# Neath Port Talbot Council
# Annual Governance Statement
# 2020/2021

# Contents

**Introduction**

The Council has adopted the 2016 Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (the Framework), developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).  To comply with the Framework, the Council must publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively.  The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Council is directed and controlled, and through which we engage with and lead the local community. The framework brings together an underlying set of legal requirements, good practice and management processes.

In preparing the AGS, the Council conducted a review on the effectiveness of its system of internal control in place for the year ending 31st March 2021 to ensure that:

- its business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations;
- public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for;
- there is sound and inclusive decision making;
- resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively; and
- there is clear accountability for the use of those resources to achieve agreed priorities which benefit local people and communities.

*"Corporate governance is about making sure that the Council is run properly. It is about ensuring the Council does the right things, at the right time and in the right way."*

The Council's system of internal control are designed to manage risk to a reasonable level.  The Council cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. During the year ending March 2021, Covid-19 had a dramatic impact on the way we live and work and during that time the Council's leadership and governance arrangements needed to adapt very quickly. Those

changes are reflected in this document to evidence how the Council ensured visibility of decision making and business was continued to be conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations.
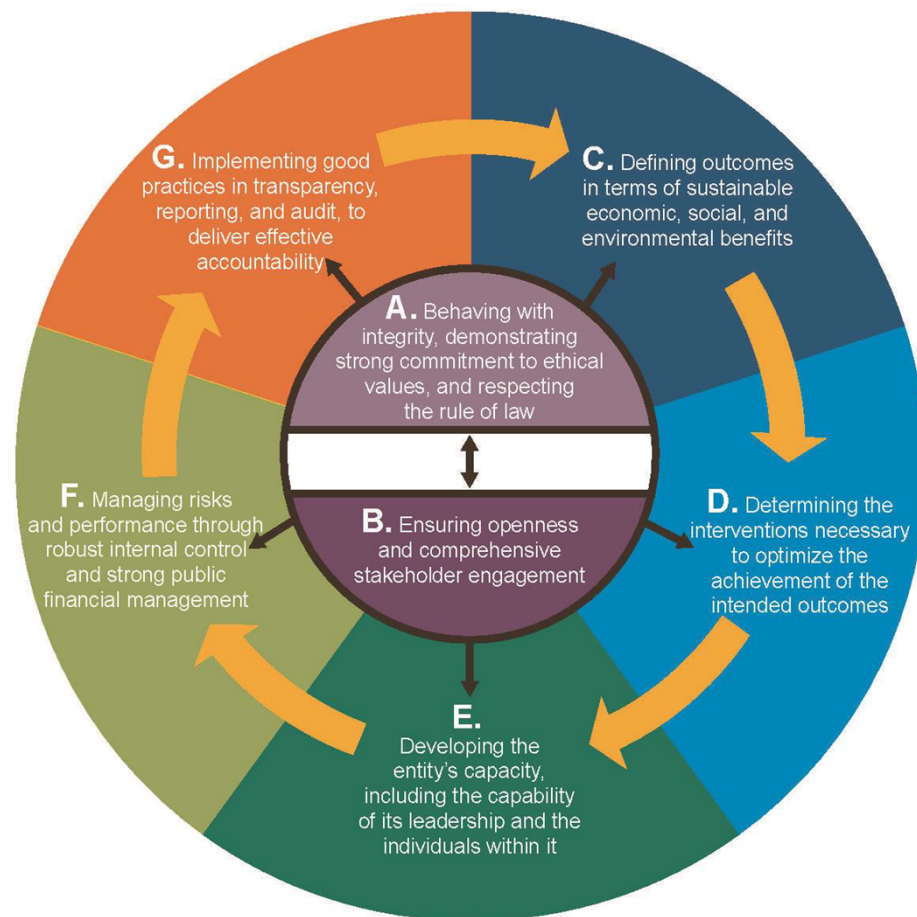
**The Framework**

The Framework comprises two core principles and five supporting principles as illustrated in the diagram.

Principles A and B run through principles C to G but good governance is dynamic, and the Council as a whole is committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.

**The next section: Putting the Principles into Practice**,

illustrates examples of how the Council demonstrates compliance to meet these seven principles and the assurances taken during the year on the effectiveness of our governance arrangements.

Any governance improvement areas identified from undertaking the review have been included in an action plan set out in **Table 2** on page 63.  The Corporate Governance Group, will oversee the action plan and progress will be reported to Corporate Directors Group, Cabinet and Audit Committee throughout the financial year.

Progress made on improvement work identified during 2019/2020 are contained in **Table 1** on page 57.

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

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

A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

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

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes

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

## Putting the Principles into Practice

| Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 1.1 Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation | 1.1.1 Employee Code of Conduct | An Internal Audit review of adherence to the Code was published in November 2020 and the Code was updated in January 2021 to take into account the recommendations made in the report. | None identified |
| | 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct | Monitored by the Standards Committee and Corporate Governance Group.<br><br>On signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Members are required to give an undertaking to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct.<br><br>Ordinarily Members would receive training on the Code of Conduct and refresher training throughout the year.  However, during 2020/2021 specific Code of Conduct training did not take place, instead ad hoc advice was provided to members on Code of Conduct matters via email or in general discussions as and when required. Specific Code of Conduct training is scheduled to take place on the 8th April 2021 and biannually thereafter. | None identified |

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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | | The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will provide an additional duty on group leaders to ensure members within their political group also comply with the Members Code of Conduct and ongoing support will be provided on this function via the Standards Committee. | |
| | 1.1.3 Members: An induction programme for Members was published on the Council website in 2017. | The induction programme forms part of the Authority's Strategy and Charter for Member Development and is structured for both new and returning members. The aim is to provide a supportive and structured development framework to enable Members perform their duties. Members elected through by-elections receive a tailored induction.

A review of the programme is scheduled during 2021 in readiness for the Member Induction following the Local Government Elections in May 2022. | None identified |
| | 1.1.4 Staff: an Induction Checklist, (which contains information about the expected standards of behaviour) must be signed by managers and their employees. | The corporate Induction Checklist is emailed to recruiting managers in advance of when a new starter is due to commence employment and is signed by both manager and employee. | None identified |

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| | | In 2021, the HR team will implement the iTrent HR / Payroll Database that will have an 'onboarding' module, which will replace the Induction Checklist and facilitate more effective recording of induction arrangements and therefore provide much greater assurance. | |
| | 1.1.5 Performance Appraisal Process 2016 | In 2021, the HR team will implement the iTrent HR / Payroll Database that will have a 'performance appraisal' module, which will facilitate more effective recording of the appraisal process and provide greater assurance.  We will be able to report against the number of appraisals carried out to conclusion. | None identified |
| 1.2 Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood.  These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) | 1.2.1 Organisational Vision and Values are published in the Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT | The Vision and Values are incorporated into recruitment processes (written into job descriptions and person specifications of senior posts in the organisation). | None identified |
| | 1.2.2 The vision and priorities for staff are contained within the Workforce Plan 2018-2022 | A review of the Workforce Plan was carried out in December 2019 to review the actions taken to date and ensure future actions remain fit for purpose moving forward.<br><br>Audit Wales are supporting the Council to learn workforce planning lessons from the | None identified |

