) and there is a council group on the NCSC's Cyber Security Information Sharing Partnership for the sharing of cyber threat information. Next year we will launch a new suite of Cyber & GDPR e-Learning training to be completed by all staff, and a specific Councillor module for elected members.

Finally, the council takes part in the annual Local Government Association Cyber Stock Take Self-Assessment process through the IT Operations Manager and overseen by the Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) which is chaired by the Director of Law and Corporate Governance. Last year the council scored Amber-Amber, which was the same as most of the other Kent authorities (and the rest of the country). This year, the council improved its score to Amber-Green. Areas identified for improvement will be overseen by the CIGG.

Conclusion and Next Steps

8. The actions relating to the social media guidance for Members and the Member/Officer protocol can be considered complete.
9. Work continues to develop and embed a consultation toolkit across the organisation. Whilst good progress has been made to-date, widening the

scope of the work has slightly extended the time period for delivery. There has been good progress towards the development of a culture of cyber security which will continue during the remainder of this council year and beyond. Further updates will be provided at future meetings of this Committee until the actions are complete.

Contact and Email

Charlotte Hammersley, Data Protection and Compliance Manager

charlotte.hammersley@ashford.gov.uk