

### Significant Governance Issues: Action Plan

Source	Governance Issue	Lead Officer	Actions Planned/ In Progress	Timescale	Internal Audit Planned Work
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13	The Council must conclude the work of the Improvement Board and ensure completion/ implementation of the associated actions.	Head of Policy & Performance/ Director of Public Health	A further report was submitted to Improvement Board (22/07/2013) and Cabinet (19/09/2013) that sets out three key outcomes that will evidence the Council's improvement and inform further debate at Board meetings.	Improvement Plan hoped to be completed by November 2013	Improvement Plan Delivery
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13  Peer Challenge	<p>There has been no evidence of an up to date partnership register within the Council. This is important given the emphasis on partnership working within the developing commissioning processes and across the Council. As a minimum, partners that the Council works with on specific initiatives, as opposed to commercial partners, should be identified in a central reference source.</p> <p>Peer Challenge states: 'The Public Service Board is another new development since the peer challenge. It looks like it will work well. You are building some clear linkages to the Constituency Committees, but we encourage you to think through how it relates to your ambitions for the Health and Well Being Board and how the various other strategic partnerships such as Community Safety and Children and Young Persons all fit together.'</p>	Head of Legal/ Member Services	Presentation provided to Local Public Service Board (LPSB) (09/07/2013) – essentially setting out the scope for a review of partnerships. This was agreed, with Fiona Johnstone, Head of Policy & Performance/ Director of Public Health, leading the review and the policy team undertaking the desktop analysis. An update will be provided to LPSB (29/10/2013). A meeting of Surjit Tour, Head of Legal/ Member Services, and Fiona Johnstone has taken place to discuss linkages (19/08/2013).	October 2013	Annual Governance Statement Review
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13	It is essential for the Council to implement processes and procedures to ensure proper governance and management of its information assets.	Strategic Director-Regeneration & Environment	An Information Governance Board has been established (which first met on 16 July 2013) and is being chaired by Kevin Adderley, Strategic Director-Regeneration & Environment. The Council's progress will be evaluated by the review scheduled for 15 August 2013. Surjit Tour is preparing guidance for Managers and Heads of Service on information handling. Information Asset	October 2013	Information Assurance

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			Owners are being identified and established across the Council. The Director of Resources had been confirmed as the Senior Information Risk Owner.		
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13	In December 2012, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) announced that Wirral was included in a list of four public authorities that were to be monitored for three months in the new year over concerns about the timeliness of their responses to Freedom of Information requests. Focus must be maintained in monitoring response times and take corrective action as necessary.	Strategic Director- Transformation & Resources	The ICO set a target of 85% of requests to be completed within 20 days during the period of June-September 2013. Significant progress has been made and this target has been exceeded in June and predicted to be so in July. The Council's infrastructure needs to be improved so that this improvement is sustainable in the long term.	October 2013	Freedom of Information
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13	Improved liaison and responsibilities must be clearly established between Legal and Member Services and the Corporate Procurement Unit regarding the completion of contracts and the required signing. There are clear financial and reputational risks in the event of a problem with the service delivery if the Council has not formalised contracts. It is noted that this issue is covered in the draft new Contract Procedure Rules with reference to disciplinary action if these rules are breached and the exceptions process in operation here.	Assistant Chief Executive/ Head of Universal & Infrastructure Services	The revised Contract Procedure Rules will be considered for approval by Audit & Risk Management Committee on 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2013 and include a rule that contracts must be signed before they are mobilised. This will require the Procurement Board to be utilised to remind officers of this.	Final rules submitted for approval Audit and Risk Management Committee September 2013 - to be implemented as soon as possible thereafter	Procurement
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13	The Corporate Procurement Board has not met since November 2012. This has been acknowledged as a significant issue by senior management and the aim is to re-establish this board with the first meeting taking place in May 2013 with new terms of reference in place. Once the Board reconvenes, its effectiveness should be reviewed. Without an effective body to steer and	Strategic Director- Transformation & Resources	New Terms of Reference for the Corporate Procurement Board were established in April 2013. The Board then met in May 2013. The next meeting of the Procurement Board in September will focus on corporate ownership of procurement to overcome any directorate silos, developing a cultural evolution to	Completed  November 2013	Procurement

