

<b>REPORT TO</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>
Governance Committee	30 January 2013

Report template revised June 2008



<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>ITEM</b>
Corporate Governance Progress Report	N/A	M. Wood	7

## **SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

The report provides an update on the progress that has been made to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements. The action reported on covers cross cutting activities and spans all of the Council's priorities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee note, review and comment on the actions and progress reported on.

## **DETAILS AND REASONING**

The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the council to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the internal control environment and to publish a statement on the adequacy of the system with its annual accounts.

The review was undertaken and reported in a statement to this committee in June 2012. Section 5 of the statement highlighted areas requiring further development that had been identified from the review process. These areas for improvement are included in the Corporate Governance action plan shown at Appendix A. Appropriate owners have been identified to drive forward specific actions and report on progress.

This report provides details on the progress made against the Corporate Governance action plan in the first six month period and also demonstrates the continuous strengthening of the council's systems of internal control.

### **Overall position**

This committee, supported by the Corporate Governance Officer Steering Group, plays a crucial role in monitoring progress against the action plan and building and strengthening the Council's governance arrangements.

These actions continue to enhance our corporate governance status which is already recognised as robust.

Considerable progress has been made in delivering these actions and although some are now completed others will continue to run throughout 2013.

This achievement should not be underestimated given the challenges the Council continues to face with decreased resources and ongoing efficiency improvements.

## **Areas of Progress**

Several aspects have been revised, improved or developed to meet changing legislation. These include Community Involvement, Standards for Members and the Council's Equality, Transparency and Business Continuity arrangements.

A comprehensive piece of work was undertaken in very short timescales to develop new ethical arrangements for members to ensure compliance with the standards regime introduced with the Localism Act. This was a cross party project that had extensive member involvement.

All critical business systems now have continuity plans in place and a full desktop exercise of the Council's arrangements was successfully completed to test understanding and to assess how the emergency management team would react to a situation that would threaten the delivery of some of the Council's key services.

Government introduced a code of best practice detailing how local authorities should improve the information they make publicly available. I am pleased to report that we have met above 90% compliance with the best practice standard as reported separately to the last Governance Committee meeting.

The five My Neighbourhood areas are now well established and Governance Committee played a key role in ensuring that robust arrangements were introduced for their operation and approval of finances to support delivery of community plans. One of the highlights in 2012 was a "share and learn" session that was recommended by the Scrutiny Committee. This was a member led activity open to all members which received excellent feedback.

In 2012 following awareness sessions officers produced more than 50 equality impact assessments covering key services and policies to ensure that we remain compliant with the new requirements of the Equality Act.

## **Areas for Action**

Further work is planned in 2013 on performance management, business continuity and communications.

It is recognised that the Performance Management Framework needs considerable review as it was developed when we had a policy and performance culture that satisfied a rigorous and extensive external inspection regime. However the whole performance landscape has changed considerably and whilst performance management and improvements remain important to the Council, the current framework is not fit for purpose. Work is underway to produce a more current, streamlined and effective framework.

Work will also continue in 2013 to ensure all services have up to date continuity plans that will mitigate the risks associated with a significant business interruption.

Governance Committee will be fully involved in revising the arrangements to meet the requirements of the CIPFA Standards on Audit Committees once we have the long awaited publication.

Further progress will be reported to this committee in June 2013.

## **WIDER IMPLICATIONS**

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these. The risk assessment which has been carried out forms part of the background papers to the report.

<b>FINANCIAL</b>	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
<b>LEGAL</b>	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
<b>RISK</b>	The delivery of the actions identified in this report will enhance our governance and business control status thus minimising risk.
<b>THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY</b>	The Corporate Governance Action Plan is not considered to have any adverse impact on equality. In accordance with the council's Project Management Framework an Equality Impact Assessment is undertaken and reported on each individual project.

<b>OTHER (see below)</b>	
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<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>
<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

The Annual Governance Statement for 2011/12

## Corporate Governance Action Plan 2012/13

Areas for Improvement	Actions	Owner	Timescale	Status
<p>1. Review and update the Council's approach to consulting with and providing feedback to the local community and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>Establish My Neighbourhood Plans with projects that demonstrate the way the Borough Council is working with communities on priorities that the communities themselves have identified.</p> <p>Minimum of 4 My Neighbourhood Forum meetings held per year.</p> <p>Introduce and maintain dedicated My Neighbourhood web pages</p> <p>Review of My Neighbourhood process by Scrutiny Committee.</p>	DJ	March 2013	<p><b>Completed.</b> Plans have been completed, approved and are being delivered. Key partners in projects include community groups, LCC, Parish Councils, Lancashire Constabulary, South Ribble Partnership, New Progress Housing, Probation Service, South Ribble Children's Trust, schools, colleges, local businesses and charity groups.</p> <p><b>Completed on target.</b> In excess of 1000 attendees.</p> <p><b>Completed.</b> Regularly updated to enable the public to track progress on the projects being delivered.</p> <p><b>Completed.</b> A six monthly review was undertaken and reported to Scrutiny Committee in August 2012. The main recommendation emerging was to hold a "SHARE &amp; LEARN" session. This was led by members in December 2012 and feedback was extremely positive.</p>
	<p>Review the Performance Management Framework</p>	DC	June 2013	<p>A review is currently underway of our Corporate Performance Management Framework, which will include the use of consultation and customer information in</p>

