

**AUDIT COMMITTEE
28 JULY 2021**

ITEM NO.

MANAGERS' ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report outcomes from the completed 2020/21 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 2020/21 returns concludes that a thorough review has been undertaken and generally an overall positive position was identified. While there were no common improvement themes highlighted in the 2020/21 MAS, a number of improvements to process/controls were identified. These matters are to be progressed by Assistant Directors during 2021/22.

Recommendation

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

Reason

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

**Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations**

Background Papers

Managers' Assurance Statements 2020/21

Lee Downey: Extension 5451

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 and Climate Change	There are no specific recommendations contained within the attached reports concerning Carbon Reduction.
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.
Corporate Plan	There is no specific relevance to the Plan beyond a reflection on the Council's governance arrangements.
Efficiency	There is no specific efficiency impact.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	There are no specific recommendations contained within the attached reports concerning Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

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. 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. Statements have been completed by all Assistant Directors or Heads of Service and endorsed by the appropriate Director, covering their areas of responsibility in 2020/21. They are published on the [intranet](#) and are available on request.
9. There were no common improvement themes highlighted by the 2020/21 MAS.
10. A number of improvements to process/controls were identified, including in many cases where the Assistant Director was already able to provide assurance in relation to a particular issue. These included:

Adult Social Care

- (a) Ensure all managers including those new to the service have attended the appropriate training in relation to the Council's risk management methodology.
- (b) Risk Management will be understood and owned by all managers within the service.
- (c) Business Continuity will be understood and owned by all managers within the service.
- (d) Managers fully understanding the performance management framework and being accountable for oversight of this.
- (e) Robust arrangements are in place to ensure compliance with financial procedural rules. Understanding by all staff of their role in this process.
- (f) Ensuring new staff are fully aware of requirements in relation to the Council's Financial Management and Reporting Framework.

Commissioning Performance and Transformation

- (a) Business Continuity Plan (BCP) up to date and tested during COVID, learning has been incorporated and we will review again in September 2021 to incorporate systemwide winter planning.

Community Services

- (a) Need to ensure inventories are complete for all areas by December 2022.

Economic Growth

- (a) New Local Plan will require more robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms. These to be developed alongside Local Plan submission.

Education

- (a) Covid-19 related risk assessment work undertaken with regard to maintained schools/nurseries and home to school transport arrangements (Health & Safety).
- (b) Further development of information management procedures in SEN service being undertaken in future state procedures work.

Housing and Building Services

- (a) Continue to work with the Civil Contingencies Team to review Business Continuity Plans as appropriate. Undertake reviews and testing of all BCPs in 2021-22.
- (b) Procedural notes/manuals that reflect the Health and Safety Policy to be reviewed at every team meeting and compliance meeting. Reviews of Health and Safety risk assessments due in 2021-22.

Resources

- (a) BCP's reviewed during the year. In particular with reference to learning from COVID-19 and reflect the outcomes of the proposed Agile Working Policy being developed.
- (b) All new staff to attend the new mandatory equalities training subject to sessions being made available.

Transport & Capital Projects

- (a) Develop BCP and test regularly for identified priority service areas.
- (b) Review at Group level to refresh Performance Management and Clinic information to align with new structures and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) targets – Ongoing review and refinement.

- (c) Inventories are being updated and amended to reflect move to Agile working as a result of Covid-19.
- (d) Training/Awareness/refresher session to be programmed in Divisional Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in relation to role of the Section 151 Officer.

These matters are to be progressed by Assistant Directors during 2021/22.

Conclusion

11. Generally the review of the 2020/21 MAS has identified an overall positive position. All of the identified improvement themes are to be progressed by Assistant Directors during the 2021/22 financial year.

Outcome of Consultation

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