
MANAGERS' ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report outcomes from the completed 2011/12 Managers' Assurance Statements (MAS).

Summary

2. The report emphasises that MAS are a key element of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and based on the 2011/12 returns concludes that generally an overall positive position was identified. The common themes highlighted related to the need to adequately test the Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) for priority services and future Equalities training and awareness. These matters are to be addressed by the implementation of appropriate action plans during the 2012/13 financial year.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that the contents of the report be noted.

Reasons

4. The recommendation is supported to provide the Audit Committee with evidence to reflect on the Council's governance arrangements.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Resources

Background Papers

- 1 Managers' Assurance Statements
- 2 Schools Statements of Internal Control

Brian James: Extension 2140

S17 Crime and Disorder	The MAS includes reference to the need for staff to be aware of and understand the requirements of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption arrangements.
Health and Well Being	There is no specific health and well being impact.
Carbon Impact	There is no specific carbon impact.
Diversity	There is no specific diversity impact.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not affect the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	There is no specific relevance to the strategy beyond a reflection on the Council's governance arrangements.
Efficiency	There is no specific efficiency impact.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. Annual MAS are a key element of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an integral part of the framework that supports the production of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).
6. MAS have been formally completed for a number of years and this Committee has previously received reports on the outcomes that depicted a largely positive position.
7. The MAS takes the form of a standard template covering the key aspects of the Council's internal control environment on which assurance is required. This coverage is wide ranging and includes risk and financial management, health and safety, information governance and HR arrangements etc. In providing this assurance the MAS also states that *'the system of internal controls is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness'*.
8. The outcomes from the MAS are considered by the AGS Management Group for significant issues that merit reference in the AGS.
9. Statements for 2011/12 have been completed by all Assistant Directors and endorsed by the appropriate Director. They are published on the intranet at:
<http://intranet/Resources/Finance/corpgov/ags/managersassurancestatements.htm>
10. The 2011/12 MAS identified the same two common themes as 2010/11. These related to BCPs and Equalities training and awareness. In terms of BCPs, significant progress has been made in that Plans have largely been documented for the priority services and the focus for 2012/13 will be to adequately test the arrangements. As regards Equalities, much of the work carried out during 2011/12 concentrated upon the completion of Equality Impact Assessments for the budget proposals in the 2012/13 to 2015/16 MTFP. Nevertheless the Council has published an Equality Analysis and Equality Objectives within the timescales imposed by the Equality Act 2010. A Single Equality Scheme is to be developed as a new policy framework by the end of September 2012 following which an appropriate programme of staff training and awareness will need to be delivered.
11. Other matters raised concerned more specific operational issues to be addressed in certain areas related to changes in duties and responsibilities.
12. Darlington schools that have not converted to academy status were to complete MAS known as Statements of Internal Control (SIC) as in previous years. The SICs returned to date have identified no significant matters that require attention. However, certain school SICs still await ratification by the Chairs of the Governing Body and Finance Committees during Summer 2012.

Conclusion

13. Generally the review of the 2011/12 MAS has identified an overall positive position. The common themes highlighted related to the need to adequately test the BCPs for priority services and future Equalities training and awareness. These matters are to be addressed by the implementation of appropriate action plans during the 2012/13 financial year.

Outcome of Consultation

14. There was no formal consultation undertaken in production of this report.