Section One – Scope and responsibility

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 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.

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 Annual Governance Statement complies 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 31st March 2019. 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).

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;
- Cabinet 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.

Section Three - The Governance Framework

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

Core Principle A	
Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Behaving with integrity	➢ 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. ➢ **Anti-fraud, corruption and malpractice policy/whistle blowing policy**: conduct of Members is monitored by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Council's Standards Committee. During 2018-2019, there were no referrals from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that required the Standards Committee to hear a matter. ➢ **Whistle blowing Policy/Procedure:** whistle blowing complaints are monitored by the Council's Audit Section to ensure that complaints are responded to. All whistleblowing complaints received were dealt with in line with the Policy. ➢ **Standards Committee:** the Committee monitors the operation of the Council's adopted Members Code of Conduct throughout the Authority. ➢ **Annual monitoring** 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). ➢ **Standing declarations register:** 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. ➢ Officers' declarations are audited annually and Members on a cyclical basis. No material considerations were known during 2018-2019. The information for Members is provided on the Council's website. ➢ **Internal Audit Service:** 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

Core Principle A	
Core Principle A	
Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Behaving with integrity	were undertaken in relation to non-compliance of the Employee Code of Conduct. Details of all such investigations and outcomes were fully reported to the Audit Committee. ➢ **Audit Committee:** 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 2018-2019, training on a number of topics was undertaken with members of the Audit Committee to support their role. The above arrangements ensure that Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that demonstrate high standards of conduct and effective governance. ➢ **Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy:** the policy is published on the Council's website with service related reports provided on a quarterly basis as part of the Council's performance management arrangements. Outcomes of investigations undertaken by service managers under stage 1 and the designated complaints officer under stage 2 of the policy should explain if the complaint was upheld/not upheld or partially upheld and lessons learned from the investigation should be recorded. This information helps to identify any systemic failings in service delivery provision. ➢ The Public Services Ombudsman Wales (PSOW) overview report as it relates to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) is provided by the Head of Legal Services on an annual basis. Complaints regarding the Welsh Language are separately reported within the Welsh Language annual report. That information must include the number of complaints received during the preceding year relating to the service delivery, operational and policy making standards with which the council is under a duty to comply.

Core Principle A	
Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Behaving with integrity	➤ All Wales complaints meetings are held twice yearly (also attended by the Public Services Ombudsman) to share learning and good practice across the 22 Welsh Local Authorities. The Principal Officer for Policy and Democratic Services attends these meetings as the NPTCBC representative. This group meets staff from the Public Services Ombudsman Wales office in Bridgend annually to help strengthen working relationships. ➤ The Council's **Unreasonable/Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy** has been utilised on a few occasions over the last year to help manage persistent face-to-face, telephone and email contacts in keeping with actions identified within the policy. Limitations on contact arrangements are reviewed as needed by the relevant Head of Service in keeping with the policy.
Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	➤ 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.
Respecting the rule of law	➤ **Council's Constitution:** 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 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. ➤ The Council complies with a number of different legislation to ensure the proper running of the organisation, for example Employment statutory obligations, Health & Safety legislation and Financial Regulations, with an overall good track record (as confirmed by our regulators).

Core Principle B	
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Openness	We aim to be a transparent 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. ➢ **Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020:** During 2018-2019, work continued to deliver on the requirements of the Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy. Good progress was made in adopting a different operating model, making a shift in emphasis from a largely reactive communications function to a more proactive service. The business partner model became more embedded and we improved our use of insight in delivering more effective communications. We adopted a more confident and positive style of communications and made more use of interactive and multi-media content for a range of different channels, including a more engaging approach to promoting the Council's Corporate plan. This resulted in substantial growth in the number of Facebook followers and a higher level of engagement, both of which contribute to increasing the reach of our communications. ➢ **Consultation**: A new Consultation and Engagement Strategy was developed and a Corporate Engagement Group (CEG) established to ensure a corporate and consistent approach to engagement and consultation activities across the Council and share learning and good practice. The Council's contract for Snap Survey Software, the corporate consultation software for internal and external stakeholder engagement, was renegotiated and renewed in line with the changing requirements of the CEG, making consultation exercises more accessible. 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. ➢ **Council Website**: During the year, a dedicated 'Have your say' area was created on our website where all 'current' consultations can be accessed and responded to. This can be accessed from a 'button' on the homepage of the web and the friendly URLs