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| | | Covid-19 pandemic, and to strengthen workforce planning arrangements as we move into recovery and developing the Council's workforce into the future, embracing opportunities linked to new ways of providing services and working. | |
| | See also 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct - The Standards Framework for Members (Section 1, Ethical framework) | As 1.1.2 | |
| 1.3 Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions | 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) The tool assesses the impact of proposed initiatives (e.g. policy, service, procedures, strategies, projects etc.) relating to key legislation (i.e. equality, sustainable development, the Welsh language etc.).  It is applied to decisions relating to the initiative and to consider whether the initiative will have a positive, negative or | An IIA tool has been implemented across all service areas since April 2019. During 2020/2021 the IIA tool and associated guidance was amended to formally take into account the Socio-Economic Duty, introduced on 31st March 2021. Training on the revised IIA tool for relevant officers and elected members will be completed by April 2021. | A1.3.1: A review will be undertaken in 2021/2022 to ensure the revised IIA tool is embedded into practice by Autumn 2021. |

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| | neutral impact on the community. | | |
| | 1.3.2 Declarations of Interest | These are made by Members at the beginning of Committee meetings and recorded in the meeting minutes. | None identified |
| | 1.3.3 The Standards Committee | The Committee meet on a quarterly basis (or more frequently where referrals from the Ombudsman are considered).<br><br>Reports are regularly presented to the Standards Committee and any recommendations arising.<br><br>The Committee also has delegated authority to discharge a number of functions. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will provide an additional duty on group leaders to ensure members within their political group also comply with the Members Code of Conduct and ongoing support will be provided on this function via the Standards Committee.<br><br>An annual report of the Standards Committee will also be presented to full | None identified |

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| | | Council highlighting the work of the Standards Committee. | |
| | 1.3.4 Member and Officer Relations Protocol | A protocol is in place as part of the Council's Constitution and Employee Code of Conduct<br><br>A review of the Protocol will be undertaken by the end of September 2021 as part of the wider review of the Council's Constitution which was tasked to the Democratic Services Committee by Council in December 2020.<br><br>The protocol is monitored by the Standards Committee | None identified |
| 1.4 Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively | 1.4.1 The Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Strategy | The review of this Strategy was temporarily paused as a result of Covid-19 and the requirement to re-prioritise the work of the Internal Audit Service.  The review has now re-commenced and once approved by the relevant committee the new three year Strategy will be published.<br><br>Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014). | A1.4.1: Review of Strategy to be completed and reported to Members during 2021/2022. |

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| | 1.4.2 Member Interests are shown by individual Members on the Council website. | Declarations of Interest for Members is a standing item on all committee meeting agendas and recorded in minutes of meetings. | None identified |
| | 1.4.3 Staff Interests | An up-to-date register is held by each Director and is subject to Internal Audit review annually. | None identified |
| | 1.4.4 Members: The Constitution | The Council's Monitoring Officer is required, by law, to keep a Register of all notifications made by Members. The Register is open to public inspection during normal office hours. | None identified |
| | 1.4.5 Staff Gifts & Hospitality | An up-to-date register is held by each Director. | None identified |
| | 1.4.6 Whistleblowing Policy | Policy approved by Personnel Committee in August 2015 and reviewed in January 2020. | None identified |
| | 1.4.7 Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy | The Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy has been revised to meet the requirements set out in the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Model Complaints Policy.<br><br>The Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021 sets out the following functions for the Governance & Audit Committee (from 1st April 2021): | None identified |

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| | | 'to review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively' and 'to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively'. | |
| | 1.4.8 Social Services Compliments and Complaints | A Social Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report was prepared during 2020/2021 but was not reported to Cabinet due to the pandemic. Reporting to Cabinet will re-commence during 2021/2022. | None identified |
| | 1.4.9 Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints and responses | Reported to Cabinet and relevant Cabinet Boards on a quarterly basis. During 2020/2021, due to the pandemic this reporting did not occur. Will re-commence during 2021/2022. | None identified |
| | See also 1.4.4 Members: The Constitution, Part 5, Section 3 'Personal Interests' addresses this. | Member's interests are published on the NPT Council website for each committee throughout the year. | None identified |
| | See also 1.1.1 Officers: Employee Code of Conduct (Section 9, 2017). | The Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Employee Code of Conduct and the Public Contract Regulations (2015) require officers and members not to have any involvement in a tender process where they have a potential conflict of interest. | None identified |

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| | | They should have no role whatsoever which should negate the need for any declarations of interest to be made. | |
| 2.1 Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance | 2.1.1. The Corporate Procurement Team | This is acknowledged by the team when undertaking tender work for other sections when developing and evaluating procurement process.<br>The team also monitor and evaluate compliance looking at what approach sections adopt.<br>The Ethical Employment Code of Practice and Modern Slavery Statement issued to all sections sets out processes that should be valued. | A2.1.1: Corporate Procurement to monitor and evaluate compliance looking at what approach sections adopt. Head of Legal & Democratic Services to report annually to the Corporate Governance Group. |
| 2.2 Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation | 2.2.1 Member training<br><br>See also 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct)<br><br>See also 1.3.3 Standards Committee – special dispensation to vote | Through the year, Members receive training on the Code of Conduct (& refresher training).<br><br>Annual reports are presented to Standards Committee.<br><br>Members Declaration of Acceptance of Office – undertaken given to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct<br><br>Leading in the Welsh Public Service Behaviours Framework. | A2.2.1: Ethical awareness Officer training was provided in March 2021 on ensuring safe and legal decision making. Further sessions and ethical awareness matters are planned for 2021/2022. |

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| 2.3 Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values | 2.3.1 Recruitment and Selection Policy 2018 | Recruitment arrangements will be reviewed in 2021 to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The implementation of a new online Recruitment service (as part of the iTrent HR / Payroll system) presents opportunities to introduce evidence based equality and diversity practices into our recruitment process. This will be considered as part of the review of our Recruitment Policy.

Training is provided to recruiting managers. | A2.3.1 Courses in relation to Recruitment and Selection and Safe Recruitment and other Employment Policies and Procedures to be delivered in 2021/2022. |
| | 2.3.2 Pay Policy Statement | The 2021/2022 review has taken place and the revised Pay Policy Statement was presented to Council on 24th March 2021. | None identified |
| | 2.3.3 Contract Procedure Rules | Training is available to staff and advice booklets are provided. Ongoing support is provided to sections in complying with procurement rules and processes. | None identified |
| 2.4 Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation | 2.4.1 Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy 2019 | Policy introduced in 2019 and annual reports brought to Cabinet and Cabinet Scrutiny setting out how the Council complies with the arrangements set out in the policy. | None identified |

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| | 2.4.2 We continue to participate in a number of partnerships.  Governance arrangements are in place for each for partnership which:<br>• Clarify the roles of members both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the Council;<br>• Clearly set out the legal status of the partnership; and<br>• 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. | Given the importance of collaboration to this Council, in early 2020 (pre Covid-19) each scrutiny committee was due to review existing collaborations to make sure they were all on a strong footing and productive to enable the Council's Cabinet to be confident that those arrangements are working in the best interest of citizens and also, that there is clear and effective democratic oversight of those arrangements. The focus of this work will be reviewed in 2021/2022 as part of the Council's recovery, reset and renew work. | A2.4.2: To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services by September 2021. |
| 3.1 Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the | 3.1.1 Cabinet and Committee Reports contain a section entitled | Safe and Legal Decision Making Training is available for relevant officers and is provided | None identified |

