

Draft 2022-23 Annual Governance Statement

Significant Governance Issues: Status Report

The following is a summary of the status of the agreed actions that were identified to address the significant governance issues were identified and recorded on the Council's draft Annual Governance Statement 2022-23:

1. Governance Issue		
<p>In 2022 the Council, through the Local Government Association (LGA), commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to undertake an informal peer review to assist the council to consider how it might enhance its approach to governance and decision-making. Their final report was presented to the council's Governance Committee in November 2022 and, following that, a 10-point Action Plan was formulated and agreed by political Group Leaders. The action plan is being implemented incrementally over the next 6 months, both pre and post May elections.</p>		
Planned Action:	Status	Comments:
<p>Implementation of the 10-point Action Plan agreed in February 2023 with it being implemented incrementally over the next 6 months, both pre and post May 2023 elections.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Director of Legal and Governance</p>	<p>One action outstanding otherwise completed</p>	<p>CfGS carried out a refresher in Winter 2023 and the one significant (and ongoing developmental) action of improved report writing, consistency of approach to formal decision making including specifically ESIA's (impact assessments) through externally facilitated workshops by CfGS and the LGA had to be deferred due to CfGS's work programme being refocussed to support other authorities. These these are now planned for Autumn 2024.</p> <p>Additionally, a more fundamental review of both corporate governance and the Constitution is scheduled for the second half of the 2024/25.</p>
2. Governance Issue		
<p>As part of the council's strategy to begin to tackle its significant financial challenge it has commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy ('CIPFA') to review the overall financial standing of the council and the processes applied by the authority when managing its resources. This review will focus on actions needed to improve the council's financial resilience and future budget positions. It will also build upon and supplement the work undertaken in 2022-23 in relation to the CIPFA Financial Management ('FM') Code.</p>		
Planned Action:	Status	Comments:
<p>Consideration and implementation of the key actions arising out the CIPFA review to be agreed with Cabinet and reported to Full Council. Actions to be agreed by end July 2023 / Implementation of agreed actions to take place throughout 2023-24 and beyond.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Corporate Services (now the Director of Finance / Executive Director Enabling Services)</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) subsequent report was presented to full council and follow-up work commissioned around the robustness of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and to clarify the likely savings requirement and 'road test' it with likely scenarios. CIPFA made a number of recommendations to strengthen the council's financial management arrangements and a 'Financial Management Improvement Plan' was subsequently developed and approved for implementation in 24-25</p>

3. Governance Issue

The current service business planning process needs to be refreshed and updated in order to ensure that it better supports business and budget planning, and is aligned with the new Corporate Plan and informs the council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Planned Action	Status	Comments:
Agree a revised organisational Business Planning approach to better support business and budget planning over the short and medium term, and aligned with the new Corporate Plan Responsible Officer: Director of Strategy and Performance	Completed	A revised business planning framework was agreed which aligns business plans to the Corporate Plan and the MTFS. This will be rolled out early in the 2024/25 financial year and aligned to City and Corporate Plans going forward. This is supported by a cross organisational Business Planning & Performance group which is responsible for appropriate application of the framework and continuity of business planning across SCC, including ensuring that plans are shared across the group and more widely so that each area is fully understood and supported by others.

4. Governance Issue

Although a new 'Talent Management and Succession Planning Strategy', developed in 2022, is now in place it is recognised that there is still a way to go before there are well developed succession plans in place across the council. Currently there is inconsistency in respect of the extent to which succession planning has been formally considered within service areas across the council.

Planned Action	Status	Comments:
The Talent Management and Succession Planning Strategy will be implemented across the organisation with the support of the respective Human Resources and Finance Business Partners, and the Organisational Development Team. Ongoing throughout 2023-24 with updated position reflected in the 2023-24 AGS Self-Assessment returns from Heads of Service (in Q4 2023-24) Responsible Officer: Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	Ongoing	The 'Talent Management and Succession Planning Strategy' developed in 2022 and has now been absorbed within the wider 'Our People' Strategy. It is recognised that there is still a way to go before there are well developed succession plans in place across the council. Currently there is inconsistency in respect of the extent to which succession planning has been formally considered within service areas across the council. The 'Our People' action plan will continue to be implemented across the organisation with the support of the respective Human Resources and Finance Business Partners, and the Organisational Development Team, including the introduction of a Succession Planning tool for managers to use. This will be ongoing throughout 2024-25 with updated position reflected in the 2024-25 AGS Self-Assessment returns from Heads of Service (in Q4 2024-25).

5. Governance Issue

The council has in place a well-developed Performance and Development Review (PDR) process however there are pockets across the organisation where the process is still not embedded within the service.

The PDR process is also important in that it identifies any learning needs as well as ensuring that required mandatory e-Learning training courses / 'essentials' reading have been completed. The latter 'essentials' include Anti-fraud and corruption strategy, Anti-Money laundering, Bribery Act, Gifts and Hospitality declaration and Whistleblowing.

Planned Action	Status	Comments:
<p>HR to review the returns and advise the relevant Executive Director if there are any significant gaps in terms of PDR returns from Service Areas. Review at End Q2 2023-24 when the 2022-23 PDRs should have all been completed and uploaded onto the HR module within Business World and the new 2023-24 PDRs developed.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development</p>	Completed	This was completed on a directorate level basis via HR Business Partners who shared feedback and information and with the respective Directorate Management Team.