

**Neath Port Talbot Council
Annual Governance Statement
2021/2022**



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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 self-assessment on the effectiveness of its system of internal control in place for the year ending 31st March 2022 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.

This assessment contributes to the self-assessment the Council will be undertaking to meet the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

“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.

The Framework

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

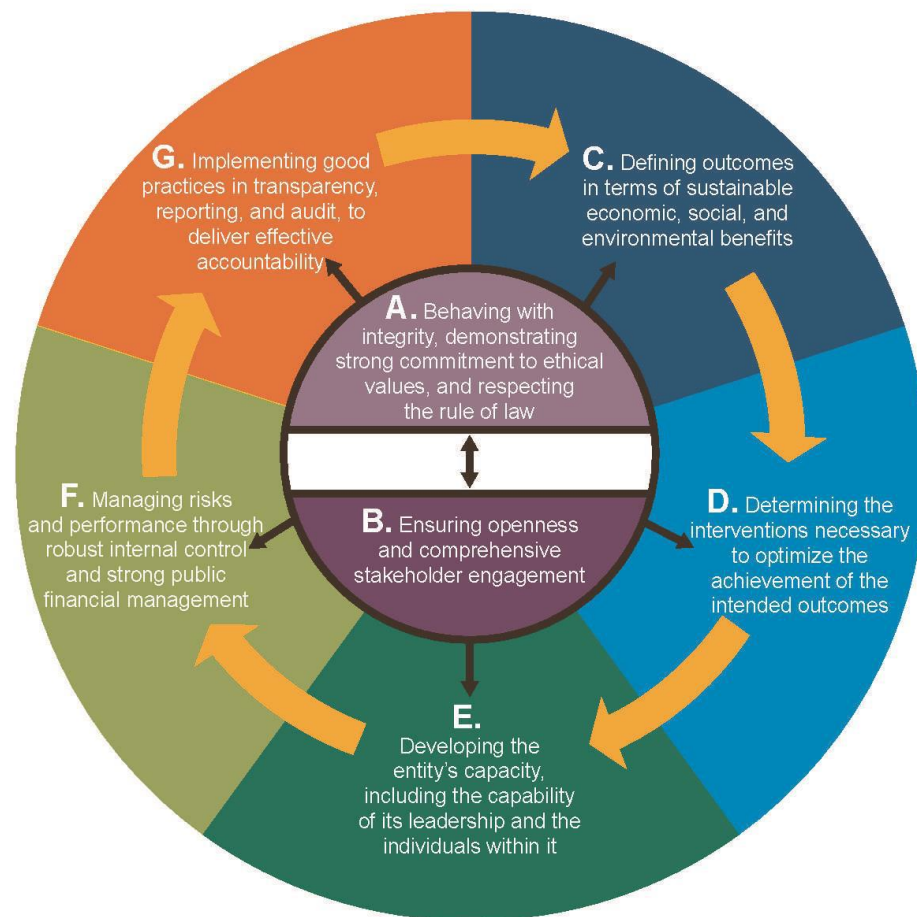
Principles A and B run through principles C to G but good governance is dynamic, and the Council as a whole is committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.

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 self-assessment have been included in an action plan set out in **Table 2** on page 72. The Corporate Governance Group, will oversee the action plan and progress will be reported to Corporate Directors Group, Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee throughout the financial year.

Progress made on improvement work identified during 2020/2021 is contained in **Table 1** on page 60.



