

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE: 7 MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN 2021/22 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 progress update against the 2020/21 corporate governance action plan, which formed part of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2020/21. The AGS was presented to Members on 28 June 2021, and approved by the Fire Authority on 12 July 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Authority has a statutory duty under regulation 6(1) (a) of the *Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015* to at least once a year conduct a review of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and prepare an 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.
- 2.2 The Authority's annual governance review methodology comprises of a number of elements to evaluate the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. This includes assessing internal controls, evaluating performance, conducting functional self-assessments, Area Manager / Director and Principal Officer assurance statements, independent assessments via internal and external audit and collating the views of elected members and service users.
- 2.3 During the 2020/21 annual governance review, eight improvement actions were identified for progression and were incorporated into the corporate governance action plan. The total number of improvement actions for completion during 2021/22 was fifteen, with seven actions being advanced from previous years.

3. ACTION PLAN PROGRESS 2021/22

- 3.1 Appendix A outlines the corporate governance actions and an update is provided as of February 2022, against each, showing the status as one of the following:
- Complete: fully completed and no more action required
 - Part complete: part of the action is complete but not fulfilled the whole action
 - Not yet complete: action or outcome not met to date.
- 3.2 Ten of the 15 actions were completed during 2021/22 and the remaining five actions will be rolled into 2022/23 for completion.

- 3.3 For assurance purposes, the Business Improvement Department have conducted reality testing to confirm that the actions completed during 2021/22 have been achieved.
- 3.4 A further status update on their progress of the remaining actions will be provided to the Committee as part of the 2021/22 annual governance review.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The risks associated with delivering the annual governance review against prescribed timescales are monitored as part of the Business Improvement Department and are included in their risk profile, which is updated quarterly. Any risks deemed appropriate would be escalated 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:

- Annual Governance Review 2020/21 report - 12 July 2021
- Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

Appendix A – Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2021/22 status update

Ref	Area for improvement	Lead Officer	Outcome
1 2021/22	Review membership of the Corporate Governance Board	AM Strategy & Performance	Complete - Review undertaken and membership extended to all Area Managers. Terms of reference updated to include these changes and to differentiate between those senior officers responsible for governance and specialist advisors. Approved by the Corporate Governance Board on 14 October 2021.
2 2021/22	Review the transparency section of the TWFRS website	AM Strategy & Performance / Finance Director	Complete - Webpage cross-referenced with the Transparency Code 2015 and a sample of fire and rescue service webpages. The Finance Director and AM Strategy and Performance approved the web page changes, which were made November 2021.
3 2021/22	Review the department heads self-assessment statements to ensure they remain appropriate and up to date in preparation for the 2021/22 annual governance review	AM Strategy & Performance	Complete - Review undertaken and amendments made including the incorporation of an additional sign off step for the Principal Officers. The self-assessments were disseminated in January 2022 and three training sessions were provided to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) between 1-4 February 2022.
4 2021/22	Review and refresh the Members' questionnaire content in preparation for the 2021/22 annual governance review.	AM Strategy & Performance	Complete - Review undertaken and questionnaire refreshed including using the use of Microsoft Forms to make the questionnaire simpler for Members to complete. The 2021/22 questionnaire was disseminated on 13 December 2021.
5 2021/22	Review the format and complexity of Authority and Committee reports to ensure they meet accessibility standards.	AM Strategy & Performance	Complete - Review completed in conjunction with Democratic Services at Sunderland City Council (the Authority's secretariat) confirmed adherence to the accessibility standards guidance on the gov.uk website.
6 2021/22	Review member induction training and development.	AM Strategy & Performance	Complete - Member training held in June 2021. Members were provided with key strategic documentation, an organisational chart and officer contact details. A further three development sessions were held covering Integrated Risk Management Planning, HMICFRS, governance and budget arrangements.
7 2021/22	Arrange for the provision of anti-fraud and bribery training for TWFRS Members, managers and staff	HR Director	Not yet complete - An anti-bribery and corruption e-learning training package has been identified for staff. Awaiting cost and license information from the provider. The Monitoring Officer confirmed Members receive training from their 'home' councils. Expected completion date May 2022.
8 2021/22	Further guidance and training required for staff on Privacy Impact Assessment to improve staff understanding of and compliance with PIA requirements.	HR Director	Not complete - Work is ongoing to revise and further develop guidance on the data protection impact assessment (DPIA). Training is to be provided to SLT during February and March 2022. Expected completion date May 2022.

