

**AUDIT COMMITTEE
19 JULY 2023**

ITEM NO.

MANAGERS' ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report outcomes from the completed 2022/23 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 2022/23 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 2022/23 MAS, a number of improvements to process/controls and proposed actions were identified. These matters are to be progressed by Assistant Directors during 2023/24.

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 2022/23

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.
Council Plan	Maintaining a system of sound internal controls and risk management processes will help contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan Objectives
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 2022/23. They are published on the [intranet](#) and are available on request.
9. A number of improvements to process/controls and proposed actions were identified. Examples include:

Adult Social Care

- Ensure all managers including those new to the service have attended the appropriate training in relation to the Council's risk management methodology.
- Practice Clinics are ongoing- changing to reflect the care reforms and CQC assurance framework requirements.
- CQC assurance framework to introduced in April 2023.
- WFD developing a WFD strategy for ASC. Training needs analysis is being reviewed to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and as well as new learning to support practice e.g. self-neglect/hoarding.
- Completion of Academy 10 by all staff (Information Management).
- SLT to ensure all staff undertaken the equalities training

Commissioning Performance and Transformation

- BCP up to date and we will review again in September 2023 to incorporate systemwide winter planning.

Community Services

- Risks associated with Community Services will be identified as part of the service planning process and managed throughout the year.
- BCPs to be reviewed to take into account cyber attack and mayor power outage.

- Any outstanding inventories to be completed by December 2023.

Education and Inclusion

- New Education Management System (Liquid Logic) implementation in September 2023.

Housing and Revenues

- Undertake reviews and testing of BCPs in 2023-24.
- Reviews of Health and Safety risk assessments due in 2023-24.

Human Resources and Health and Safety

- Risk Management, to be added to monthly HR & H&S SLT meetings.
- Annual review and testing of all business continuity plans completed in October 2022, to be tested and reviewed by October 2023.
- Inventories to be updated following the ending of the Agile Pilot.
- Corruption and Fraud information sent to team requesting that information is read and understood.
- A review of Recruitment and selection policy undertaken as part of the Recruitment and retention project. A number of changes agreed through that have update procedures.
- Ensure all new staff undertake training (Equalities).

Law and Governance

- Risk Management is now a standard item on Law and Governance Team Meeting.
- Periodic testing of Business Continuity Plans for priority services.

Public Health

- The PH team BCP will be reviewed by mid-September 2023. Updated Provider BCPs will be reviewed as part of the routine quarterly performance management process and completed in March 2024.
- New Risk Register required for new Co Durham and Darlington Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership.

Resources

- BCP's reviewed and updated in the year. Continue periodic testing of aspects of the BCPs to continue.
- Inventories to be updated following the ending of the Agile Working pilot.
- Corruption and Fraud information to be sent to all team members requesting that it is read and understood.
- All staff undertaken equalities training.

Strategy Performance and Communications

- Complete testing of 2 remaining Business Continuity Plans.
- Need to review inventories given shift to home working and clarify who is responsible for different inventories.

- All staff up to date with AC10 training, but some modules starting to expire so refresh training needed.

Transport and Capital Projects

- Develop BCP and test regularly for identified priority service areas - Review and Test 2023.
- Inventories are being updated and amended to reflect move to Agile working - 2023/24.

10. Updates to and testing of Business Continuity Plans, updates to inventories following the introduction of agile working, risk management and the completion of mandatory training were all common improvement themes highlighted by the 2022/23 MAS.

Conclusion

11. Generally the review of the 2022/23 MAS has identified an overall positive position. Those improvements to process/controls and proposed actions which require further work are to be progressed by Assistant Directors during 2023/24.

Outcome of Consultation

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