

To: Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

On: 28 May 2019

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Unaudited Annual Governance Statement 2018 - 2019

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Local Authority Accounting Regulations require that an Annual Governance Statement is prepared and included in the Annual Accounts for the council. The Annual Governance Statement should be prepared in accordance with the CIPFA / Solace guidance "Delivering good governance in Local Government".
- 1.2 The Annual Governance Statement for 2018-19 is attached and has been prepared in accordance with the relevant regulation and guidance taking account of the Internal Audit Annual Report and Director's evaluation of the operation of the governance arrangements within each service area.
- 1.3 The Governance Statement is subject to statutory audit by the Council's External Auditors as part of their review of the annual accounts.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to note the Annual Governance Statement will be included in the Unaudited Accounts for 2018/19.
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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial - None**

2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community Planning** – The application of sound governance arrangements supports the Council to deliver on its key objectives and priorities.
4. **Legal** - subject to approval by Council, the Accounts will be released for audit by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2019.
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - None
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** - None
10. **Risk** – Specific risks identified from the Chief Auditor’s Annual Report and the assessments of service Directors are disclosed in the statement.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **COSLA Implications** - None

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Scope of Responsibility

Renfrewshire Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a statutory duty to make arrangements to secure best value under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council's members and the corporate management team are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) framework; Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. A copy of the Local Code is available on our website www.renfrewshire.gov.uk

This statement explains how Renfrewshire Council has complied with the Local Code and also meets the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK, which details the requirements for an annual Governance Statement.

The purpose of the governance framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives set out in the Council plan.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. Internal control cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework

The main features of our governance arrangements are described in the Local Code but are summarised below:

The overarching strategic priorities and vision of the Council are set out in the Council Plan 2017-2022 and the Renfrewshire Community Plan 2017-2027. The Council Plan is aligned to the Community Plan and sets out 5 strategic outcomes that the organisation will work to achieve over a 5 year period with specific priorities relating to tackling inequality, promoting economic and cultural regeneration, attainment and sustainability. Renfrewshire's Community Plan (also referred to as its Local Outcome Improvement Plan) details how community planning partners will work together to achieve the key priorities identified for Renfrewshire.

- The key outcomes the Council is committed to delivering with its partners, are set out in the Community Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- The Council operates within an established governance framework which incorporates a scheme of delegated functions, financial regulations, standing orders relating to contracts and procedural standing orders. These elements of the framework are kept under regular review by the council.
- The Council facilitates policy and decision making through a policy board structure. The Council's scheme of decentralisation was reviewed during 2018 and the five Local Area Committees were replaced with 7 Local Partnerships adopting a more informal and inclusive approach as part of a drive to ensure community voices are heard on local issues and to distribute their delegated resources in accordance with community need identified in their respective local action plans and community plan key priorities.
- Services are able to demonstrate how their own activities link to the Council's vision and priorities through their service improvement plans. Performance management and monitoring of service delivery is reported through policy boards regularly including six monthly updates to the Leadership Board on progress against the implementation of the Council Plan.
- The Corporate Management Team monitors a quarterly scorecard of performance information. The Council regularly publishes information about its performance, e.g. "It's all about you", a publication outlining the performance of the Council published annually. An annual benchmarking report on the performance of the Council is submitted to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board.

- The Council has adopted a code of conduct for its employees'. Elected members adhere to the nationally prescribed Code of Conduct for Members. In addition, the Council has in place a protocol for Relationships between Political Groups, Elected Members and Officers.
- The Council's approach to risk management is set out in the risk management strategy and is well embedded. Risks are reported regularly to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board.
- The Director of Finance and Resources is the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner and information risk is monitored through the Information Management and Governance Group and its sub-groups.
- Comprehensive arrangements are in place to ensure members and officers are supported by appropriate training and development.
- Registers of interests for elected members and senior officers are maintained and published on the Council's website.
- The Council's arrangements for fraud prevention, detection and investigation are managed through the corporate counter fraud service.
- The Council's approach to 'whistleblowing' is outlined in the policy for expressing concerns outwith line management, it is intended to review and update this policy in the forthcoming year.
- There are adequate cyber security controls in place including a dedicated cyber security officer and conformance to the cyber essentials standards.
- This governance framework has been in place at Renfrewshire Council for the year ended 31 March 2019 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Governance arrangements are in place within Renfrewshire Leisure Limited (RLL) and have been operating throughout the year with reports on performance being provided to the council's Leadership Board.

