

This report is public	
Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024 – Update on Actions	
Committee	Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee
Date of Committee	15 January 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services Councillor Chris Brant
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	16 December 2024
Report of	Monitoring Officer & Assistant Director of Law & Governance, Shiraz Sheikh

Purpose of report

To consider an update on actions from the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/2024.

1. Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee resolves to:

- 1.1 Consider and comment on the update on the actions arising from the Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 At its 29 May 2024 meeting, the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (AARC) approved the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year 2023/2024.
- 2.2 The report gives the Committee an update to the actions that was included in the Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	There are no financial implications as a result of this update report. Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer)
Legal	The Council has a legal duty to agree an Annual Governance Statement. This report does not itself raise legal implications but this update on the actions arising from last year's AGS is consistent with the responsibility of this Committee to ensure the effectiveness of the Council's Governance.

	Shiraz Sheikh, Monitoring Officer & Assistant Director of Law & Governance 26 November 2024			
Risk Management	There are no risk implications associated directly with this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 4 December 2024			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		x		Not applicable
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		Not applicable
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		Not applicable
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		Not applicable
ICT & Digital Impact		x		Not applicable
Data Impact		x		Not applicable
Procurement & subsidy		x		Not applicable.
Council Priorities	Not applicable			
Human Resources	Not applicable			
Property	Not applicable			
Consultation & Engagement	Senior officers for each area have been consulted and provided updates on progress as set out in section 4 of this report			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 At its 29 May 2024 meeting, the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (AARC) approved the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year 2023/2024 which can be found at appendix 1 of the report.
- 3.2 Local authorities are required to prepare an AGS to be transparent about their compliance with good governance principles and to give an opinion on the effectiveness of those arrangements. As part of the process, authorities are expected to highlight particular areas of focus for the year following. This report updates the Committee on the actions identified for 2024/25 in the AGS.

4. Details

Annual Governance Statement Actions for 2024/2025

- 4.1 The Annual Governance Statement outlined the following areas and expected outcomes for particular focus in 2024/25:

Action	Timescale for completion	Responsible Officer(s)	Update
Review focus on transformation and identify work programmes with savings.	First three phases due for completion by close of Q3 2024/25.	Corporate Director of Resources and Transformation Assistant Director of Customer Focus	The three phases of the Transformation programme work were completed in November 2024. Initial effectiveness changes are being built into the budget for 2025/26. Further work is being carried out to develop the long-term transformation programme covering the next 3-5 years.
Ensure reports commissioned for transformation projects have taken into account financial implications and have clear actions plans.	Ongoing	Corporate Director of Resources and Transformation Assistant Director of Customer Focus	The worked carried out over the autumn included S151 on the project board and detailed financials were the basis for the scope of this project. Future workstreams and individual projects with have detailed action plans and clear financial implications and will follow the Councils project management protocols.
Establishing Corporate Programme office type arrangements to deliver corporate projects and	2024-25	Corporate Director of Resources and Transformation	New Corporate Project and programme management system in place and being rolled out in November/December 2025.

transformation with project management methodology.		Assistant Director of Customer Focus	
Develop Workforce Strategy to address key staff vacancies in key services with staff development objectives.	Ongoing	Assistant Director of Human Resources	A new People Strategy is in the final stages of development and will encompass actions such as this as part of its 5 year action plan.
Update on the implementation of the Planning Improvement Plan following three different service review reports.	Ongoing	Assistant Director - Planning and Development	<p>Work has been undertaken on improving the Planning Service over the course of the year with the support of the Transformation Team. A Task and Finish Group has been responsible for an action plan and work continues. A significant reduction in the backlog of development management cases has been seen, assisted by the national Planning Skills Delivery Fund.</p> <p>The recommendations from previous service and process reviews were fed into the recent comprehensive budget review which will inform the Council-wide transformation programme.</p>
Devise a work programme arising from the Digital Futures Strategy 2022 – 2025.	2026-27	Head of Digital and Innovation	Work from the Digital Strategy is in progress and is currently being updated to incorporate a program of work that includes digital-related items identified in the recent work with PA Consulting.
Ensure understanding of the Council's governance at all levels including members and officers. This is to include roles and responsibilities and scheme of delegation.	Ongoing	Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of 8 “Away days” with the new administration on key strategic issues, each day had a session on governance – related to the topics covered in the away day eg planning, regeneration, companies • The legal team review the officer scheme of delegation regularly, with

