New toolkit gives crucial governance guidance to support council resilience

Tuesday 9 March, 2021

Press release

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A set of practical toolkits launched today by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and the think-tank Localis will help council officers and councillors navigate governance risk and resilience.

One of the toolkits will assist senior council staff - the golden triangle of chief executive/monitoring officer/finance officer – exercise their leadership responsibilities to own and champion good governance.

In addition, a separate set has been designed for the needs of individual council officers and councillors not expert in governance to help them play their part in understanding, and acting on, risks that might prevent a council being effective, well run and accountable.

Jacqui McKinlay, chief executive, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, said: “The toolkit practically describes seven ‘governance characteristics’ and clear examples of good and poor practice, supporting councils to review their own position.

“Drawing on research from a wide range of councils, including those requiring improvement support to councils looking to lead the way, we believe this work will positively contribute to local understanding of risk and what’s required to improve.”

Localis chief executive, Jonathan Werran, said: “The release of this toolkit, many years in the planning, could not be more opportune for a local government sector stretched to breaking point by a calendar year of pandemic and the twin pressures of remorseless service demand and financial structures.”

CIPFA CEO, Rob Whiteman, said: “Over the last decade, council finances have been bludgeoned by the dual pressures of austerity and increasing demand for services. With the impact of COVID-19 now added to the mix, practical toolkits that support good governance and strong risk management are essential to the ongoing resilience of local authorities.”

Scott Dorling, partner, Trowers and Hamlins said: "We are a very proud sponsor of this toolkit. The toolkit is a fantastic practical guide which aims to provide all local government officers and members with a framework to help them identify, understand and act on governance risks in their authority. The timing of the toolkit couldn't be better"

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Notes to Editors:

1. **Advance copy of the digital toolkits can be accessed**

Please see; www.cfps.org.uk/governancerisk

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1. **Report Launch – Tuesday 9th March from 11.00 to 12.00 via Zoom Webinar**

The report is being launched from 11.00 to 12.00 on Tuesday 9th March via Zoom Webinar with a panel debate that includes:

- Lord Bob Kerslake
- Helen Bailey, chief executive, Sutton LBC
- Siobhan Jones, director, communities and local government, MHCLG
- Cllr Marianne Overton, leader, Independent Group, Local Government Association

Registration is via Eventbrite:

1. **About the organisations involved**

About Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) is a social purpose consultancy and national centre of expertise. Our purpose is to help organisations achieve their outcomes through improved governance and scrutiny. We support local government, the public, corporate and voluntary sectors in ensuring transparency, accountability and greater involvement in their governance processes.

About Localis

Localis is an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to politics, public service reform and localism. We carry out innovative research, hold events and facilitate an ever growing network of members to stimulate and challenge the current orthodoxy of the governance of the UK.

www.localis.org.uk

Trowers & Hamlins

Trowers & Hamlins is well known for its eclectic mix of specialisations combining sector leadership in the UK and across the Middle East. We help businesses and governments change the way we live and work for the better. We do this by providing commercial advice geared towards tackling tomorrow's challenges in industry.

We are well known for being experts in the public sector and have thriving real estate, commercial, social housing, banking and finance, private wealth, employment and care practices, in addition to specialist practices such as planning, tax, pensions, and environment.

We are a top-40 UK law firm and undertake work around the globe. We have over 160 partners and approximately 990 employees. The main office is in the City of London, with three UK regional offices in Birmingham, Exeter and Manchester. Outside the UK we have more than 80 lawyers and four offices across the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region (including Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Dubai and Oman), as well as an office in Malaysia.

http://www.trowers.com/about/

1. **Main points in ‘Governance, risk and resilience’ toolkit**

The research was undertaken by CfGS and Localis over an eighteen month period. It was supported by the LGA, CIPFA, Local Partnerships, MHCLG and Trowers and Hamlin.

There are two products, one aimed at members and officers generally and another for those officers in statutory positions. The toolkit provides a framework for internal reflection based on seven governance characteristics with a description and a set of positive and negative behaviours.

The characteristics are:

- The state of member oversight through scrutiny and audit
- Extent of recognition of individual and collective responsibility for good governance
- How the council looks to the future to set its decision-making priorities

- Officer and councillor roles
- How the council’s real situation compares to its sense of itself
- Quality of local (external) relationships
- Awareness of political dynamics

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