Putting the Principles into Practice

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law			
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	In November 2020 an Internal Audit review was published of the compliance with the need to make the necessary declarations re interests, gifts and hospitality accepted/rejected. The recommendations made were taken into account and the Code was updated in January 2021.	None identified
	1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct	<p>Monitored by the Standards Committee and Corporate Governance Group.</p> <p>On signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, Members are required to give an undertaking to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Code of Conduct training took place on the 8th April 2021 relating to the member code of conduct, social media issues, gifts and hospitality and officer/member protocols. Further training took place in Autumn 2021 on officer/member relationships and will be undertaken biannually thereafter to enhance member's compliance with the Members Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Further training was developed to be embedded in the Member Induction process</p>	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
		<p>for May 2022 onwards to ensure members are aware of the responsibility to act ethically and with integrity throughout the year, with advice provided on a variety of matters throughout year on interests and predetermination matters.</p> <p>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.</p>	
	<p>1.1.3 Members: An induction programme for Members was published on the Council website in 2017.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>A review of the programme took place during 2021 in readiness for the Member Induction following the Local Government Elections in May 2022.</p>	<p>None identified</p>

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	<p>1.1.4 Staff: an Induction Checklist, (which contains information about the expected standards of behaviour) must be signed by managers and their employees.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>In 2022, the HR team and Learning, Training and Development Team will progress with the implementation of the iTrent HR / Payroll Database in Phase 2 of the Project. In phase 2, employee self-serve will mean the development of resources such as the 'onboarding' module, which will replace the Induction Checklist and facilitate more effective recording of induction arrangements and therefore provide much greater assurance.</p>	None identified
	<p>1.1.5 Performance Appraisal Process</p>	<p>In 2022, the Learning, Training & Development Team will continue with progress in relation to the implementation of the iTrent HR / Payroll Database in Phase 2 of the Project, launching the Development 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.</p>	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
<p>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)</p>	<p>1.2.1 A recently updated vision and set of values have been published in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027</p>	<p>The Vision and Values are incorporated into recruitment processes (written into job descriptions and person specifications of senior posts in the organisation).</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>1.2.2 The vision and priorities for staff are contained within the Workforce Plan 2018-2022</p>	<p>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. A framework Future of Work strategy has been developed with the support of the Corporate Recovery Board. Additional resources are currently being recruited to support the development and implementation of this strategy early in 2022/2023, to replace the current Workforce Plan.</p> <p>Audit Wales have supported the Council to learn workforce planning lessons from the 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. Feedback from Audit Wales was largely positive with constructive suggestions for</p>	<p>None identified</p>

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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
		improvement, particularly in relation to succession planning.	
	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 neutral impact on the community.	Three separate reviews of the IIA process have been undertaken to determine how well the IIA tool is embedded into the decision making process, its effectiveness and the quality of the IIAs. Two of the reviews were completed by March 2022 (Internal Audit / external consultant) with the last (Audit Wales) due to be completed by July 2022. The recommendations from the reviews undertaken will be implemented to further improve the embedding of the IIA process into decision making. Training to address the recommendations will be part of the New Member Induction Programme following the Local Government Elections in May 2022) for Members. Training will also be arranged for officers.	None identified

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	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	<p>The Committee meet on a quarterly basis (or more frequently where referrals from the Ombudsman are considered).</p> <p>Reports are regularly presented to the Standards Committee and any recommendations arising.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>An annual report of the Standards Committee will also be presented to full Council highlighting the work of the Standards Committee.</p>	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
	1.3.4 Member and Officer Relations Protocol	<p>A protocol is in place as part of the Council's Constitution and Employee Code of Conduct.</p> <p>A review of the Protocol was undertaken in Autumn 2021 as part of the wider review of the Council's Constitution and subsequently a slightly revised version was taken to Full Council in Autumn 2021 for approval. Copies of which have been distributed to officers.</p> <p>Further training took place in Autumn 2021 on officer/member relationships and will be undertaken biannually thereafter to enhance member's compliance with the Members Code of Conduct. Detailed training on the protocol will be embedded in training from May 2022 onwards.</p> <p>The protocol is monitored by the Standards Committee</p>	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	An updated Fraud Strategy has been prepared by the Internal Audit team (March 2022). This will be the subject of review internally before being presented to Members after the May 2022 election.	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
	<p>1.4.2 Member Interests are shown by individual Members on the Council website.</p>	<p>Declarations of Interest for Members is a standing item on all meeting agendas and recorded in minutes of meetings.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>1.4.3 Staff Interests</p>	<p>An up-to-date register is held by each Director and is subject to Internal Audit review annually.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>1.4.4 Members: The Constitution</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>1.4.5 Staff Gifts & Hospitality</p>	<p>An up-to-date register is held by each Director and is subject to Internal Audit review annually.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>1.4.6 Whistleblowing Policy</p>	<p>Policy approved by Personnel Committee in August 2015 and reviewed in January 2020.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>1.4.7 Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy</p>	<p>The Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy was revised in March 2021 to meet the requirements set out in the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Model Complaints Policy.</p> <p>The Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021 sets out the following functions for the Governance & Audit Committee (from 1st April 2021):</p>	<p>None identified</p>

