

Service Assurance Statement 2021/22 – Development 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 Development Services
Date	12 th September 2022

2021/22 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			A number of key projects within Development Services are reported to the Council's Programme Board. Risks are identified for each project and reported accordingly. 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			The review of the Joint Strategic Plan has recently been added to the corporate risk register. Other key corporate risks are escalated to CMT accordingly. 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			Regular meetings held with operational managers to disseminate relevant information.
2.2	I am satisfied my services routinely monitor compliance with prescribed processes (Council policy, agreed procedures, statutory returns etc.)	X			Due to a number of external funding arrangements in place led by Development Services there is a requirement to meet funders monitoring requirements, these are adhered to. 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			Monthly meetings held with operational managers, key service updates included which will pick up any new legislation affecting respective service areas.
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			Fortnightly Development Services TEAMS meetings held where updates from Management team are disseminated and also provide the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns. One to ones are held 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			As a result of having to work from home it has been necessary for individuals to complete a working from home risk assessment. Some issues have been raised as part of the Council's staff survey relating to work stations at home, however it is understood that all of these issues have now been resolved.
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			All new members of staff are advised of the requirements relating to the GDPR.
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			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			I am not aware of any whistleblowing allegations.
3.5	I am satisfied that any key projects are delivered in accordance with the council's project management framework.	X			As far as I am aware all projects are being delivered in accordance with the Council's project management framework.
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			A couple of secondary employment requests have been made and approved.
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	X			Approval processes are in place and adhered to.

	claims etc.				
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			Nothing has been raised with the Head of Development Services relating to this. Significant contracts are discussed with One Legal.
4.4	All recruitment has been undertaken in accordance with the council's recruitment procedures.	X			The HR team are fully engaged in any recruitment of permanent members of staff.
4.5	Any grant schemes set up or grants received have been approved in accordance with the council's financial procedure rules.	X			As far as I am aware 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 compliant 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	The Joint Strategic Plan involves partnership with both Cheltenham BC and Gloucester City. A governance structure is agreed and is operational for the review of the JSP. An informal governance arrangement is in place for the Community Infrastructure Levy.
7. Any other issues to note <i>(please give details)</i>					
	I was advised in August 2022 by the interim development management manager that the Council had been issuing planning consents for 5 years. The legislation that governs this specifies that planning permissions should be granted for 3 years unless there is a specific reason for a longer time period. I can confirm that this has now been corrected and for the most part planning applications are now being issued for 3 years.		X		It was important to correct this matter urgently since like any other document, a planning permission must be interpreted in context. The context includes the legal framework within which planning permission are granted.

