

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

24 February 2021

Report of Director of Finance & Corporate Services

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title

Half Year Progress Report - Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2020-2021 – period 1st August 2020 – 31st January 2021

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with a half year update on the progress made on the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2020-2021 (attached at Appendix 1). The action plan reflects the governance issues (improvement areas) identified in the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2019-2020 reported to Cabinet on 21st May 2020.

Executive Summary

2. On 21st May 2020, Cabinet approved the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020 subject to early and urgent review of the improvement work outlined for action during 2020-2021 due to the impact of the pandemic.
3. To meet the above requirement, the Corporate Governance Group prepared an Addendum which contained a revised table of improvement work for action during 2020-2021 which was prepared in accordance with guidance issued by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy). The Addendum was approved by Cabinet on 30th July 2020.

Background

4. The Annual Governance Statement 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.
5. However, between 16th and 31st March 2020, changes were required to the Council's system of internal controls to ensure the Council was able to mobilise its emergency response to the pandemic. These changes, along with a review of the effectiveness of these arrangements informed the improvement work contained within the attached improvement action plan.

Progress to date

6. The Corporate Governance Group continues to oversee the improvement work identified in the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan to ensure the Council's processes and procedures enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively.
7. During the period August 2020 – January 2021, good progress has been made on the improvement work areas contained within the action plan.

The improvement work progressed includes:

- The audit of the Urgency Action procedure undertaken by Internal Audit which concluded all decisions had been taken in accordance with the Urgency Action Protocol which ensured all decisions have been taken lawfully
- “Homeworking Guidance – during Covid-19” - guidance and information prepared on what it is recommended an employee should have in place to ensure home working is carried out in a safe manner
- The commissioning of a community impact assessment by the Public Services Board to understand how people, businesses and

organisations have experienced the pandemic and what impact it has had.

- No breaches referred to the Standards Committee in 2020
- Revised Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy approved by Cabinet September 2020.

More detail is contained in Appendix 1.

Financial Appraisal

8. The progress described was delivered against a challenging financial backdrop.

Integrated Impact Assessment

9. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring/information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impact:

10. No implications.

Workforce Impact

11. The progress set out in Appendix 1 has been delivered during the Council's response to the pandemic which has been a challenging time for the workforce. During that time the Workforce Planning Group met and a key role of the Group was to review key employment strategies to support the Council's response to the pandemic.

Legal Impact

12. This monitoring report is prepared under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and discharges the Council's duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions".
13. The Council also has a duty to reflect the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to ensure that our governance structures enable different parts of the organisation to work together on

setting well-being objectives and taking all reasonable steps to meet well-being objectives.

Risk Management Impacts

14. The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk. Failure to monitor progress on the action plan may lead to non-compliance by Audit Wales and statutory recommendations the Council would be obliged to address.

Consultation

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

Recommendations

16. It is recommended that Cabinet note the half year progress made on the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2020-21 for the period 1st August 2020 to 31st January 2021 - attached at Appendix 1.

Reason for Proposed Decision

17. This is a matter for monitoring therefore no decision is required.

Implementation of Decision

18. This is a matter for monitoring therefore no decision is required.

Appendices

19. Appendix 1 – Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan 2019-20

List of Background Papers

20. Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020
21. Annual Governance Statement Addendum 2019-2020

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