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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
		<p>‘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’.</p> <p>A report to meet the above requirement was presented to the Committee on 18th February 2022</p>	
	<p>1.4.8 Social Services Compliments and Complaints</p>	<p>The latest Social Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021 was prepared and reported to Social Care, Health & Wellbeing Cabinet on 21st October 2021. No systemic issues were identified.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>1.4.9 Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints and responses</p>	<p>The latest Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021 was reported to Cabinet on 15th December 2021. No systemic issues were identified. During 2021/2022 quarterly complaints and compliments data has been reported to relevant Cabinet Boards on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>See also 1.4.4 Members: The Constitution, Part 5, Section 3 ‘Personal Interests’ addresses this.</p>	<p>Member’s interests are published on the NPT Council website for each meeting throughout the year.</p>	<p>None identified</p>

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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
	See also 1.1.1 Officers: Employee Code of Conduct (Section 9, 2017).	<p>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.</p> <p>They should have no role whatsoever which should negate the need for any declarations of interest to be made.</p>	None identified
2.1 Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation’s ethical standards and performance	2.1.1. The Corporate Procurement Team	<p>This is acknowledged by the team when undertaking tender work for other sections when developing and evaluating procurement process.</p> <p>The team also monitor and evaluate compliance looking at what approach sections adopt.</p> <p>The Ethical Employment Code of Practice and Modern Slavery Statement issued to all sections sets out processes that should be valued.</p>	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.

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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
<p>2.2 Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation’s culture and operation</p>	<p>2.2.1 Member training</p> <p>See also 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct)</p> <p>See also 1.3.3 Standards Committee – special dispensation to vote</p>	<p>Through the year, Members receive training on the Code of Conduct (& refresher training).</p> <p>Annual reports are presented to Standards Committee.</p> <p>Members Declaration of Acceptance of Office – undertaken given to abide by the Members’ Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Leading in the Welsh Public Service Behaviours Framework.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
<p>2.3 Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values</p>	<p>2.3.1 Recruitment and Selection Policy 2018</p>	<p>Recruitment arrangements have been reviewed in line with the implementation of a new online Recruitment service (as part of the iTrent HR / Payroll system). This presents opportunities to introduce evidence based equality and diversity practices into our recruitment process which will be taken forward under Phase 2 implementation. This will also be considered as part of the review of our Recruitment Policy, a key action for the Recruitment Taskforce by March 2023.</p> <p>Training is provided to recruiting managers and courses in relation to Recruitment and</p>	<p>None identified</p>

