

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council must ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council has a duty to implement the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, (which commenced on 1 April 2016). The requirements of the Act need to be applied to our governance structures to secure the type of changes the Act expects. The Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals (a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and globally responsible Wales). Furthermore, the Council must set well-being objectives that maximise the Council's contribution to the national well-being goals and embrace the sustainable development principle.

The Council also has a general duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [its] functions” and in discharging this duty, the Council must have regard in particular to the need to improve the exercise of its functions in terms of the following seven aspects of improvement:

1. Making progress towards an authority's strategic objectives (as set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan).
2. Improving service quality.
3. Improving service availability.
4. Fairness especially in reducing inequality in accessing or benefiting from services, or improving the wellbeing of disadvantaged groups.
5. Exercising functions in ways that contribute to the sustainable development of an area.
6. Improving the efficiency of services and functions.
7. Innovation and change which contributes to any of the above.

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In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

### **Section Two - The Purpose of the Governance Framework:**

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have resulted in the delivery of appropriate, cost effective and efficient services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives and to evaluate the likelihood of those risks and the impact, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

### **Section Three - The Governance Framework:**

The Council has updated this Annual Governance Statement to comply with the new 2016, Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and in association with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). The Framework demonstrates the system of internal controls which have been in place within the Council for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. The Framework illustrates examples of how the Council demonstrates compliance with good practice and meets the core and sub principles of effective governance. The Framework also provides details on the assurances taken during the year on the effectiveness of governance arrangements and the improvement work that arises from taking such assurances. The Council's governance environment embraces the seven core principles of the new Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (CIPFA/SOLACE, 2016).

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The improvement work identified following the development of the Annual Governance Statement is overseen by the Corporate Governance Group and progress is reported as follows:

- Corporate Directors Group receive a quarterly progress report on the improvement action plan;
- Policy and Resources Cabinet Board receive a half year and end of year progress report on the improvement action plan, the Cabinet will discharge this responsibility from 2018-2019 civic year, and;
- Audit Committee receive the end of year progress via the Annual Governance Statement.

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## Section Three - The Governance Framework

Acting in the public interest requires a commitment to and effective arrangements for:

Core Principle A	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
<p>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</p>	<p>Behaving with integrity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Council's political leadership have provided clear and consistent direction in terms of what is expected from senior officers, i.e. a workplace culture based on trust, respect, early and meaningful consultation.</li> <li>➤ <b>Anti-fraud, corruption and malpractice policy/whistle blowing policy:</b> conduct of Members is monitored by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Council's Standards Committee. During 2017-2018 there were no referrals from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that required the Standards Committee to hear a matter.</li> <li>➤ <b>Whistle blowing Policy/Procedure:</b> whistle blowing complaints are monitored by the Council's Audit Section to ensure that complaints are responded to.</li> <li>➤ <b>Standards Committee:</b> the Committee monitors the operation of the Council's adopted Members Code of Conduct throughout the Authority.</li> <li>➤ <b>Annual monitoring</b> of key employment policies, discipline, grievance, and whistle blowing takes place and is reported to Members in the annual equalities employment information report (published on the Council's website).</li> <li>➤ <b>Standing declarations register:</b> this is updated by Members as and when a declaration is made or amended when there has been a change in circumstances e.g. taking up new posts.</li> <li>➤ Officers' declarations are audited annually and Members on a cyclical basis.</li> </ul>

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Core Principle A	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>No material considerations were known during 2017-2018. The information for Members is provided on the Council's website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Internal Audit Service:</b> the service undertakes, when required, case by case checks on officer compliance with the Employee Code of Conduct. Last year a number of special investigations were undertaken in relation to non-compliance of the Employee Code of Conduct.</li> <li>➤ <b>Audit Committee:</b> the Committee meets on a quarterly basis throughout the year and is responsible for examining, approving and keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of risk assessment, risk management and internal controls/compliance. The Committee is also responsible for reviewing the work and performance of both internal and external audit and receives reports from both. The terms of reference of the Committee are consistent with those recommended in the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards (PSIAS). During 2017-2018, training on a number of topics was undertaken with members of the Audit Committee to support their role.</li> </ul> <p>The above arrangements ensure that Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that demonstrate high standards of conduct and effective governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy:</b> the Policy is published on the Council's website and reports are submitted on a regular basis to Members. An annual report is reported to Policy and Resources Cabinet Board and as part of the Council's wider performance management arrangements details of complaints and compliments received are included in quarterly performance reports to Cabinet Boards. The annual Ombudsman Complaint report is also submitted to the Policy &amp; Resources Cabinet Board.</li> </ul>

