

Appendix D - Corporate Governance Improvement Plan 2020/2021

The table below summarises the areas of improvement identified during the 2019/20 annual governance review and outlines the planned actions to be completed in order to enhance the Council's governance arrangements.

Area of Improvement	Proposed Action	Governance Code Principles	Responsible Officer	Target Date
Local Plan	<p>Following the submission of the Local Plan for inspection during 2019/20, a number of actions for the Council resulted from the subsequent Hearing Sessions. These actions will be completed during 2020/21.</p> <p>Further hearing sessions will be necessary for Phase 2 of the Local Plan Examination during 2020/21 and the Inspector will be issuing Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) in relation to these Phase 2 Hearing Sessions. The Council will be producing Hearing Statements on all of the issues and specific questions set out in the Phase 2 MIQs and preparing for the Phase 2 Hearing Sessions.</p> <p>In addition, a consultation will be required to take place prior to the Phase 2 Hearing Sessions on the additional evidence which has been produced by the Council during the Phase 1 Hearing Sessions and as well as the consultation on the Main Modifications to Chapter 13 of the Local Plan.</p>	A, B, C, D, G	Julietta McLoughlin	March 2020
Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement	Establish an online consultation tool for the Council for use across services areas to support consultation and local decision making, and to strengthen understanding and the ability to shape national and regional policy.	B	Kelly Angus	September 2020
Adult Social Care Partnership with the NHS	Completion of a full review of the partnership arrangement with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	B, C, D	Cath McEvoy-Carr	November 2020
Member Representation on Outside Bodies	A detailed review of appointments to all outside bodies will be undertaken, and consideration given to the development of a protocol for Members that represent the Council on outside bodies (to include a report back mechanism to improve accountability).	A, B	Constitution Working Group	December 2020

Overview and Scrutiny	External training will be provided for all members on Overview and Scrutiny Committees.	B, E	Kelly Angus	December 2020
Virtual Meetings	Options for holding virtual meetings for bodies with no decision making powers should be explored. This would support the Council's climate change agenda, and would also support members to use their time more efficiently using the latest technology.	C	Liam Henry	December 2020
Planning Service Restructure	The Planning service has commenced a Section 188 consultation with the trade unions in regards to a proposed restructure of the service, to support embedding the improvements in the systems of control within the department.	E	Juliemma McLoughlin	November 2020
Planning Decision Investigation	A formal Investigation will be carried out into an historic planning decision case, in order to identify any issues of concern regarding probity or quality. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the appropriate actions will be taken.	A, B, G	Juliemma McLoughlin	November 2020
Formation of Subsidiaries and Holding Company.	Establish a robust legal and governance structure in the establishment of the Council's parent holding company of the proposed trading company structure, and the associated trading subsidiaries.	E, F, G	Maureen Taylor	September 2020
Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service	To implement the Northumberland Fire & Rescue Improvement Plan, to address the three 'requires improvement' areas (Effectiveness, Efficiency and People) identified in the HMICFRS report. Monitoring of progress and action will be undertaken by the senior leadership team of Fire & Rescue on a monthly basis, with a summary report provided to the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder member. A summary of the plan is also published on the website for public inspection.	C, D, E	Paul Hedley	March 2021
Audit Committee Review	The outcome of the 2019/20 self-assessment evaluation of the effectiveness of the Audit Committee, against the requirements of CIPFAs best practice guidance, Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2018 Edition), will be reported to the Audit Committee. Consideration will be given to undertaking this review on an annual basis, and to provide an annual report to Cabinet on the performance and effectiveness of the Audit Committee.	F, G	Audit Committee	March 2021

Group Audit Committee	In order to strengthen the Council's arrangements for audit and oversight of its subsidiaries, consideration will also be given to the County Council Audit Committee taking on a 'Group' audit committee role, so that the audit of all existing and new subsidiary entities are under its remit.	F, G	Audit Committee	December 2020
Advance Northumberland	Progress made by Advance in completing agreed management actions to address governance weaknesses, identified from an Internal Audit review of fundamental financial systems, will be monitored through the Shareholder Assurance Group. Follow-up reviews of these systems will be undertaken by Internal Audit during 2020/21 to assess the effectiveness of the new controls put in place by Advance.	F	Daljit Lally	Ongoing
Contracts Management	Following assessment of contracts with a cumulative spend over 4 years of £50k, the contract managers will be identified and new governance arrangements and training will be introduced to provide further assurance on arrangements for contact management.	D, E, F	Teresa Palmer	October 2020
Post COVID-19 Lessons Learned Review	At the time of publication of the AGS, COVID-19 remains a live, national risk, and therefore the Council is responding to a live ongoing issue which remains significant at this time. The Council will conduct a review of its response to the COVID-19 crisis, to identify any lessons learned and any areas of improvement required in its contingency planning and governance arrangements.	A, B, C, D, E, F, G	Daljit Lally	March 2021