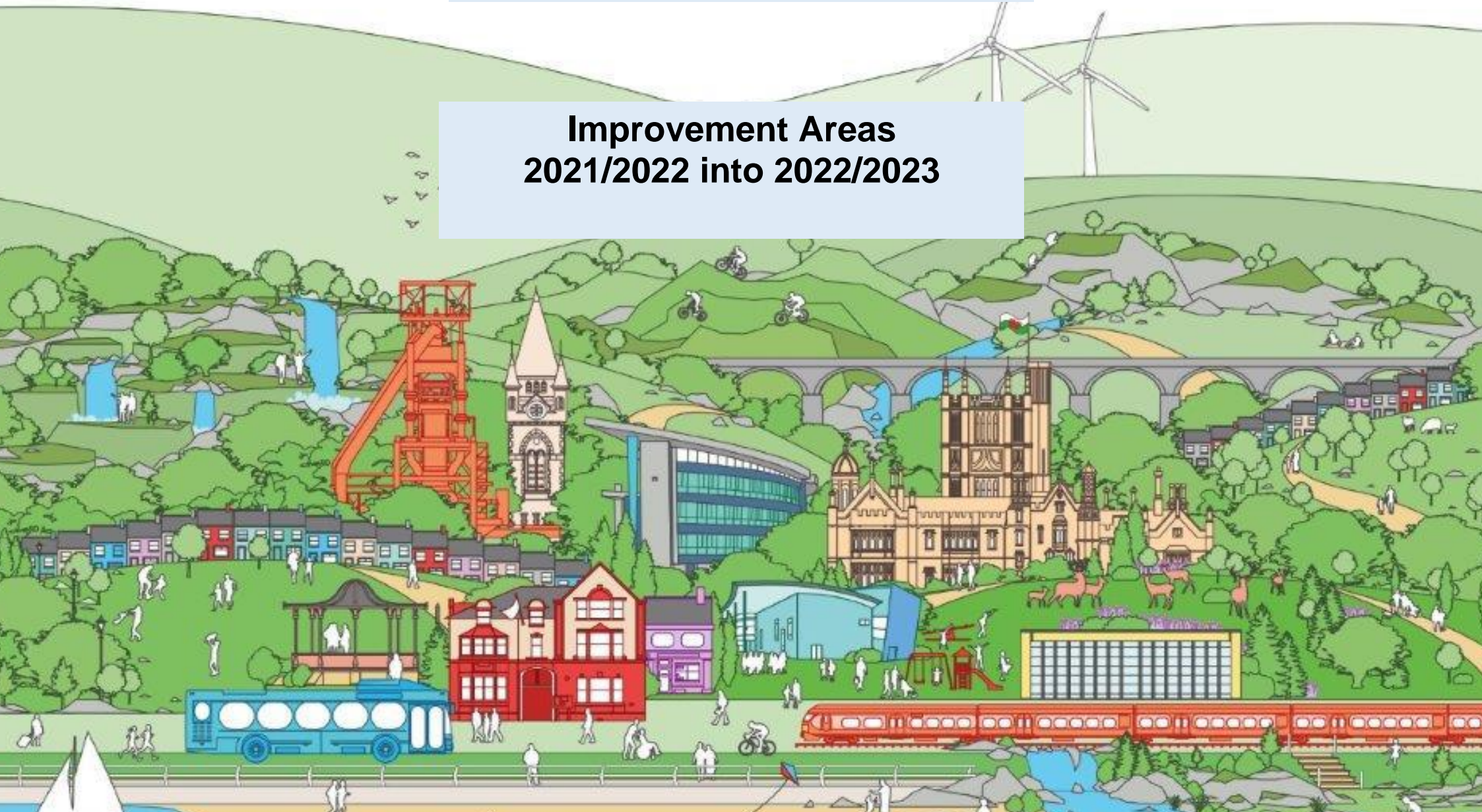


**Neath Port Talbot Council  
Annual Governance Statement  
2020/2021**

**Improvement Areas  
2021/2022 into 2022/2023**



## Improvement areas 2021/2022 into 2022/2023

<b>Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</b>		
<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A1	<p><b>Reassess governance arrangements as part of recovery planning and the associated governance improvement priorities.</b></p> <p>Governance is one of the core activities that will underpin the implementation of the Council's Corporate Recovery Plan. The Corporate Governance Group will ensure the Council's governance arrangements remain robust and transparent but fit for purpose to enable the delivery of the priorities set out in the Plan and facilitate any cultural change required in the way the Council works.</p>	Corporate Governance Group
A1i	<p><b>Democratic arrangements - continuous review of arrangements being undertaken to evolve democratic arrangements when meetings will be held remotely/hybrid.</b></p> <p>This work is ongoing. Cabinet and Democratic Services Committee approved the purchase of equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings and work is ongoing to implement the same. Reports have been presented to Full Council for the implementation of public speaking at Council meetings from January 2022 and reports will shortly be taken to Democratic Services Committee for petition schemes in December 2021. Work will be ongoing throughout 2022 to prepare a Public Participation Scheme in respect of democratic arrangements, which is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A1ii	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>The Health and Safety Team worked with frontline teams and trade union health and safety representatives to develop safe systems of work throughout the pandemic. This included for example specific arrangements within Waste, amending the number of employees who could</p>	Head of Human & Organisational Development