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Core Principle A	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>No systemic weaknesses have been identified over the last year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Customer Services Manager attends the quarterly all Wales Complaints meetings (which is also attended by the Public Services Ombudsman) to share good practice with representatives from the 22 Welsh Local authorities. This group visits the Public Services Ombudsman Wales office annually to strengthen working relationships.</li> <li>➤ Directorate complaints officers liaise regularly to discuss any issues arising across the Council. The Unreasonable/Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy has been utilised on a few occasions in respect of persistent face to face, telephone and email contacts in keeping with the policy. Within the Social Services Health and Housing Directorate there have not been any requirements for significant improvements as a result of complaint outcomes; as part of the quality assurance process, the Performance and Analysis Manager plays a lead role in ensuring the Directorate revisits practice as and when issues arise or if recurring themes are identified. Learning and training for front-line staff is continually monitored as part of 1-2-1/supervision on an individual basis, particularly when directly relating to complaints received.</li> </ul>
	Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Across the Council we have a number of professions that are obliged to comply with their relevant professional body's code of ethics. For example, all of our social workers must meet the standards set out in the code of conduct or code of practice from the Social Care Wales.</li> </ul>
	Respecting the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Council's Constitution:</b> the Constitution sets out how the Council operates and the process for policy and decision making. Within this framework all the decisions are taken by Council, Cabinet or Cabinet Boards. The decisions are</li> </ul>

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Core Principle A	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>presented in a comprehensive written format in a standard template. The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee considers any decisions directly before the Cabinet meets. This is referred to as contemporaneous scrutiny.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Council complies with a number of different legislation to ensure the proper running of the organisation, for example Employment statutory obligations, Health &amp; Safety legislation and Financial Regulations, with an overall good track record (as confirmed by our regulators).</li> </ul>

Core Principle B	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We aim to be an open and responsive Council that encourages those who use our services to tell us what is important to them and to suggest how services might improve. Examples of how we engage with individual citizens and service users effectively are listed under the sub principle included below.</li> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy:</b> On the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018, the Policy &amp; Resources Cabinet Board approved the Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy which covers the period 2018-2020. The Strategy has been developed to help us meet the requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to involve people in the work that the Council carries out. It has also been designed to make our collective communications and community relations efforts more consistent, effective and relevant and to support the delivery of the new Corporate Plan approved by Council on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018.</li> <li>➤ <b>Consultation Portal:</b> Since June 2017, the Council has used Snap Survey Software as the corporate consultation portal for internal and external</li> </ul>

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Core Principle B	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>stakeholder engagement. The Council's Planning Policy Service continues to use the Objective consultation software as that software enables consultation at all stages of Local Development Plan preparation and improves management of their consultee database.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Scrutiny Committees:</b> The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs are continuing to undertake specific training to enhance their skills. Training will continue throughout the new Council term on a Scrutiny by Scrutiny Committee basis, building on the Members' individual skills and interests and focussing their work as a team to best enable them to discharge their functions and responsibilities.</li> <li>➤ <b>Performance reports:</b> we have a number of channels where performance is reported to and scrutinised, e.g. quarterly budget and performance monitoring reports are submitted to chief officers and Cabinet Board / Scrutiny Committees and an Annual Report is published in October which contains an assessment of our overall performance in the previous financial year. The above information is available for our citizens to view on our website.</li> <li>➤ <b>Council Website:</b> we recently updated our website to make it easier for our citizens to use and for them to be able to access the information/service (bilingually) they want first time.</li> <li>➤ <b>Impact Assessment (IA) Framework:</b> The Equality Impact Assessment framework was revised during 2017-2018 to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016). Training for reporting officers is scheduled for 2018-2019.</li> </ul>



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Core Principle B	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Record of decision making and supporting materials:</b> all publically accessible reports are published on the Council’s website via Modern.gov.</li> <li>➤ <b>Decision making protocols:</b> the Council agrees its meeting cycle at its Annual Meeting and this is published on the Council’s website. Forward work programmes are required to be maintained for the next 3 meetings of the relevant committee. Report templates ensure the relevant information and advice is presented to substantiate recommendations. During 2017-18, the Committee report template has been revised to ensure the Council is able to demonstrate how the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 have been taken into consideration when making decisions. The revised template will be rolled out early 2018-2019.</li> </ul>
	Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Stakeholders:</b> we have a list of key stakeholders that we engage with on major policies and plans. These include: Youth Council; Older Persons’ Council; Black Minority Ethnic Community Association; and the Disability Network Access Group (whose members have direct experience of disability issues and offer to meet with service providers to help them address the needs of people with disabilities).</li> <li>➤ Working in partnership with trade unions and the Council’s formal employee relations framework is an important feature in how we engage with our employees. We have Staff Council at the highest level in the organisation, the LGS Green Book Negotiating Forum, LSPG (Schools trade union partnership forum), Service Joint Consultative Groups, and the Corporate Health &amp; Safety Trade Union forum. All of these groups meet regularly and are an opportunity for two-way information sharing, consultation (formal and informal) and where necessary, negotiation. As part of our approach to partnership working, trade unions have representation in other forums; so for example, trade unions sit as</li> </ul>

