Title: Policy Framework Internal Audit Review - Outstanding Recommendations

Open Report For information

Wards Affected: None Key Decision: No

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Summary
This report outlines the activities undertaken and progress made in relation to reviewing the Policy Framework. This forms part of the recommendations from the Internal Audit report logged in January 2014.

Recommendation(s)
PAASC is asked to:

1. Note this report.

2. Note that the Strategy Team will review the remaining internal audit recommendations and realign with the emerging work programme as determined by the new Chief Executive with the Corporate Management Team and in consultation with the Leader as the relevant Cabinet member.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The internal audit review examined the controls around the management of policies and associated framework whereby policy management is devolved out to departments to manage with an overview at the corporate centre through the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Strategy Team. The internal audit findings are set out in Appendix 1.

1.2 The following key weaknesses were identified:

   a) No standard format for policies across the Council
   b) Responsibility / ownership of individual policies is not clearly defined
   c) No central repository of key policies
   d) Lack of control to ensure policies remain up to date
   e) Poor communication of policies across the Council
2. Progress and Issues

2.1 Although the implementation activities have not been completed in the way initially agreed, there has been considerable work undertaken in relation to clarifying key strategies and policies, and aligning them with new strategic priorities as they have been developed over the last 12 months.

2.2 During Strategy Week in June 2014, CMT and members of the newly formed Cabinet developed a new vision with new corporate priorities. These were formally agreed by Assembly in September 2014.

2.3 At the same time, CMT reviewed and updated a list of all strategies and identified those which were deemed as key to ensure that appropriate strategies were in place to deliver the new vision and priorities. This included a common template as a guide for services to provide greater consistency and summary ‘plan on a page’. As such, items b, c and d in Section 1 of Appendix 1 have been actioned.

2.4 During late Summer/Autumn, Leadership Group worked together to develop the Corporate Delivery Plan 2014/15, the mechanism for ensuring the Council delivers its commitments within the vision and priorities.

2.5 The Strategy Team are advising services on new strategies and policies, and there is now a more consistent approach. The corporate template for Cabinet reports also now includes a section regarding policy implications which is completed/verified by the Strategy Team.

2.6 Whilst important that the Council strengthens the areas identified in the internal audit, other pieces of work have been greater priority. The review of the vision and priorities and the strategic prioritisation of the budget have all shaped what the key strategies need to be. Now that these have all been established the remaining identified areas of improvement can be assessed by the team to see what appropriate actions now need to be put in place with due regard for the views of the new Chief Executive.

3. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Carl Tomlinson, Group Finance Manager

3.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report. The new vision and priorities reflect the Council’s context and priorities. These have been written in line with the funding arrangements identified at a high level within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

4. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Eldred Taylor-Camara, Legal Group Manager

4.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:
Appendix 1: Policy Framework Review: Internal Audit Findings