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| rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations | "Legal Impacts" so that legal obligations are placed at the forefront of decision making.<br>See also 1.4.4 The Constitution | on an annual basis by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to Council officers.<br><br>Democratic Services Officers and Legal Services monitor reports to ensure legal compliance. | |
| 3.2 Creating the conditions to ensure that statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements | 3.2.1 Financial management arrangements | We have a range of policies and procedures (such as financial regulations, financial procedures, contract standing orders, accounting instructions and officer delegations) that conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010). | A3.2.1: To put in place an agreed procedure where Financial Regulations and Accounting Instructions are reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and proportionate. A review of Accounting Instructions is currently underway and will be completed by December 2021. |
| | 3.2.2 Democratic Services - support function. | The Head of Democratic Services presents an annual report to Democratic Services Committee and Council, outlining the resource requirements to enable the Council, Cabinet and Committee to receive high level support and discharge of its democratic functions. The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee presents an Annual Report of the Democratic Services Committee to full Council updating Members | None identified |

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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | | on the work that has been undertaken by the Committee during the previous civic year. | |
| | See also 1.4.4 The Council's Constitution sets out the different responsibilities of Members and Officers. Clear job descriptions for all staff, which highlight their roles and responsibilities. | The Monitoring Officer oversees the Council's Constitution and ensures it is kept up to date. | None identified |
| 3.3 Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders | 3.3.1 Cabinet and Committee Reports contain a section entitled "Legal Impacts" so that legal obligations are placed at the forefront of decision making. | Legal Enterprise Case Management Software providing audit trails of legal advice given and time spent providing legal advice on all matters.<br><br>Transaction documentation and hard copies of Legal Advice provided are stored by the Council.<br><br>Legal training provided to officers on regular basis to ensure they are up to date with recent legal developments and powers available. | None identified |
| 3.4 Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively | 3.4.1 Data Protection Breaches Panel review cases. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services reports annually to the Corporate Governance Group to give an assurance | None identified |

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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | | that the current system for dealing with data protection breaches is fit for purpose. | |
| | 3.4.2 Internal Audit Special Investigations / Disciplinary Cases

See also 3.3.1 Cabinet and Committee Reports | The Council requires that all officers who carry out disciplinary investigations have undertaken the ACAS Investigation Officers training. In addition, Heads of Service who are the decision makers in disciplinary investigations must have attended the ACAS Decision Maker training. | None identified |
| 3.5 Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively | See 1.4.1 Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Policy

See 1.4.6 Whistle Blowing Policy | Cases are monitored by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Council's Standards Committee. During the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, the Monitoring Officer was notified of a total of 2 complaints made against County Borough Councillors alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct. Both were dismissed by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales as not being appropriate for investigation.

For the civic year: 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, the Standards Committee received 0 referrals from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales stemming from the previous civic year (2019/2020) relating to the Code of Conduct of Town and Community Councils only. | None identified |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 4.1 Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness | 4.1.1 The Council produces a number of annual reports throughout the year to give assurances about our governance arrangements. | The reports are available to the public and the Corporate Governance Group oversee any risks identified to governance arrangements, arising from these annual reports. <br> 1. Corporate Plan Annual Report <br> 2. Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report <br> 3. PSB Well-being Plan Annual Report <br> 4. Welsh Language Standards Annual Report <br> 5. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy <br> 6. Audit Service progress Report September 2020 <br> 7. Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report <br> 8. Ombudsman Annual Report <br> 9. The Pay Policy Statement is published annually in line with the Localism Act 2011 and to ensure transparency in the Council's pay arrangements. | None identified |

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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | 4.1.2 FOI Policy / FOI Publication Scheme | Published in March 2014.<br><br>As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there was a delay in undertaking a review of the Scheme. | A4.1.2: To undertake a review of FOI Publication Scheme throughout 2021-2022 with a report to Cabinet for approval. An amended version of the Publication Scheme will then be considered as part of a review on the Constitution to ensure it is fully up to date. |
| | 4.1.3 The Council's strategic purpose, vision and values are set out in the Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT. | One of our values is: we will conduct the work of the in an open and accessible way, ensuring we are properly accountable for the decisions we make. | None identified |
| | 4.1.4 Council Meeting Cycle | The Council agrees its meeting cycle at its Annual Meeting and this is published on the Council's website.  Meetings are supported with forward work programmes detailing items for the next 3 meetings. | None identified |

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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | 4.1.5 Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020<br><br>This includes new 'Brand' guidelines to create consistency and increase visibility and understanding about what the Council does. | We have improved the accessibility of information to better engage all stakeholders in the Council's work, with the intention that there will be a continuous flow of information about how the Council is delivering on its well-being objectives and to keep stakeholders up-to-date.<br><br>Council Website (www.npt.gov.uk) performance is monitored using Google analytics to see how our website is being used.  We also carry out an annual website survey to measure our effectiveness and ensure the website is performing as expected. | A4.1.5 Due to Covid-19 the review of the Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy has been delayed. This will be now be undertaken in 2021/2022. |
| 4.2 Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes.  The presumption is for openness.  If that is not the case the justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided | 4.2.1 Executive and non-executive and regulatory report guidance and report template | The guidance was developed and circulated to reporting officers in May 2019.  As and when changes arise the guidance is updated and circulated to report authors/officers.<br><br>Report templates ensure the relevant information and advice is presented to substantiate recommendations. | None identified |
| | 4.2.2 Safe and Legal Decision Making | Training is available for relevant officers. | None identified |

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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 4.3 Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used.  In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear | 4.3.1 Modern.gov system

See also 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) | All publically accessible reports are published on the Council website via Modern.gov system showing the decisions taken at each meeting. | None identified |
| 4.4 Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action | 4.4.1 Neath Port Talbot Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020 | The Council uses Snap Survey software for corporate consultations for both internal and external stakeholders.

The Planning Policy Service use Objective consultation software for the Local Development Plan.

These arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective and value for money when reviewing budget for the forthcoming financial year. | A4.4.1 Due to Covid-19 the review of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy has been delayed. This will be now be undertaken in 2021/2022. |
| | 4.4.2 Community of Practice | First launched in September 2019, to improve the way we consult and involve our communities and partner agencies in the work we do from the outset.  The aim being to get early feedback that helps shape proposals before the Council goes out to wider public consultation. | None identified |
| | 4.4.3 Citizens Panel | The NPT Citizens Panel was launched in January 2020 enabling residents to express | None identified |