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Core Principle B	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>an integral part of the Heads of Service Voluntary Redundancy Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Partnership Governance Arrangements</b> (including Terms of Reference): the Council has in place governance arrangements for partnerships which:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clarify the roles of members both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the Council;</li> <li>○ Clearly set out the legal status of the partnership; and</li> <li>○ Make clear the extent to which representatives or organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>➤ <b>Partnership working arrangements:</b> during 2017-2018 we continued to participate in a number of partnerships as follows: the Public Services Board, Think Family Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, Low Income Families Partnership, Digital Inclusion Partnership, and Third Sector Partnership. The Public Services Board has commissioned a review of partnership governance and this should report in 2018-2019. Partnership working with our trade unions and teaching associations is a predominant feature of the Council's culture in relation to workforce engagement. It involves elected Members, managers, employees and trade unions developing and implementing a way of working based on mutual respect and trust, shared objectives and joint ownership of problem solving.</li>   <li>➤ <b>Regional collaborative arrangements:</b> we continued with our regional working arrangements via Education through Regional Working, Western Bay, City Region and Waste Services. A number of reports have been brought forward to the Council to ensure the participation of the Council is properly authorised.</li> </ul>

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Core Principle B	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
	Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	<p><b>Corporate communications and engagement activities:</b> It is important that our citizens and other stakeholders have a voice at an early stage to influence the development of policies and strategies that affect their lives and inform the way services are planned and delivered. However, due to the complexity of the differing needs of citizens it is not always possible to meet all needs, but a good understanding means we are better placed to divert valuable resource into the right places, at the right times and in the right ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy</b> (see above)</li> <li>➤ <b>Consultation Portal</b> (see above)</li> <li>➤ <b>Public Services Board:</b> On 21st September 2017, the Public Services Board approved a Citizen Engagement Scheme to support and improve citizen engagement in the various consultations that will be conducted by the Board.</li> </ul> <p>We have a number of channels of communication in place with all sections of the community, stakeholders and staff. Our corporate communications and engagement system comprises of internal and external networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Internal networks</b> include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff monthly e-newsletter - features important information relevant to staff;</li> <li>○ Staff Intranet which acts as an internal information portal ( including press releases);</li> <li>○ Staff Portal - launched internally and is a web-based tool through which employees can access relevant information about the Council. It is due to be made available for staff to access from home during 2018-2019.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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Core Principle B	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff consultations – during the year we undertook a number of staff consultations e.g. 2018-2019 budget proposals; Children and Young People Services staff survey; draft Well-being Objectives as contained within the draft Corporate Plan and;</li> <li>○ Chief Executive Roadshows – a series of Chat with the Chief sessions were held with staff to explain the Forward Financial Plan and its implications</li> <li>➤ <b>External networks</b> including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Key stakeholders that we engage with on major policies and plans. These include: Youth Council; Older Persons’ Council; Black Minority Ethnic Community Association; and the Disability Network Access Group (whose members have direct experience of disability issues and offer to meet with service providers to help them address the needs of people with disabilities).</li> <li>○ Community Engagement events: During 2017-2018, officers attended a number of community events as part of the consultation exercise on the Council’s draft well-being objectives.</li> <li>○ Public meetings - last year senior officers from the Council attended public meetings to brief the public on proposals for Cymer Afan Comprehensive and the Pantteg Landslip.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Plan 2018-2022:</b> an extensive public consultation exercise took place between 6<sup>th</sup> July and 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017 on the Council’s draft well-being objectives which generated a total of 520 responses via a combination of channels (on-line survey, community engagement events and post boxes).</li> <li>➤ <b>Budget 2018-2019:</b> an extensive public consultation exercise took place between 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018 which generated over 303</li> </ul>

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Core Principle B	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>responses from a wide range of stakeholders which shaped the final budget proposals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The new Communications and Community relations Strategy sets out a range of measures designed to improve the effectiveness of the Council's mechanisms for involving people in its work.</li> <li>➤ <b>Citizen Engagement Scheme</b> (see above Public Service Board)</li> </ul>

Core Principle C	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	Defining outcomes	<p>The key plans listed below, describe the Council's short term and long term priorities to ensure citizens receive high quality services whether directly, or in partnership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Plan:</b> The Council's previous administration set six well-being objectives based on the improvement priorities that had been pursued over their term of office. The administration also extended the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 to enable the incoming administration (May 2017) to consider what its priorities would be over this term. During the summer those priorities were reviewed against the Manifesto commitments made to the electorate and replaced the six well-being objectives with three well-being objectives. Following a period of public consultation those three well-being objectives were adopted by Council at the end of September 2017, as was the revised Corporate Plan that set out how we would seek to fulfil the new objectives. The Plan was further refined over the period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, when a further revised Plan was approved by Council.</li> </ul>