Core Principle B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Openness	www.npt.gov.uk/haveyoursay / www.npt.gov.uk/dweudeichdweud. An online newsroom was also launched where content from the Council, in a variety of formats, is curated. ➢ A new area on the Council's website 'ShapingNPT' has been designed to improve communications and engagement. The aim is to improve awareness of what the Council does and encourage engagement by simplifying the narrative around the Council's Corporate Plan and Annual Reports. We are using citizens' and wider stakeholders' stories to bring the Council's work to life and celebrate successes, but we are also highlighting areas where more work needs to be done to achieve our objectives. ➢ **Scrutiny Committees:** All Scrutiny Members are continuing to undertake specific training to enhance their skills. Training will continue throughout this Council term on a Scrutiny by Scrutiny Committee basis and collectively, 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. ➢ **Performance reports:** 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. ➢ **NPT News**: Our online e-newsletter was launched. This is accessed via a free subscription and is available in English, Welsh or bilingually. ➢ **Integrated Impact Assessment (IA) Framework**: following the initial revision of the Equality Impact Assessment framework during 2017-2018 in order 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 took place during summer/autumn 2018. As a result of comments received during these sessions, the

Core Principle B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Openness	framework was further revised and is due to be rolled out, along with a revised reporting template, in April 2019. ➢ **Record of decision-making and supporting materials**: all publicly accessible reports are published on the Council's website via Modern.gov. ➢ **Decision making protocols**: 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 three meetings of the relevant committee. Report templates ensure the relevant information and advice is presented to substantiate recommendations.

Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	➢ **Stakeholders**: we have a list of key stakeholders that we engage with on major policies and plans. These include: Youth Council; Older Persons' Council and the Black Minority Ethnic Community Association.
	
	➢ 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 & 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 an integral part of the Heads of Service Workforce Planning Group.
	
	➢ **Partnership Governance Arrangements** (including Terms of Reference): the Council has in place governance arrangements for partnerships which:
	    o Clarify the roles of members both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the Council;
	    o Clearly set out the legal status of the partnership; and

Core Principle B	
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	o 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. ➤ **Partnership working arrangements**: during 2018-2019 we continued to participate in a number of partnerships as follows: the Public Services Board, Think Family Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, Digital Inclusion Partnership, and Third Sector Partnership. 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. ➤ **Regional collaborative arrangements**: we continued with our regional working arrangements via Education through Regional Working, Western Bay, City Region, Area Planning Board and Waste Services. A number of reports have been brought forward to the Council to ensure that Governance arrangements remain robust and proportionate. These arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure they meet required needs of the Council and where they do not reports are brought to members highlighting various risks and concerns for the decisions to be made on future actions. The Council plays an active role in such regional collaborative arrangements to ensure the best return for our citizens and other stakeholders.
Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	➤ **Corporate communications and engagement activities:** 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.

Core Principle B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**

Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	➢ **Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy** (see above)
	
	➢ **Consultation** (see above)
	
	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.
	
	➢ **Internal networks** include:
	
	    o Staff monthly e-newsletter 'In the Loop' - features important information relevant to staff.
	
	    o Staff Intranet which acts as an internal information portal (including staff news and a link to the Council's online Newsroom).
	
	    o Employee Portal – during the year ICT colleagues made developments to this web-based tool to enable employees to access it via their personal devices from home (it was previously only accessible internally). The Portal enables employees to access relevant information about the Council and their own HR and payroll information. Approximately 4,400 employees have now registered to the Portal.
	
	    o Staff consultations – during the year we undertook a number of staff consultations e.g. 2019-2020 budget proposals; Smart & Connected – A Revised Digital Strategy 2018-2022; Social Services, Health and Housing staff survey (extended to adult services for the first time this year.
	
	    o Chief Executive Roadshows – a series of Chief Executive's Staff Engagement Sessions were held with staff to explain the Forward Financial Plan and its implications. These were attended by almost 200 staff.
	
	    o Staff notice boards.