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	co-ordinate procurement across the Council, there is a risk that procurement efficiency will suffer and corporate targets in this area may not be met.		procurement and ensuring we provide the right level of scrutiny to our funding/contractual arrangements. The intention is to merge this with our emerging commissioning arrangements to eventually have a single commissioning/procurement board.		
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13	Absence monitoring statistics have revealed a calculated year end figure of 10.28 days against a target of 9.5 days. This remains a high position in comparison with other Councils and additional short term resources have been added within Human Resources to review all long-term cases and to work with managers to ensure there is an action plan in place and that cases are managed appropriately in accordance with policy.	Head of Human Resources & OD	It was highlighted within the Internal Audit Report (on Absence Management) dated February 2013 that this issue had been reported to Employments and Appointments Committee on 15 November 2012. Within this report it was highlighted that a "number of initiatives have been taken forward to drive performance improvement across the authority". The absence figures for 2013/14 are now showing a significant improvement. The following actions have been put in place: All Heads of Service are required to sign off absence returns on a weekly basis, providing improved governance. Follow up of mandatory training by December 2013. Re-allocation of resources has ensured a dedicated HR Absence team to support managers through case conferences with Occupational Health. Improved absence reporting Introduction of Self serve New Occupational Health provider in place with improved support.	All actions in place, with self serve live by December 2013. Improvement in monthly absence figures. Improved OH service in place through new contract	HR Policies and Procedures
Significant	It must be ensured there is adequate control of	Head of Human	A full set of people management	September	Annual

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<p>Governance Issue AGS 2012/13</p> <p>Peer challenge</p>	<p>workforce costs (including short-term contracts; agency costs; and control of establishments). The use of consultants should be subject to the same controls.</p> <p>Peer Challenge states: 'We think now is the time to strengthen the corporate support functions. You have rightly sought interim capacity and expertise to help tackle the most pressing and acute challenges and implement the immediate changes required. This approach has served you well. We highlighted in our last report that you need to strengthen your HR capacity and we still think this is the case. We suggest you now need to do some 'long term strengthening' rather than 'short term patching', shifting the emphasis from repairing the current organisation with interim expertise to building the future one with permanent capacity. In doing this you will need to consider the style of some of the support functions the council of the future requires. Undoubtedly this will be less about 'regulating and ensuring' compliance and more about 'enabling and facilitating' new ways of working.'</p>	<p>Resources &amp; OD</p>	<p>information costs is now being sent on a monthly basis to Heads of Service to enable them to understand better their costs. Alongside this the Finance Department is providing enhanced support for Heads of Service to better understand their budget.</p> <p>The Council expects to have made anticipated savings of £9.5m in employee pay costs since 2012.</p> <p>In September the HR Self serve will go live with on-time people management reporting. This will be tested firstly in Transformation and Resources with a view to full roll-out by the end of the calendar year.</p> <p>As the Council considers shared services, particularly in the transactional areas, that will give more capacity to consider strategic HR management.</p>	<p>2013</p>	<p>Governance Statement Review</p>
<p>Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13</p>	<p>Asset Management was in a position of constant change of policy and priorities during the 2012/2013 year. It is important in order to obtain maximum benefit from its property assets that the Council focuses on a clear policy and strategy, fees and charges are regularly reviewed, updated and income monitored, and a clear separation of duties and evidence trail exists regarding valuations. This is currently the focus of a transformational project for 2013/14.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive/ Head of Universal &amp; Infrastructure Services</p>	<p>An Internal Audit Report was issued to the then Head of Asset Management, Ian Brand, on 31 January 2013. All actions were agreed. Responsibility for this area has now moved following changes to the senior management structure. The re-structure is now complete and within the context of an overall reduction in staff, steps have been taken to allocate a post specifically to Asset Strategy and Policy to address issues raised in the audit and work is in progress on key areas identified in the report re office</p>	<p>First report to Cabinet in October 2013 to be followed by further reports as matters are reviewed/ addressed.</p>	<p>Asset Management</p>