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Core Principle C	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="763 260 2128 683">➤ <b>Strategic Equality Plan:</b> The Council has a Strategic Equality Plan to make sure we work towards treating all people fairly, promoting equality of opportunity, combating discrimination and harassment and promoting good community relations. Last year, the Heads of Service Equality and Community Cohesion Group continued to monitor progress against the equality objectives. Areas of success have included the development of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Draft Strategy and work to better support and develop the Black Minority Ethnic Community Association. There were no complaints in relation to the Strategic Equality Plan during 2017-2018.</li> <li data-bbox="763 707 2128 1345">➤ <b>Biodiversity Duty Plan:</b> The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces a duty (the S6 Duty) on public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity, thereby promoting the resilience of ecosystems, in the exercise of its functions. The Council's Biodiversity Duty Plan was adopted on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The Plan focuses on evaluating our existing work practices and assimilating the new statutory duty into wider Council functions. This will result in a more joined-up approach between services, fulfilling both the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requirements and the sustainable development principle embedded in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The six objectives incorporated into the Plan, include requirements such as embedding biodiversity into decision making at all levels; managing and enhancing our habitats; improving our understanding and monitoring of biodiversity; and putting in place a framework for delivery. The Act further requires that before the end of 2019, and every third year thereafter, all public authorities must publish a report on what they have done to comply with the S6 Duty.</li> </ul>

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Core Principle C	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Property Asset Management Plan:</b> Progress on the Property Asset Management Plan (2016-2021) is reported via annual Property Performance Reviews. The Plan and annual progress statements continue to link, feed off, and react to a range of other corporate plans, programmes and strategies, including the Forward Financial Plan, the ICT Strategy and the Council’s workforce planning arrangements. Property asset management is also included in the Council’s business planning process to ensure the identification of any property consequences of the delivery of the Council’s priorities.</li> <li>➤ <b>ICT Asset Management:</b> A new Asset Management IT system has been sourced and an audit of equipment is being undertaken to derive the information needed to populate the system. A detailed replacement programme will then be created and the necessary funding assigned. An interim replacement programme has been drafted and the costs required to facilitate have been profiled over the next four years. These costs to be met by the ICT Reserve but once this source has been exhausted then continued funding will be sought from the Capital Programme.</li> <li>➤ <b>Other Asset Management Plans:</b> we have well-established mechanisms in place to manage our many assets. Our asset management plans provide information on the number and condition of different classes of asset including Highways, Fleet, Bridges and Structures, Property and ICT. The asset management plans inform our risk register and are an important consideration when determining revenue and capital budget priorities and our wider strategies.</li> <li>➤ <b>The Corporate Asset Management Group</b> has continued to meet through 2017-2018. The emphasis has been to develop work streams from the reported accommodation strategy and the emerging agile working agenda. These</li> </ul>

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Core Principle C	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		priorities are being led by Property and ICT with support from HR and the remaining corporate members of the group.
	Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Revenue and Capital Budgets:</b> the Council's Annual Budget and Capital Programme were set in the context of the revised Forward Financial Plan and Corporate Plan. Monthly reports are produced for senior officers and quarterly reports for elected Members, to support the monitoring expenditure forecasts against the agreed cash limits for the revenue budget. A Capital Programme Steering Group meets regularly to review expenditure against budget on the capital programme and to update the capital programme as funding decisions are made on relevant specific grants with reports to senior officers and elected Members as appropriate. Capital expenditure is also monitored and reported to Members quarterly.</li> <li>➤ <b>Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015:</b> The Corporate Plan 2018-2022 sets out the steps we will take to achieve the Council's well-being objectives and related improvement priorities through which we will maximise our contribution to the seven well-being goals and improve citizen's social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. The Plan also demonstrates how the sustainable development principle has been applied in developing those steps.</li> <li>➤ <b>Budget 2018-2019:</b> whilst the Council has made efforts to embrace the sustainable development principle in developing its budget proposals, it is inevitable, given the scale of changes that there will be some negative impacts arising from proposals.</li> </ul>



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Core Principle D	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	Determining interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Record of decision making and supporting materials</b> (see above)</li> <li>➤ <b>Decision making protocols</b> (see above)</li> </ul>
	Planning interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Planning Arrangements:</b> the Council has a number of robust corporate planning and control arrangements in place in the following areas: Strategic Plans, Forward Financial Plan, Workforce Plan, Asset Plans, Risk Management and Performance Management.</li> <li>➤ <b>Committee Cycle dates:</b> committee dates are confirmed at the annual Council meeting and have clear terms of reference and membership. Amendments to committee arrangements are taken back to full Council for consideration and agreement during the civic year. The dates of committee meetings are circulated in the form of work programmes to ensure officers produce reports in a timely manner. Forward work programmes have also been developed for Cabinet Board and Scrutiny Committees.</li> <li>➤ <b>Key stakeholders:</b> we have a list of key stakeholders (internally and externally) that we engage with on major policies and plans throughout the year.</li> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Risk Policy:</b> The Council's Corporate Risk Management Policy has been updated to reflect improvements made to the way in which both strategic risks and operational risks are recorded, managed and reported. The revised Policy will continue to promote an open, consistent and proactive risk management attitude.</li> </ul>

