



**Governance Improvement
Action Plan Table (2020/2021)
(Progress - January 2021)**

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Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law			
Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2020-2021	Responsible Officer	Progress – January 2021
A1	Areas of work identified following a reassessment of governance arrangements as part of recovery planning and the associated governance improvement priorities:		
	<p>A1i</p> <p>Democratic arrangements - continuous review of arrangements being undertaken to evolve democratic arrangements when meetings will be held remotely.</p>	<p>Strategic Manager - Policy & Executive Support</p>	<p>Continuous review has been undertaken by the Head of Democratic Services in consultation with Leader and Group Leaders and Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Forum and Democratic Services Committee.</p> <p>Cycle of meetings for remainder of 2020/2021 agreed at Council – 23rd December 2020 (which includes the standing up of Cabinet Boards).</p> <p>Amended Guidance and Protocol for the Remote Attendance at Meetings circulated to all Members (following consideration by Chairs and Vice Chairs – on 26th October 2020).</p> <p>Digital Democracy Fund - £500,000 funding been made available by Welsh Government to support the digital</p>

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			<p>transformation of democracy (with a focus on the requirements set out in Part 3 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Bill. Application submitted.</p> <p>Simultaneous translation – no solution to date.</p> <p>Audit of Urgency Action procedure completed by Internal Audit. The main conclusion of the report was:</p> <p>‘During the period when Council meetings were suspended the urgency action protocol was utilised which ensured that there was scrutiny in place and decisions taken were lawful. All Urgency Actions tested conformed with the Urgency Action Protocol.</p> <p>Further action was also taken to ensure lawful decision making in the event that the Urgency Action Protocol could not be utilised.’</p>

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	<p>A1ii</p> <p>Audit - refocusing of the audit work programmes to focus on issues related directly to the crisis and revisiting risk assessments to identify priorities for forward programme of work for Internal Audit</p>	<p>Head of Finance</p>	<p>Audit Committee (14th September) approved an Audit Plan for the quarter September 2020 – December 2020.</p> <p>A further update was presented to Audit Committee at their meeting of 14th January 2021 in relation to Audit work completed to date and plans for the remainder of the financial year.</p> <p>The focus of Internal Audit work in 2020/21 is on auditing areas considered to be a higher risk due to remote working due to the pandemic and the subsequent changes in control processes.</p> <p>Coverage of these areas should provide the Head of Internal Audit with sufficient assurance not to have to issue a limitation of scope when</p>

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			providing the opinion required for the financial year.
	<p>A1iii</p> <p>Health, safety and welfare - ensuring risk assessments and associated control measures are robust across the Council to protect the workforce, those who need to use our services and functions and to uphold confidence in the Council’s response to the ongoing situation.</p>	<p>Corporate Governance Group</p>	<p>“Homeworking Guidance – during Covid-19” - guidance and information prepared on what it is recommended an employee should have in place to ensure home working is carried out in a safe manner.</p> <p>“Return to Workplaces Processes – following COVID-19” – a framework developed within which services can commence their planning in relation to how they return to the workplace and deliver services in a sustainable way.</p>
	<p>A1iv</p> <p>Equalities and other impacts - ensuring there is scrutiny of the extent to which the changes implemented and planned discharge the Council’s legal obligations.</p>		<p>Assessing the impact of various new/changes to policies and services</p>

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	(Ensuring democratic oversight of the wider impact on the community arising from the crisis and how this may vary between geographies and between people who share protected characteristics).	Strategic Manager – Policy & Executive Support	<p>is a requirement of the Council’s reporting arrangements. First stage assessments, and/or full assessments as required, are undertaken as part of the policy development process and consider the impact of policies and/or services to meet legal requirements. The assessment provides members with information on which to make an informed decision with the minutes reflecting the consideration given.</p> <p>With the recent changes and developments as a result of the commencement of the socio economic duty, the evidenced disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on our various communities as well as our ongoing work to address racial inequality, the IIA framework will be reviewed in the coming months to ensure it remains fit for purpose.</p> <p>The Public Services Board is leading on the multi-agency recovery planning for the County Borough following the</p>