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	<p>travel in a vehicle at any time, along with other control measures. The Learning, Training and Development team supported the safe systems of work by providing appropriate Health and Safety training to newly appointed and redeployees to frontline team, and for example spent several weeks supporting the 'Safe and Well' service's Food Distribution Hub.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Team and Facilities Management Team have worked jointly with the recognised trade unions to develop a Covid risk assessment based on The Quays setting out a number of identified risks and control measures designed to keep people as safe as possible during the pandemic. Accountable Managers have been issued with guidance on how to complete workplace specific risk assessments in addition to this, but using the Civic Centre risk assessment as a template. The Marketing and Communications Team issued short video guides for employees to show them what to expect on returning to the office, and this accompanied the 'Return to Workplaces' guidance which sets out what accountable managers need to do in order to arrange the safe return of employees to the workplace.</p> <p>Homeworking Guidance was developed to keep our employees working at home safe and this included an online risk assessment which provides a report directly to each employee's accountable manager and enables them to understand if any measures, including the provision of equipment or furniture, is necessary to keep the employee safe.</p>	
A1iii	<p><b>Equalities and other impacts - ensuring there is scrutiny of the extent to which the changes implemented and planned discharge the Council's legal obligations.</b></p> <p><b>(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).</b></p> <p>This work is ongoing. Cabinet and Democratic Services Committee approved the purchase of equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings and work is ongoing to implement the same. Reports have been presented to Full Council for the implementation of public speaking at Council</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services / Strategic Manager – Policy & Executive Support

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<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
	<p>meetings from January 2022 and reports will shortly be taken to Democratic Services Committee for petition schemes in December 2021. Work will be ongoing throughout 2022 to prepare a Public Participation Scheme in respect of democratic arrangements, which is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Scrutiny Committees continue to meet on a frequent basis to ensure that there is suitable oversight of the Council's statutory obligations.</p> <p>The Let's Talk campaign asked respondents the questions - how has the pandemic impacted on themselves and how has the pandemic impacted their communities. The responses will be analysed and correlated with the information provided by respondents regarding where they live, their age etc. This will provide an insight into the impact of the pandemic and how it varies between geographies and between people who share protected characteristics. This analysis will contribute to the development of the priorities and the underpinning work to achieve those priorities that will be included in the Council's draft Corporate Recovery Plan which will come before Members towards the end of the calendar year.</p>	
A1iv	<p><b>Finance – understanding the one-off and recurring costs associated with the pandemic and its future impact on the Council's financial health.</b></p> <p>This is very much 'work in progress' as the pandemic is still ongoing. Established processes are in place to deal with claims from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund for current Covid related costs. Understanding the longer term structural impacts of the pandemic will commence in the Spring of 2022.</p>	Chief Finance Officer
Av	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>The NPT Cyber Resilience strategy has been developed and is planned to be published by the end of the calendar year. The strategy sets out the Council's approach to protecting our digital</p>	Chief Digital Officer

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	<p>services from unauthorised access, harm or misuse, which will ensure the services we provide are secure and our residents, businesses and stakeholders can safely interact with us.</p> <p>To support the implementation of the strategy, Cyber Playbooks have been developed which deal with a range of cyber incidents including phishing, malware and data loss.</p> <p>There is ongoing training and development for officers which has included the Socitm Breach Workshop attended, training sessions with staff to ensure they are cyber aware and 'Bob's Phishing exercise' is underway to improve staff awareness of Phishing.</p> <p>Officers actively participate in a number of Cyber groups including the Wales WARP group and participate in NCSC briefings and workshops. Officers regularly arrange vulnerability testing of council systems with any remediation action scheduled and acted on. We ensure any new applications conform to security standards.</p>	
Avi	<p><b>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).</b></p> <p>The Emergency Planning Team carried out an incident debrief in the summer of 2020 to review the Council's response to the first wave of the pandemic. It included recommendations and a plan of action which was provided to Corporate Director Group for their consideration.</p>	Head of Human & Organisational Development
A1vii	<p><b>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".</b></p> <p>The workforce priorities to support Corporate Recovery have been developed, discussed and reported to the council's Corporate Recovery Board, which meets fortnightly.</p>	Head of Human & Organisational Development