Core Principle B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**

Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	➢ **External networks** including:
	
	    o Key stakeholders that we engage with on major policies and plans. These include: Youth Council; Older Persons' Council; and the Black Minority Ethnic Community Association.
	
	    o Community Engagement events.
	
	    o Public meetings - last year senior officers from the Council continued with public meetings to brief the public on developments with the Pantteg Landslip area.
	
	    o Social media – we have corporate Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Linkedin accounts which are used to broadcast information and have two-way dialogue with stakeholders via facilities such as direct messaging and polls. In addition, there are more than 90 service specific accounts across the Council.
	
	    o E-newsletter – the council has a monthly e-newsletter, NPT News. This is available in a choice of languages (English, Welsh or bi-lingual). It is issued on a monthly basis, but can be issued more frequently in the case of breaking news or a major announcement. The e-newsletter is available to stakeholders via a free subscription
	
	➢ **Budget 2019-2020**: an extensive public consultation exercise took place between 31st October 2018 and 11th January 2019, generating more than 1000 responses from a wide range of stakeholders, which shaped the final budget proposals.
	
	➢ The 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.

Core Principle C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**

Defining outcomes	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.
	
	Corporate Plan: The Council's strategic vision and priorities (well-being objectives) for the county borough are set out in the Corporate Plan. The delivery of our vision and well-being objectives is organised at three levels:
	
	    ○ **Level 1- Improvement Prior**ities: these are the areas prioritised for service change by the Council to respond to the challenges and opportunities that have been identified and to deliver on manifesto promises.
	
	    ○ **Level 2 - Corporate Change Programme**: the Council's corporate change programme was agreed by Council in 2017, focus continues to extending the use of digital technologies; exploiting new income sources and working differently with its communities.
	
	    ○ **Level 3 - Business Plans / Service Delivery**: the Council delivers or commissions an enormous range of services and functions that affect the day to day life of everyone who lives in the county borough. During 2018-2019, a new Corporate Performance Management System (CPMS) was implemented which enables the integration of the Council's strategic planning, performance management and risk management arrangements.
	
	Since the Corporate Plan was last updated, the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board, published its Well-being Plan. There are a number of links between the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and the objectives in the Well-being Plan. The Council is also continuously reviewing the effectiveness of collaborative working arrangements. As the model of collaborative working further matures the Council is better able to discern what works and what is ineffective.

	Core Principle C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Defining outcomes	➤ **Strategic Equality Plan**: 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. During 2018-2019, the focus and membership of the Equality and Community Cohesion Group have been revised. Local equality groups are now represented on the Group and its focus is more outward looking with promoting cohesiveness, addressing issues and concerns of the various communities, monitoring progress of corporate equality policies and action plans and sharing expertise and experience amongst its aims. The Group has identified a number of 'business as usual' work area audits, the outcome of which will help inform the revision of the SEP which will be undertaken during 2019-2020. ➤ **Biodiversity Duty Plan**: 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 8th 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. ➤ **Property Asset Management Plan:** 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

	Core Principle C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Defining outcomes	workforce planning arrangements. ➢ **ICT Asset Management:** An audit of the council's ICT equipment has been undertaken and the data is now held within the new Asset Management system. This information is being used to inform the ICT replacement programme. ➢ **Other Asset Management Plans/Registers**: we have well-established mechanisms in place to manage our other assets. Our other asset management plans and registers provide information on the number and condition of different classes of assets, these include the Highways Asset Management Plan (which also includes bridges and structures) and a Fleet Asset Register (includes vehicles, small plant and machinery). ➢ The asset management plans and registers inform our risk register and are an important consideration when determining revenue and capital budget priorities and our wider strategies. ➢ **The Corporate Asset Management Group** has continued to meet through 2018-2019. The emphasis has been to develop work streams from the reported accommodation strategy and the emerging agile working agenda. These 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	➢ **Revenue and Capital Budgets:** 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.

