

**Audit and Governance Committee**  
**Friday, 21 July 2023, 10.30 am, Lakeview Room, County Hall,**  
**Worcester**

**Agenda**

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## **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

### **21 JULY 2023**

### **DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2023/2024**

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#### **Recommendation**

- 1. The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance recommends that the draft governance action plan for 2023/24 be noted.**

#### **Background**

2. At the meeting on 26 May 2023 the committee considered the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2022/2023. The AGS forms part of the Annual Statement of Accounts.
3. As discussed at the committee in May the AGS is primarily retrospective. It reports on the assurance framework and measures in place for the financial year 2022/23 and considers any significant issues of governance up to the date of publication of the Statement of Accounts. The AGS outlines the actions taken or proposed to address governance issues identified.
4. The AGS is completed by the Corporate Risk Management Group based on information provided by senior officers. The evidence comes from a variety of sources, including service plans, relevant lead officers within the organisation, internal and external auditors and inspection agencies.
5. This report appends the draft action plan for 2023/204 which will be updated quarterly.

#### **Content**

6. The Committee is asked to consider the draft governance action plan. The plan focusses on the action which will take place to ensure there is robust governance across the Council.
  - Review of the constitution focussing on a review of the contract standing orders, financial regulations, the officer scheme of delegation, departments registers of authority, officer/ member protocol
  - Governance training for managers across the Council
  - Training for members on the new code of conduct for members approved at the Council meeting on 18 May 2023
  - Robust monitoring of council's finances
  - Risk management and monitoring of performance
  - Decision making across the Council

7. The final action plan will be presented to the Committee at its meeting in September.

### **Contact Points**

#### Specific Contact Points for this report

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### **Supporting Information**

- Appendix: Draft action plan 2023/2024

### **Background Papers**

[Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Friday, 26th May, 2023, 2.00 pm - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report)

Task	How	Who/When
<p>Financial management and resilience: ensuring that financial monitoring is supported by a robust and realistic budget and effective and timely in year monitoring of performance against budget and delivery of agreed savings plans</p>	<p>The Finance Improvement Programme has a series of projects to undertake work on financial reporting, controls and E5 maximisation.</p> <p>The FIP project will be reviewed and refreshed following the appointment of a new S151 officer, with a renewed focus on Financial Management and resilience. Further detail will be provided following this review.</p> <p>The Financial Regulations of the Council were reviewed in early 2022. There will be a full review in 2023 with a draft set of updated Financial Regulations presented to Audit and Governance Committee. This will be form part of the review of the constitution referred to throughout this action plan.</p> <p>The primary monthly finance report is the Budget Monitoring Report which is presented to the Senior Leadership Tea, (SLT) and the Chief Officer Group (COG). The format of this report has been amended to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full detail of forecast and achieved delivery of agreed savings plans (previously provided in summary only).</li> <li>• Details of WCF budget monitoring position (not previously included in WCC monitoring), as WCF is wholly owned and ultimately impacts on the financial resilience of the Council.</li> <li>• Quarterly high-level refresh of the Medium-term Financial Plan (MTFP) to take account of improve financial planning.</li> <li>• An update on the capital programme for the current financial year.</li> </ul>	<p>Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and Finance Leadership Team</p> <p>September 2023</p> <p>CFO/Monitoring officer March 2024</p> <p>September 2023</p>

Task	How	Who/When
<p>Strengthen the process around capital decision making, including business cases.</p>	<p>SLT receive regular updates on the financial forecasting for the Capital programme and receive quarterly reports on the delivery and as part of its performance management responsibility.</p> <p>The Capital Board has now been established in late 2022/23 and is up and running. This Board meets monthly and considers requests (through business cases) for alterations or additions to the capital programme. Whilst final decisions on amendments to the programme must be made by Cabinet, the Capital Board provides a strong gateway at SLT level that assesses the strategic benefits, financial implications, and timescales of any proposals. This ensures there is one only source of recommendations through to Cabinet.</p> <p>The Capital Board also receives updates on progress of the financing of the capital programme, and updates on decisions made within existing approved schemes, which improves capital monitoring within the organisation and helps to identify slippage that might impact on our current and future borrowing costs.</p>	<p>CFO</p> <p>Rolling to March 2024</p>

Task	How	Who/When
<p>An assurance gap analysis of decision making, including boards and roles of directors to help drive a constitutional refresh to support and strengthen effective business decision making. This will include for example schemes of delegation and contract procedure rules</p>	<p><b>What has happened</b></p> <p>The Chief Officers Group commissioned a review of the governance boards that had been established across the Authority. The scope of the review was to ascertain purpose, remit, and interdependencies of each board/forum, and to identify opportunities for rationalisation, aggregation or cessation of boards, as well as to highlight any gaps in either the provision of governance, or the oversight and scrutiny of it. The review was recently concluded, with the findings and recommendation presenting back to the group. The review outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The creation of new boards to address gaps in governance</li> <li>- The reclassification of some boards to operational meetings</li> <li>- The cessation of boards no longer required</li> <li>- The aggregation and rationalisation of boards from multiple to single forums</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the report made recommendations on when and how the individual boards should report back to the chief officers group on progress, key activities and matters of importance, as well as establishing the group as the point of escalation for the Boards. It was agreed that the chief officers group will provide oversight, but will have no direct decision making authority over the boards. Issues that remain unresolved by the group will be escalated to the SLT by the chair. The Chief Officers Group forward plan has been updated to reflect the reporting requirements of each of the governance boards, and the executive support function will ensure the Boards provide papers for review in accordance with the approved schedules.</p> <p><b>Next steps</b></p> <p>The constitution review will include</p> <p>Review of Contract Standing Orders  Review of Financial Regulations  Review of procurement code (not part of the constitution)</p>	<p>Rolling to March 2024 COG</p> <p>Rolling to March 2024 COG</p> <p>Lead Officer- Monitoring Officer</p>

