



# **Report of the Director of Finance and IT to the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee to be held on 27 January 2022**

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## **Subject:**

**Annual Governance Statement 2020-21 Review**

## **Summary statement:**

**This report reviews progress on the significant governance concerns reported in the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2020-21.**

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## **Portfolio:**

**Corporate**

## **Improvement Area:**

**Corporate**

## 1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress and improvements being made in addressing those significant governance concerns reported in the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021.

## 2. Update on 2020-21 Significant Governance Concerns

2.1 The annual governance review is undertaken against the principles contained in the CIPFA/Solace framework – Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. The Council is required to consider the effectiveness of its current arrangements and:

- Assess the extent to which it complies with the principles and requirements of good governance
- Identify systems, processes and documentation that provide evidence of compliance
- Identify and ensure individuals and committees hold responsibility for governance arrangements and their continuing application and effectiveness
- Identify issues that have not been addressed adequately and any planned changes required in the future
- Prepare an action plan, identifying any individuals responsible for taking any changes forward

2.2 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) was formally reviewed and approved by the Governance & Audit Committee at its meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021. The Committee subsequently authorised the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to sign the document on behalf of the Council for inclusion with the Statement of Accounts for 2020-21.

2.3 The Statement reported that the Governance and Audit Committee would be kept informed of progress in addressing weaknesses and areas of concern. The Annual Governance Statement identified four continuing governance challenges,

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Children
- Ensuring an effective, integrated system of health and social care
- Key Staffing Skills
- Elective Home Education

A comprehensive review of these governance issues has been undertaken and a detailed update is provided in Appendix 1. Council officers recognise the need for continuing effort to achieve improvements in the delivery and operation of their services.

## 4. Financial and resources appraisal

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## 5. Risk Management

The Council's risk management framework remains in place and, as previously reported, corporate risks are reviewed regularly, at quarterly intervals. There are no new risk management issues arising from this report.

## **6. Legal appraisal**

- 6.1** The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance framework including the system of internal control.
- 6.2** The Council is required to test its governance arrangements against the principles contained in the CIPFA/Solace framework 'Delivering good governance in Local Government'.
- 6.3** The CIPFA/Solace framework also requires the Council to provide an outline of the actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance issues.

## **7. Other implications**

### **7.1 Equal and Diversity**

Risk management assists in ensuring barriers to the delivery of services are reduced which in turn supports the achievement of equality and diversity.

### **7.2 Greenhouse Gas Emission Impacts**

There are no impacts on gas emissions.

### **7.3 Sustainability Implications**

The Annual Governance Statement will examine the sustainability of the Council's activity and ensures that mechanisms are in place to deliver business continuity.

### **7.4 Community Safety Implications**

Community safety implications are considered when identifying strategic risks such as safeguarding.

### **7.5 Human Rights Act**

The Annual Governance Statement will take into account any Human Rights Act implications.

### **7.6. Trade Union**

There are no specific implications for the Trade Unions arising from the report.

### **7.7 Ward Implications**

In general the Annual Governance Statement does not focus on individual ward issues.

### **7.8 Implications for Children and Young People**

The Annual Governance Statement includes concerns raised in relation to Childrens Services.

**7.9 Issues Arising from Privacy Impact Assessment**

None

**8. Not for publication documents**

None.

**9. Options**

9.1 Members may –

- Endorse the report
- Provide comment or instruction
- Bring forward any new governance concerns which should be reviewed, assessed or examined for the 2021-22 Annual Governance Statement.
- Require further information.

**10. Recommendations**

- (1) That the information contained in this report and the progress made in addressing the significant governance challenges be reviewed.**
- (2) That the further actions planned be endorsed.**
- (3) That officers and Members be alerted to any emerging governance concerns requiring review during the 2021-22 process.**

**11. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2020-21: Review of Prior Year Challenges

**12. Background documents**

“Annual Governance Statement 2020-21” – report to Governance and Audit Committee 23rd September 2021 – Director of Finance and IT.