Core Principle C	
Core Principle C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	➢ **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:** 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.
	➢ The Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board published its Well-being Plan in May 2018. There are a number of links between the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and the objectives in the Well-being Plan. The Council is also continuously reviewing the effectiveness of collaborative working arrangements. As the model of collaborative working further matures the Council is better able to discern what works and what is ineffective.
	➢ **Budget 2018-2019:** 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.

Core Principle D Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Determining interventions	➢ **Record of decision making and supporting materials** (see above) ➢ **Decision making protocols** (see above)
Planning interventions	➢ **Corporate Planning Arrangements**: 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. ➢ **Committee Cycle dates**: 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. ➢ **Key stakeholders**: we have a list of key stakeholders (internally and externally) that we engage with on major policies and plans throughout the year. ➢ **Corporate Risk Policy:** 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. ➢ **Corporate Performance Management Framework**: 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. During 2018-2019, a new Corporate Performance Management System (CPMS) was implemented which enables the integration of the Council's strategic planning, performance management and

Core Principle D
Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Sub principle	Examples of our key systems, documents and processes
Planning interventions	risk management arrangements. In implementing the new CPMS, the Council has taken the opportunity to ensure that there is a golden thread running from the three corporate well-being objectives, through to key corporate strategies and to service business plans. This enables the Council to clearly demonstrate how its services and functions contribute to the Council's well-being objectives, which in turn support the seven national well-being goals.
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	➢ **Financial management arrangements**: 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. ➢ 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. ➢ 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. ➢ 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.

Core Principle E
Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Sub principle	Examples of our key systems, documents and processes
Developing the entity's capacity	➤ In April 2018 the Council adopted a Corporate Workforce Plan with the ambition of ensuring the Council has the right number of people with the right skills and attitudes in place at the right time to deliver its services and functions. The Plan's action plan sets out how this will be achieved. A progress report will be presented to Members at Personnel Committee early in 2019.
Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	➤ 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. ➤ **Cross party panel**: 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. ➤ The **Chief Executive** (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 **Section 151 officer** under the Local Government Act 1972 and the **Designated Monitoring Officer** (Head of Legal Services) carries overall responsibility for legal compliance. The **Head of Democratic Services** 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. ➤ **Members' induction programme**: all new Members and those returning Members following an election, receive an induction programme to familiarise 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

Core Principle E Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	Elected Members taking public office for the first time and those Members elected following by-elections held during the year. ➢ **Member Support and Development:** A schedule of Member Seminars was delivered over the Civic Year covering a wide range of topics such as: substance misuse, asset based community development and Brexit as well as matters such as the 2018-2019 Budget Consultation. ➢ **Officer Development (Performance Appraisal System and Employment Development Review**): the Council's corporate training and development capacity has been reduced significantly over several years. Learning, training and development opportunities are 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. ➢ Resources have been made available support the digital development of the workforce, and this will commence early in 2019-2020 focusing the leadership development necessary to initiate the workforce changes necessary to deliver the Council's ambitious Digital Strategy. ➢ During 2018-2019, despite constraints on corporate training capacity, we continued to support and deliver a considerable amount of training and qualifications, supporting staff development and progression at all levels in the organisation. ➢ In 2018-2019, priority was given to workforce development across the social care sector through the Social Care Wales Workforce 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. ➢ 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. ➢ In 2018-2019, we have supported a number of apprenticeships in various designations throughout

Core Principle E
Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Sub principle	Examples of our key systems, documents and processes

Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	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.
	