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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
		Selection and Safe Recruitment and other Employment Policies and Procedures to be delivered in 2022/2023.	
	2.3.2 Pay Policy Statement	The 2022/2023 review has taken place and the revised Pay Policy Statement was presented to Council on 16 th March 2022.	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. A dedicated section of the Council's intranet has provided standard documents and processes for officers to follow.	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
	2.4.2 We continue to participate in a number of partnerships. Governance arrangements are in place for each for partnership which:	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	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
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the roles of members both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the Council; • Clearly set out the legal status of the partnership; and • 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. 	<p>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 was reviewed in 2021/2022 as part of the Council’s recovery, reset and renew work.</p> <p>To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services. This work is ongoing and has proved complex whilst officers have been required to work from home. As colleagues return to the office, further work will be undertaken to fully gather this list (given it requires access to the Council’s Archives in Port Talbot Civic Centre). The work is due to be completed in Spring 2022.</p>	
<p>3.1 Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations</p>	<p>3.1.1 Cabinet and Committee Reports contain a section entitled “Legal Impacts” so that legal obligations are placed at the forefront of decision making. See also 1.4.4 The Constitution</p>	<p>Safe and Legal Decision Making Training is available for relevant officers and is provided on an annual basis by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to Council officers.</p> <p>Democratic Services Officers and Legal Services monitor reports to ensure legal compliance.</p>	<p>None identified</p>

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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
<p>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</p>	<p>3.2.1 Financial management arrangements</p>	<p>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).</p>	<p>A3.2.1: To complete the review of Accounting Instructions</p>
	<p>3.2.2 Democratic Services - support function.</p>	<p>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 on the work that has been undertaken by the Committee during the previous civic year.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
	<p>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</p>	<p>The Monitoring Officer oversees the Council's Constitution and ensures it is kept up to date. A review of the Constitution has taken place throughout 2021 and annual reports will be produced to the Democratic Services Committee on any updates required to the</p>	<p>None identified</p>

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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
	their roles and responsibilities.	Constitution and to seek Members views on constitutional provisions	
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.	<p>Legal Enterprise Case Management Software providing audit trails of legal advice given and time spent providing legal advice on all matters.</p> <p>Transaction documentation and hard copies of Legal Advice provided are stored by the Council.</p> <p>Legal training provided to officers on regular basis to ensure they are up to date with recent legal developments and powers available.</p>	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 that the current system for dealing with data protection breaches is fit for purpose. The authority retains a breach register and 3 referrals were made to the Information Commissioner’s Office who directed that no further action was necessary on the part of the Council.	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
	<p>3.4.2 Internal Audit Special Investigations / Disciplinary Cases</p> <p>See also 3.3.1 Cabinet and Committee Reports</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
<p>3.5 Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively</p>	<p>See 1.4.1 Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Policy</p> <p>See 1.4.6 Whistle Blowing Policy</p>	<p>Cases are monitored by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Council's Standards Committee in relation to members conduct. During the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, 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.</p> <p>For the civic year: 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, the Standards Committee received 0 referrals from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales stemming from the previous civic year (2020/2021) relating to the Code of Conduct of Town and Community Councils only.</p>	<p>None identified</p>

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
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.	<p>The reports are available to the public and the Corporate Governance Group oversee any risks identified to governance arrangements, arising from these annual reports.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate Plan Annual Report 2. Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report 3. PSB Well-being Plan Annual Report 4. Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 5. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 6. Internal Audit Report 2020/2021 7. Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 8. Ombudsman Annual Report 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
	4.1.2 FOI Policy / FOI Publication Scheme	<p>Published in March 2014.</p> <p>As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a delay during 2021/2022 in undertaking a review of the Scheme. It is</p>	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement / action
		<p>planned to conclude the review early 2022/2023 with a report to Cabinet for approval in Autumn 2022.</p> <p>The revised 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.</p>	
	4.1.3 The Council's strategic purpose, vision and values are set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027	Set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022/2027. The emerging Future of Work Strategy will embed the Council's vision, values and priorities in everything we do.	
	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
	<p>4.1.5 Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020</p> <p>This includes new 'Brand' guidelines to create consistency and increase visibility and</p>	<p>The review of the 2018/2020 Strategy has been delayed due to the pandemic. Work is now underway to align the revised Strategy with the Council's Corporate Plan 2022/2027 and will be completed in early 2022/2023.</p> <p>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</p>	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement / action
	understanding about what the Council does.	about how the Council is delivering on its well-being objectives and to keep stakeholders up-to-date. 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.	
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. 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
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	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