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| | | their views and opinions about the Council's work and feel that their voices are listened to.  This will strengthen the Council's approach to consultation and engagement and also help us to meet our obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. | |
| | 4.4.4 Shaping NPT | An 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 celebrating successes and highlighting areas where more work needs to be done to achieve our objectives. | None identified |
| 4.5 Effectively engaging to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably | 4.5.1 Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020 | We have improved the accessibility of information to better engage all stakeholders in the Council's work, with the intention that there will be a continuous flow of information about how the Council is delivering on its well-being objectives and to keep stakeholders up-to-date. | See A 4.1.5 |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | 4.5.2 Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020 | | See A 4.4.1 |
| | 4.5.3 Key Stakeholder List | We have a list of key stakeholders that we engage with on major policies and plans. These include: Youth Council; Black Minority Ethnic Community Association; and consultee database for the Local Development Plan. | None identified |
| | 4.5.4 Youth Mayor | First established in September 2019 and elected by the young people of the borough. The role involves representing the voice of all children and young people across the borough at a number of pre-determined civic duties. | None identified |
| | 4.5.5 Partnership working with our trade unions and teaching associations | This is a major 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. | None identified |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 4.6 Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively | 4.6.1 Third Sector Partnerships | The Council has a long and productive relationship with Third Sector organisations and awards grant funding to organisations so they can support our communities in a wide range of ways. The Council recognises and values the contribution the organisations make to help us deliver on some of our services (e.g. supporting the wellbeing of local people and communities). The Partnership Agreement (Compact) between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Neath Port Talbot formally recognises the contribution of voluntary work to local people and communities. It provides a framework for further developing the many years of partnership working in the county borough in pursuit of our shared interest to build strong communities where everyone has an equal chance to lead a fulfilled life. It sets out the responsibilities and expectations on both the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector in working together. | None identified |
| | 4.6.2 Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum | There is a partnership agreement in place between the Council and the local Voluntary and Community Sector in Neath Port Talbot. | None identified |
| | 4.6.3 County Borough Council / Community Councils Liaison Forum | The Council meets with the Town and Community Councils throughout the year to discuss a wide number of issues. Due to the | None identified |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | | pandemic the forum did not meet during 2020/21 but meetings will recommence in 2021/2022. | |
| | 4.6.4 Informal partnerships | There are a number of informal partnerships in place, e.g. Equality and Community Cohesion Group which is made up of both officers from across the Council and representatives of external organisations. | None identified |
| | 4.6.5 Public Services Board (PSB) | PSB members work together to deliver the objectives set out in the PSB Well-being Plan and monitor progress on delivery of work. | None identified |
| 4.7 Ensuring that partnerships are based on:<br>• Trust<br>• A shared commitment to change<br>• A culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; and<br>• that the added value of partnership working is explicit | See 2.4.2 and 4.5.4 | The Council plays an active role in collaborative arrangements to ensure the best return for our citizens and other stakeholders.<br><br>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. | A 4.7 Mapping exercise of partnership arrangements 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. |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | 4.7.1 Staff Council (Consists of: 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 but no Staff Council meeting took place during 2020/2021 but will recommence in 2021/2022. These meetings are an opportunity for two-way information sharing, consultation 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. | None identified |
| 4.8 Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users - establishing a clear policy on the type of  issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes | See 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) | The IIA assesses the need for consultation with stakeholders to consider whether 'initiatives' (e.g. policy, service, procedures, strategies, projects etc.) will have a positive, negative or neutral impact on the community. | See A1.3.1 |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 4.9 Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement | See 4.5.1 Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018/2020 | Clear strategies are in place to ensure members and officers communicate effectively in relation to community engagement.<br><br>See 1.1.1 Employee Code of Conduct<br><br>See 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct - monitored by the Standards Committee | See A.4.1.5 |
| 4.10 Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs | See section 4.4 and 4.5 | | |
| 4.11 Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account | See section 4.5 | | |
| 4.12 Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity | 4.12.1 Council has a number of duties through the following legislation to ensure inclusivity of feedback from all stakeholder groups:<br>• Equality Act 2010<br>• Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, | See 1.3.1 | A1.3.1 |

| Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice | Evidence of key systems, documents and processes | Assurance of arrangements in place | Suggested improvement / action |
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| | • Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<br>• Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021<br>• Environment (Wales) Act 2016) | | |
| 4.13 Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users | 4.13.1 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. | Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT<br><br>Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board (PSB) Well-being Assessment | A4.13.1: Where relevant incorporate proposals for improvements from external regulator's audit work into the Council's 2021-2023 corporate planning arrangements. |
| | 4.13.2 The Council's three Well-being Objectives and statement are published in the Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT | The Council's updated Corporate Plan 2020-2023 was due to be presented to Council for approval in April 2020 and as part of that work the well-being objectives were reviewed.<br><br>The onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic meant that it was not practical to publish a refreshed detailed Corporate Plan for 2020/2021. For 2020/2021 the well-being objectives and priorities for improvement set out in the 2019-2022 Plan remain the same. | None identified |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | | In preparing the Annual Report for the 2019/2020 financial year, the Council is required to consider whether the current well-being objectives remain relevant or whether changes to those objectives should be considered. Given that the objectives were agreed in September 2017 and reviewed in March 2020, it was not considered necessary to make any changes. This was endorsed by Council on the 14th October 2020.<br><br>Audit Wales has issued certificates confirming that the council has discharged it duties under relevant legislation for our Corporate Plan and our Annual Report. | |

| Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvements / action** |

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

| Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice | Evidence of key systems, documents and processes | Assurance of arrangements in place | Suggested improvements / action |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1 Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions | See 4.1.4 - The Council's Corporate Plan. The Council's vision is set out in the Corporate Plan | The Council's strategic vision and priorities for the county borough are set out in the: Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT  The Plan is reviewed each year to ensure it reflects current state of affairs / local need. | None identified |
| | 5.1.1 Corporate Performance and Risk Management system (CPMS) | The system enables the integration of the Council's strategic planning, business planning, performance management and risk management arrangements. This ensures 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 | A5.1.1: Incorporate the findings from the Audit Wales review of our performance, risk and business planning arrangements (undertaken in 2020/2021) into the corporate review of the Council's corporate planning, financial planning and performance management arrangements (to be undertaken during 2021/2022 – as part of recovery planning). |
| 5.2 Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer | 5.2.1 Commissioning | 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.  Service user questionnaires are undertaken as part of contract monitoring; contracts | None identified |

| Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvements / action** |
| | | require processes to be in place to ensure providers actively engage with service users, informing service and feedback on proposed changes. Contract Monitoring Officers review practice, including interviewing service users. | |
| 5.3 Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available | See section 4.1 | We examine the progress made in achieving our well-being objectives set out in the Corporate Plan, including the key performance indicators. On an annual basis progress is summarised in our Annual Report which includes data on key areas of performance. | None identified |
| 5.4 Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes | 5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy | The Council's risk register was not updated on a regular basis during 2020/2021 due to Covid-19.  The Pandemic was recognised on the risk register as a key Strategic Risk.<br><br>The risks arising from the pandemic were managed via the establishment of a Corporate Incident Management Team chaired by the Council's Chief Executive. | See A5.1.1 |
| | 5.4.2 Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) | The Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer fulfilled the SIRO role between June 2019 and December 2020.  In January 2021 the Director of Finance and Corporate | None identified |

| Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvements / action** |
| | | Services took over the role of SIRO. The SIRO will report directly to the Corporate Directors Group on information security matters. The SIRO is accountable for information risk throughout the Authority. An Information Management Strategy has been prepared to support the SIRO in their role. | |
| 5.5 Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available | See also 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)<br><br>See also 4.1.4 The Council's strategic vision and priorities (set out in the Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT)<br><br>See also 4.3.3 Budget setting process<br><br>See also A1.3.1 | | |
| 5.6 Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits - considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision | | | |
| 5.7 Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints | 5.7.1 Welsh Government Procurement Policy<br><br><br><br>See also 2.4.1 Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy 2019 | Complying with the policy, by ensuring that contracts over the value of £1,000,000 include community benefits clauses and contracts split into "Lots" or smaller arrangements – allowing smaller organisations to bid for elements of contracts if they are unable to bid for larger packages.<br><br>The Council has made a commitment to actively examine where it sources its goods and services from to ensure those arrangements are ethical. | None identified |