	<p>Review of the scheme of assignment of responsibility for functions – officer scheme of delegation (Review of each directorates register of authority)</p> <p>An Officer working group forming members of COG and the democratic services group will review the appendices of the constitution referred to above.</p> <p>Governance training will be provided to managers across the Council focussing on the Nolan principles, types of decision, how decisions are made, access to information and scrutiny process.</p> <p>A report outlining changes to the constitution will be presented to the Audit and Governance committee later this year. Subject to the Committee agreeing to the proposed changes a report will be presented to a Council meeting next year.</p> <p>The executive support officer to the chief officers group will engage with the chairs of each board to advise on the reporting requirements and frequency. This will be kept under review during the course of the year, and will be examined further as part of the annual COG review process.</p>	
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Task	How	Who/When
<p>Strengthen the Council's performance framework, including service plans linked to performance and medium-term financial plans.</p>	<p>Risk Management has recently been transferred to the Business Intelligence team. The team has commenced a review and redevelopment of the Authority's risk management framework. As part of the process, each service areas has provided updated risks against a framework of 7 risk categories, and each risk has been designated against a hierarchy for management, ranging from service level risk, through to directorate and corporate level risk, depending on the level at which it is to be managed. With the introduction of a hierarchy of risks, the number and types of risks reviewed at each management level is proportionate and appropriate. There is also an escalation and review mechanisms as part of the framework, ensuring that deteriorating risks can be "called in" for review where necessary.</p> <p>The CRMG (corporate risk management group) is to be amalgamated in to the Chief Officers Group, with monthly reviews.</p> <p>A new performance management framework is also under development, with key service KPIs having been established across each Assistant Directors portfolio, with targets and measures agreed. Work is ongoing to determine how best to keep this populated, and at what frequency. As with risk, a hierarchy of KPIs has been agreed, allowing review of the key metrics relevant to the particular level of management, and these are mapped to a framework that includes the 8 core performance categories under organisational health, and the 4 corporate priorities. It is then possible to establish a golden thread from the organisational priorities, down to service KPIs and individual objectives.</p> <p><b>Next steps</b></p> <p>The risk framework data visualisation is in development, with a separate risk dashboard having been developed in the power BI tool as an interim measure. During the next six months, this will be amalgamated into the corporate performance suite as one of a number of indicator dashboards of organisational health. This will be rolled out across the organisation to all Heads of Service and above. Similarly, the performance and productivity data, finance data, and HR performance data will sit in one consolidated power bi suite of dashboards, filterable by directorate and level of management. The final product will be available, rollout and embedded prior to the end of the calendar year.</p> <p><b>The business planning cycle</b></p>	<p>Strategic Director Coach and COG</p> <p>Rolling programme to March 2024</p>

	<p><b>Progress to date</b></p> <p>The business planning cycle has been updated and approved by the chief officers group. This captures the key activities required to be undertaken by the organisation in any given 12 months to ensure effective governance and to support operational performance. Each of these requirements is mapped into the chief officers group forward plan, and the executive support officer will monitor actions accordingly. The key requirements of service plans, KPIs and aligned budgets are explicitly captured. Budget reviews will be undertaken on a monthly basis, along with performance KPIs and risks, and service plans for all areas will be reviewed and scrutinised annually by COG.</p> <p><b>Next steps</b></p> <p>We will monitor progress and compliance against the business cycle activities and review effectiveness as part of the COG annual review process.</p>	
<p>Further enhance the working between Officers and Members, including Officer Register of Interests.</p>	<p>A new code of conduct for members was approved at the Council meeting on 18 May 2023. Training for Councillors on civility in public life and social media was offered to Councillors in July. Training in relation to the new code of conduct will be offered to members. The chair of the Standards and Ethics committee will be consulted as to whether this committee should be involved in considering training for members in relation to the code of conduct.</p> <p>As part of the review of the constitution there will be a review of the officer and member officer protocol</p> <p>There will also be a review of the officer code of conduct which refers to the officer register of interests and gifts and hospitality. Lead officers will be the Monitoring Officer and the Assistant Director of HR, OD and engagement overseen by the Chief Executive.</p>	<p>Monitoring Officer and the Assistant Director of HR, OD and engagement overseen by the Chief Executive</p> <p>Rolling programme to March 2024</p>

<p>Focus on core competency training and development for all employees, in particular HR, finance, decision making and performance management</p>	<p>Design development programmes across various levels within the organisation for Managers, supervisors and staff to ensure that competencies required at each level enable each to perform their duties effectively.</p> <p>2023/2024 performance reviews to include standard targets/ objectives for all staff appropriate to their level around HR, finance and decision making with direction to training as required. This includes focused mandatory training as appropriate to role across different levels and corporate training basis level for all</p> <p>2023/2024 Performance monitored and reported on these competencies with appropriate reward, development and action.</p>	<p>Assistant Director of HR, OD and engagement and COG</p> <p>Rolling programme to March 2024</p>
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