	 ➢ **Health and wellbeing of the workforce:** we have a number of arrangements in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce, these include:
	
	     ○ 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
	
	     ○ Stress risk assessments are available for everyone signed off work with stress even if its non-work related stress
	
	 ➢ In 2019-2020, we will be working with Time to Change Wales to raise awareness in relation to Mental Health and developing an action plan to support the mental health of employees in the workplace.

Core Principle F	
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Managing risk	➤ **Corporate Risk Policy, Corporate Risk Register and procedures for Risk management**: The Director of Finance is responsible for overseeing the implementation and continuous development of corporate risk. During 2018-2019, a new Corporate Risk Management Policy was approved by Cabinet. The risk module of the CPMS performance management system is being utilised to strengthen and underpin risk management arrangements. ➤ **Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO):** during 2018-2019 the Head of Information and Communications Technology was 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. Following retirement, a new SIRO must be designated. 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.
Managing performance	➤ **Performance Management:** during 2018-2019, a new Corporate Performance Management System (CPMS) was implemented which enables the integration of the Council's strategic planning, performance management and risk management arrangements. In implementing the new CPMS, the Council has taken the opportunity to ensure that there is a golden thread running from the three corporate well-being objectives, through to key corporate strategies and to service business plans. This enables the Council to clearly demonstrate how its services and functions contribute to the Council's well-being objectives, which in turn support the seven national well-being goals.
Robust internal control	➤ **Internal Audit Section**: 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

Core Principle F	
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Robust internal control	the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes. ➢ In March 2018, the Internal Audit Service was externally assessed in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the service was assigned the highest rating. ➢ During 2018-2019, 56 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 2018-2019 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 "***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".*** ➢ Each year, the section has a risk based **Internal Audit Plan** 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 2018-2019. The **Audit Manager** provides quarterly reports to Audit Committee highlighting any concerns and to give assurance to elected Members regarding the Council's internal controls. ➢ The **Audit Committee** 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. ➢ **IT Health Checks**: 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

Core Principle F Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Robust internal control	personal data). The last reaccreditation, which was successful, took place in January 2019. As well as this, as part of an all-Wales exercise, the ICT Service is working towards achieving Cyber Essentials Plus (CE+). The first stage has been successfully completed and forthcoming work will include on-site audits and health checks. ➢ **IT audits**: 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 2019-2020 ➢ **Annual Governance Statement**: 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&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.
Managing data	➢ **Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)** – see above - sub principle Managing Risk. ➢ **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** - As a result of the implication of the General Data Protection Regulations, the Council has updated its data protection policies and information sharing protocols to ensure compliance with the same during the financial year 2018-2019 and will continue to develop this into 2019-2020. Ongoing review will take place to ensure the effectiveness of the policies and protocols. ➢ **Strengthening and Modernising Democratic Arrangements** - In 2018-2019, we continued to embed the 'Modern.Gov' Committee Administration Management software system. 100% of the elected Members now receive papers electronically via iPad or the 'Modern Gov' system.
Strong public financial management	➢ 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

Core Principle F	
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Strong public financial management	function also provides the annual statement of accounts for the Authority. ➢ 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 proposals was explicitly considered when developing and agreeing the proposals within the revised Forward Financial Plan. ➢ 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. ➢ 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. ➢ 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 2017-2018.

Core Principle G Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	
Sub principle	**Examples of our key systems, documents and processes**
Implementing good practice in transparency	➢ 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.
Implementing good practices in reporting	➢ **Annual Governance Statement**: 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&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.
Assurance and effective accountability	➢ **Procurement:** 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. ➢ Internal Audit undertakes a review of all of the Authority's major financial systems on an annual basis. ➢ 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 2018–2019.

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 2018-2019, the Head of Legal Services reported to Council on a number of occasions with amendments to the Constitution relating to changes to scrutiny rules, designation of duties to officers and changes to rules of procedure to encourage and facilitate better scrutiny and decision making.

