

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

12 May 2021

Report of Director of Finance & Corporate Services

H. Jenkins

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021

Purpose of Report

1. To present to Cabinet the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021 for approval.

Executive Summary

2. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2020-2021 (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 2021 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 2021.
6. The AGS is prepared under the remit of the Corporate Governance Group, which is chaired by the Director of Finance & Corporate Services and 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 2020-2021 against the improvement areas that were identified during the development of the 2019-2020 AGS (Table 1 on page 57).
 - Improvement areas proposed for 2021-2022 following the development of 2020-2021 AGS (Table 2 on page 63).
8. Table 2 contains a number of improvement areas to be actioned during 2021/2022. The Corporate Governance Group will keep this work under review as the Council progresses recovery planning during 2021/2022 and if necessary will prioritise the work which may result in some improvement areas rolling into the early part of 2022/2023.
9. As the Council moves forward its plans in terms of recovery the Council's governance arrangements will continually be kept under review by the Corporate Governance Group to ensure that they remain effective.

Consultation

10. There is no requirement for consultation on this item.

Financial Appraisal

11. The improvement work undertaken during 2020-2021 was delivered against a continuing challenging financial backdrop.

Integrated Impact Assessment

12. There is no requirement for an Integrated Impact Assessment on this item.

Workforce Impact

13. The progress set out in Table 1 on page 57 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

14. The Council has a general duty under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to keep its performance under review and the extent to which:
 - a) It is exercising its functions effectively;
 - b) It is using resources economically, effectively and efficiently;and
 - c) Its governance is effective for securing the matters set out in a) and b) above.
15. 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

16. The Council's risk register was not updated on a regular basis during 2020/2021 due to Covid-19. However, the Pandemic was recognised on the risk register as a key Strategic Risk. The risks arising from the pandemic were managed via the establishment of a Corporate Incident Management Team chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.

Recommendations

17. It is recommended that :
 - i. Members note the progress made on the Corporate Governance improvement work undertaken during 2020-2021
 - ii. Approve the Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021 attached at Appendix 1.
 - iii. Approve the proposed Corporate Governance improvement work to be undertaken during 2021-2022.

Reason for Proposed Decision

18. 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.

Implementation of Decisions:

19. The decision will be implemented after the 3 day call in period.

Appendices

20. Appendix 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021

List of Background Papers

21. None

Officer Contact

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