

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Cabinet
Finance & Audit Committee

Date: 28 May 2024
16 July 2024

Reporting officer: Sarah Parfitt, Director (Corporate Services)

Subject: Learning from Local Government Interventions

Purpose and summary of report:

To provide an update to Members on the actions to further enhance or strengthen governance and culture within the council identified as a result of the self-assessment conducted in September 2023.

Recommendations:

1. Cabinet reviews and considers progress against the action plan at Appendix One.
2. Cabinet agrees for the report be considered at the next Finance & Audit Committee as the committee established to provide independent assurance and oversight of the council's governance arrangements.
3. Cabinet agrees that moving forwards, the indicators of cultural or governance issues set out in the DLUHC guidance document be assessed as part of the process undertaken to prepare the Annual Governance Statement of the council.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	<p>Under the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended), Best Value Authorities (which includes local authorities) are required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which they exercise their functions, having regard to a combination of factors including economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. The same Act provides the Secretary of State with powers to inspect and, subject to their being sufficient evidence, intervene in a local authority where that authority is failing in its best value duty.</p> <p>The Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 includes the general duty of the Local Auditor, through their work, to be satisfied that the authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources.</p>
Finance and Value for Money	<p>Strong Governance is a key tenet of supporting the council to secure value for money in its activity.</p>

Corporate Plan	<p>One Council: a well-run and innovative authority, defined by its skilled and valued workforce, committed to developing its local social impact.</p> <p>Robust standards: a comprehensive, timely and benchmarked framework of performance management, delivered by services built on corporate principles and sound internal controls.</p> <p>Corporate compliance: a responsible organisation, ensuring all constitutional, policy and legislative demands are met, and proactive risk management practices adopted.</p> <p>Strong Governance underpins the delivery of the council's corporate objectives and securing value for money.</p>
Climate Change	There are no direct Climate Change considerations arising from this report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2023 both the Cabinet and Finance & Audit Committee considered a report providing information on local government intervention and setting out the findings of a self-assessment conducted at the time against the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) guidance for addressing cultural and governance failings in local authorities. The self-assessment concluded that the council had many strengths in its organisational culture and governance arrangements, which had been kept under review by both internal and external mechanisms. The self-assessment did, however, identify opportunities to build on these strengths and continue to develop and enhance the arrangements the council has in place.
- 1.2 This report provides an update to Members on the actions identified through the self-assessment process intended to further enhance or strengthen governance and culture within the council.
- 1.3 The culture of a local authority will be defined by the shared values and beliefs of the organisation, how decisions are made, as well as how elected members and officers behave, interact, and carry out their roles.
- 1.4 Governance refers to the way in which an organisation is run; it encapsulates policies, procedures, how decisions are made and how decision-makers are held to account.

2. Progress Update

- 2.1 Appendix One provides an update on the actions identified from the self-assessment to further enhance or strengthen governance and culture within the council. This confirms that all actions identified through the self-assessment have been progressed.
- 2.2 The council undertakes a robust review of its governance arrangements each year in the production of the Annual Governance Statement, which is reviewed and considered by the Finance & Audit Committee. To ensure that the council continues to maintain its arrangements, it is proposed that the indicators of cultural or governance issues identified in the DLUHC Guidance are incorporated into this annual governance assessment process.

3. Appendices

3.1 The following documents are to be published with the report:

3.1.1 Appendix One – Progress Update

4. Background Documents

4.1 The following background documents were used:

4.2 [Statutory intervention and inspection - a guide for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

4.3 [Addressing cultural and governance failings in local authorities: lessons from recent interventions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

4.4 [Report to Cabinet/F&A - September 2023](#)

Lead Officer: Sarah Parfitt, Director (Corporate Services)

Email: sarah.parfitt@gravesham.gov.uk

Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	The report is intended to provide Members with an overview of both the strengths in the arrangements in place at the council, but also progress in actions to strengthen and address potential risks to those arrangements.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk. N/A</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
Crime and Disorder	N/A
Digital and website implications	N/A
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	N/A