**Annual Governance Statement 2020-21: Review of prior year challenges**

Governance Challenge – AGS 2020-21	Position provided in the Annual Governance Statement 23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2021	Update for the Governance and Audit Committee 27 <sup>th</sup> January 2022	Responder
<p><b>Safeguarding Vulnerable Children</b></p>	<p>In relation to Safeguarding Vulnerable Children the Council has made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing efforts to recruit and retain permanent experienced social workers and managers.</li> <li>• Ensuring that training induction for new starters is of a consistently high quality, so that expected standards of casework and case management can be met and maintained.</li> <li>• Work is ongoing to understand imbalances in social work caseloads across the service and to ensure that these are addressed and levelled as appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>However, there remain significant challenges in workforce stability, which have led to too many cases having multiple changes of social worker, leading to issues of poor quality and lack of consistency at handover. Some mitigating processes, involving managers and Practice supervisors (who would not normally hold the case allocation) have been necessary in certain cases to ensure quality is maintained.</p> <p>The latest Ofsted Monitoring visit was concluded on 28 April 2021 with the findings</p>	<p>We have recruited temporary and agency staff to fill vacancies and support the work with children and families. This is unfortunately unstable because of the often transient nature of the agency workforce.</p> <p>In response to the Service, HR engaged Seriph, a production company to develop recruitment material for Children’s social care using information on Bradford and videos featuring young people, staff, managers and Lead Member to promote the work of the Council and the benefits for workers to apply for permanent roles. This micro-site is now available and advertised on Community Care, British association of Social Workers (BASW) and others. As it went live in early January it is not possible yet to comment on its impact.</p> <p>Creating a stable workforce over time will promote better relationships with children and families and better outcomes.</p> <p>Induction for all new starters is important to us and each member of staff is now provided 5 working days induction at the start of their employment.</p> <p>We are considering the balance of resources and demand to balance the service needs and resources. With the instability of the workforce it has been difficult to clearly establish the correct levels of support. Further work is underway on this currently as it impacts on the</p>	<p>Marium Haque</p>

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	<p>reported in June. This noted that:</p> <p>“The local authority is starting to make progress in improving services in some specific areas. However, the progress on the quality of core social work practice has been too slow to show impact for children and families. This has been exacerbated by the breadth of the inadequacy and maintaining service delivery during the pandemic”</p> <p>Additionally, Safer Bradford has published the ‘Emily’ Serious Case Review. This poses serious concerns about the efficacy of some multi-agency practice in respect of Child in Need and CP Plans, the effectiveness of multi-agency meetings and effective information sharing, picking up early signs of neglect, the need to take a holistic overview of a series of reports of neglect and domestic abuse rather than them being treated as separate instances, and the effectiveness of care planning and reviewing as being focused on improving the lived experience of the child.</p> <p>There are emerging issues in terms of management capacity and emerging outcomes within our children’s homes service that require urgent interim action to ensure that the service is stabilised and can progress satisfactorily.</p>	<p>quality of practice and the outcomes for children.</p> <p>The most recent Ofsted Monitoring visit in September noted some progress being made but that progress remains slow.</p> <p>We have increased the management capacity of the Heads of Service by bringing in some experienced and proven temporary managers to drive practice standards and outcomes for children. We have seen a steady increase in the numbers of referrals received at the integrated front door, partly as a result of concerns for the welfare of children following their return to school and potentially latterly due to publicity of the issues raised around the Court Case and the publication of the Serious case review.</p> <p>Bradford Safeguarding Partnership will publish a Serious Case Review on Star Hobson in the near future which identified serious concerns about individual agency and interagency practice similar to lessons identified in other reviews.</p> <p>Ofsted inspected children’s homes in the course of the Summer and Autumn of 2021 and found a number of them to be operating below standard. Subsequently the service bolstered the management capacity with experience managers and recent inspections has demonstrated improvements in the provision and no further homes were judged inadequate.</p> <p>The service developed a more succinct and outcome</p>	

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	<p>These persistent and ongoing concerns in respect of the perceived insufficient pace of change have resulted in a letter from Vicky Ford MP, Minister for Children and Families, informing us that she is minded to change the Children’s Services Notice to Improve to a Statutory Direction and appoint an independent commissioner to review progress and evaluate further capacity to improve services in a timely way. It is not yet clear what the detailed arrangements for this, or the possible outcomes will be, but the ultimate outcome could be the creation of a Children’s Social Care Trust to elicit improvement at the pace required</p>	<p>focused improvement plan which has been widely shared and developed. This has been noted by partners and Ofsted as an improvement which allows staff and managers to focus more clearly on the critical services we need to deliver. This is regularly monitored.</p> <p>The DFE appointed a Commissioner to assess the authority’s ability to develop and deliver a safe and robust Children’s Social Care system and he has worked alongside the service and the authority for some months and submitted his report to the Secretary of State on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022. We await the outcome of the Secretary of State’s considerations.</p>	
<b>Ensuring an effective, integrated system of health and social care</b>	<p>The Council has worked even more closely with the NHS during the 2020/21 pandemic year, responding to different demand patterns, protecting people from the virus and integrating services in different ways. Our shared health and care strategy ‘healthy, happy and at home’ is signed up to by all partners and forms the basis for our joint working.</p> <p>The Wellbeing Board has been renewed over the past year to broaden its agenda to cover all of the wider determinants of health including employment, economy, housing, education and skills – and health and care. This has put Bradford in a better position to respond to the proposed NHS legislation on Integrated Care</p>	<p>The Council has been actively involved and engaged in the design and governance of the new Integrated Care Board and decision-making arrangements within the NHS when the Health and Care Act is passed by Parliament. We will be operating shadow arrangements in Bradford, District and Craven from 1 January until the Bill is passed.</p> <p>We have a comprehensive set of decision-making committees, partnership boards and system committees to discharge the proposed duties which are fully inclusive of the council’s health, care and public health functions and cognisant of the wider contribution the council’s services make to people’s health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The CEO will lead for the partnership on population</p>	<p>Iain Macbeath</p>

