

Audit Committee – 22 July 2019

Governance, Member and Business Support Business Unit Progress Report

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To give an overview of the functions of the Governance, Member and Business Support Business Unit and related elements of the Annual Governance Statement process in line with the Audit Committee work programme

2. Functions of the Business Unit

- 2.1 The business unit has a number of functions reporting to the Service Director, Governance, Member and Business Support:
- Council Governance (relating to decision-making processes and associated advice);
 - Personal support for the Leader, Mayor and Cabinet Members;
 - Wider Members' Services (mainly providing an interface with Council administration, for example: supplies and services; payment of allowances; booking and promotion of surgeries; maintenance of webpages);
 - The Council's Business Support Function.

In addition the Service Director (Joint Authorities Governance Unit) is responsible for governance support to various sub-regional/ City Region bodies, funding for which is provided by the service bodies via Service Level Agreements. (This is an historic arrangement which dates back to the demise of the former South Yorkshire County Council and the creation of the South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat which operated between 1986 and 2015):

- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority; South Yorkshire Pensions Authority; The Sheffield City Region Combined Authority/Local Enterprise Partnership (meetings servicing only); The Border to Coast Pensions Partnership; The Doncaster Sheffield Airport Consultative Authority.
- 2.2 The core purpose of the Governance, Member and Business Support business unit is therefore:

- To provide advice and support for elected members, senior officers and representatives of partner organisations to fulfil their duties and meet their obligations, and support the range of governance structures that are in place to ensure effective decision making;
- Provide consistency and resilience in delivering core administrative functions to Council Directorates through its Business Support function.

2.3 In line with this, the business unit seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- The effective implementation of decisions made within Council processes, free from the impact of legal challenge or delay;
- Awareness amongst elected members and senior officers of the legal constraints and requirements of decision making and the ability to maintain positive assurance of the process;
- Public awareness of how decision making processes operate and the ability to access decision making information with ease;
- Elected members who can perform all of their functions effectively.

3. Related Elements of the Annual Governance Statement

3.1 The Business Unit has a role in ensuring assurance against the following elements of the Annual Governance Statement:

- Documenting the roles, responsibilities and delegated powers of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny and officer functions within the Council's Constitution;
- Keeping under review the effectiveness of the Council's decision making framework, including delegation arrangements;
- Arrangements to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures.

3.2 The Service Director Governance, Member and Business Support takes responsibility for identifying the areas of the Constitution that need to be updated or amended following any changes internal or external to the Council. Invariably, this requires liaison with colleagues in other Business Units to ensure that key elements of their responsibilities are covered by this review process. This also helps to engage them more effectively in the requirements of the Constitution.

3.3 The Business Unit also operates the processes and procedures through which agenda and reports for formal Council meetings are published. These arrangements take into account the relevant legal framework in respect of timeliness of notices for meetings. The Unit also ensures compliance with further legal requirements, for example in relation to specific arrangements for Key Decisions and any decision taken by Cabinet in private, liaising with other

business units as required. This includes the production of related guidance and information, including Report Writing Guidelines and pro forma documentation.

4 Other Issues Affecting Elected Members

- 4.1 Emphasis continues to be placed on supporting Elected Members in support of the Council's Digital First agenda. Elected Members are encouraged to promote with their constituents the use of electronic methods of contacting the Council or interacting with services, acknowledging that this will not be easy for everyone to achieve. Members receive ongoing support in assisting with this initiative.
- 4.2 The Council has revised its approach to Scrutiny with wider Member participation expected. It is hoped that this will provide for robust, proportionate challenge which ultimately supports the decision making process.

5. Conclusion / Recommendations

- 5.1 This report is presented for information.

6. Background papers

- 6.1 Governance and Member Support business plan and Annual Governance Statement – Available for inspection, except where it contains exempt information, in the Business Unit, Town Hall, Barnsley, email governance@barnsley.gov.uk for more information.

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