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			<p>Covid-19 outbreak. An initial community impact assessment was commissioned to understand how people, businesses and organisations have experienced the pandemic and what impact it has had. The evidence from the community impact assessment will inform the approach to recovery and to help identify key areas where collective action by partners could reduce the negative impacts.</p>
	<p>A1v Finance – understanding the one-off and recurring costs associated with the situation and the impact of this on the Council’s financial health</p>	<p>Head of Finance</p>	<p>Monthly claims process set up to reclaim additional costs from the WG Hardship Fund. Claims also submitted for income loss resulting from Covid. First quarter and second quarter claims have been paid; Welsh Government have requested a third quarter claim to be submitted in January with a fourth quarter estimated claim anticipated in February.</p> <p>Budget monitoring reports to Members have moved to bi-monthly from</p>

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			quarterly to ensure Cabinet are kept informed as to the financial impact of the pandemic.
A1vi	ICT - ensuring there is an assessment of the impact of innovation on Information Risk and suitable measures in place to manage the risks.	Strategic Manager - ICT	Digital Services and Information Governance will conduct a DPIA including Risk Assessment in respect of the introduction of a new Digital solution and to cover any significant change to an existing process.
A1vii	Business Continuity – a review of business continuity planning to identify lessons learned for both the ongoing situation and for future incidents. (Assurance that emergency response can be mobilised quickly to any rise of infection across the county borough or to local clusters/outbreaks).	Head of Human & Organisational Development	In September the Emergency Planning Team published the “1 st wave Covid-19 debrief report”. There are a number of recommendations within the report which will need to be actioned (prioritised) and included within the cell reactivation document which is to follow.
A1viii	Statutory duties – careful consideration of Council responses to statutory duties suspended or relaxed during the emergency situation		Ongoing review takes place of current and forthcoming legislative obligations and consideration will be given to all

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	to ensure lessons learned from the emergency response inform choices made about the way such statutory duties are discharged into the future.	Corporate Governance Group	legislative aspects that has and will take place during the pandemic as part of any recovery plan developed.
A1xi	Partnership working – ensure the lessons learned from mobilising the emergency response inform future choices made about partnership working	Corporate Governance Group	Mapping exercise to be undertaken (as part of recovery planning) to capture the lessons learned including the identification of those partnerships that were effective and the de-prioritisation of those that were not.
A1x	Capacity and capability – review the Council’s workforce planning priorities to ensure they continue to be aligned with the organisation’s priorities given the challenges and opportunities associated with the ‘new normal’.	Head of Human Resource & Organisational Development	<p>The already established Workforce Planning Group has met more frequently throughout the emergency, weekly, and since June fortnightly.</p> <p>This forum supports the identification of critical skill shortages, enables the rapid redeployment of staff to plug identified gaps, critical recruitment, and reviews key employment strategies to support the Council’s response to the Covid-19 emergency. It is an inclusive approach, ensuring participation of all</p>

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			<p>directorates and trade unions. Provides sounding board for the HR Team on key workforce strategies and ensures that directorates have a framework for providing workforce data and intelligence.</p> <p>Audit Wales are working with the Council to identify learnings and future improvements for workforce planning with focus groups for key stakeholders planned (subject</p>
A1.1.2	Report annually to the Corporate Governance Group and Standards Committee to give an assurance that the Member Code of Conduct is fit for purpose	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	<p>A report was presented to Standards Committee in January 2021 which provided assurances on the Member Code of Conduct.</p> <p>To date there have been no breaches referred to the Standards Committee in 2020 and a suitable assurance can be given to the Corporate Governance Group in due course.</p>

