

Agenda Item No: 7 **Report No:** 12/15

Report Title: Lewes District Council – Code of Corporate Governance Update

Report To: Audit and Standards Committee **Date:** 26 January 2015

Ward(s) Affected: All

Report By: Head of Audit and Performance

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Purpose of Report:

To inform Councillors of the update of the Lewes District Council Code of Corporate Governance and progress on issues to be addressed.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To receive and consider the report.
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Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 To ensure the Council follows best practice for corporate governance as set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/ Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (CIPFA/SOLACE) Framework, and has effective arrangements in place.

Information

2 Background

2.1 Lewes District Council recognises the importance of effective corporate governance so that local communities can place trust in the way that the Council carries out its duties. Corporate governance for councils in simple terms is ensuring they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

2.2 At the Audit Committee meeting of 17 March 2008 Councillors approved the Council's Code of Corporate Governance to meet the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". The local Code is made available to the public on the Council's website and can be found at the following link
<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/council/3748.asp>

3 Lewes District Council Code of Corporate Governance

3.1 The Local Code brings together all of the Council's corporate governance arrangements in one place and identifies a number of issues to be addressed that will improve the Council's approach. Each financial year the Head of Audit and Performance in consultation with key officers reviews the Code to ensure that it remains robust and reflects the arrangements at the Council, and identifies any issues that need to be further developed.

3.2 The Code has the following six core principles:

- Focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community, and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
- Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the value of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and risk management.
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

3.3 Appendix A provides an extract of the Code to illustrate the structure of the document. It shows:

- The individual requirements of the local code.
- Systems/processes/documentation demonstrating compliance.
- Responsibility for monitoring/review.
- Issues to be addressed, target date where known and officer responsible.

4 Review of the Local Code

4.1 The review has shown the Council continues to have satisfactory arrangements in place for corporate governance, and these are embodied in a range of documents and systems that are already in place at the Council, or are planned. For example:

- Council's Constitution
- Council Plan
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Quality Strategy

4.2 A small number of updates have been made to the Code to reflect developments in the Council's governance arrangements. The updated Code can be found at the following link;
<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/council/3748.asp>

4.3 Appendix B identifies the progress that has been made against the issues to be addressed that were identified in July 2013 when it was last reviewed.

5 Financial Appraisal

5.1 There are no additional financial implications from this report.

6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 Failure to maintain proper corporate governance arrangements can reduce the likelihood of the Council meeting its aims and objectives and attract criticism from the Council's stakeholders and the Council's external auditor. Maintenance of a local Code of Corporate Governance which concords with best practice and is regularly reviewed will ensure that the corporate governance arrangements remain effective.

7 Sustainability Implications

7.1 I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this report is exempt from the requirement because it is a progress report.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from the report.

9 Equality Screening

9.1 I have given due regard to equalities issues and, as this is an internal monitoring report screening for equalities is not required.

10 Background Papers

10.1 None.

11 Appendices

11.1 Appendix A: Extract from the Lewes District Council Code of Corporate Governance.

11.2 Appendix B: Progress that has been made against the issues to be addressed in the Code that were identified in July 2013.