

SUBJECT: CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN 2020/21 UPDATE

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO
THE AUTHORITY) AND THE FINANCE DIRECTOR**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Members with a 2020/21 progress update against the actions detailed in the corporate governance action plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 2.2 The Authority has a statutory duty to conduct a review of its governance activities as stipulated under regulation 6(1)(a) of the *Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015* which states that an Authority must at least once a year conduct a review of the effectiveness of their systems of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement (AGS). The AGS is an accountability statement to stakeholders which demonstrates how well the Authority has delivered on its governance arrangements over the course of the previous year.
- 2.3 The Authority's annual governance review methodology comprises of a number of elements which monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. This includes assessing internal controls, evaluating key performance indicators, conducting functional self-assessments, completion of Area Manager / Director control assurance statements, attaining independent assessments via internal and external auditors and collating the views of elected members and customers (Appendix A).
- 2.4 Following the annual governance review, where areas of improvement are identified within the remit of corporate governance then they are added to the corporate governance action plan.

3. 2020/21 ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

- 3.1 The annual governance review for 2019/20 saw five new actions identified which

were incorporated into the corporate governance action plan. This brought the total actions for completion to 11, with six of those actions being advanced from previous years.

- 3.2 The COVID 19 pandemic impacted on the schedule and alignment / sequence of committee meetings. As such the annual governance review which should have initially been presented to Governance Committee, was presented to the Fire Authority on 13 July 2020, [Min 4/July 2020] followed by the Governance Committee on 28 August 2020 [Min 42/August 2020]. It was agreed that a 2020/21 progress update against the Action Plan would be presented to the Governance Committee at a future meeting.
- 3.3 Full details of the progress made during 2020/21 against each of the 11 actions can be located in Appendix B.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The risks associated with delivering the annual governance review against prescribed timescales are monitored as part of the Business Support and Improvement department and included in their risk profile which is updated quarterly. Any risks deemed appropriate would be escalated as part of the Corporate Risk Management Group for consideration and mitigation by the Executive Leadership Team.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report has no direct financial implications.

6. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Committee are recommended to:
- a) Note the contents of this report.
 - b) Receive further updates as required.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned background papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- *The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)* Available at: legislation.gov.uk