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A1.4.4	Update the constitution and bring a report to members in Autumn 2020 following royal assent of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	<p>The updating of the Constitution is continuing and a report was brought to Council in December 2020 seeking authority for the Democratic Services Committee to establish a task and finish group to review the appropriate provisions and to consider the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.</p> <p>Democratic Services Committee will now undertake this work stream in Spring 2021.</p>
A1.4.6	Whistle Blowing Policy to be reviewed in 2020 and published on the council website.	Head of Human Resource & Organisational Development	This was actioned in January 2020.
A1.4.7	Revise Corporate Complaints Policy in 2020 (to include: implementation of the Complaints Standards Authority for Wales (CSA) powers; recommendations from an internal audit review report which was received in November 2019; further staff guidance within the complaints process for disability related reasonable adjustments;	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support	<p>Revised Policy approved by Cabinet September 2020.</p> <p>Further work to be undertaken to produce an external facing Policy in line with the PSOW Model Policy. To be completed by end of February 2021</p>

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	further staff guidance in relation to covert recording and further staff guidance in relation to managing querulous/persistent complainants).		and forwarded to PSOW by end of March 2021.
A2.2.2	Deliver six courses in relation to Recruitment and Selection and Safe Recruitment.	Head of Human Resource & Organisational Development	Only two courses have been provided this year as a result of re-prioritising HR activity.
A2.3.3	To provide training on implementation of Contract Procedure Rules - training to be scheduled for Spring 2020 and bi annually thereafter.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	As a result of Covid-19 an extensive training programme was not able to take place. Officers adopted a new approach therefore of training officers in smaller groups via Microsoft Teams and issuing briefing and guidance notes to colleagues to assist in implementation. Ongoing support is provided by Corporate Procurement Team to any issues.
A2.4.1	Report annually to the Cabinet on the implementation and operation of the Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy - add to Cabinet forward work programme for 2020-2021.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	A report will be brought to Cabinet for information in Spring 2021 as to the how the Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy has been implemented in Council Contracts.

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A2.4.2	To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal Services – by the end of March 2021.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	Work is presently ongoing and a definitive record of arrangements will be produced by Spring 2021
A3.4.1	Reports annually to the Corporate Governance Group to give an assurance that the current system for dealing with data protection breaches is fit for purpose - add to agenda for 2020-2021.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	Feedback will be provided to the Corporate Governance Group at the next meeting and ongoing.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

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A4.1.3	To undertake a review of FOI Publication Scheme in 2020-2021 with a report to Cabinet for approval.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	Work is presently ongoing with this and an updated report will be provided to the Corporate Governance Group in 2021.
A4.13.1	Where relevant incorporate proposals for improvements from external regulators audit work into the Council's 2020-2021 corporate planning arrangements.	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support	Corporate planning arrangements underway for 2021/2022 and where relevant will incorporate proposals for improvement from external regulators audit work.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2020-2021	Responsible Officer	Progress – January 2021
A5.1.1	Incorporate the findings from the Audit Wales review of our performance, risk and business planning arrangements in 2020-2021 into CPMS.	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support	Review undertaken in September 2020 (slightly scaled back from original scope). “Opportunities for improvement” received in December 2020 which will be considered as part of the corporate work to be undertaken early in 2021/22 to further develop the Council’s performance management framework to meet the requirements set out in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Bill.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2020-2021	Responsible Officer	Progress – January 2021
A8.14.1	A review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing work will be undertaken by the Information Governance team in 2020 and central records kept of data sharing.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services	This work is ongoing but due to Covid-19 and staff priorities being redirected to other areas it was determined not appropriate to commence this stream

			of work in the Autumn 2020 and will instead being in early 2021.
A1	A1xi To identify further training opportunities in order to provide additional clarity as to the role of Audit Committee Members and strengthen the Audit Committee function.	Head of Finance	No further training has been undertaken at present.

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2020-2021	Responsible Officer	Progress – January 2021
A9.5.1	To deliver governance awareness training across the Council in 2020-2021.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services / Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support	Sessions will be delivered by March 31 st 2021 (3 sessions). The sessions will be a refresh for officers on how the Council makes decisions and the role of scrutiny.