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Core Principle D	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Performance Management Framework:</b> we have a range of performance indicators that enable the Council to measure performance of services. To support the delivery of the framework, there is a corporate performance management team as well as directorate performance management teams.</li> </ul>
	Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Financial management arrangements:</b> the Council has sound financial management arrangements in place (including a range of policies and procedures such as financial regulations, financial procedures, contract standing orders, accounting instructions and officer delegations). These arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010), all relevant legislation and within the terms of its Constitution.</li> <li>➤ The Director of Finance and Corporate Services is responsible for ensuring there are proper arrangements in place for the administration of the financial affairs of the Council. Corporate Directors are responsible for the financial management of their respective services and are supported by regular financial management information, which includes monthly financial monitoring reports.</li> <li>➤ In addition, quarterly budget and Forward Financial Plan monitoring reports are submitted to the Council, Chief Officers and Scrutiny Committees, culminating in the production of the statutory Annual Statement of Accounts.</li> <li>➤ The budget setting process for last year continued to be challenging and difficult decisions on cuts were unavoidable as a consequence, however the final settlement from Welsh Government was better than expected. The savings identified came from a prolonged and intense professional and Cabinet Member input and where appropriate subject to consultation with service users, staff and trade unions, and scrutinised by the relevant committee.</li> </ul>

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Core Principle E	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	Developing the entity's capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ During 2017-2018 we developed a Corporate Workforce Plan. Consultation will take place with relevant stakeholders with a view to agreeing this plan and implementing it early in 2018-2019.</li> </ul>
	Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Council's Constitution clearly sets out the different, but complementary, responsibilities of Members and Officers to ensure there is effective leadership throughout the authority and there are clear job descriptions for all staff, which highlight their roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>➤ <b>Cross party panel:</b> the panel which is made up elected Members (chaired by the Leader) undertakes the Chief Executive's appraisal and agrees the objectives for year ahead and personal learning aims.</li> <li>➤ The <b>Chief Executive</b> (as Paid Head of Service) leads the Council Officers and chairs the Corporate Directors and Corporate Management Groups (includes all Heads of Service). The Director of Finance and Corporate Services is the <b>Section 151 officer</b> under the Local Government Act 1972 and the <b>Designated Monitoring Officer</b> (Head of Legal Services) carries overall responsibility for legal compliance. The <b>Head of Democratic Services</b> created by the Local Government Measure 2011 is the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer (previously the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services) and reports formally to the Democratic Services Committee on the adequacy of resources available to deliver the support related to the democratic functions of the Council.</li> <li>➤ <b>Members' induction programme:</b> all new Members and those returning Members following an election, receive an induction programme to familiarise</li> </ul>

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Core Principle E	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>themselves with protocols, procedures, values and aims of the Council. Following Local Government Elections in May 2017, the Council saw the introduction of 64 Members who were offered a focussed and tailored Induction programme providing them with the skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively. This included 27 Elected Members taking public office for the first time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Member Support and Development:</b> A schedule of Member Seminars was delivered over the Civic Year covering a wide range of topics such as the Swansea Bay City Deal, Violence against Women and Counter-Extremism training as well as matters such as the 2018/2019 Budget Consultation.</li> <li>➤ <b>Officer Development (Performance Appraisal System and Employment Development Review):</b> the Council's corporate training and development capacity has been reduced significantly over several years, and continues to reduce. Learning, training and development opportunities are now primarily service-initiated, with staff within adult and children's services being best supported as a result of the Welsh Government Social Care Workforce Development Programme and Council match funding. Social workers receive a full induction programme in their first year of practice and ongoing support throughout their career. During 2017-2018, despite corporate training capacity being significantly reduced, we continued to support and deliver a considerable amount of training and qualifications, supporting staff development and progression at all levels in the organisation.</li> <li>➤ In 2017-2018, priority was given to workforce development across the social care sector and ensuring compliance with the Code of Practice on the role of Directors of Social Services, through the Social Care Wales Workforce</li> </ul>