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	<p>Systems and Partnership governance.</p> <p>The Council has actively participated in Bradford’s emerging Integrated Care Partnership, communicating the ‘Act as One’ brand to its staff, updating the Strategic Partnering Agreement and leading on a number of joint work streams. We are represented at all strategic partnership boards and committees.</p> <p>Previous disputes around contributions to the Better Care Fund have all been fully resolved and an agreed BCF plan for 2021/22 was submitted to deadline.</p> <p>A Joint Commissioning and Planning Forum between the council and the NHS now meets monthly to share respective commissioning intentions and jointly plan future models of care. This includes a population health focus with Public Health and Children’s collaboration and our early help and locality working operating model.</p>	<p>health management, the Strategic Director will lead for the partnership on commissioning and service integration and other senior officers are involved in shaping the agenda for their client groups.</p> <p>System Finance &amp; Performance, System Quality and System Planning Committees have been operating for more than six months and have been used to agree allocation of resources and raise issues of quality and planning over that period.</p> <p>The Better Care Fund Plan for 2020/21 was signed off and a revised plan for 2021/22 is already in draft.</p>	
<p><b>Key Staffing Skills</b></p>	<p>There is a shortage of professional and skilled staff within the employment market leading to recruitment difficulties to key posts. Inability to recruit in key disciplines could have a significant impact on the Councils ability to deliver services and support the Council’s ambitions within the financial resources available.</p>	<p>To help address youth unemployment in the District we launched our Future Boost programme in June. Since then, more than 2,000 interventions have supported over 1,100 young people. Alongside this more than 500 young people have started on Kickstart placements coordinated by SkillsHouse, of which 254 have been within the Council and 250 across the employer partnership. More broadly, to the end of September 2021, more than 13,800</p>	<p>Anne Lloyd</p>



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		<p>have entered a positive employment or education destination or had in-work support through Skills House interventions. This includes over half of residents from BAME communities and 20% of participants from residents with a disability. The successful “Building Our Future” bid to the Community Renewal Fund will bring an additional £535,000 funding to focus on addressing inequalities of employment and engagement in education across a range of key groups (young people with disabilities, BAME, women graduates, Care Leavers, long-term NEET). 254 Kickstart placements (increasing weekly) have started across the Authority. The largest take up is in Business Admin support and continues to be a popular choice for young people. The first cohort of our newly established Leaving Care Employability Programme, a 12 month extended Kickstart programme for 15 care leavers commenced over the Summer. Working closely with the LEAP (Learning, Employment, Advice and Preparation) Team, care leavers are identified and encouraged to take up this opportunity. Placements are sourced based on their chosen area of interest and care leavers are given priority. So far, eight care leavers started in placements, and one has now gone on to a full time apprenticeship.</p> <p>We have taken on graduates from the Local Government National Graduate Development Programme and are on our second intake in 2021, and are part of local system talent development and attraction programmes. We are using the apprenticeship levy to develop existing and new skills in roles including professional and skilled roles. There are currently 196 live apprenticeships. In Children’s Services we are focussed on attracting and</p>	

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		<p>retaining social workers through a dedicated “bring heart” campaign and microsite, and are developing an ambitious ASYE academy to grow our own given the national shortages of experienced Level 3 Social Workers. We continue to review our approach to total rewards and development and include this as part of our wider attraction strategy. We have consulted on a recruitment and retention market supplement policy to help attract and retain talent in hard to fill roles, where there are market forces at play (e.g. HGV drivers). Workforce planning is progressing in services and a refresh and review of job evaluation and grading schemes is underway.</p>	
<p><b>Elective Home Education</b></p>	<p>There has been an acceleration in the growth of elective home education This increases the risk of losses in education and subsequent learning gaps for pupils, lack of opportunities to socialise, potential impact on mental health, decline in school budgets to meet these needs given additional pressures and loss of earnings for Council commercialised services. In 2020/21 this was further exacerbated with further risk to long term learning outcomes for Children &amp; Young people caused by the need to work in bubbles and the need to self-isolate.</p>	<p>The high numbers of children coming off school rolls to be home educated has somewhat stabilised due to investment into the Education Safeguarding team. However there are still roughly 50% more children home educated in the district compared to pre pandemic levels. If parents are not providing a suitable full time education from the start, there can be learning gaps, impact on mental health and curtailment of subsequent opportunities for children. Where children have involvement from other services, such as Children’s Social Care, significant work is necessary to ensure professionals across the district understand rights, roles and responsibilities with regards to EHE.</p>	<p>Marium Haque</p>