

Report of the Chief Audit and Control Officer

GOVERNANCE DASHBOARD – MAJOR PROJECTS1. Purpose of Report

To provide the Committee with a governance dashboard report relating to the Council's major and key projects.

2. Background

Members requested that a regular governance dashboard report be provided to Committee on major projects, such as the Beeston Square Development, Stapleford Town Fund and Housing Delivery Programme, to include a governance checklist and an independent assurance opinion from Internal Audit.

As a consequence of the ongoing lockdown protocols, it has not been possible to prioritise these governance reviews in time for this Committee. To allow time for a robust and professional challenge to be undertaken by Internal Audit, it is proposed that this work is deferred until at least the next meeting.

With regards to the Covid-19 emergency schemes, Internal Audit was asked to confirm that the Council has complied with the government's guidance on the grants given to businesses and the hardship scheme for council tax payers. The request also sought confirmation of compliance with internal governance protocols regarding the grants provided to voluntary and mutual aid groups.

In the immediate timeframe required for reporting to this Committee, it was not possible for the Chief Audit and Control Officer to professionally complete such a review and deliver a robust and independent assurance opinion. Despite this, the Chief Audit and Control Officer has provided some initial commentary regarding the emergency schemes, in particular the Business Support Grants scheme and these are provided in the appendix. A further report will be provided to this Committee in due course as part of the Internal Audit Progress Report.

It should be noted that with regard to decisions made by Committees during the current situation, levels of transparency and openness are being adhered to through the implementation of virtual meetings that include public participation and the ability to stream meetings while ensuring that quoracy levels comply with the Council's Constitution. It should be further noted that grants to outside organisations are currently being made under the Chief Executive's urgency powers following consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

Background Papers

Nil

APPENDIX**COVID-19 EMERGENCY SCHEMES**

With regards to the Covid-19 emergency schemes, Internal Audit was asked to confirm that the Council has complied with the government's guidance on the grants given to businesses and the hardship scheme for council tax payers. The request also sought confirmation of compliance with internal governance protocols regarding the grants provided to voluntary and mutual aid groups.

It would be difficult for the Chief Audit and Control Officer to complete such a review and deliver a robust and independent assurance opinion in the immediate timeframe required for reporting to this Committee. As such, a professional decision was taken to defer a full review until later after the majority of grant funding had been paid. This is in line with government guidance that supported the need for retrospective review, but not at the expenses of the delivering the schemes promptly and effectively.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services has prioritised the delivery of these schemes. Members should be assured that the Chief Audit and Control Officer has strategically supported him with setting-up the processes for flagging up potential fraud and irregularities. Internal Audit has also been operationally active in supporting the business support grants process with fraud checking and quality checks on a sample basis.

The Chief Audit and Control Officer is comfortable that the Council has delivered the best scheme possible given the timeframe and notwithstanding the tremendous pressure to pay these grants promptly.

Internal Audit will look to review the hardship scheme for council tax payers and the arrangements for providing emergency grants to voluntary and mutual aid groups.

Members will appreciate that much of what has been achieved has been done on an emergency footing and, as such, it may not have been feasible to follow regular established governance procedures in all cases. A further report will be provided to this Committee in due course as part of the Internal Audit Progress Report.