

**AUDIT BOARD**  
**21 OCTOBER 2020**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020 OF THE MONITORING OFFICER ON  
THE REVIEW OF ETHICAL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND  
ANCILLARY MATTERS**

1. Summary

1.1 To review the Council's ethical governance arrangements and ancillary matters.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report 2019/20 on the Review of Ethical Governance Arrangements and ancillary matters, as set out in Appendix A, be considered and endorsed.

3. Background and Discussion

3.1 The Monitoring Officer's Annual Report set out at Appendix A, focuses on the effectiveness of the ethical governance framework and reviews the Council's ethical governance arrangements and ancillary matters by providing:

- (a) an acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of ethical governance;
- (b) an indication of the level of assistance that the systems and processes that comprise the Council's ethical governance arrangements can provide;
- (c) a brief description of the key elements of the ethical governance arrangements;
- (d) a brief description of the process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the ethical governance arrangements; and
- (e) an outline of the actions taken to deal with changes to the standards regime introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

3.2 The Council is responsible for ensuring inter alia, that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and ethical standards. Members and Officers are responsible for implementing proper ethical governance arrangements. To this end, the adopted Member Code of Conduct [GAC 16.07.12:Min.No.35] [GAC 16.12.2013 [Min.No:72] and Audit Board 22.07.2020 [Min.No.43]], is consistent with the legal principles and reflects the requirements of the CIPFA guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' and Addendum.

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- 3.3 On 23 March 2020, the Prime Minister addressed the nation on the Covid-19 pandemic. Lockdown measures were put in place by the Government to avoid and/or mitigate against the transmission of the virus. Measures included the closure of non - essential businesses, people required to stay at home, working remotely etc.
- 3.4 The unprecedented in peacetime Government measures in response to the crisis (e.g. prohibitions on gatherings, social distancing, self-isolation and shielding of those deemed to be the most vulnerable) have meant that the requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person, with all Members present in one place, cannot be met.
- 3.5 The Council still needs to deliberate and make decisions, enable democratic participation from applicants and residents and maintain momentum on developments in the Borough, whilst adhering to social distancing. The Coronavirus Act 2020 came into force in April 2020 to support local authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst ensuring essential business and services continue.
- 3.6 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings)(England and Wales) Regulations 2020 gives local authorities greater flexibility to redeploy their resources to focus on meeting the many new challenges they face in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst maintaining critical front-line services.
- 3.7 In addressing the numerous challenges brought by Covid-19, the Council had to find innovative solutions such as piloting virtual meetings using the Zoom video conferencing platforms, with live streaming of committee meetings' open sessions on YouTube.
- 3.8 The Monitoring Officer's Annual Report summarises the key work carried out in 2019/2020 and provides assurance that the Council's control environment, in the areas that are the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer, is adequate and effective. This Annual Report supports the assurance statements included in the Annual Governance Statement.
- 3.9 Members are asked to consider and endorse the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report at Appendix A.

#### 4. Relationship to the Corporate Plan

The Monitoring Officer's Annual Report is part of the Council's ongoing commitment to good corporate governance and supports effective decision making and an effective ethical governance framework.

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5. Financial, legal, staffing and other administrative implications and risk assessments

Financial Implications	None
Legal Implications	As detailed in Appendix A
Staffing Implications	None
Administrative Implications	None
Risk Assessment	The Monitoring Officer's Annual Report increases awareness of the ethical governance framework and sets out the good governance arrangements that are in place

6. Details of Exempt Information Category

Not applicable

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Monitoring Officer 2019/2020 Annual Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
		Marie Kelly-Stone (01322) 343634	Legal Services/ Strategic Directorate (Internal Services)	N/A