

Cheltenham Borough Council

Audit, Governance and Compliance Committee –

22 January 2025

Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update

Accountable member:

Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Services

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This includes a statutory duty to prepare an Annual Governance Statement as part of the Statement of Accounts.

The Annual Governance Statement for the period 2023/24 included two areas of focus for the financial year 2024/25. The first related to the transition of Cheltenham Borough Homes and the second strategic procurement. The report provides an update on the progress of those actions.

Recommendations:

That Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee:

- 1. notes the Annual Governance Statement action plan update**
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

There are no financial or property implications associated with this report.

A copy of the Annual Governance Statement was published as part of the accounts.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets
gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 6 (1) (a) requires the Council to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control, and (b) to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

Signed off by: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk Tel: 01684 272691

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

There are no environmental or climate change implications arising from this report

Signed off by: Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Services

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

An equality impact assessment is not required for this report.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Performance against the actions identified in the Annual Governance Statement is monitored by the Corporate Governance Group and reported to the Audit, Governance and Compliance Committee.

2 Background

2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance and confirms its ongoing commitment and intentions through the development, adoption, monitoring and maintenance of its Local Code of Corporate Governance. The Council recognises that achieving high standards of corporate governance encourages stakeholders to have confidence in us and allows the Council to undertake its community leadership role.

2.2 In preparing the AGS for 2023/24 the following areas were identified as areas of focus for the financial year 2024/25

- Housing Transition
- Strategic Procurement

2.3 The attached action plan provides an update as to the progress against each of those areas of focus.

3 Alternative options considered

3.1 N/A

Report author:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Services

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Annual Governance Statement action plan update

Background information:

None

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1.	If the Council fails to monitor completion of the actions identified in the Annual Governance Statement, then it will not be able to assurance itself that robust systems of governance and control are in place.	Claire Hughes	3	2	6	Accept	Provide updates on action plan to Corporate Governance Group and Audit, Governance and Compliance Committee	Claire Hughes	Annually

Appendix 2: Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2024/25 – update against actions January 2025

No.	Key Area of Focus	Planned Actions	Update
1.	Transition of Cheltenham Borough Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure workstreams remain on track for transition to take place on 1 July • Establish appropriate governance arrangements to facilitate the transition, including relevant updates to the Constitution • Conduct a TUPE compliant transfer • Ensure compliance with new Housing Regulations, reporting regularly to relevant committee/Cabinet 	<p>The transition of Cheltenham Borough Homes was successfully completed on 1 July 2024.</p> <p>New governance arrangements are in place, and we have developed a consumer standards improvement programme which reports regularly to the Cabinet Housing Committee</p> <p>The governance arrangements will be reviewed once they have been in operation for 12 months. Initial feedback received via external assurance processes is that the structure provides a sound basis for appropriate levels of assurance.</p>
2.	Strategic Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit a new strategic procurement manager with a view to undertaking a review of the Councils procurement activities to identify best practice, value for money and delivery of social value 	<p>A strategic procurement manager has been recruited and took up their post with effect from 1 September 2024.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to ensure the council is prepared for the implementation of the new Procurement Act in February 2025, including a revision of the contract procedure rules.</p> <p>We continue to develop our approach to social value.</p>