

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

15 June 2023

- * Councillor Phil Bellamy (Chairman)
- * Councillor Bob Hughes (Vice-Chairman)
 - Councillor Joss Bigmore
- * Councillor James Jones
 - Councillor George Potter
- * Councillor James Walsh
- * Councillor Fiona White

Independent Members:

- * Murray Litvak

Parish Members:

- * Julia Osborn
- * Ian Symes
- * Tim Wolfenden

*Present

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Julia McShane, the Lead Councillor for Engagement and Customer Services, Councillor Angela Goodwin, and the Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development, Councillor Carla Morson, and Councillor Ruth Brothwell were also in attendance.

Councillors Dawn Bennett, Catherine Houston, and Howard Smith were in remote attendance.

CGS1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joss Bigmore, for whom Councillor Ruth Brothwell was substituting, and from Councillor George Potter.

CGS2 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

CGS3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

The Chairman signed the minutes.

CGS4 DECISION AND ACTION TRACKER

The Committee noted that the decision and action tracker had been introduced to monitor progress against the decisions and actions that the Committee had agreed, which would be kept up to date for each meeting. When decisions/actions were reported as being 'completed', the Committee would be asked to agree to remove these items from the tracker.

The Committee again noted that the first item on the tracker, which related to the Planning Appeals Monitoring Report, had been outstanding for a year due to a combination of staff sickness and staff turnover. The Committee agreed that an update on this should be provided as a matter of urgency.

Having noted the update set out on the Supplementary Information Sheet, the Committee

RESOLVED: That the decision and action tracker be noted and that the actions reported as being completed be removed from the table.

CGS5 RISK MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Committee considered a report on the changes that had been made to the corporate risk register since it was last presented to the Committee in November 2022. The report had also detailed how the new process continued to achieve the desired outcomes set out in the Risk Management Strategy and Policy as well as setting out the changes made to the Strategy and Policy by the Risk Management Group.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the update on the Supplementary Information Sheet in respect of Risk Reference CR32 (risk of designation by Secretary of State for failing to achieve national target for determining non major planning applications).

Since the November 2022 report, the Risk Management Group had met twice, most recently on 18 May 2023, when they reviewed the Corporate Risk Register.

The Corporate Risk Register set out in the report had included 31 risks in total, with 7 marked as red, 13 amber, and 8 green. Two of the risks had unscored residual risks that were waiting to be scored by the Risk Management Group and one new risk which needed to be completed by the Risk Management Group.

The Committee noted that, in the next quarter, officers would be working with the Council's insurers to hold risk challenge lessons and provide assurance for

risks that were red RAG rated, the aim of which was to assess whether the mitigation measures identified in the Corporate Risk Register would address the risk identified and also factors affecting the likelihood.

The following comments were made during the debate:

- In response to concerns expressed about the 7 red rated residual risks and how work would be prioritised to mitigate those risks, the Joint Strategic Director: Transformation and Governance informed the Committee that the risk register was a live document, with risks changing constantly, and the Corporate Management Board, the Executive, and the Lead Councillor monitoring the risks closely on a very regular basis.
- In response to a question regarding having sufficient staff capacity to deliver on the management of these risks, the Strategic Director confirmed that for some risks, for example Risk CR32, maintaining sufficient capacity had been very difficult. However, managing the risks was a day-to-day active management process. A more detailed explanation of how the Council will ensure that it has sufficient staff resources to achieve the various mitigations proposed would be provided.
- In response to a concern that there appeared to be no strategic solution to mitigating Risk CR6 (risk that the Council is unable to recruit and retain staff, including as a result of the collaboration), the Committee noted that part of the collaborative work with Waverley included a strategy on workforce development the aim of which was to identify how the Council could recruit, retain and develop staff, with a view to effective succession planning, particularly in those areas where this has been, and continues to be, difficult.
- Welcomed progress on implementing the risk management process, noting that in respect of the movement of risks, the only substantive change related to Risk CR9 (risk that capital programmes and projects experience issues that affect time, quality or budget). Concern was expressed that unmitigated likelihood had increased from five to six, and mitigated likelihood from four to five.
- It was noted that no commentary had been provided in respect of reasons for slippage on target dates for mitigation actions (e.g. Risks CR21 and CR25).
- It was also noted that some risks had shown the same gross and residual scores implying that the mitigations being proposed would have no impact on the likelihood of those risks occurring (e.g. Risks CR14 and CR24)
- Comment on whether it would be appropriate to include a risk in respect of air quality in the Corporate Risk Register.
- In response to these concerns, the Strategic Director: Transformation and Governance commented that officers had examined these risks carefully and

had asked some searching questions in respect of mitigations in terms of what they might look like and how effective they might be. It was clear that some planned mitigations had not had the desired impact. In relation to Risk CR21 (risk that the Council fails to meet its target of becoming net carbon zero for its own operations in Scope 1 and 2 by 2030) and given that almost half of the Council’s carbon emissions came from Guildford Spectrum, it was clear that, unless the Council had a plan in place now to address it, there was little scope to reduce the risk of failing to meet that target.