| **Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits** | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvements / action** |
| 5.8 Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social, and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs | See section 5.7 / 4.3 / 4.4 | | |
| 5.9 Ensuring fair access to services | 5.9 Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) | We revised the Council's equality objectives and published them as part of the SEP 2020-2024 in October 2020. They were developed taking into account findings from the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer?' Report. The Report focuses on six themes: Education, Health, Personal Safety, Living Standards, Employment and Participation, we have adopted these themes for our revised equality objectives. Actions initially developed to meet the equality objectives were revised to address the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 on our communities as well as issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement. The actions were approved by Council on 27th January 2021 and are published on our website. | None identified |

| Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 6.1 Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided | See 1.4.4 The Council's Constitution sets out the different responsibilities of Members and Officers. Clear job descriptions for all staff highlight roles and responsibilities. | The Monitoring Officer oversees the Council's Constitution and ensure it is kept up to date.<br><br>The Report Guidance for both Executive and Non-Executive reports requires report authors to describe all options that have been considered, not just any preferred option. | None identified |
| | See section 5.7. | | |
| 6.2 Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts | See sections 4.5 / 4.10 / 4.11 / 4.12 | | |

| Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 6.3 Planning Interventions - establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets | See 4.1.4 Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT. | See 4.3.1 | None identified |
| 6.4 Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered | See also section 6.2 | | |
| 6.5 Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks | See 2.4.2<br><br>See also 5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy | | |
| 6.6 Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances | See 4.1.4 Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT. | | |
| 6.7 Establishing appropriate local performance indicators (as well as relevant statutory or other national performance indicators) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured | See 4.1.4 Corporate Plan – Shaping NPT. | There is a clear structure in place for delivering the objectives, priorities and actions set out in this Plan, which includes a basket of key performance indicators.<br><br>Service Business Plans also contain a number of local performance indicators.<br><br>On a quarterly basis the Cabinet and relevant Cabinet Boards, receive a report on progress being made in relation to the well- | None identified |

| Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | | being objectives and improvement priorities. The above reporting arrangements did not happen during 2020/2021 due to the pandemic but will recommence in 2021/2022. | |
| 6.8 Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly | See also 5.1.1 Corporate Performance and Risk Management System (CPMS) | The system generates a number of performance reports to support the above quarterly reporting cycle. | See A5.1.1 |
| 6.9 Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium-term financial plan | 6.9.1 Budget setting process | For 2020/2021 the savings identified came from professional and Cabinet Member input and were subject to an extensive programme of consultation with service users, staff and trade unions, and scrutinised by the relevant committee.  The equality impact of budget proposals was also explicitly considered when developing and agreeing the proposals within the revised Forward Financial Plan.<br><br>Due to the operational and financial challenges arising from Covid-19 the frequency of budget monitoring reports to the Executive was increased from quarterly to bi-monthly.<br><br>On 9th March 2021, Council approved the 2021/2022 budget following stakeholder | A6.9.1 Additional work on the forward financial plan covering the period April 2022 – March 2025 will be undertaken. |

| Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| | | consultation. No new savings proposals were proposed and additional funding of £3.1m from reserves was incorporated to set a balanced budget. | |
| 6.10 Informing medium and long-term planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy | See above 6.9.1 Budget setting process | | |
| 6.11 Optimising achievement of intended outcomes - ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints | See above 6.9.1 Budget setting process | | |
| 6.12 Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term | See above 6.9.1 Budget setting process | | |

| **Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes** | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 6.13 Ensuring the medium-term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage | See A6.9.1 | | |
| 6.14 Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning.  The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is "the additional benefit to the community….over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes" | See 2.4.1 Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy 2019<br><br>See A2.4.1 | | |

| **Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it** | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |

| Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |
| 7.1 Developing the entity's capacity - reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness | See 1.2.2 The vision and priorities for staff are contained within the Workforce Plan 2018-2022 | The Workforce Plan seeks to identify the key challenges and priorities for our employees over the 5 year period, as set out in the Corporate Plan objectives and priorities, Forward Financial Plan, the Asset Management Plan and the Corporate Risk Register.<br><br>The action plan seeks to address these challenges, and to ensure that the Council has the right number of people, with the right skills and attitudes, in the right place, at the right time, and in order to deliver its services and functions.<br><br>A review of the Workforce Plan will take place in 2021 to ensure that it remains fit for purpose given the changing circumstances of the council and to support organisational development as we move into recovery and future ways of providing service and working. | None identified |
| 7.2 Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently | 7.2.1 There are a number of examples of research and benchmarking exercises undertaken across the Council: | The Corporate Policy & Performance Management Team work collaboratively with a number of other welsh Councils in relation to our corporate performance management system to share best practice. | None identified |

| Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |
| | | A number of services benchmark via The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) for some services<br>The Council's Electoral Services officers participate in the Association of Electoral Administrators network to benchmark electoral administration.<br>Participation by Officers and Members in networks facilitated by the WLGA to benchmark and research out best practice across Democratic Services functions in other Councils. | |
| 7.3 Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved | See 2.4.2 / section 4.6 and 4.7 | | |
| 7.4 Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources | 7.4.1 Social Care Workforce Development Partnership (SCWDP)<br><br>See also section 7.1 Workforce Plan 2018-2022 | The broad aim of the SCWDP is to improve the quality and management of social services provision through a planned approach to training and to increase the proportion of staff across the whole social care sector with the qualifications, skills and knowledge they need for the work they do and to achieve this through Social Care Development Partnerships led by local authorities. | None identified |

| Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |
| 7.5 Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals - developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained | See 1.4.4 The Council's Constitution (different responsibilities of Members and Officers / clear job descriptions for all staff).<br><br>Additional support will be provided to the appointed Leader and Deputy Leader from March 2021 | | |
| 7.6 Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body | 7.6.1 List of officer delegation | The Constitution requires the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to keep a list of all officer delegations made in accordance with the Constitution. | A7.6.1: Head of Legal & Democratic Services to undertake a review in 2021/2022 of all proposals and keep a central electronic list of delegations. |
| 7.7 Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure, whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority | 7.7.1 Cross party panel | The panel which is made up elected Members (and chaired by the Leader) undertakes the Chief Executive's appraisal and agrees the objectives for year ahead and personal learning. | None identified |
| | See 1.4.4 The Council's Constitution sets out the different responsibilities of Members and Officers. Clear job descriptions for all staff highlight roles and responsibilities. | The Monitoring Officer oversees the Council's Constitution and ensures it is kept up to date. | See A1.4.4 |

| Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |
| 7.8 Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:<br>• Ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged<br>• Ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis<br>• Ensuring personal, organisation and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from both internal and external governance weaknesses | 7.8.1 Member support and development. | Each year a schedule of Member Seminars is delivered over the Civic year.  Some topics are standard items such as: Committee Procedures, Code of Conduct, Council Budget and Corporate Safeguarding. However, as the year evolves new topics are added. There was a full programme of Seminars scheduled for 2020/2021 however this was disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.<br><br>The following are examples of seminars that were held during 2020/2021:<br><br>• Additional Learning Needs Reform<br>• Houses in Multiple Occupation<br>• Review of the Strategic Equality Plan<br>• First Cymru Buses<br>• Armed Forces Community<br>• Covid-19 and Council Recovery<br>• Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (including Corporate Joint Committees)<br>• Socio Economic Duty<br>• Budget<br><br>Members are also encouraged to participate in the Annual Development Review (ADR) | None identified |

| Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |
| | | Process, and the Annual Survey of Members which highlights development and training needs. | |
| | 7.8.2 Reviewing individual member performance | This is done on a regular basis taking account of their attendance and considering any training or development needs. | None identified |
| | 7.8.3 Officer support and development | The training available for officers is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to ensure they can fulfil their roles and responsibilities. | None identified |
| | 7.8.4 Reviewing individual officer performance | See below | None identified |
| | See also 1.1.3 An induction programme for Members / 1.1.4 Staff: the Induction Checklist, (which contains information about the expected standards of) / 1.1.5 Performance Appraisal Process 2016 / 1.2.2 The vision and priorities for staff are contained within the Workforce Plan 2018-2022 / 2.2.1 Member training | | |
| 7.9 Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation | See section 4.5 | | |

| Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |
| 7.10 Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections | 7.10.2 External regulator inspections<br>See 1.1.5 Performance Appraisal Process 2016 | CIW have a programme of inspections based on their annual performance evaluation.<br><br>The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 contains a requirement for Peer reviews to be undertaken once every electoral (ordinary) cycle. | None identified |
| 7.11 Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs | See 1.1.5 Performance Appraisal Process 2016 | The majority of employees within the Council have regular 1:1s or supervision sessions with their manager to address their performance and to discuss training and development needs.<br><br>In 2021 the HR team will be implementing the iTrent HR / Payroll Database that will have a 'performance appraisal' module, which will facilitate more effective recording of the appraisal process and provide greater assurance.  We will be able to report against the number of appraisals carried out to conclusion. | None identified |
| 7.12 Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing | See 1.2.2 Workforce Plan 2018-2022 | The Council has signed the Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge.  We have in place an action plan which contains initiatives to support employees across the Council with mental ill health.  Progress on the action plan is reported annually to Personnel Committee. | None identified |

| Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it | | | |
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| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement /action** |
| | | A wide range of tools and resources have been developed to support our employees during Covid-19.  We have developed different ways of communicating with and reaching out to our employees, and we are developing a training plan to support managers managing virtually and remotely, which require different skill sets and include an emphasis on supporting the health and well-being of remote workers. | |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 8.1 Managing risk - recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making | | See 2.4.2 / 4.1.1 / 4.5.4 / 5.4.1 / 5.4.2 and section 6.5 | |
| 8.2 Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively | | | |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 8.3 Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated | | | |
| 8.4 Managing Performance - monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post-implementation review | 8.4.1 Corporate Performance Management Framework<br><br>See also 5.1.1 Corporate Performance and Risk Management system (CPMS) | 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. | See A5.1.1: |
| 8.5 Making decisions based on relevant, clear, objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook | See also 1.4.4 The Council's Constitution<br><br>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. A record of decision-making and supporting materials are published (publically accessible reports only) on the Council's website via Modern.gov. | | |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 8.6 Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made, thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible | 8.6.1 Scrutiny Committees | The role and responsibility for scrutiny has been established and is clear.  Annual forward work programme sessions are arranged to identify items for the committees to focus on in the new civic year. Throughout the year scrutiny Members also undertake specific training to enhance their skills (e.g. Chair and Vice Chair training). | None identified |
| 8.7 Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement | See 4.1.4 Council Meeting Cycle | The cycle of meetings sets out a calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely performance reports. | |
| 8.8 Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post-implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements) | 8.8.1 Financial standards, guidance and regulations | The Director of Finance & 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. | None identified |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 8.9 Robust internal control - aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives | See also 5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy | | |
| 8.10 Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis | See 5.4.1 Corporate Risk Management Policy | | |
| 8.11 Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place | See 1.4.1 The Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Strategy | | |
| 8.12 Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor | 8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement<br><br>See also 9.9.1 Internal audit service | The Annual Governance Statement reports on the extent of the Council's compliance with its principles and practices of good governance, including how the Council has monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year. The Annual Governance Statement is reviewed every year and updated to reflect the improvement work undertaken during the year. | None identified |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 8.13 Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment and that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon | Audit Committee (Terms of reference, Membership and Training) | Audit committee complies with best practice (Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2013) | A8.13: New responsibilities for the renamed Governance and Audit Committee to be developed during 2021/2022 |
| 8.14 Managing Data - ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data | 8.14.1: Data management framework and procedures / data protection officer / policies and procedures | The Head of Legal & Democratic Services is the Council's Data Protection Officer (DPO) and has responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. The DPO will report directly to the Corporate Directors Group on information security matters. | A8.14.1: A review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing work to be undertaken by the Information Governance team.<br><br>As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there was a delay in commencing this area of work but work began in Spring 2021 and will continue throughout 2021/2022. |
| 8.15 Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies | See 8.14.1 | | |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 8.16 Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring | See 9.9.1 Internal audit service | | |
| 8.17 Strong public financial management - ensuring financial management supports both long-term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance | See 3.2.1 | | |
| 8.18 Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls | See 3.2.1 | | |

| Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of  arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 9.1 Implementing good practice in transparency - writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate | See 4.3.1 Modern.gov system | | |
| 9.2 Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand | See 4.1.1 The Council produces a number of annual reports throughout the year to give assurances to our governance arrangements. | | |
| 9.3 Implementing good practices in reporting - reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources | | | |
| 9.4 Ensuring members and senior management own the results | See 1.4.4 The Constitution | | |
| 9.5 Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement) | 9.5 Corporate Governance Group | The Corporate Governance Group ensure that the governance arrangements of the Council are robust and fit for purpose.  The Group oversee any risks identified to governance arrangements and meet on a regular basis and have terms of reference to fulfil their role. | A9.5.1: Work to deliver governance awareness training across the Council is ongoing and will continue to ensure appropriate training takes place with Council officers. Training will continue throughout 2021 and 2022. |

| Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 9.6 Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate | See 8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement | | |
| 9.7 Ensuing the performance information that accompanies the financial statement is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations | See 8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement | | |
| 9.8 Assurance and effective accountability - ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon | 9.8 External audit / regulatory reports | | |
| 9.9 Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon | 9.9.1 Internal audit service | During the initial period of the pandemic Internal Audit staff temporarily re-deployed to the Test, Trace and Protect Service. An abbreviated Internal Audit Plan was agreed by Audit Committee on 14th September focussing on auditing areas considered to be a higher risk due to remote working due and the subsequent changes in control processes.<br><br>Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of internal Audit (2010).<br><br>Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. | None identified |

| Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice** | **Evidence of key systems, documents and processes** | **Assurance of arrangements in place** | **Suggested improvement / action** |
| 9.10 Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations | See 9.8 | | |
| 9.11 Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement | See 8.12.1 Annual Governance Statement | | |
| 9.12 Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met | See 2.4.2 Governance arrangements are in place for each partnership we are involved in. | | |

