

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

21 May 2020

Report of Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer

K.Jones

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020

Purpose of Report

1. To present to Cabinet the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020 for approval.

Executive Summary

2. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019-2020 (attached at Appendix 1) has been prepared by the Corporate Governance Group and complies with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework: (CIPFA/SOLACE, 2016).
3. The AGS demonstrates the system of internal controls which have been in place within the Council for the year ending 31st March 2020 and provides examples of how the Council demonstrates compliance with good practice and meets the core and sub principles of effective governance. The AGS also provides details on the assurances taken during the year on the effectiveness of our governance arrangements.

Background

4. The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and is used economically, efficiently and effectively.
5. The AGS forms part of the Statement of Accounts and reports on the extent of the Council's compliance with its principles and practices of good governance, including how the Council has monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year ending 31st March 2020.
6. The AGS is prepared under the remit of the Corporate Governance Group, which is made up of Heads of Service who are directly responsible for governance aspects.
7. The AGS also contains:
 - An update on the progress made during 2019-2020 against the improvement areas that were identified during the development of the 2018-2019 AGS – more detail on progress can be found in Table 1 on page 55.
 - Improvement areas proposed for 2020-2021 following the development of 2019-2020 AGS – more detail on the improvement areas can be found in Table 2 on page 57.

Covid-19

8. The assessment of the Council's governance arrangements was undertaken prior to the Covid-19 outbreak. Since that outbreak there has been a significant impact on the council's operations as we have responded at fast pace to the spread of the Coronavirus.

We are also expecting a lengthy recovery process ahead of us and as part of the recovery planning we are focused on three issues:

- i. Ensuring we can support the national effort to continue to stem the spread of the disease;

- ii. Resuming council operations in step with decisions taken by the Welsh and UK Governments; and
- iii. Understanding the wider community impact of the disease.

As part of this work we will review the Council's governance arrangements to ensure that they remain effective in this unprecedented situation.

Consultation

- 9. There is no requirement in the Constitution for consultation on this item.

Financial Appraisal

- 10. The improvement work undertaken during 2019-2020 was delivered against a continuing challenging financial backdrop.

Integrated Impact Assessment

- 11. There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impact

- 12. The Council continues to contract as financial resources continue to reduce. In recognition of the scale of change affecting the workforce, the Council's Corporate Workforce Plan supports the Council to adapt and help deliver the Council's objectives and priorities.

Legal Impact

- 13. The Council has a general duty under the local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions". In

discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions.

14. The Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council has met the requirements of Regulation 5(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 in relation to an annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal control and the preparation and approval of an Annual Governance Statement.

Risk Management

15. During 2019-2020, the Council has continued to promote an open, consistent and proactive risk management attitude in order to better monitor risks over the short, medium and long term.

Recommendations

16. It is recommended that :
 - i. Members note the progress made on the Corporate Governance improvement work undertaken during 2019-2020
 - ii. Approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020 attached at Appendix 1.
 - iii. Approve the proposed Corporate Governance improvement work to be undertaken during 2020-2021.

Reason for Proposed Decision

17. To ensure the Annual Governance Statement meets the requirements of Regulation 5(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 in relation to an annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal control and the preparation and approval of an Annual Governance Statement.

Appendices

18. Appendix 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020

List of Background Papers

19. None

Officer Contact

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