- In response to a query regarding the need for robust business cases and strategic direction associated with Risk CR8 (risk that the Guildford/ Waverley collaboration does not meet its objectives) the Strategic Director reminded the Committee that the initial plan for collaborative working with Waverley related to the establishment of a joint management team, which was in place with effect from 1 October 2022. Since then, there had been considerable work undertaken in terms of sharing resources, via a Section 113 Agreement. It was now proposed to take a report to both councils seeking authority for the joint management team to proceed with further collaborative work including bringing forward business cases in that regard.

Having considered the report, the Committee

RESOLVED: That the progress made to implement the risk management process be noted and that officers be requested to respond to the Committee’s observations and comments referred to above where further information is required.

Reason:

The Risk Management Strategy and Policy states that this Committee will review the corporate risk register on a six-monthly basis. It is the responsibility of the Committee to ensure it is satisfied that the Council operates and maintains a robust and effective risk management process

Action:	Officer to action:
To provide a more detailed explanation of how the Council will ensure that it has sufficient staff resources to achieve the various mitigations proposed in the Corporate Risk Register.	Executive Head of Organisational Development
To provide commentary in respect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reasons for slippage on target dates for mitigation actions (e.g. Risks CR21 and CR25); and • whether it would be appropriate to include a risk in respect of air quality in the Corporate Risk Register. 	Executive Head of Organisational Development

CGS6 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMPLIANCE - ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Committee considered the annual report for 2022-23 on the monitoring of the Council's performance in dealing with Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests.

Following a fall in performance standards during 2020-21, largely due to the Covid pandemic lockdown and recent corporate restructures, performance rates for timely delivery of FOI/EIR requests within the 20- working day deadline had since improved over the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years.

The Committee noted that the Council had received 691 FOI/EIR requests during the financial year 2022-23. Of these, 92.7% had been responded to within the 20-working day deadline, compared to the very similar figure of 92% for 2021-22. Both of the previous years' figures had indicated a steady improvement when compared with the 2020-21 financial year when 82% of requests had been answered within the target. The Council had therefore exceeded the Information Commissioner's performance indicator of 85%, and the 90% target agreed by Corporate Management Board for two consecutive years.

Furthermore, following the Committee's request to monitor, as an additional target, response rates dealt with promptly within 10 working days, the report had noted that, during 2022-23, 253 requests (36.5% of the total) had been responded to within 10 or fewer working days.

Questions and comments from the Committee raised the following points:

- It was suggested that the correspondent groups in the table showing the categories of requester should be in descending order of number of requests
- It was suggested that each service area should have a target 90% response rate within 20 working days.
- In response to a query as to when the 20 working days began, the Information Governance Officer confirmed that this was generally taken to be the point at which the request was received by the Council.

The Committee

RESOLVED: That the improved response rates and officer actions contained within the Freedom of Information Compliance Annual Report for 2022-23 be noted and that the Committee continues to receive regular updates.

Reasons:

- To ensure that the Committee is kept up to date with developments in the FOI/EIR framework
- To ensure that the Committee has the necessary information to enable requests for information to be made easily to the Council and properly responded to
- To assist with learning lessons and improving performance following requests for information made to the Council

Action:	Officer to action:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To list the correspondent groups in the table showing the categories of requester in descending order of number of requests in future reports• To consider whether each service area should, in future, have a target 90% response rate within 20 working days.	Information Governance Officer

CGS7 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee

RESOLVED: That the updated 12 month rolling work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Committee, be approved.

Reason:

To allow the Committee to maintain and update its work programme.

Before closing the meeting, the chairman informed the Committee that this would be Ian Symes' final meeting as a co-opted parish member, as he had opted not to seek re-appointment. The Committee thanked Mr Symes for his 14 years' service as a co-opted member of the Committee and its predecessor Committee and wished him well for the future.

The meeting finished at 8.17 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman