



Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Audit Committee – 8 December 2020

Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 Action Plan Update.

Purpose:	The report presents an update on progress meeting the action plan from the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 in light of the impact from COVID-19.
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For Information

1. Background

1.1 Work to implement the action plan from the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 is continuing during 2020/21; but implementation has been and will continue to be affected by the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, which was unforeseen and in the extent of its longevity and impact.

1.2 This report outlines what progress has taken place, how the pandemic has affected it and what arrangements have been put in place to ensure governance remains strong.

2. Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 - Action Plan

2.1 Appendix A attached to this report sets out the actions for improvement identified through the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 and the progress implementing them during 2020/21; this includes the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. Progress can be summarised as follows:

- 2.1.1 *Budget pressures* – strong monitoring and controls remain in place but Welsh Government arrangements for funding COVID-19 has created uncertainty concerning the timing and quantum of actual grant support available. There are material overspends and a near certain need to exhaust contingency and draw down from reserves. Both have been reported to Cabinet in October and are to be reported to Council in November. The S151 officer is operating a deliberately blended approach to robust monitoring and action and has reported as such to Cabinet, Council, Audit Committee and to Scrutiny.
- 2.1.2 *Workforce capacity, capability and resilience* – a session was undertaken with managers before COVID-19 on developing workforce plans. A significant amount of interim, transitional workforce planning has been undertaken in response to Covid since March and to support the redeployment of staff. This is a testament to the flexibility and the resilience of the workforce to respond to a crisis.
- 2.1.3 *Appraisals* - appraisals were suspended because staff were diverted into COVID-19 work or were affected in other ways by the response. However, one-to-one and corporate meetings have taken place on a regular basis with the emphasis on addressing the pandemic and meeting citizen's needs.
- 2.1.4 *Future Generations Act* - A draft Future Generations Impact Assessment has been developed and is being piloted. Training to improve awareness and understanding of the Act and to support the impact assessment is being scoped and will be supported by online videos.
- 2.1.5 *Partnership governance* – A report to Audit Committee will outline the actions taken by the Welsh Government and Swansea Council to date and potential actions that Swansea Council should consider.
- 2.1.6 *ICT disaster recovery* - The Council's ICT Infrastructure is now on resilient platforms; the long term Digital Strategy is to move to the cloud.
- 2.1.7 *Social media* – processes and ways of working in this area have been tightened and changes are being implemented.
- 2.1.8 *Risk Management* - Risk management monitoring and reporting was recovered during July following suspension from March as a result of COVID-19. Risk monitoring and monthly reporting re-commenced in August. Compliance and the quality of aspects of risk information has improved; further improvements are being sought in line with available capacity as a result of the pandemic.

3. Equality and Engagement Implications

- 3.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2 Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.
- 3.3 There are no direct equality implications with this report.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

Background papers: *None*

Appendices: Appendix A – AGS 2019/20 action plan update.