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			accommodation disposals and joint area reviews of property. The re-structure is also intended to support as much separation as possible in a small team between strategic and operational matters. Issues raised in respect of the Asset Register and Volunteers are being addressed.		
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13 and Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report 2012/13	The Council's position regarding £31m accumulated bad debts over the years, as well as the financial situation regarding income/debt recovery within the Department of Adult Social Services, has been identified and was subject to an independent investigation which has been reported to Cabinet. A plan and initial actions are in place to prevent future occurrence.	Director of Resources	External collection and recovery arrangements piloted July 2013, New assessment team in place August 2013, detailed project plan agreed by Cabinet May 2013.	End of September 2013	Debt Management DASS
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13 and Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report 2012/13  Peer challenge	Corporate and Departmental plans have lacked clear linkages and consistency, the aim being that the integration with Public Health will assist in improvements in timetabling, approvals, content and reporting. Steps must be taken to implement a robust performance management framework across the Council that is adhered to in practice.  Peer Challenge states: '[Strengthening corporate support], along with a fresh approach to performance management, will we think support a new organisational culture we know you are keen to develop and embed. You appreciate that good performance management is a basic strength of a well-functioning organisation, and have started to develop a new approach that shifts the emphasis from 'performance measurement' to 'performance culture'. We encourage you to continue with this work at pace so that a new approach can be implemented.'	Head of Policy & Performance/ Director of Public Health	A project plan has been put in place to address issues identified as part of the performance management framework which is anticipated to encompass Corporate and Directorate Plans. It is envisaged this will be in place for the start of the business planning process for 2014/15 which will likely begin in October/November 2013.	By start of 2014/15	Corporate Plan Directorate Planning

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Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13 and Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report 2012/13	There must be continued emphasis on the importance of corporate and departmental risk management throughout the Council. Risk management must be seen as an integral part of policy and performance processes. Steps must be taken to implement a robust risk management framework across the Council and which is adhered to in practice.	Strategic Director- Transformation & Resources	The latest Internal Audit Report was issued 4 July 2013. All actions have been agreed by Joe Blott, Strategic Director- Transformation & Resources, and Mike Lane, Risk & Insurance Officer, with a view to implementation by start of 14/15 (n.b. some recommendations can be and have been agreed to be implemented immediately or during 13/14). Revised corporate risk management policy and strategy documents are being developed and drafts are to be put to CESG for consideration by the end of September 2013.	By start of 2014/15	Risk Management
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13 and Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report 2012/13	It has been identified that the Council's policies on whistleblowing and grievances require improved communication across the organisation with clear responsibilities and consistent operation. It is important that employees are clearly made aware of how to raise a whistleblowing issue, and this should be publicised on a regular basis.	Head of Legal/ Member Services	Internal Audit Reports were issued regarding Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) and Grievances in June 2012. Report on Confidential Reporting issued July 2013. Recommendations relating to review of the policy, training and staff reminders have been agreed to, with the latest target implementation date being end of October 2013.	End of October 2013	Whistleblowing (Follow up)
Significant Governance Issue AGS 2012/13 and Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report 2012/13	Mandatory training across the Council has proved difficult to monitor and control. It is important that any training requirements deemed to be mandatory, such as Equalities and Diversity, should be communicated to and undertaken by all employees, including officers who do not have computer access.	Head of Human Resources & OD	The Council, through its management re-structure, has in place a clear and consistent management hierarchy identified on the HR system. This allows improved targeting and follow-up of training. The Chief Executive's Strategy Group has identified mandatory management training, the uptake of which will be reported regularly. Delivery is from Sept	Programme launched September 2013	Annual Governance Statement Review

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			<p>2013 to August 2014. (This programme includes the Equality and Diversity modules).</p> <p>A risk register for all statutory and mandatory training will be completed by 30 September 2013.</p> <p>The OD function has completed the last stage of bringing together staff and is now working with one training system which has improved the organisational ability to monitor across all Directorates, therefore improving accountability.</p> <p>The re-launch and increased uptake of Performance Appraisal also increases the level of accountability for ensuring that mandatory training is completed and that the responsibility lies with line managers to ensure this is the case. Deadline for 2013 returns is 30 September 2013.</p>		
Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report 2012/13	A number of external reviews conducted have identified some significant weaknesses in the governance arrangements currently in operation across the Council and have clearly indicated the need for significant change and improvement in many areas of the Council's activities.	Strategic Director-Transformation & Resources	The progress report summarises the actions taken to address the weaknesses identified in external reviews. A refreshed Code of Corporate Governance is being compiled, reflecting how governance structures are in place to guard against recurrence of significant weaknesses.	October 2013	External Assurances