➢ **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. In July 2018, members of the Audit Committee undertook training on risk management and they received a presentation from the Wales Audit Office on the role of Audit Committees.

➢ **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 2018-2019, 56 formal reports were issued.

➢ **Wales Audit Office audit report** (Annual Improvement Report) – The Council did not receive any statutory recommendations within the report during the course of the year 2017-2018.

➢ **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, 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 2018-2019.

Governance Issues – progress to date

The table below describes the governance issues identified during 2017-2018 and the progress made against these during 2018-2019.

Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress
1. Equalities – roll-out of training, implementation, review and evaluation of the revised Impact Assessment Tool	Caryn Furlow	• Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool has been developed and training delivered to relevant officers across the Council. • Training sessions for those officers originally identified but unable to attend earlier sessions were held in early February 2019. • A number of additional officers have been identified to undertake training and sessions are to be held at the end of April 2019. • Report template has been revised to include IIA and WBFG Act and will be introduced by April 2019. • IIA and Report Template to be rolled out during April 2019.
2. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – monitoring	Craig Griffiths	• The documentation in respect of GDPR is continually being rolled out to officers of the Council and work is presently ongoing to

Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress
of arrangements		ensure compliance with the same and to ensure the Council is meeting its legislative obligations. As new methods of working are being operated, the consideration of GDPR issues and the need for updated Privacy Statements are being implemented. Further work is presently ongoing to ensure that directorates are uploading their Service Specific Privacy Statements to the Internet.
		• Training for elected Members has been developed and presented to Members in the first week of February 2019 to demonstrate what Members must consider in line with GDPR and they are to be provided with practical and easy to use documents to aid in compliance. Members have now been registered as individual data controllers with the Information Commissioner's Office in their own right.
		• Officers are continuing to regularly provide advice to client departments on GDPR requirements and the need to consider data protection in all their areas of work to the extent that data protection is now factoring into all processes undertaken by the Council. Further work is required to continue with this rollout.
		• A report was taken to Corporate Directors Group on the 8th January 2019 regarding additional steps that the Head of Legal Services and Head of ICT feel should be implemented to ensure further safeguarding against GDPR non-compliance, including:
		a. Each Directorate nominates a member of staff to be a Data Protection Champion to undertake detail training and guidance in Data Protection matters and to assist directorates in compliance related issues. It is envisaged that this could be the current

Key Improvement Area	Lead Officer	Progress
		Information Officers.
		b. Information Security awareness to become a mandatory item for Employee Induction.
		c. Information Security training to be mandated for all staff who collect and/or handle data relating to individuals or families. Refresher training to also become mandatory and delivered as required.
		d. The Directorate based Champion(s) to be responsible for ensuring staff undertake both training and awareness sessions and to maintain a register of attendance. The Champion(s) also to be responsible for scheduling refresher training as required.
3. Information Management – update the Information Strategy and bring forward for approval	Karen Jones	The Information Strategy is currently under review in light of the change to the Council's obligations introduced under the recent GDPR legislation. Once this exercise is complete the updated strategy will be forwarded to the Corporate Governance Group for ratification before being presented to Members for approval
4. Code of Corporate Governance – review of assurances in place to fully comply with Core Principle A on Behaviours and Values	Caryn Furlow	A desktop exercise has been undertaken to review what assurances the Council has in place (e.g. systems, documentation and evidence) to ensure we fully comply with Core Principle A on Behaviours and Values and good practice.

Section Five - Governance Issues for 2019-2020 (including those carried forward from last year and new ones identified)

Key Improvement Area	Carried Over from 2018-2019	New 2019-2020
1. Integrated Impact Assessment – review and evaluate the revised Integrated 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. Corporate Performance Management System – review system implementation		✓
5. Review of the Council's collaborative / regional working arrangements		✓

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: *Signed:*

Chief Executive: Steven Phillips   *Leader of the Council: Councillor Rob Jones*

Date: *Date:*