
MANAGERS' ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report outcomes from the completed 2010/11 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 2010/11 returns concludes that generally an overall positive position was identified. The common themes highlighted related to service specific Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) and future Equalities training and awareness that are to be addressed by the implementation of appropriate action plans during the 2011/12 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. Following the Council restructure the 2010/11 Statements 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 2010/11 MAS identified two common themes namely service specific BCPs and Equalities training and awareness. In terms of BCPs, as a result of the Council restructure, priority services are to be redefined and service specific plans documented, fully tested and regularly reviewed. As regards Equalities, a programme of staff training and awareness will need to be delivered once the Council's Scheme has been developed to reflect the duties imposed by the Equality Act 2010.
11. Other matters raised concerned more specific operational issues to be addressed in certain areas related to changes in duties and responsibilities.
12. In previous years Darlington schools completed MAS known as Statements of Internal Control (SIC) as one of the requirements of the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS). The coalition government announced the cessation of FMSiS in November 2010 with the intention of replacing it with a much simpler regime to be rolled out to schools during 2011. In the interests of good governance, in the interim, Darlington schools were encouraged to complete a SIC for the 2010/11 financial year.
13. Many school SICs await ratification by the Chairs of the Governing Body and Finance Committee during Summer 2011. Those returned to date identify only individual operational aspects to be addressed at specific schools.

Conclusion

14. Generally the review of the 2010/11 MAS has identified an overall positive position. The common themes highlighted related to service specific BCPs and future Equalities training and awareness that are to be addressed by the implementation of appropriate action plans during the 2011/12 financial year.

Outcome of Consultation

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