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Core Principle E	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>Development Programme (SCWWDP) Grant. The SCWWDP Grant has continued to be used to support the continued implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 as well as identified regional and local priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Other priority training areas for the wider workforce included; Awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation; Digital Literacy Skills; Welsh Language; Data Protection; Violence against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and Workshops to Raise Awareness of PREVENT.</li> <li>➤ In 2017-2018 we have supported a number of apprenticeships in various designations throughout the organisation with the aim of supporting people into work and career development. Apprenticeships in building, construction and engineering as well as social care have proved to have been successful.</li> <li>➤ <b>Health and wellbeing of the workforce:</b> we have a number of arrangements in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce, these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maximising Attendance at Work Policy, which has a number of options to support people to return to work and remain in work, for example, early occupational health referrals, rehabilitation and phased return</li> <li>○ Stress risk assessments are available for everyone signed off work with stress even if its non-work related stress</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Core Principle F	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
<p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	<p>Managing risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Risk Policy, Corporate Risk Register and procedures for Risk management:</b> the Director of Finance is responsible for overseeing the implementation and continuous development of corporate risk. During 2017-2018 work has been completed on revising and updating the Council's existing Corporate Risk Management Policy and the Council's corporate risk management arrangements. The risk module of the CAMMS performance management system to strengthen the underpinning risk management process went live on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.</li> <li>➤ <b>Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO):</b> the Head of Information and Communications Technology is the Authority's designated Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), a role recommended in the Local Government Data Handling guidance and which is reinforced by the Public Services Network (PSN) Information Assurance requirements. It has been agreed that the SIRO will report directly to the Corporate Directors Group on information security matters. The SIRO is accountable for information risk throughout the Authority.</li> </ul>
	<p>Managing performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Corporate Performance Management Framework:</b> To further improve the management and reporting of the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and other services and functions delivered by the Council, a corporate performance management system was purchased during 2017-2018 and this will be fully implemented by the end of the summer 2018.</li> </ul>
	<p>Robust internal control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Internal Audit Section:</b> Internal audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of</li> </ul>

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Core Principle F	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>risk management, control, and governance processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In March 2017, the Internal Audit Service was externally assessed in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the service was assigned the highest rating.</li> <li>➤ During 2017-2018, 54 formal reports were issued with recommendations made where appropriate and all audit work undertaken complied with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Details of achievement against the 2017-2018 audit plan will be presented in June to the Audit Committee, in addition an opinion will be given via the Annual Internal Audit Report that “<b><i>Reasonable assurance can be given that there have been no major weaknesses noted in relation to the various internal control systems operating within the Authority</i></b>”.</li> <li>➤ Each year, the section has a risk based <b>Internal Audit Plan</b> approved by Audit Committee, which involves carrying out a series of audits in order to provide an opinion on the internal controls, risk management and governance arrangements of the Council. In addition, the section also carries out a number of special investigations which will include investigations into suspected incidents of fraud, irregularity and malpractice. No significant governance issues were identified during 2017-2018. The <b>Audit Manager</b> provides quarterly reports to Audit Committee highlighting any concerns and to give assurance to elected Members regarding the Council’s internal controls.</li> <li>➤ The <b>Audit Committee</b> monitors the work plan of the Internal Audit Section, and the work of external audit, throughout the year. Enhancements have been made throughout the year to the reports provided to Members by Internal Audit. Work is ongoing to strengthen the role of Audit Committee.</li> </ul>

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Core Principle F	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>IT Health Checks:</b> the Council continues to undertake annual IT Health Checks which incorporate internal and external penetration testing as part of yearly PSN (Public Services Network) accreditation. The accreditation takes the form of an annual submission detailing how the Authority performs against a host of controls based upon ISO27001 and will give the Council confidence that effective arrangements are in place regarding the collection, storage and use of data (including personal data). The last reaccreditation, which was successful, took place in November 2017.</li> <li>➤ <b>IT audits:</b> we will work with both the Wales Audit Office and the Internal Audit Section to put in place a series of IT audits which will be undertaken during 2018-2019.</li> <li>➤ <b>Annual Governance Statement:</b> annually, officers undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance framework when compiling the annual governance statement. This is a shared effort with wide input from a range of services outside the finance and audit functions (e.g. Legal, ICT, H&amp;S and HR). The Annual Governance Statement is presented by senior officers of the Corporate Governance Group to the Corporate Directors Group and Cabinet for agreement.</li> </ul>
	Managing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)</b> – see above - sub principle Managing Risk.</li> <li>➤ <b>General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)</b> - As a result of the implication of the General Data Protection Regulations, the Council will be updating its data protection policies and information sharing protocols to ensure compliance with the same during the financial year 2018-2019. Ongoing review will take place to ensure the effectiveness of the policies and protocols.</li> </ul>



## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Core Principle F	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>➤ <b>Strengthening and Modernising Democratic Arrangements</b> - During 2017-2018, we implemented the next phase of the 'Modern.Gov' Committee Administration Management software system, which included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ embedding the system core usage and exploring options to widen functionality such as 'automated workflow' which could support better work and time management of report writing processes linked to the relevant forward work programme and investigate activation of the Welsh Language module to support production of bilingual agendas and minutes.</li> <li>○ Maintenance of automatic calendar notifications, which will ensure Members get real time updates to any changes in committee meeting dates, avoiding miss-communication and non-attendance,</li> <li>○ To date 97% of the 64 elected Members now receive papers electronically via iPad or the 'Modern Gov' system.</li> </ul>
	Strong public financial management	<p>➤ The Director of Finance and Corporate Services is the responsible officer for the proper administration of the financial affairs of the Authority. This finance function provides support to directorates and determines the budget preparation and financial monitoring processes. This function also provides the annual statement of accounts for the Authority.</p> <p>➤ The budget setting process for last year continued to be challenging and difficult decisions on cuts were unavoidable as a consequence, however the final settlement from Welsh Government was better than expected. The savings identified came from a prolonged and intense professional and Cabinet Member input and subject to an extensive programme of consultation with service users, staff and trade unions, and scrutinised by the relevant committee. The Council also took steps to ensure the equality impact of budget</p>

