

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

15th December 2021

Report of Chief Finance Officer – H Jones

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title

Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2021-2022 into 2022-2023 - Half Year Progress Report – (1st June 2021 – 30th November 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 2021-2022 into 2022-2023 (attached at Appendix 1). The action plan contains the governance improvement areas identified in the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2020-2021 reported to Cabinet on 12th May 2021.

Executive Summary

2. On 12th May 2021, Cabinet approved the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2020-2021.
3. 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.

4. The Improvement Action Plan (contained at Appendix 1) contains improvement actions to address governance improvement areas identified during the development of the Council's AGS for 2020-2021.
5. A summary of some of the key areas of progress is provided below with a more detailed update on all improvement actions included in Appendix 1.

Summary of key areas of 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 1st June 2021 – 30th November 2021, good progress has been made on the improvement actions contained within the action plan.
8. A number of the improvement actions relate to ensuring the Council meets statutory requirements contained within the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021. For example, reports have been presented to Council for the implementation of public speaking at Council meetings from January 2022 and work will be ongoing throughout 2022 to prepare a Public Participation Scheme in respect of democratic arrangements which is a requirement of the Act.
9. Other improvement actions relate to the ongoing work to ensure risk assessments and associated control measures are robust across the Council to keep the workforce safe. Progress includes the development of Homeworking Guidance to keep employees safe while working at home and the Corporate Communications Team developed a video guide for employees to show them what to expect when they return to the offices.
10. With regard to the improvement work on Workforce Planning, Audit Wales worked the Head of Human & Organisational Development over the summer to review the Council's workforce planning arrangements both pre-pandemic and during the pandemic to see what lessons could be learnt. Audit Wales found "The Council's reactive workforce planning

during the pandemic worked well, with strong focus on maintaining essential services and ensuring employee wellbeing”. Work will continue in 2022 on the implementation of the Council’s Future of Work Strategy which aims to ensure that our employees can be the best they can be, doing the right thing, in the right place, at the right time and in the right way.

11. Officer training sessions on ensuring safe and legal decision making have taken place during 2021-2022 focussing on decision making and governance related issues to ensure officers are aware of the appropriate steps that must be taken in decision making. In addition, training for Chief Officers, Accountable Managers and Members has taken place with an external provider to consider the relationship between officers and members and the appropriateness of compliance with Member/Officer protocols. Further sessions will continue to take place through 2021-2022.
12. A more detailed update on all improvement actions is included in Appendix 1.

Financial Appraisal

13. The work to progress the improvement actions was delivered within existing budgets.

Integrated Impact Assessment

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

Valleys Communities Impact:

15. After consideration there are no implications.

Workforce Impact

16. The progress set out in Appendix 1 has been delivered during the Council’s continued response to the pandemic and planning for recovery which has been a challenging time for the workforce.

Legal Impact

17. 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".
18. 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

19. 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

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

Recommendations

21. It is recommended that Cabinet note the half year progress made on the Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan for 2021-2022 into 20-22-2023 for the period 1st June 2021 to 30th November 2021 - attached at Appendix 1.

Reason for Proposed Decision

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

Implementation of Decision

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

Appendices

24. Appendix 1 – Corporate Governance Improvement Action Plan 2021-2022 into 2022-2023

List of Background Papers

25. Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021

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