Each year Audit Scotland publish an Annual Audit Report which reflects the findings from the annual financial audit, and also in relation to best value. Within the report, Audit Scotland specifically refer to the progress that has been achieved by the Council in terms of implementing the improvement plan which was developed following the publication of the Best Value Improvement Plan. In the report Audit Scotland noted that the "governance arrangements within the Council are operating effectively and support good governance and accountability". There are therefore no further actions required by Audit Scotland at this time in terms of the national report relating to ALEOs.

The system of internal financial control

The system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management and supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability. Development and maintenance of the system is undertaken by managers within the Council. The system includes:

- Guidance on financial management supported by comprehensive financial regulations and codes,
- Comprehensive budgeting systems, and detailed guidance for budget holders,
- Regular reviews of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts,
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performance,
- The preparation of regular financial reports that indicate actual expenditure against the forecasts,
- Clearly defined capital expenditure guidelines,
- As appropriate, formal project management principles,
- The Chief Finance Officer is the Director of Finance and Resources who complies with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of The CFO in Public Services.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Audit Committee and the Chief Auditor

The role of the audit committee is under the remit of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board which is chaired by a member of the opposition its role includes:

- to approve the internal audit charter and annual internal audit plans;
- to review internal and external audit reports and the main issues arising, including those relating to the annual accounts and seek assurance that action has been taken and make recommendation to the Council where appropriate;
- to receive and consider the Chief Auditor's annual report, summarising internal audit activity and the level of assurance this provides over the arrangements for internal control, risk management and governance within the Council;

- monitor the performance of internal audit;
- to consider the annual review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

The internal audit service operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and reports to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board. Internal Audit undertakes an annual programme of work, approved by the Board, based on a strategic risk assessment. The Chief Auditor provides an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance framework, risk management and internal control.

Members and officers of the Council are committed to the concept of sound governance and the effective delivery of Council services. The Council's Chief Auditor has responsibility to review independently and report to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board annually, to provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Local Code and the extent of compliance with it. The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board performs a scrutiny role in relation to the application of the Local Code of Corporate Governance and regularly monitors the performance of the Council's internal audit service.

Internal Audit reporting arrangements, including communication of finalised audit engagements, monitoring the progress of agreed management actions and communication of any unacceptable risk identified to the Board.

Review of effectiveness and Continuous Improvement

Renfrewshire Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness of the framework is informed by the work of the Corporate Management Team who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Chief Auditor's annual report, and reports from the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The effectiveness of the governance framework is reviewed annually by the Corporate Management Team, including the use of a self-assessment tool involving completion of a 38 point checklist covering five key areas of governance:

- Business Planning and Performance Management
- Internal Control Environment
- Budgeting, Accounting and Financial Control
- Risk Management and Business Continuity
- Conflicts of Interest and Gifts and Hospitality

This self-assessment indicated the governance framework is being complied with in all material respects. In addition, the review of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements and the systems of internal control within the group entities places reliance upon the individual bodies' management assurances in relation to the soundness of their systems of internal control.

The Council continues to develop its approach to working with communities, with a new model for community level governance approved by full Council in September 2018. 7 Local Partnerships have been established and have identified initial local priorities. Decision making including that relating to relevant grants is delegated to each Local Partnership through a Lead Officer appointed by the Council.

The Council has a well embedded approach to continuous improvement through self-assessment. Registered services within education, social care and housing undertake regular self-assessment as part of the delivery of their services. A corporate self-assessment framework based on the Public Service Improvement Framework has been in place across the Council for almost 10 years. The framework was reviewed in late 2017 and a revised model of self-assessment the 'Renfrewshire Continuous Improvement model' was developed in 2018 and will be piloted in services during 2019. A self assessment exercise involving the community planning partnership will also be undertaken.

