

Title of report: Annual Governance Statement - action plan update for March 2022

Meeting: Audit and governance committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 15 March 2022

Report by: Service Director - Corporate Services

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards)

Purpose

Based on the final version of the Annual Governance Statement agreed in September 2021 an action plan has been formed based on continuous improvement requirements. This report provides a review of the actions as of March 2022.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The updated actions are noted.**

Alternative options

1. That the committee wait until the actions are updated in May 2022 when the draft annual governance statement is submitted.

Key considerations

2. The annual governance statement for 2020-21 was agreed by the audit and governance committee on 27 September 2021 as a statement of the controls the council has in place to manage risks in the delivering of outcomes and governance.
3. As part of the statement there were a number items under “continuous improvements” that have formed the action plan for improvement. A list of actions was presented to committee on 25 January 2022, with concern raised that actions were not complete so far into the year. There has now been movement on some of the actions though it remains likely that some will continue next year or become part of operational activity (this will be outlined in the report to the audit and governance committee in May 2022).
4. The requirements to produce the 2021-22 annual governance statement (note retrospective view) has started and due to be completed in May 2022. On Tuesday 1 March 2022 Management Board was notified of the action required including assurance statements by directors and statutory officers; register of significant partnerships; and managers’ checklists.

Community impact

5. Corporate governance is the term used to describe the systems, processes, culture and values the council has established to ensure we provide the right services, to the right people in a timely, open, and accountable way. Good corporate governance encourages better informed longer-term decision making using resources efficiently, and being open to scrutiny to improve performance and manage risk.
6. The annual governance statement is a self-reflection that the organisation makes effective decisions in supporting the achievement of the council’s vision and county plan priorities.

Environmental impact

7. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire’s outstanding natural environment.
8. Whilst this is a decision to agree the AGS which is a back office function and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council’s Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

9. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and the delivery of services. As this is a factual progress report, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

10. Whilst the recommendations themselves do not have a direct resource implication, some of the actions may result in additional expenditure. Where this is the case separate governance will take place. The AGS does take resources to produce and deliver action plans but these are from existing staffing.

Legal implications

11. The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 include a requirement for all councils to produce an AGS, and set out the timescales by which they must be published. Approval of the statement ensures that the council will comply with these requirements.

Risk management

12. The statement itself identifies any high level or strategic governance risks and the action plan provides mitigation to those risks. The risks listed below are based on half year update:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Actions not complete due to pressure on other areas of delivery.	Understand priorities within the council and balance competing demands.
Assurance risk highlighted during the year.	To be raised in the future AGS, and address in year if need immediate action.
Resources to implement.	Though no direct resource implications additional activity may lead to a resource impact.

Consultees

13. Internal consultation and completion of the actions by officers named in the action plan.

Appendices

Appendix A - AGS action list, 4 March 2022

Background papers

None identified.