				corporate and service planning.
2. Review and update the Council's communications strategies and policies.	<p>Co-ordinate an events calendar.</p> <p>Modernise the Council's web site</p> <p>Review and relaunch an Employee Panel</p> <p>Improve cross service communications</p>	SN	September 2013	<p><b>Completed.</b> A calendar of planned communications events have been produced in consultation with SMT.</p> <p>Following the Scrutiny review of external communications a new web site is being built and is planned to be launched in April 2013.</p> <p>Work is underway to establish a new panel.</p> <p>A programme of cross service shadowing is encouraged and promoted at the highest level. The majority of managers were involved in this initiative throughout 2012.</p>
3. Raise staff awareness of the Customer Charter in order to maximise levels of compliance with the agreed standards of customer care.	<p>Rationalise customer information.</p> <p>Raise awareness of agreed standards.</p>	IP	June 2013	Further consideration to be given to data provided via Gateway's CRM system to avoid duplication and how such data will be published.
4. Further embed the revised Values Framework throughout the authority.	Establish Working Group to review and refresh values	SN	January 2013	<p><b>Completed.</b> Several exercises were undertaken involving consultation with the Leaders Forum. New posters were produced and circulated. Managers were refreshed and revised framework incorporated into the performance appraisal process.</p>

<p>5. Introduce a Local Code of Conduct for members on standards following the publication of new national guidance, including procedures in relation to the declaration of interests and for the investigation and hearing of complaints.</p>	<p>Introduce and adopt a new Members Code of Conduct and all relevant procedures to deal with complaints against elected members.</p>	<p>MW</p>	<p>March 2013</p>	<p>The new regime has been fully implemented for this Council and all parish and town councils within our borough.</p> <p>This includes a new code of conduct, relevant training for all members, publication of members' interests, appointment of an Independent Person and revised procedures for dealing with complaints and investigations.</p> <p>Further training is planned for the Standards Committee and the Independent Person.</p>
<p>6. Implement the recommendations emanating from the re-assessment of the North West Member Development Charter in September 2012.</p>	<p>Discuss and agree with Member Development Group what should be incorporated in the Member Development Action Plan.</p>	<p>SN</p>	<p>May 2013</p>	<p>The assessment was completed in September 2012 and the Charter was awarded in October 2012. Recommendations have been accepted, considered and appropriate action has been agreed to further improve the member induction programme for 2015.</p>
<p>7. Undertake a review of compliance with the revised CIPFA Standards on Audit Committees once they are published.</p>	<p>Review current arrangements against the revised standards &amp; produce an action plan.</p> <p>Present action plan to the Governance Committee &amp; oversee implementation</p>	<p>GB</p>	<p>June 2013</p>	<p>Revised standards are still awaited before work can commence. It is planned that a report will be presented to the Governance Committee in June.</p>
<p>8. Fully implement all the agreed areas for improvement in the Equality Action Plan.</p>	<p>Raise awareness and provide training on the new Equality Act. Ensure the decision-making processes assess the requirements</p>	<p>DC</p>	<p>December 2012</p>	<p>The action plan is almost fully completed. A small number of equality impact assessments remain outstanding.</p>

	of the Act. Carry out equality impact assessments of key council services, policies and functions. Update the Council's website.			An internal audit review is currently being carried out to check compliance.  Relevant publication was provided in the winter edition of FORWARD the Council's newspaper.
9. Finalise the Council's suite of Business Continuity Plans.	Oversee completion of new templates by "non-critical" service functions.	GB	March 2013	All critical services now have plans in place. Training has now been provided to enable the remaining services to complete their BCP templates and this is now in progress. The target date for completion is on course to be achieved.
10. Further strengthen the Council's approach to transparency	Assess the Council's position against best practice and produce and deliver action to ensure compliance.	DW	December 2012	Action Plan and report presented to Governance Committee meeting on 28 November. Almost full compliance achieved against the latest guidance. Comments raised by members and a member of the public will be considered and appropriately responded to.

#### KEY TO OWNERS:

GB – Garry Barclay, Head of Shared Assurance Services  
DC – Darren Cranshaw, Scrutiny and Performance Officer  
DJ – Denise Johnson, Director of Regeneration and Healthy Communities

IP – Ian Parker, Director of Business Transformation  
DW – David Whelan, Legal Services Manager  
MW – Maureen Wood, Director of Corporate Governance  
SN - Steve Nugent - HR Manager