Aberdeenshire
C O U N C I L   **Business Services**

REPORT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE – SEPTEMBER 2019

ACTION PLAN: HOW GOOD IS OUR…GOVERNANCE IN PRACTICE? SELF-EVALUATION

1   Recommendations

Audit Committee is recommended to:

1.1   Agree the improvement actions in support of the How Good Is Our Governance in Practice self-evaluation

1.2   Note that a progress report on the Action Plan will be provided to Committee during next year's self-evaluation process

2.   Discussion

2.1   In May, Audit Committee considered the results of the How Good is Our Governance self-assessment.

2.2   The report highlighted the approach undertaken to utilise the HGIO methodology against the Code of Corporate Governance as a 'temperature check' of the health of the organisation more generally, and was aligned to provide assurance, understanding and to identify:

- Do we have clear strategic direction;
- How are we performing;
- Are we using our resources effectively;
- Do we work well with partners and communities; and
- Can we demonstrate continuous improvement?

3   Improvement Actions

3.1   An improvement plan has been created which sets out actions to be taken, owners and timescales. This is set out in Appendix 1 and has been subject to extensive engagement with officers.

3.2   The self-assessment will play an important role in the forthcoming Best Value Audit as it will be used as a core document which articulates self-awareness of the organisation's weaknesses and strengths. It is vital that the improvement actions are owned by the corporate leadership group, and progress made towards achieving the outcomes within the timescales set out.

3.3   Once agreed by Audit Committee, the actions will be input to Pentana to monitor implementation and progress.

3.4   The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated in the Report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

4   Scheme of Governance

4.1   The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section G1.1.5 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the Council's Code of Corporate Governance and ` annual Self-Evaluation Report.

5   Implications and Risks

5.1   An equality impact assessment is not required because the report is to inform Committee on arrangements for performance improvement and there will be no differential impact, as a result of the report, on people with protected characteristics.

5.2   There are no Town Centre First principle or specific financial or staffing implications arising from this report.

5.3   The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

• ACORP004 Business and organisational transformation - this is controlled through the council's project management approach and assured by Internal Audit.

• ACORP006 Reputation management – this is controlled through general policy & procedures and assured by external scrutiny bodies through the annual shared risk assessment and by Internal Audit;

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Director of Business Services

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15 August 2019

APPENDIX 1

HOW GOOD IS OUR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN

Q.I. Ref	Area for Improvement	Action Required	Owner	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date	Status: Planned; Active; Complete
Performance						
1.1.1 1.1.2	Performance management	New approach to area performance reporting – including six-monthly progress report to Area Committees evidencing delivery of the priority projects supporting the Council Plan and regular informal meetings between services and area committees	Area Managers	April 2019	On-going	Approach has been established and first six-monthly reports due Nov/Dec 2019. Programme of meetings agreed for the year.
1.1.3 1.1.5	Performance management	Ensure all services use performance data to inform decisions, taking conscious decisions on how we perform in all areas of the business, compared to others, making use of LGBF benchmarking to learn from other councils and demonstrating continuous improvements across all PIs	Directorate Management Teams (DMTs)	April 2019	On-going	Embed discussions on performance at DMTs, CLG and area management teams. Active use of Pentana
1.2.1	Complaints	Annual complaints report to be provided to Audit Committee to support continuous improvement by services. All services to make use of annual report to identify and deliver improvements.	Head of Customer Communication & Improvement	Sept 2019 Sept 2019	Annual On-going	Report is shared with services for action, overview by Audit Committee will support the process

			DMTs			
Use of resources						
5.1.3	Scheme of Governance	Revise and review appropriate inclusion of Loans and Grants within Scheme of Governance	Head of Legal & Governance	Dec 2019	March 2020	To be undertaken at next major review of Scheme
8.1.1	Service Level Agreements	Review and revise service level agreements and provide clarity on when these should be used – include roles and responsibilities, resource allocation, accountability and expectations	Director of Business Services	Sept 2019	March 2020	Consider scope of service arrangements
8.1.2 9.2.4	Budget setting process	Review of budget setting process to include working with services to ensure budgets are aligned to outcomes/priorities; and consider long term financial planning linking revenue, capital, HRA, alongside wider data eg performance	Budget Strategy Group (BSG)	July 2019	Nov 2019	Review underway
9.2.2	Budget setting process	To provide greater levels of transparency and accountability in the lead up to key decisions eg full council, through peer challenge, clear processes and timetables	BSG	April 2019	Nov 2019	Communication, wider involvement of CLG – on-going
Partnership working						
4.1.1.	Community Councils	Support and deliver training to governance arrangements within Community Councils	Area Managers	April 2019	On-going	Annual event planned for 28 Sept, alongside training for individual community councils as required
4.1.5 4.1.7	Community Engagement	Strengthen transparency of community engagement to include clarity on what is meant by engagement, consultation and broadcasting of information and provide training to officers on appropriate and consistent use.	Head of CCI	April 2019	January 2020	Engagement and participation policy under development – supported by cross-service reps

8.2.1	Partnership working	Promote Partnership Policy/Framework across the organisation	Head of CCI	Sept 2019	Dec 2019	
8.2.5	Partnerships/Volunteers	Review arrangements for provision of information to Community Groups, including funding streams available	Head of Legal & Governance	Sept 2019	April 2020	
8.2.6	Participation /Participatory budgets	Promote opportunities for community groups to use participation requests	Head of CCI	June 2019	January 2020	Further promotion of all aspects of community participation to be included within the wider engagement policy
Vision and strategic direction						
9.1.1	One Aberdeenshire	Set out objectives for embedding One Aberdeenshire for the year ahead	Head of CCI	June 2019	Dec 2019	Plan to support employee engagement in development, which will contain measurable objectives
9.1.2	Personal Performance Plans (PPP)	Provide clear guidance to support managers in delivering PPP	Head of HR&OD	Sept 2019	Jan 2020	Extensive supporting materials available on Arcadia. Issue further resources such as articles and webinars and signpost to existing support delivered to help managers develop their skills in this area
9.1.4	Leadership: officers	Increase visibility of our leadership in relation to embedding vision in support of future council and One Aberdeenshire, with a focus on leadership development	Chief Executive supported by CLG	Sept 2019	Dec 2019	Gap analysis to determine where we are now, and where we need to be. Action plan to then be developed based on findings
9.2.1	Leadership: elected members	Support cllrs in providing leadership to the organisation in the delivery of their strategic priorities through CPD, seminars, action learning, external speakers and peer challenge	Group leaders	Sept 2019	Jan 2020	Support and guidance can be provided by officers as needed

Improvement & Transformation						
	Project delivery	Embed project prioritisation process that incorporates benefits to demonstrate value to inform project approval and assign resources.	Head of CCI	Sept 2019	Oct 2020	Prioritisation tool in development for Strategic Change Board which can be adapted
	Peer challenge	Develop peer support/challenge mechanisms, including a model which sets out how and when to use it.	Head of CCI	Sept 2019	Jan 2020	
Annual Governance Statement						
	Certificate of Assurance	Within the Annual Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement requests that Committee Chairs and Directors review and sign a Certificate of Assurance which confirms they are content with the current governance arrangements. Whilst this has been completed, there were a number of comments, which require further action. These include: • Directorate Risk Registers. • Aligning Risk Registers to the Council Priorities. • Aligning Council Priorities to core activities within Services. • Link Priorities to Outcomes to Delivery Plans. • Agree a timescale for Performance Information to Committees.	SLT	Oct 2019	Mar 2020	SLT will review the current progress against each point and report to Policy Committees with updates.