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	<p>Audit Wales worked with the Head of Human &amp; Org Development in the summer of 2021 to review workforce planning arrangements in the Council, both pre pandemic and during the pandemic to see what lessons could be learnt. Audit Wales have said:</p> <p>“The Council’s reactive workforce planning during the pandemic worked well, with strong focuses on maintaining essential services and ensuring employee wellbeing”.</p>	
A1.3.1	<p><b>Undertake a review in 2021/2022 to ensure the revised IIA tool is embedded into practice by Autumn 2021.</b></p> <p>Review will be completed prior to March 2022. Alongside this piece of work, Audit Wales are undertaking a national review of the way that public bodies undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and will be looking at summarising the picture across Wales, rather than individual bodies, with a focus on good practice and shared learning. In addition, the Council’s Internal Audit Service is undertaking a review of IIA’s which will focus on guidance, training, compliance and quality control.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A1.4.1	<p><b>Review of Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Strategy to be completed and reported to Members during 2021/2022.</b></p> <p>The review is nearing completion and a revised policy will be presented to Members for approval early in the new calendar year.</p>	Chief Finance Officer
A2.1.1	<p><b>Report annually to the Corporate Governance Group on corporate procurement and compliance.</b></p> <p>A report will be presented to Corporate Governance Group in early 2022 highlighting compliance. In the interim, a report was undertaken by the Council’s Internal Audit section on the procurement work during the Covid-19 pandemic with a high assurance of compliance being identified.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services

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<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A2.2.1	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>Training Sessions have taken place through 2021/2022 focussing on decision making and governance related issues to ensure officers are aware of the appropriate steps that must be taken in decision making. In addition, training for Chief Officers, Accountable Managers and Members has taken place with an external provider to consider the relationship between officers and members and the appropriateness of compliance with Member/Officer protocols. Further sessions will continue to take place through 2021/2022</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A2.3.1	<p><b>Courses in relation to Recruitment and Selection and Safe Recruitment and other Employment Policies and Procedures to be delivered in 2021/2022.</b></p> <p>A programme of Recruitment and Selection and other employment policy training was postponed due to Covid but will be built into the 2022/23 corporate training programme.</p>	Head of Human & Organisational Development
A2.4.2	<p><b>To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal &amp; Democratic Services by September 2021.</b></p> <p>This work is presently ongoing and will be completed by Spring 2022.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A3.2.1	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>Work is in progress with the first, highest priority, accounting instruction having been reviewed and re-issued. This work will not be completed by December 2021 but will be addressed in priority order.</p>	Chief Finance Officer

<b>Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</b>		
<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A4.1.2	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>This review is presently ongoing with the aim that a report will be presented to members in Spring 2022.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A4.1.5	<p><b>To undertake review of the Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020</b></p> <p>This has been delayed until early 2022 to align the review with the publication of the Council's Corporate Recovery Plan.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A4.4.1	<p><b>To undertake review of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020</b></p> <p>This has been delayed until early 2022 to align the review with the publication of the Council's Corporate Recovery Plan.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A4.7	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>The mapping exercise is being taken forward as part of the preparation of the Council's draft Corporate Recovery Plan.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A4.13.1	<p><b>Where relevant incorporate proposals for improvements from external regulators audit work into the Council's 2021-2023 corporate planning arrangements.</b></p> <p>The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2023 was presented to Council on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021. See comment in A5.1.1 below.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support



<b>Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</b>		
<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A5.1.1	<p><b>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).</b></p> <p>The findings from the above review are being considered as part of the development of the Councils corporate Self-assessment Framework and Service Recovery Plan arrangements (in readiness for implementation during 2022-2023).</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support

<b>Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b>		
<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A6.9.1	<p><b>Additional work on the forward financial plan covering the period April 2022 – March 2025 will be undertaken.</b></p> <p>A one year budget will be proposed for the 2022/23 financial year. Work will then commence in the Spring of 2022 on a medium term financial strategy.</p>	Chief Finance Officer

<b>Principle E: Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</b>		
<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A7.6.1	<p><b>To undertake a review of all proposals and keep a central electronic list of delegations.</b></p> <p>This work has commenced as part of the Council’s Constitution Review and officers have been requested to update the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on any times delegations have been made to officers that have been made in accordance with Constitutional provisions. A version of the current list of delegations is available from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services

<b>Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b>		
<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A8.13:	<p><b>New responsibilities for the renamed Governance and Audit Committee to be developed during 2021/2022.</b></p> <p>The remit of the Governance and Audit Committee was changed in March 2021 to comply with the provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Processes are now ongoing to recruit additional lay members of the Governance and Audit Committee for May 2022.</p>	Chief Finance Officer / Head of Legal Services & Democratic Services
A8.14.1	<p><b>Review of Data Processing, Data Protection and Data Sharing to be undertaken by the Information Governance team. (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).</b></p> <p>This work is presently ongoing and officers have commenced processes to undertake this review. The review will continue throughout 2021/2022 and into 2022/2023.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A8.17	<p><b>The Council will assess its financial position during 2021/22 in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.</b></p> <p>This will be completed prior to March 2022.</p>	Chief Finance Officer

<b>Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</b>		
<b>Ref (action)</b>	<b>Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
A9.5.1	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>Training Sessions have taken place through 2021/2022 focussing on decision making and governance related issues to ensure officers are aware of the appropriate steps that must be taken in decision making. In addition, training for Chief Officers, Accountable Managers and Members has taken place with an external provider to consider the relationship between officers and members and the appropriateness of compliance with Member/Officer protocols. Further sessions will continue to take place through 2021/2022.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services / Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support