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Core Principle F	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
		<p>proposals was explicitly considered when developing and agreeing the proposals within the revised Forward Financial Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In addition, quarterly budget and Forward Financial Plan monitoring reports are submitted to the Council, Chief Officers and Scrutiny Committees, culminating in the production of the statutory Annual Statement of Accounts, all available for the public to view on the Council's website.</li> <li>➤ The Annual Statement of Accounts is a statutory summary of the Council's financial affairs for the financial year and is prepared in accordance with the local government Accounting Code of Practice (ACOP). The purpose of the Statement of Accounts is to give electors, local taxpayers, council members and any other interested parties clear information on the overall finances of the Council and to demonstrate the good stewardship of public money for the year.</li> <li>➤ Capital and revenue expenditure and related activities are subject to annual audit by the Wales Audit Office and an unqualified opinion (our information in the financial statements was sound) was provided on the Annual Statement of Accounts by WAO for 2016-2017.</li> </ul>

Core Principle G	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	Implementing good practice in transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Members' Allowance scheme and Staff Pay Structure: the Council has a clear scheme setting out the terms and conditions for remunerating members and officers and an effective structure for managing the process. No new non-compliance issues were identified by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in relation to the NPT Scheme during 2017-2018.</li> </ul>

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Core Principle G	Sub principle	Demonstrated by
	Implementing good practices in reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Annual Governance Statement:</b> annually, officers undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework when compiling the annual governance statement. This is a shared effort with wide input from a range of services outside the finance and audit functions (e.g. Legal, ICT, H&amp;S and HR). The Annual Governance Statement is presented by senior officers of the Corporate Governance Group to the Corporate Directors Group and Cabinet for agreement.</li> </ul>
	Assurance and effective accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Procurement:</b> the Procurement Team aim to ensure that best use is made of resources and that tax payers and service users receive value for money. The team continue to make improvements to the way goods and services are procured and the roll out of the electronic ordering and receipting system is ongoing. The electronic systems replace the old fashioned, labour intensive paper based process and has resulted in better management information regarding the goods and services the Authority buys as well as better adherence to corporate, regional and national procurement frameworks.</li> <li>➤ Internal Audit undertakes a review of all of the Authority’s major financial systems on an annual basis.</li> <li>➤ The Auditor General for Wales reports annually on his audit and assessment work in relation to whether the Council has discharged its duties and met the requirements under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. At the time of preparing this Statement, the Council is yet to receive the WAO’s Annual Improvement Report for 2017–2018.</li> </ul>

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## Section Four - Review of effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Chief Officers and the Internal Audit Service who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. A Corporate Governance Group, reporting to the Corporate Directors Group ensures that improvement work is scheduled, resourced and monitored.

The review mechanism includes:

- **Constitution review and monitoring** - the Chief Executive and the Head of Legal Services are required to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution, and to report to Council at least annually on any proposed changes. During 2017-2018, the Head of Legal Services reported to Council on a number of occasions with amendments to the Constitution.
- **Standards Committee** – during the year the committee met to consider reports relating to decisions of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and the Ombudsman grant of dispensations to Councillors. Last year there were no referrals from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that required the Standards Committee to hear a matter.
- **Audit Committee** - work has been ongoing to strengthen the role of the Audit Committee.
- **Internal Audit Service** – the service prepares an annual plan of work which is then monitored throughout the year by the Audit Committee. A series of audit reviews are carried out throughout the year, in order to provide an opinion on the internal control, risk management and governance arrangements of the Council. During 2017-2018, 54 formal reports were issued.
- **Wales Audit Office audit report** (Annual Improvement Report) – At the time of preparing this Statement, the Council is yet to receive the WAO's Annual Improvement Report for 2017-2018. However, it is not expected that the Council will receive any statutory recommendations within that report.
- **Annual Reports** – the Council produces a number of annual reports throughout the year to give assurances on our governance arrangements. These include the following: Asset Management, Audit Service Annual Report,

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Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report, Occupational Health and Safety and Joint Resilience Annual Report, Information Management & Information Governance Annual report, Ombudsman Annual Report, Performance Annual Report, Social Services Director’s Annual Report, Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report, Welsh Language Scheme - Annual Monitoring Report. The Corporate Governance Group will oversee any risks identified to governance arrangements, arising from these annual reports and none were received during 2017-2018.

### Governance Issues – progress to date

The table below describes the governance issues identified during 2016-2017 and the progress made against these during 2017-2018.

Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress	Carry Forward for 2018-2019
1. Modernise and Strengthen Democratic Services – further development work required to Modern.Gov in relation to embedding the automated work flow into council governance processes.	Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer	<p>This work has been delayed as to comply with the Welsh Language Standards staff need to be upskilled to use the Welsh Language Module of the system.</p> <p>This improvement area will be a key priority for Democratic Services to progress during 2018-2019.</p>	No
2. Corporate Risk Management – further improvement work required to the existing policy and corporate risk register.	Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer / Head of Financial Services	Work has been completed on revising and updating the Council’s existing Corporate Risk Management Policy and the Council’s corporate risk management arrangements:	No

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Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress	Carry Forward for 2018-2019
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New criteria for risk scoring has been developed</li> <li>○ Training for directorate officers has been completed</li> <li>○ Strategic risks have been identified</li> <li>○ Operational risks have been reviewed and updated</li> </ul> <p>Corporate Risk Policy has been updated.</p> <p>The risk module of the CAMMS performance management system to strengthen the underpinning risk management processes went live on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.</p>	No
<p>3. Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 - ensure the Council's decision making, planning and partnership arrangements comply with the requirements of the Act.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer</p>	<p><b>Corporate Planning:</b> The Council set and published its well-being objectives on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017 (as contained within the Corporate Plan 2017-2022) following an 8 week consultation period (6<sup>th</sup> July – 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017). An updated Corporate Plan for the period 2018/2022 was approved by Council on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018.</p>	No

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Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress	Carry Forward for 2018-2019
		<p><b>Decision making:</b> The Committee Report Template has been revised to meet the requirements of the Act and will be issued early 2018-2019.</p> <p><b>Partnership Planning:</b> The Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board prepared and published its Well-being assessment in May 2017. The findings of this assessment informed the draft priorities contained within the Board's draft Well-being Plan which was consulted upon for a 12 week statutory period. On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018, the Board approved the draft which was presented and approved by Council on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The final Plan will be published in May 2018.</p> <p>As required by the Act, the Public Services Board has produced a Citizen Engagement Scheme to support and improve citizen engagement in the various consultations that will be conducted by the Board.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">No</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No</p>

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Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress	Carry Forward for 2018-2019
<p>4. Equalities (Equalities Impact Assessment) to revise associated guidance to incorporate examples of good practice for data collection, data sources</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer</p>	<p>The Equalities Impact Assessment form has been revised into an Impact Assessment (IA) Tool which incorporates requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which are required to be taken into consideration when making decisions. Training for officers and Members is being arranged in 2018-2019.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>5. Welsh Language - ensure the systems established to implement the Welsh Language Standards are robust</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer</p>	<p>The Challenge process has drawn to a close with a final determination for 9 no. standards requiring approval by the Policy &amp; Resources Cabinet Board (18<sup>th</sup> April 2018).</p> <p>A meeting with the Commissioner's representatives to discuss our performance in the first year since the Standards (2016-17) came into force indicated a positive position overall. Some issues were highlighted which have already been addressed.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Officers' Group have completed a number of initiatives to support the</p>	<p>No</p>



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Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress	Carry Forward for 2018-2019
		implementation of the Standards, including the establishment of a Welsh language preference form and database, as well as working with Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot to help assist in other practical opportunities to secure greater compliance.	
6. Develop a corporate workforce plan - in line with Wales Audit Office guidance developed with the Welsh Local Government Association/ Human Resources Development Network	Head of Human Resources	Draft document produced and currently being reviewed to ensure alignment with the Council's revised Corporate Plan 2018-2022.	No
7. Corporate performance appraisal process - review new process	Head of Human Resources	Review completed	No
8. Information Commissioner's Audit action plan – monitor roll-out of Data Protection training across the Council	Head of ICT and Procurement / Head of Legal Services	Training programme in place and communicated to all staff. Another reminder for staff is to be issued shortly.	No



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Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress	Carry Forward for 2018-2019
		An interim replacement programme has been drafted and the costs required to facilitate have been profiled over the next four years. These costs to be met by the ICT Reserve but once this source has been exhausted then continued funding will be sought from the Capital programme.	
11. Corporate Code of Governance - review of assurances in place to fully comply with core principle A on behaviours and values	Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer	Work to be initiated in next financial year in alignment with the Corporate Workforce Plan.	Yes
12. City Deal – ensure the governance arrangements for the emerging City Deal are aligned and dove tailed with local government arrangements	Chief Executive	The Chief Executive presented a progress report to Cabinet 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2017 and 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2018.	No

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### Section Five - Governance Issues for 2018-19 (including those carried forward from last year and new ones identified)

Key Improvement Area		Carried Over from 2017-2018	New 2018-2019
1.	Equalities – roll-out of training, implementation, review and evaluation of the revised Impact Assessment Tool	✓	✓
2.	General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – monitoring of arrangements	✓	✓
3.	Information Management – update the Information Strategy and bring forward for approval	✓	✓
4.	Code of Corporate Governance – review of assurances in place to fully comply with Core Principle A on Behaviours and Values	✓	✓

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements and we will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

**Signed:**

**Chief Executive: Steven Phillips**

**Date:**

**Signed:**

**Leader of the Council: Councillor Rob Jones**

**Date:**