# 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 Council uses a number of ways to review and assess the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, the table below highlights the different mechanisms during 2020/2021:

| Constitution Review & Monitoring (2020/2021) | Internal Audit Service (2020/2021) | Audit Committee (2020/2021) | Standards Committee (2020/2021) | External Auditors (2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| We started a review of the Constitution to look at ways to modernise arrangements.<br><br>Democratic Services Committee were tasked in December 2020 to undertake a review of the Constitution and that work is presently ongoing with a report being brought back to Council in Summer 2021.<br>Reports were taken to the Council's Cabinet and Cabinet Boards in 2020/2021 seeking authority to amend the Constitution to include additional delegated powers for officers in respect of decision making of new items | The focus of Internal Audit work in 2020/2021 was on auditing areas considered to be a higher risk due to remote working due to the pandemic and the subsequent changes in control processes. This is in order to provide an opinion on the internal control, risk management and governance arrangements of the Council.<br><br>The Head of Internal Audit's opinion is that the Council's internal control environment and systems of internal control in the | In 2020/2021 the Audit Committee:<br>• Approved the Council's Statement of Accounts including the Annual Governance Statement.<br>• Approved the Council's Internal Audit Plan for the second half of the year including the focus on higher risk areas.<br>• Monitored Internal Audit performance against the plan.<br>• Monitored External Audit Performance and received update | During the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, the Monitoring Officer was notified of a total of 2 complaints made against Members of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.<br><br>The annual report for 2019/2020 was presented to the Standards Committee on the 6th March 2020, highlighting the work undertaken and work will be ongoing in 2021 to address compliance with the | In the Audit Wales – Annual Audit Summary 2020 – which detailed the work completed since the Council's last Annual Improvement Report which was issued in September 2020, the Auditor General provided an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements on 15th September 2020, in line with the statutory deadline. The Auditor General also certified that the Council has met its legal duties for improvement planning and reporting, and believes that it is likely to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) |

| Constitution Review & Monitoring (2020/2021) | Internal Audit Service (2020/2021) | Audit Committee (2020/2021) | Standards Committee (2020/2021) | External Auditors (2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| of legislation and in particular dealing with the legislative changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Formal reports by s151 or Monitoring Officer – no reports were issued by the s151 or Monitoring Officer in 2020/2021. | areas audited are satisfactory; and that despite the limited scope of work reasonable assurance can be given that there have been no major weaknesses noted in relation to the internal control systems operating within the Authority. | reports from Audit Wales.<br><br>• The Committee received Treasury Management Progress Reports in order to fulfill their obligations in relation to the Scrutiny of Treasury Management activity. | Members Code of Conduct. | Measure 2009 during 2020-21. |

**Governance Improvement Areas**

The Council is committed to improving the governance arrangements in place and addressing issues identified.

**Table 1** improvement areas identified during 2019/2020 and progress made during 2020/2021.

| | Improvement Areas 2019/2020 | Progress (during 2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Democratic arrangements - continuous review of arrangements being undertaken to evolve democratic arrangements when meetings will be held remotely. | Continuous review of the Council's democratic arrangements was 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.<br><br>The cycle of meetings for the remainder of 2020/2021 was agreed at Council on 23rd December 2020 (which included the standing up of Cabinet Boards) and the next cycle of meetings for the civic year 2021/2022 was agreed at the Annual Meeting on the 17th March 2021.<br><br>The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will require amendments to processes to reflect changes, including increased provision of webcasting, remote attendance and participation schemes. A Member Seminar was held during March 2021 and work will be ongoing to implement the legislative requirements with reports being brought back to Members accordingly<br><br>With regard to simultaneous translation, there is no solution to date and officers continue to work with WLGA and Welsh Government to source suitable requirements and a report will be brought to Democratic Services Committee on updates as and when available. |
| 2. | 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 | Due to the impact of the pandemic, the Audit Committee on 14th September approved an Audit Plan for the quarter September 2020 – December 2020.<br><br>A further update was presented to Audit Committee at their meeting on 14th January 2021 in relation to Audit work completed to date and plans for the remainder of the financial year. |

| | Improvement Areas 2019/2020 | Progress (during 2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|
| | | The focus of Internal Audit work in 2020/2021 was on auditing areas considered to be a higher risk due to remote working due to the pandemic and the subsequent changes in control processes.<br><br>Coverage of these areas will provide the Head of Internal Audit with sufficient assurance not to have to issue a limitation of scope when providing the opinion required for the financial year. |
| 3. | 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. | "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.<br><br>"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. |
| 4. | Equalities and other impacts - ensuring there is scrutiny of the extent to which the changes implemented and planned discharge the Council's legal obligations.<br>(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). | Assessing the impact of various new/changes to policies and services is a requirement of the Council's reporting arrangements.<br>First stage integrated impact assessments, and/or full integrated impact 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. With the recent changes and developments as a result of the commencement of the socio economic duty the IIA framework has been reviewed.<br><br><br>The Public Services Board is leading on the multi-agency recovery planning for the County Borough following the 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. |

| | Improvement Areas 2019/2020 | Progress (during 2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|
| 5. | Finance – understanding the one-off and recurring costs associated with the situation and the impact of this on the Council's financial health. | Monthly claims processes were set up to reclaim additional costs from the WG Hardship Fund. Claims also submitted for income loss resulting from the pandemic.<br><br>Budget monitoring reports to Members moved to bi-monthly from quarterly to ensure Cabinet were kept informed as to the financial impact of the pandemic.<br><br>The Council acted as agent for the Welsh Government to pay grants to support businesses affected by the Covid pandemic. |
| 6. | ICT - ensuring there is an assessment of the impact of innovation on Information Risk and suitable measures in place to manage the risks. | Digital Services and Information Governance have conducted Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) including Risk Assessments in respect of the introduction of new Digital solutions and to cover any significant changes to existing processes. |
| 7. | 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). | In September the Emergency Planning Team published the "1st wave Covid-19 debrief report". There are a number of recommendations which will be incorporated into the Council's recovery plan. |
| 8. | Statutory duties – careful consideration of Council responses to statutory duties suspended or relaxed during the emergency situation to ensure lessons learned from the emergency response inform choices made about the way such statutory duties are discharged into the future. | Ongoing review takes place of current and forthcoming legislative obligations and consideration will be given to all legislative aspects that have and will take place during the pandemic as part of recovery planning. |
| 9. | Partnership working – ensure the lessons learned from mobilising the emergency response inform future choices made about partnership working | This improvement work to be carried over to 2021/2022 when a mapping exercise will 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. |

| | Improvement Areas 2019/2020 | Progress (during 2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|
| 10. | 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'. | The already established Workforce Planning Group met more frequently throughout the emergency, weekly, and fortnightly from June and then as required later in the year.<br><br>This forum supported the identification of critical skill shortages, enabled the rapid redeployment of staff to plug identified gaps, critical recruitment, and reviewed key employment strategies to support the Council's response to the Covid-19 emergency. It is an inclusive approach, ensuring participation of all directorates and trade unions. The Group also provided sounding board for the Human Resource Team on key workforce strategies and ensured directorates had a framework for providing workforce data and intelligence.<br><br>Audit Wales are working with the Council to identify learnings and future improvements for workforce planning with focus groups for key stakeholders planned |
| 11. | Report annually to the Standards Committee to give an assurance that the Member Code of Conduct is fit for purpose | At a Standards Committee meeting in January 2021 Members considered code of conduct matters. A report will be presented to the 21st May Standards Committee meeting on the Code of Conduct to ensure it is fit for purpose.<br><br>To date there have been no breaches referred to the Standards Committee in 2020-21 and a suitable assurance was given to the Corporate Governance Group. |
| 12. | Update the constitution and bring a report to members in Autumn 2020 following royal assent of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill. | 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) Act 2021.<br><br>Democratic Services Committee will now undertake this work stream during 2021/2022. |
| 13. | Whistle Blowing Policy to be reviewed in 2020 and published on the council website. | This was actioned in January 2020. |