The Council continues to recognise the need to exercise strong financial management arrangements to manage the financial pressures common to all local authorities. Regular reviews of the Council's arrangements are undertaken by Internal Audit and overall the Council's internal financial control arrangements are sound.

As part of the ongoing relationship which is in place under the new best value methodology, Audit Scotland continuously engage with the Council in relation to the improvement plan, regularly attending Council and board meetings and reviewing information

provided. Each year Audit Scotland provide an assessment of the ongoing position in relation to best value, within the Annual Audit Report. The Annual Audit Report for 17/18 was published in September 2018 and noted:

- The Best Value follow-up audit found the Council is making good progress in addressing the recommendations from the 2016/17 Best Value Assurance Report.
- The Council has several improvement activities working in parallel and these are clearly linked to the Council's priorities and budget setting process.

This is a very positive outcome in terms of follow-up audit, and officers will continue to work with the Audit Scotland team as part of the ongoing best value and financial audit appointments, and to progress the actions set out in the improvement plan.

During the year, the council put in place arrangements to meet the Scottish Housing Regulator's new regulatory and assurance framework which requires the council to submit an annual assurance statement, an annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and a return on the Energy Efficiency Standard for Scotland.

The programme of work undertaken by Internal Audit identified a number of areas of limited assurance in relation to the internal control, risk management and governance objectives for the specific areas of each audit review. The following areas have been identified as requiring improvement:

The review of the arrangements for recording salary sacrifice transactions identified that improvements were required in relation to the reconciliation of the suspense account and improvements in the processes for dealing with terminations from the scheme. Management has put in place arrangements to ensure that a regular review of the suspense account is now being undertaken to monitor and reconcile any discrepancies. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that any actions are taken as necessary to clear the account and no further action is required.

The review of catering services, purchasing and stock control identified the need to ensure that catering employees responsible for purchasing activities are fully trained in their roles and responsibilities and more robust controls were required in relation to stock control. Management has agreed to comprehensively review the service arrangements for purchasing and stock control and provide training to relevant staff on the revised arrangements.

A review of selected inspection arrangements within Environment and Infrastructure services identified the need for management to undertake a comprehensive service review and ensure that revised policies are in line with the current code of practice.

It is our view that the Council has in place a sound system of governance, risk management and internal control and that appropriate mechanisms are in place to identify any areas of weakness. This is corroborated by an Annual Assurance Statement prepared by the Chief Auditor stating that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal control framework.

Action Plan

Following consideration of the review of adequacy and effectiveness the following action plan has been agreed to ensure continual improvement of the Council's governance.

Agreed action	Responsible person	Date
Review and update where necessary the policy for expressing concerns outwith line management 'whistleblowing' for approval by Board.	Chief Auditor	March 2020
Undertake a comprehensive review of catering service arrangements for purchasing and stock control and provide training to relevant staff on the revised arrangements.	Head of Facilities Management	Spring 2019
Undertake a comprehensive review of selected inspection service arrangements and update the policy in line with the code of practice.	Head of Operations and Infrastructure	Autumn 2019

Update on the 2017/2018 Action Plan

The 2017/18 Governance Statement identified a number of continuous improvement activities to be taken forward to improve the overall governance, risk management and internal control environment. Progress over the last 12 months against the agreed action plan is detailed below.

Agreed action	Progress Update	Responsible person	Date	Revised Date
Continue to implement the governance arrangement for community planning.	Governance structure fully implemented, with Improving Life Chance Board established in 2018	Head of Policy and Commissioning	Spring 2019	Complete
Complete the review of Renfrewshire Leisure Limited's governance arrangements following publication of Audit Scotland national review report.	A number of changes to governance were implemented during 2017 and 2018 in relation to RLL following recommendations made through the 2017 Best Value Assurance Report. These were made ahead of the publication of the national report, rather than awaiting its publication. In the 2017/18/ Annual Audit Report for Renfrewshire Council, the Council's external auditors (Audit Scotland) did not recommend further action in relation to ALEO governance.	Head of Policy and Commissioning	Winter 2018	Complete
Complete the review of the Financial Regulations for approval by the Council and the supporting financial codes.	The review and update of the Financial Regulations and Codes is complete and the Regulations have been approved by Council.	Director of Finance and Resources	Summer 2018	Complete
Review the community lead governance arrangements for approval by the Council.	Following extensive consultation and engagement a new model of local partnerships was approved by full Council in September 2018. The new partnerships are now up and running and have identified local priorities for further progression.	Head of Policy and Commissioning	Summer 2018	Complete
Develop a detailed locality plan focusing on the communities that experience the poorest outcomes.	A locality plan was published in September 2017, the approach is now embedded within community planning arrangements.	Head of Policy and Commissioning	Spring 2019	Complete
Pilot the revised Renfrewshire continuous improvement model of self-assessment.	A new model was developed and approved by CMT in Summer 2018. This is currently on hold to allow for the completion of the staff values exercise that is underway.	Head of Policy and Commissioning	Autumn 2018	March 2020
Continue to monitor the delivery of the actions	The implementation of the Best Value Improvement Plan	Chief Executive	Continuing	Complete

