

Service Assurance Statement 2021/22 – Community Services

Overall Assessment

During the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, this has placed a significant challenge on council services not only to respond to the impact of the pandemic but to maintain core service delivery. Whilst responding to this challenge, it is important an adequate system of internal control is exercised including arrangements for the management of risk and ensuring key governance frameworks continue to operate effectively.

It is recognised that the system of internal control can only manage, not eliminate, risk and that it cannot guarantee that any system or process is free from defect and does not prevent or detect irregularities. This service assurance statement is therefore prepared to the best of my knowledge.

Based upon the undertakings of my services during the year my assessment on the adequacy of the internal control environment has been informed by:

- The performance management arrangements for my services;
- The risk management processes in place within my services;
- Other corporate management, monitoring and review processes; and
- Review work undertaken by any third party, for example, external audit, review agencies or other assurance providers.

I confirm that within my areas of responsibility I am not aware of any of the following:

- Any irregularities in accounting practices or systems of internal control.
- The override or non-compliance of any key internal controls in place.
- Any communications from regulatory agencies concerning non-compliance with, or deficiencies in, reporting practices.
- Any non-compliance issues regarding the application of rules and regulations such as the Council's financial procedure rules or contract procedure rules.
- Any plans or intentions that may affect the valuation or classification of Council property or equipment and liabilities e.g. change in use or significant damage to an asset.
- Any large debts, fines, claims or other potential financial obligations.
- Any pending or threatened litigation relating to any of my service activities.

Head of Service	
Signature	
Name	
Job Title	Head of Community Services
Date	12/09/2022

2020/21 Service Assurance Statement		Responses			
		Yes	No	Partial	Provide comment, particularly on any responses of 'partial' or 'no'. Please feel free to add a comment on 'yes' responses to support the response.
1.Risk Management					
1.1	Whilst there is not a requirement to maintain an operational risk register I am satisfied there are arrangements in place to identify and mitigate risks where appropriate, for example in relation to any key projects.	X			Risks are identified through programme board and through regular project planning meetings and the relevant mitigations are put in place. Where risks are high and can't easily be managed these are flagged up to management team at the earliest opportunity. The Councils risk register is reported to CMT and the A&G Committee regularly.
1.2	Any significant risks identified have been escalated to corporate management team and if necessary included within the corporate risk register.	X			Key corporate risks such as those that can have a significant financial impacts are raised and discussed at corporate management team and where the risk cannot wait until the next CMT then they are flagged early and discussed with the relevant CMT colleagues at the earliest possible opportunity. The Councils risk register is reported to CMT and the A&G Committee regularly.
2. Internal Control					
2.1	I am satisfied my service areas are kept up to date with updates and changes to relevant Council policies and procedures.	X			Whilst things don't seem to have calmed post C19 and legislative changes and guidance still come thick and fast with issues such as migration support the service and the management keep abreast of this. Various external partnership also assist with this.
2.2	I am satisfied my services routinely monitor compliance with prescribed processes (Council policy, agreed procedures, statutory returns etc.)	X			Council policies and procedures are regularly consulted and complied with. All statutory returns have been submitted within the relevant timescales.
2.3	I am satisfied my services fully understand and comply with all legislation that is relevant to our operations.	X			As with council policies all legislation is regularly reviewed and practices adapted to ensure compliance. There have been improvement in areas highlighted as concerning last year e.g. private sector housing and licensing.

2.4	Communication and reporting channels exist to allow timely reporting of operational issues to the relevant body e.g. corporate management team. Including appropriate escalation of incidents.	X			Key corporate messages are disseminated via regular management team briefings, staff briefings and one to ones with operational managers.
2.5	I am satisfied there has been no circumvention of any key internal controls during the year or the complete removal of any key controls.	X			To the best of my knowledge all controls have been adhered to e.g. procurement of services etc.
3. Key Governance Framework					
3.1	I am satisfied my services fully understand and comply with their health and safety responsibilities.	X			All of the staff within my service area are fully conversant and comply with their health & safety requirements. As a regulator of this legislation we have to be seen to be leading the way with this.
3.2	I am satisfied my team comply with information management and security requirements, in particular, awareness and compliance to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	X			I am not aware of any GDPR breaches this year. If these do occur there are processes in place to ensure that these are reported to the responsible officer and lessons learned have been shared across the team and the council as a whole.
3.3	I am satisfied my services team are aware of and fulfil our responsibilities in respect of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.	X			As the lead officer for safeguarding in the council this is a priority for me and my team. I am satisfied that all staff understand their responsibilities in this area and all staff are encouraged to ask if they are unsure.
3.4	Any cases of fraud or whistleblowing allegations have been reported in accordance with relevant policies and remedial action taken where necessary.	X			To the best of my knowledge this is the case. Nothing has been reported to me personally.
3.5	I am satisfied that any key projects are delivered in accordance with the council's project management framework.	X			This has improved and all current projects are going through or due to go through programme board. Some projects are also monitored through various member working groups and or O&S committee.
3.6	I am satisfied that all my service areas have awareness to and where necessary make declarations in respect of policies such as Code of Conduct, Gifts and Hospitality, other employment etc.	X			Generally staff are encouraged to turn down gifts and hospitality where possible, where this cannot be done e.g, a member of the public sending flowers to a member of staff these have been declared in line with the policy.
4. Financial System and Controls					

4.1	I am satisfied there is adequate budgetary and financial controls in place across my service areas particularly around the monitoring of budgets and taking appropriate action when required.	X			Budget monitoring is regularly carried out with my service areas and the appropriate corrective action taken where necessary. Any non-routine concerns red flagged with the S.151 officer in a timely manner.
4.2	In relation to the above all expenditure is legitimate and checked before authorisation – this includes expenditure types such as corporate procurement cards, travel and overtime/additional hours claims etc.	X			Approval processes are in place and adhered to.
4.3	I am not aware of any instances where the council’s financial procedure rules or contract procedure rules have not been complied to.	X			I am not aware of any financial or procurement rules not being adhered to.
4.4	All recruitment has been undertaken in accordance with the council’s recruitment procedures.	X			There has been improvement in this area this year.
4.5	Any grant schemes set up or grants received have been approved in accordance with the council’s financial procedure rules.	X			All grants are compliant with financial procedural rules.
5. Control over Assets					
5.1	I am satisfied my services are aware and compliant with procedures that ensure the protection of assets from loss, damage and misuse.	X			To the best of my knowledge my team are complaint with this requirement.
5.2	I am satisfied my services review and report instances of loss, damage and misuse of assets and take appropriate management action where necessary.	X			To the best of my knowledge my team are complaint with this requirement.
5.3	I am satisfied that any disposal of assets have been approved in accordance with the council’s financial procedure rules.	X			I am unaware of my service area disposing of any assets.
6. Partnerships					
6.1	I am satisfied that any key partnerships which my services are part of have the necessary governance arrangements in place to ensure the effectiveness of that partnership.			X	Improvements are required for the community safety partnership and there is an outline plan for this.
7. Any other issues to note (please give details)					

7.1	Licensing – The licensing service has an improvement plan in pace which is now monitored by programme board and the licensing committee. This is seeing significant improvements in this area of work.	X			Appendix 1
7.2	Private Sector Housing – Additional resource has been allocated to this area of work and this has resulted in significant improvement.	X			