

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

MANAGER ASSURANCE STATEMENTS 2009/10

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OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the level of reliance that can be placed on the self certified Manager Assurance Statements in support of the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

To independently review the evidence supporting a sample of 2009/10 Manager Assurance Statements (statements) as certified by Corporate Directors and Heads of Service following their annual review of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements within their service areas.

The statements contain a number of questions that assess compliance with system requirements within each governance area. Each question is assessed as met, partially met or not met. All questions relating to a governance process must be assessed as met to achieve an overall met assessment for that area.

The completed statements were risk assessed to identify a sample of five to spot check for reasonableness. The sample selected included at least one service from each directorate. Then the adequacy and robustness of evidence available to support the assurances given was assessed.

These governance processes have not been subject to detailed audit so this work does not provide assurance that they are operating satisfactorily as designed.

The aim is to review all service area's Manager Assurance Statements over a three-year period.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the limited work undertaken, the overall assessment by service managers that generally governance processes have been operating throughout 2009/10, is reasonable.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

A summary of compliance with the fifteen key corporate governance processes covered in the assurance statements is contained in Appendix 1.

All five statements reviewed were amended downwards in specific governance processes as illustrated in Appendix 1. These adjustments, however, only relate to one question within a governance area and do not alter the overall assessment.

From the services selected, improvement opportunities were identified in relation to:

- Business Strategy & Planning, as not all of them had completed and finalised service plans for 2009/10. However 2009/10 service objectives were achieved and 2010/11 service plans have been finalised for all areas; and

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- Business Continuity, where business continuity plans had been prepared in some areas but they lacked detail, i.e. not specifying clear actions for the team, just stating the need for alternative action.

Analysis of the overall responses highlighted the need to provide support to improve the application of governance processes across the Council in the following areas:

- Policy Framework: This needs to be updated. Policies and strategies should also have review dates, version controls and comply with the Council's Strategy and Policy design guide.
- Risk Management: Service level risk registers should be prepared in support of all service plans and then be reviewed regularly with timely implementation of actions. Risk management and health & safety should be included as a standing item on management / team meeting agendas.
- Performance Management: There needs to be closer monitoring of recommendations contained within internal / external audit and inspection reports to ensure implementation by agreed due dates.
- Data Quality: All performance information should be collated on and reported through Covalent (performance and risk management software). Data quality controls should be mapped through each stage of the performance indicator process.
- Value for Money: Overall, the statements show that value for money is being considered and implemented through activities such as benchmarking. From this, services need to identify value of money profiles, incorporating this in departmental service plans.

These areas should be included in the action plan of the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2009/10.

Generally, Heads of Service have proposed appropriate actions where governance requirements were considered "partly met" or "not met". For others, suitable plans are being agreed. They will be uploaded onto Covalent for monitoring purposes.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNCIL'S AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

All audit work contributes to the Corporate Aim of being "An Excellent Council" and the Cross Cutting Theme of "Becoming a Higher Performing Organisation".

THE WAY FORWARD

Departmental Management Teams should monitor whether actions identified to further improve governance processes have been implemented by the agreed date.

This process will be audited during the year and progress in implementing action plans evaluated. This will be reported to Corporate Management Team and the Audit Committee.

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