
MANAGERS' ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report outcomes from the completed 2012/13 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 2012/13 returns concludes that generally an overall positive position was identified. The common theme highlighted related to the need to adequately test Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) for priority services. This matter is to be addressed by Assistant Directors during the 2013/14 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

Managers' Assurance Statements 2012/13

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 have been completed by all Assistant Directors, endorsed by the appropriate Director, covering their areas of responsibility in 2012/13. They are published on the intranet at:
<http://intranet/Resources/Finance/corpgov/ags/managersassurancestatements.htm>

10. The one common theme to emerge from the 2012/13 MAS was BCPs. This issue had been highlighted the previous year and although advances have been made as only a small number of Plans remain incomplete for identified priority services significant progress is still required in terms of testing the Plans. This matter is to be addressed by Assistant Directors during 2013/14.
11. Other matters raised in the 2012/13 MAS concerned more specific operational issues to be addressed in certain areas related to changes in duties and responsibilities.
12. The other common theme that was identified in the previous year was Equalities. Progress on this issue during 2012/13 was reflected in the MAS in that Cabinet had approved an Equality Scheme and Equality Impact Assessment Tool in September 2012 and associated training and awareness was delivered by the Head of Communities to Senior Management Teams and Heads of Service who had cascaded it down to their teams.

Conclusion

13. Generally the review of the 2012/13 MAS has identified an overall positive position. The common theme highlighted related to the need to adequately test the BCPs for priority services. This matter is to be addressed by Assistant Directors during the 2013/14 financial year.

Outcome of Consultation

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