

Report of the Head of Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Assurance

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 19th January 2022

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW PROCESS

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an update regarding the Annual Governance Review (AGR) process that has been determined and used to influence and assist in the preparation of the Council's Statutory Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2021/22.
- 1.2 The consideration of the Council's governance and assurance framework and the preparation of the AGS are key responsibilities of the Audit and Governance Committee.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Audit and Governance Committee:

- i. **Consider the Annual Governance Review Process for 2021/22;**
- ii. **Receive further reports relating to the Annual Governance Review Process for 2021/22 and how the Review will be used to inform the development of the Annual Governance Statement.**

3. Annual Governance Review Process – 2021/22

- 3.1 The Annual Governance Review (AGR) process for 2021/22 will be informed by the following:
 - Progress against the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2020/21
 - Findings obtained from the governance assurance process being developed with Business Units – this is based on the self-assessment documentation used in 2020/21 to prompt consideration of the existence and adequacy of governance arrangements across key areas.
 - Internal Audit will undertake a review to independently validate of the self-assessments undertaken by Business Units
 - An Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Assurance which provides an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's risk management, control, and governance processes
 - The work of the designated Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and the Data Protection Officer (DPO) and the role of the Information Governance Board

- The work of the Audit and Governance Committee which includes responsibility for monitoring the development and operation of corporate governance in the council
- The Council's internal management processes, such as performance monitoring and reporting; the staff performance and development framework; employee awareness of corporate policies; monitoring of policies such as the corporate complaints and health and safety policies and budget management systems
- External Audit Reviews
- Recommendations from external review agencies and inspectorates
- Assurance from the Council's statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer)

4. Local Code of Corporate Governance

- 4.1 This stands as the overall statement of the Council's corporate governance principles and commitments,
- 4.2 The current Local Code of Corporate Governance was approved by the Committee at its meeting on 29 July 2020 and was approved by Full Council on 24 September 2020. Minor updates to reflect the correct terminology for the Audit and Governance Committee have been made to the Code – otherwise the document remains the same as that approved in September 2020.

5. Preparation of the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

- 5.1 The preparation of the Annual Governance Statement is undertaken adopting the guidance "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016" CIPFA/SOLACE Guide. It will include the findings from the work carried out outlined in section 3 on the annual governance review process.
- 5.2 The framework defines the principles that should underpin the governance structures of the organisation and provides an opportunity to test existing governance structures and principles against those set out in the framework by:
- Reviewing existing governance arrangements
 - Developing and maintaining a Local Code of Corporate Governance; and
 - Reporting publicly on our compliance with our own Local Code of Corporate Governance

6. Timescales

- 6.1 The proposed timescales for the Annual Governance Review Process are as follows:

Confirmation of the Annual Governance Review process	February 2022
Governance Assurance by Business Units	May 2022
Annual Report – Internal Audit	June 2022
Assurance from SIRO/DPO	May/June 2022

Assurance from Statutory Officers	June 2022
Consider external inspection reports	May/June 2022
External Audit Reviews	June 2022
Preparation of Draft AGS	June 2022
Final AGS	September 2022

- 6.2 It is assumed that the timescales for the publication of Statutory Accounts in 2022 will follow a similar pattern to those in 2021, subject to any changes/impact on these which may occur due to the ongoing impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Contact Officer: Alison Salt – Corporate Governance and Assurance Manager
Email: alisonsalt@barnsley.gov.uk
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