

Report To: Corporate Governance Committee

Date of Meeting: 20 May, 2015

Lead Member / Officer: Barbara Smith – Lead Member for Modernising & Performance
Ivan Butler – Head of Internal Audit

Report Author: Ivan Butler – Head of Internal Audit

Title: Governance Improvement Plan & Draft 'Annual Governance Statement 2014/15'

1. What is the report about?

This report provides an update on the Council's Governance Improvement Plan arising from the Council's 2013/14 'annual governance statement' - '*Delivering good governance and continuous improvement*'. It also presents a first consultation with the Committee on the self-assessment report on the Council's governance and improvement arrangements for 2014/15.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

This report provides information to the Committee on progress being made with implementation of the various actions included in last year's Governance Improvement Plan to ensure that the Council has robust and effective governance arrangements in place.

It also provides the Committee with the opportunity to comment on the first draft of this year's 'annual governance statement'.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- The Committee reviews and comments on progress on last year's Governance Improvement Plan (Appendix 1)
- The Committee reviews and comments on the draft 'annual governance statement' for 2014/15 (Appendix 2)

4. Report details.

In 2013/14, the traditional 'annual governance statement' was replaced with a document entitled '*Delivering good governance and continuous improvement*'. This document provided a transparent and balanced self-assessment of the Council's governance arrangements, highlighting any significant governance weaknesses and other areas for improvement.

The improvement areas were included in a Governance Improvement Plan that also provided proposed actions to address the weaknesses, officers responsible for the actions, and timescales. This report provides the latest update on progress with the Governance Improvement Plan included as Appendix 1.

Appendix 2 provides the first consultation draft on the 2014/15 *'Delivering good governance and continuous improvement'* report that will include any areas from last year's Governance Improvement Plan that remain outstanding. The Committee should note that this is a very early draft that is still a work in progress and needs to be discussed further, particularly with Senior Leadership Team. The agreed final version will be signed by the CEO and Leader by 30 June 2015 and presented to this Committee with the Statement of Accounts.

The document in Appendix 3 provides an 'at a glance' view of the direction of travel for areas that have changed since last year's 'annual governance statement'.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

While the 'annual governance statement' self-assessment does not directly contribute to Corporate Priorities, it provides an assessment and assurance on the delivery of the Corporate Plan, the Council's operational and financial performance, governance arrangements, community engagement etc. that are all directed towards delivering the Corporate Priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no costs attached to this report and the only impact on services is where the report identifies improvement areas; however, services will already be aware of these and should be building this into their service planning.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

This report does not require a decision or proposal for change, so there is no impact on people who share protected characteristics.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

This is an information report only. The only consultation so far has been with the officers with responsibility for implementing the actions identified within the Governance Improvement Plan and contributing changes to the 'annual governance statement' 2014/15.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no financial implications attached to this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

If the Governance Improvement Plan is not implemented, weaknesses will remain in the Council's governance arrangements, which could lead to:

- adverse regulatory reports;
- poor use of public money;
- failure to improve key corporate and service areas;
- loss of stakeholder confidence; and
- an adverse impact on the Council's reputation.

11. Power to make the Decision

There is no decision required for this report but there is a requirement under the local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 for the 'audit committee' to oversee the Council's corporate governance arrangements.