

## **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

### **Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

#### **Report of Monitoring Officer**

##### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide Members with an update on the Action Plan referred to in the AGS in connection with other governance issues identified.

**This report is public**

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the progress and steps yet to be taken on the Action Plan be noted.**

##### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 On 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 the Audit Committee received a report on progress and steps taken on the Annual Governance Statement (AGS)'s Action Plan with regards to 'other governance' issues identified in the 2023/2024 AGS. As Members will be aware the Council issued its AGS following the Audit Committee's consideration of the document on 31 July 2024. The AGS identified various issues to be addressed. These are split into two categories – (a) Other Governance Issues and (b) Significant Challenges for 2023/24 and beyond. This report provides an update on the first category. That is the issues identified as "Other Governance Issues".

- 1.2 Following the 2022/23 AGS, an Action Plan was put together to address the areas identified. The issues covered by the Action Plan include:

- (a) Policy review/updating
- (b) The Corporate Complaints Policy and other service complaint procedures
- (c) Publication of Information
- (d) Information on the Council's website
- (e) Better Publication of Officer roles
- (f) Review of Festival Market Management

- 1.3 As set out in the Audit report of 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024, the remaining issues covered by

the Action Plan included:

- (a) Policy review/updating
- (b) Information on the Council's website
- (c) Review of Festival Market Management

- 1.4 Good progress is being made against the Action Plan. Although, more work is yet to be done.

### **Work undertaken/to be completed**

#### **Policy Review / Updating**

- 1.5 As previously reported many policies lacked sufficient audit trail of review and amendment. This creates weakness in ensuring that policies are kept up-to-date and are kept properly under review.
- 1.6 There has been some delay in progressing the work on reviewing and updating policies. The member of staff taking the lead on this area went on maternity leave and it took some time to recruit maternity cover (late January 2025).
- 1.7 A central list of Council Policies has been created from looking at LCC's website and intranet. Chief Officers were last contacted in February 2025 and asked to review a spreadsheet of policies in their area. As part of the review, it was requested that officers:
- a. Update policies, adding necessary details with regards to the date of creation, date of review and details of the decision maker.
  - b. Update the spreadsheet with any revised policy details ensuring all columns are complete and accurate; and
  - c. Add any additional policies that are not listed onto the spreadsheet.
- 1.7 The spreadsheet includes details of:
- a. Service and Responsible Officer
  - b. Officer contact details
  - c. Policy Name
  - d. Policy Creation Date
  - e. Review Frequency (years)
  - f. Date policy last updated
  - g. Date next policy review is due (a calculated date, based on the two fields above)
  - h. Decision maker (e.g. Committee, Cabinet Member, Officer)
  - i. Notes appropriate to the particular policy
- 1.8 Updates were requested by the end of 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025, and this has resulted in further policies being updated. At present 57 policies out of 170 are listed as remaining overdue according to their review frequency and last review date. Further work is needed to continue to update policies, and further reminders are due to be sent out in June/July 2025. Officers are also currently looking at ways to speed up the process of updating policies and methodologies of policies up to date. This includes looking at

automatic reminders being generated and a central point where the list of policies and updates can be kept up to date.

- 1.9 Meetings with individual officers are currently being arranged to discuss out of date policies and to understand the present position. Discussions with officers has revealed that some policies have been split into separate policies and some policies have been amalgamated (reducing the number of policies) and some policies are being worked on. It may be that the list of out-of-date policies is less due to amalgamation and that some policies are obsolete.
- 1.10 Review dates on policies are generally between 1 and 2 years. Work is needed to appraise whether these review periods are correct. Some policies will need annual review whereas other policies may not need a review for 2 or 3 years (depending on statutory requirements and change).

### **Information on Website**

- 1.11 As previously reported, it has been noted that Information is sometimes difficult to find on the Council's website.
- 1.12 Funding has been secured through the budget process for a new site. The Council's Communication team is working on the specifications and hope to go out to procurement within the next couple of months.

### **Review of Festival Market Management**

- 1.13 Again, as previously reported, following a matter raised under the Raising Concerns Policy the Monitoring Officer requested that a review of the festival market trading practices be undertaken by the Chief Officer Sustainable Growth to ensure suitable financial management has been, and is being, undertaken.
- 1.14 An audit report with regards to the Council's markets (Festival, Charter and Assembly Rooms) has now been finalised and an action plan created to address issues highlighted. This provides a timestable for actions to be completed over the next 12 months.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.18 Audit Committee members are asked to note the progress and work yet to be done under the Action Plan on the other governance issues identified in the AGS.

#### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):**

The Council must keep its governance processes under review and must ensure that it take steps to ensure that its processes are kept up-date and relevant. Good governance ensures that resources are properly used for the community it serves. Implementing the action plan on other governance issues helps ensure the Council's good governance.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No direct financial implications arising from this report

**OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces**

No direct resource implications arising from this report.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The S151 officer has seen this report and has no further comments.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has helped draft this report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Annual Government Statement – July 2024

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