| | Improvement Areas 2019/2020 | Progress (during 2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|
| 14. | 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; further staff guidance in relation to covert recording and further staff guidance in relation to managing querulous/persistent complainants). | Revised Policy approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 16th March 2021. |
| 15. | Deliver six courses in relation to Recruitment and Selection and Safe Recruitment. | Only two courses have been provided this year as a result of re-prioritising HR activity. |
| 16. | To provide training on implementation of Contract Procedure Rules - training to be scheduled for Spring 2020 and bi annually thereafter. | 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 was provided by Corporate Procurement Team to any issues. |
| 17. | 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. | Due to the pandemic this work has been delayed. A report will be brought to Cabinet for information in July 2021 as to the how the Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy has been implemented in Council Contracts. |
| 18. | To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal Services. | Work is presently ongoing and a definitive record of arrangements will be produced by September 2021. |
| 19. | 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. | Data protection matters are reported to the Corporate Governance Group at every meeting and any updates or changes required are discussed at every meeting. The position has been that the policy remains fit for purpose because no changes are needed. However, a formal review of the policy is now taking place as a result of the exit from the European Union and suitable updates will be taken to the group in due course with an assurance provided at the same time. |
| 20. | To undertake a review of FOI Publication Scheme in 2020/2021 with a report to Cabinet for approval. | Due to the pandemic this work has been delayed. Work is presently ongoing with this and an updated report will be provided to the Cabinet in 2021. |
| 21. | Where relevant incorporate proposals for improvements from external regulators audit work into the Council's 2020-2021 corporate planning arrangements. | The onset of the pandemic meant that it was not practical to publish a refreshed detailed Corporate Plan for 2020/21. For 2020/21 the well-being |

| | Improvement Areas 2019/2020 | Progress (during 2020/2021) |
|---|---|---|
| | | objectives and priorities for improvement set out in the 2019-2022 Plan remained the same.<br><br>Corporate planning arrangements are underway for 2021/2022 and where relevant will incorporate proposals for improvement from external regulators audit work. |
| 22. | Incorporate the findings from the Audit Wales review of our performance, risk and business planning arrangements in 2020/2021 into CPMS. | 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) Act 2021 |
| 23. | 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. | 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 begin in early 2021. |
| 24. | 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. | Due to the pandemic no training was undertaken.<br><br>Member training for the Governance & Audit Committee will be undertaken during 2021/2022 following the appointment of Lay Members as required by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. |
| 25. | To deliver governance awareness training across the Council in 2020/2021. | Sessions were delivered by March 31st 2021 (3 sessions). The sessions were a refresher for officers on how the Council makes decisions and the role of scrutiny. |

**Table 2**: improvement areas identified during 2020/2021

| 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 2021/2022 into 2022/2023** | **Responsible Officer** |
| A1 | Reassess governance arrangements as part of recovery planning and the associated governance improvement priorities. | Corporate Governance Group |
| A1i | Democratic arrangements - continuous review of arrangements being undertaken to evolve democratic arrangements when meetings will be held remotely/hybrid. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services |
| A1ii | 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. | Head of Human & Organisational Development |
| A1iii | Equalities and other impacts - ensuring there is scrutiny of the extent to which the changes implemented and planned discharge the Council's legal obligations.<br><br>(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). | Head of Legal & Democratic Services / Strategic Manager – Policy & Executive Support |
| A1iv | Finance – understanding the one-off and recurring costs associated with the pandemic and its future impact on the Council's financial health. | Head of Finance |
| Av | Digital and Cyber Security - ensuring there is an assessment of the impact of current service delivery and innovation on Information Risk and suitable measures in place to manage the risks. | Chief Digital Officer |
| Avi | 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 |

| 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 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
| A1vii | 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 moving through the "Recovery Process". | Head of Human & Organisational Development |
| A1.3.1 | Undertake a review in 2021/2022 to ensure the revised IIA tool is embedded into practice by Autumn 2021. | Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support |
| A1.4.1 | Review of Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Strategy to be completed and reported to Members during 2021/2022. | Head of Finance |
| A2.1.1 | Report annually to the Corporate Governance Group on corporate procurement and compliance. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services |
| A2.2.1 | Ethical awareness Officer training was provided in March 2021 on ensuring safe and legal decision making. Further sessions and ethical awareness matters are planned for 2021/2022. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services |
| A2.3.1 | Courses in relation to Recruitment and Selection and Safe Recruitment and other Employment Policies and Procedures to be delivered in 2021/2022. | Head of Human & Organisational Development |
| A2.4.2 | To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services by September 2021. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services |
| A3.2.1 | To put in place an agreed procedure where Financial Regulations and Accounting instructions are reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and proportionate.  A review of Accounting Instructions is currently underway and will be completed by December 2021. | Head of Finance |

| Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ref (action) | Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
| A4.1.2 | To undertake a review of FOI Publication Scheme throughout 2021/2022 with a report to Cabinet for approval. An amended version of the Publication Scheme will then be considered as part of a review on the Constitution to ensure it is fully up to date. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services |
| A4.1.5 | To undertake review of the Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020 | Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support |

## Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

| Ref (action) | Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
|---|---|---|
| A4.4.1 | To undertake review of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020 | Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support |
| A4.7 | Mapping exercise of partnership arrangements to be undertaken (as part of recovery planning) to capture the lessons learned including the identification of those partnerships that were effective during the emergency response and the de-prioritisation of those that were not. | Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support |
| A4.13.1 | Where relevant incorporate proposals for improvements from external regulators audit work into the Council's 2021-2023 corporate planning arrangements. | Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support |

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

| Ref (action) | Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
|---|---|---|
| A5.1.1 | A5.1.1: We will incorporate the findings from the Audit Wales review of our performance, risk and business planning arrangements into the corporate review of the Council's corporate planning, financial planning and performance management arrangements (to be undertaken early 2021-2022 – as part of recovery planning). | Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support |

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

| Ref (action) | Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
|---|---|---|
| A6.9.1 | Additional work on the forward financial plan covering the period April 2022 – March 2025 will be undertaken. | Head of Finance |

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

| Ref (action) | Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
|---|---|---|
| A7.6.1 | To undertake a review of all proposals and keep a central electronic list of delegations. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services |

| Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ref (action) | Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
| A8.13: | New responsibilities for the renamed Governance and Audit Committee to be developed during 2021/2022 | Head of Finance / Head of Legal Services & Democratic Services |
| A8.14.1 | Review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing to be undertaken by the Information Governance team.<br><br>(As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there was a delay in commencing this area of work but work began in Spring 2021 and will continue throughout 2021/2022). | Head of Legal & Democratic Services |

| Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ref (action) | Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023 | Responsible Officer |
| A9.5.1 | Work to deliver governance awareness training across the Council is ongoing and will continue to ensure appropriate training takes place with Council officers. Training has been provided in Spring 2021 and will continue throughout 2021 and 2022. | Head of Legal & Democratic Services / Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support |

**Signed:**

**Signed:**

**Chief Executive:     Karen Jones**

**Leader of the Council:     Councillor Edward Latham**

**Date: 4th May 2021**

**Date: 4th May 2021**