Pre 2021/22 legacy actions			
43 2018/19	Review and streamline policies and procedures, to include PIA & EIA and support training, to align to new strategic planning framework	AM Strategy & Performance	Part complete - An improved process for developing, monitoring, and managing Service policy and procedures was consulted on and implemented during 2021. New templates and guidance documents have been developed. This new process includes EIAs and SLT are working to update all outstanding policies and procedures. Expected completion date January 2023.
50 2018/19	Project management principles and processes are applied i.e. PSUs and evaluations completed in all projects.	AM Strategy & Performance	Complete - A project management framework has been established for oversight of all Service projects. The Programme Management Office and Board, which is chaired by the DCFO, support this. Project management training has been undertaken and is being rolled out to additional staff. Further improvements to take place to embed processes across the Service.
60 2019/20	Information Asset Register (IAR) and recording system to be reviewed, supported by new technology and further training	HR Director	Part complete - The IAR is integrated into the MS Teams channel procedure and work is ongoing in relation to the Services retention schedule. Training with the SLT to discuss information governance, IAR and the retention schedules are arranged. An e-learning package is in development. Expected completion date June 2022.
66 2020/21	Establish corporate oversight of TWFRS Partnership Register - review register and process, embed evaluation / benefits realisation of collaboration.	AM Strategy & Performance	Complete - The partnership register has been updated. New templates and guidance on the management of partnerships have been developed to ensure appropriate monitoring, benefits realisation, stakeholder analysis and management is undertaken. Head of Communications and Corporate Affairs now has responsibility for overseeing the register.
67 2020/21	Roll out training on CG for SLT – including: a) CG principles, CG cycle b) info asset management, c) Impact Assessments (PIA / EIA).	AM Strategy & Performance / HR Director	<p>a) Complete - All of the SLT have completed corporate governance (CG) training and there are mechanisms in place to undertake this with new / promoted staff. For all staff, bi-annual CG bulletins are published and the Service now has a CG intranet page.</p> <p>b) Part complete - Work has been undertaken with respect to data sharing agreements and the partnership register and there is a process in place for the Information Governance Advisor to review partnerships prior to them being added to the register. Training sessions are scheduled with the SLT. Expected completion date is March 2022</p> <p>c) Complete - A new process for the Services' equality impact assessments and associated documents have been developed, published and are now in use.</p>

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68 2020/21	Review Strategic / Corporate Plan – (ensure Strategic Planning Framework (including vision, mission and corporate goals), aligns to organisational strategies, policies, procedures and department annual plans, and PDRs are linked.	AM Strategy & Performance	<u>Complete</u> - A review of the Service's approach to strategic planning was undertaken, resulting in the production of a new strategic planning process and timeline, the publication of the TWFRS Strategy 2020-25 and the IRMP 2021-24. Workshops to provide training and support to the SLT have taken place to develop their annual department / function business plans and ensure alignment to the Services' strategic goals and priorities.
69 2020/21	Assess / evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on our corporate governance arrangements (e.g. information security, policies, agile working, and communications).	AM Strategy & Performance	<u>Complete</u> - A review of the effectiveness of the Authority's governance arrangements took place during 2021, which included a review of the impact of covid-19 on these arrangements. No governance issues were identified and the Service has adapted its working arrangements to reflect the new ways working by harnessing a fuller use of technology.

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