contained in the Best Value Improvement Plan.	is reported to the Leadership Board every 6 months. Audit Scotland has acknowledged that the Council is making good progress in addressing the recommendations from the 2016/17 BVAR.			
Continue to monitor and respond to developments in education reform and the establishment of regional collaboratives.	The regional collaboratives have now been formed and Renfrewshire, as one of the 8 local authorities in the West partnership, plays an active role in the work being taken forward. As part of the acting director's national involvement, Renfrewshire are well placed to help support and inform national policy as appropriate. At the moment, there are no further plans for legislative change.	Director of Childrens' Services and Head of Corporate Governance	Continuing	Complete
Review the governance and operational arrangements for corporate health and safety and formalise the health and safety strategy for approval by Board.	The review of governance and operational arrangements has been completed. A revised health and safety strategy has been approved by Board.	Director of Finance and Resources	Summer 2018	Complete
Improve the corporate oversight of external funding applications.	A single officer contact for all of the Council's external funding applications has now been agreed. The post holder will be responsible for ensuring corporate oversight and compatibility with Council policy of all applications.	Head of Regeneration	Winter 2018	Complete
Improve the procedures for non-residential care charging and payments.	The Charging & Payment Team has been restructured and all care at home invoicing is now dealt with by one team. Improved processes have been introduced to further improve the timeliness of system updates. The HSCP have supported a greater engagement between care providers and Care Managers to resolve any issues identified.	Head of Business and Customer Services and Head of Adult Services	Winter 2018	Complete
Revise the action plan for records management and monitor delivery.	The records management plan has been updated and is monitored by the Records Management Working Group (RMWG) which meets on a quarterly basis and regular	Head of Corporate Governance	Summer 2018	Complete

	updates are provided to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board.			
Review the counter fraud strategy and submit to Board for approval.	A revised counter fraud and corruption policy has been approved by Board.	Chief Auditor	Summer 2018	Complete
Continue to complete the recommendations to ensure full compliance with the PCI DSS standards.	Upgrade activities have addressed gaps. An audit is currently underway to re-assess compliance scope in order to confirm that no new gaps have appeared since the previous audit and to prepare the documentation for PCI compliance.	Head of ICT	Autumn 2018	Summer 2019
Payroll processes, procedures and management information will be reviewed in line with the implementation of Business World ERP system.	Payroll processes, procedures and management information have been reviewed in line with the implementation of Business World ERP system. The review developed a new guidance manual for payroll employees.	Head of Business and Customer Services	Spring 2019	Complete
Develop expenditure monitoring and contract oversight arrangements through the implementation of the Enterprise Resource Planning system and associated monitoring activity.	The implementation of the purchase to pay element now part of the Business World development project which is fully underway. Systems testing has been undertaken and the focus of the implementation is now on business readiness. The approach will be a phased implementation across services.	Head of Policy and Commissioning	Spring 2018	Complete

Assurance

Subject to the above, and on the basis of the assurances provided, we consider the governance and internal control environment operating during 2018-2019 provides reasonable and objective assurance that any significant risks impacting on the achievement of our principal objectives will be identified and actions taken to avoid or mitigate their impact. Systems are in place to continually review and improve the governance and internal control environment and action plans are in place to address identified areas for improvement.