			<p>other departments, to ensure decision making is at the correct level of delegation. The scheme of delegation is updated as and when necessary by taking a report to Full Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On companies owned by the council, a governance review was conducted in 2023 in respect of Graven Hill and its actions are ongoing and monitored each quarter by the Shareholder Committee. A governance review of Crown House is starting by end of 2024/25 • Legal and governance comments are included in every report that goes to members for a decision • The MO is a member of the CLT, and provides governance advice on all matters before CLT • The MO attends all meetings of the Executive and Council, and provides governance and constitutional advice
Ensure Implementation of Procurement Act 2023 effective from October 2024.	February 2025	Procurement Manager / Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Democratic Services and MO	<p>The implementation has been delayed to the end of 2025. In order to prepare we have been involved in the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement & Contracts Teams Site Updates • Monthly Newsletters • Procurement Act FAQs • Engagement with our e-tendering portal provider • Cabinet Office Procurement Act accreditation • Briefing/Webinars to staff & members • Existing toolkits to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Specification/KPI development

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contract management & variation • Update to Forms/Templates • Information for Suppliers • Procurement Strategy Update (2025) • Commercial Playbook v2 (2025)
Addressing issues identified by Internal Audit as requiring improvement in a timely manner.	Ongoing	Assistant Director of Finance / Head of Finance	Monitoring of the implementation of agreed management actions is an ongoing process. The Veritau Internal Audit team has picked up monitoring the delivery of agreed actions identified by the previous provider. Where actions are not completed on time, these are discussed with the service and escalated where appropriate.
Ensure further improvements on Information Governance by setting up as a corporate project.	Ongoing	Information Governance and Localism Manager	A prioritised Information Governance Improvement Plan proposal was presented to CLT on 09 December. Recommendations will include setting up as a corporate project.
Ensure Health and Safety requirements are properly understood for those working in the office and remotely.	Ongoing	Health and Safety Manager	<p>Staff are required to complete mandatory health and safety training to understand risks and requirements in their working environments.</p> <p>All desk-based staff were asked to complete a DSE assessment for their desk in the workplace and home set up by the end of October 2024.</p> <p>In Spring 2024, the H&S Manager, along with the Performance Team Leader completed training for ELT on the completion of risk registers, and all departments have now developed these. Risk registers cover all risks related to service areas, including any specifically relating to H&S.</p>

			H&S complete regular audits across the workforce, and the outcomes of these, along with all H&S accidents, incidents and relevant updates are reported to CLT on a monthly basis.
Implementation of the new waste regime and extended producer responsibility.	Simpler Recycling needs to be implemented by 31 March 26. Plans are being developed but also awaiting further information on EPR, this information is due for release from Defra in Nov 24	Assistant Director of Environmental Services	Simpler Recycling for CDC means that glass will need to be collected at the kerbside by 31.03.24. Plans are being developed to minimise this extra cost. EPR payments should commence in 2025 with the first payments in Autumn 25. Defra is due to release the size of these payments in Nov 24

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to note the update. This is not recommended as it is good practice for the Committee to review progress against actions arising from the Annual Governance Statement.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 In line with Annual Governance Statement process, this report provides an update on actions taken to date during 2024/2025 in respect of recommended actions arising from the 2023/2024 Annual Governance Statement.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Annual Governance Statement 2023-24
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Shiraz Sheikh, Monitoring Officer & Assistant Director of Law & Governance
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Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Report of the Statutory Office, Monitoring Officer