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement / action
consequences of those decisions are clear.			
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	<p>The review of the 2018/2020 Strategy has been delayed due to the pandemic. Work is now underway to align the revised Strategy with the Council's Corporate Plan 2022/2027 and will be completed in early 2022/2023.</p> <p>The Council uses Snap Survey software for corporate consultations for both internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>The Planning Policy Service use Objective consultation software for the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>These arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective and value for money when reviewing budget for the forthcoming financial year.</p>	None identified
	4.4.2 Community of Practice	<p>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. The Community of Practice undertook a key role during 2021/2022 in supporting the Lets Talk</p>	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
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		campaign which informed the priorities contained in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027.	
	4.4.3 Citizens Panel	The NPT Citizens Panel was launched in January 2020 enabling residents to express 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 and Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.	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 4.5.2 Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020	See 4.1.5 and 4.4.1 above	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement / action
	4.5.3 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
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	4.6.1 To review the Partnership Agreement (Compact) between the Council and the Voluntary Sector

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement / action
		Agreement (Compact) between the Council and the Voluntary 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 Sector in working together.	
	4.6.2 Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum	The Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum meets on a quarterly basis and is regularly consulted on key Council policies e.g. budget and Corporate Plan.	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. Meetings were held throughout 2021/2022 to discuss issues of concern to the Town and Community Councils and also to update them on the Council's approach to recovery. Ongoing training was also provided to Town and Community Councils by the Monitoring Officer on the Member's Code of Conduct.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement / action
	4.6.4 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • A shared commitment to change • A culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; and • that the added value of partnership working is explicit 	See 2.4.2 and 4.5.4	<p>The Council plays an active role in collaborative arrangements to ensure the best return for our citizens and other stakeholders.</p> <p>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.</p>	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
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. 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.	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
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. See 1.1.1 Employee Code of Conduct See 1.1.2 Member Code of Conduct - monitored by the Standards Committee See 4.1.5 See 4.5.1	None identified
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Act 2010 	See 1.3.1	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement / action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, • Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 • Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 • 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.	The Corporate Plan 2022-2027 sets out the council's revised purpose, vision, values and wellbeing objectives and shows how the council contributes to the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Neath Port Talbot and to the seven national wellbeing goals contained in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The priorities under each wellbeing objective in the short and medium term demonstrate how the Council intends to maximise its contribution to the seven wellbeing goals set by Welsh Government.	None identified
	4.13.2 The Council's four Well-being Objectives and statement are published in	Audit Wales has issued certificates confirming that the council has discharged its duties under relevant legislation for both the Council's Corporate Plan and our Annual Report .	None identified

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
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 Corporate Plan 2022-2027		

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 revised vision is set out in the recently published Corporate Plan 2022-2027.	None identified
	5.1.1 Corporate Performance and Risk Management system (CPMS)	CPMS enables the integration of the Council's strategic planning, business planning, performance management and risk management arrangements.	5.1.1 To develop a revised Corporate Performance Management Framework

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
		<p>During 2021/22 work began to incorporate the findings (opportunities for improvement) 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, risk management and performance management arrangements.</p> <p><u>Service Recovery Plans (SRPs)</u> Whilst requirements of the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 require self-assessment to be undertaken at corporate level, the council has developed a new Service Recovery Plan process (effective from April 2022) for accountable managers to help services recover from the pandemic. The new process has the principles of self-assessment at its core and will help embed self-assessment across the organisation. At operational level, SRPs will integrate planning, performance, risk and budget management.</p>	
5.2 Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be	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.	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
immediately or over the course of a year or longer		Service user questionnaires are undertaken as part of contract monitoring; contracts 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 risks arising from the pandemic were managed via the establishment of a Corporate Incident Management Team chaired by the Council's Chief Executive. The Council's current Risk Management Policy is under review and will be reported to Members following the May 2022 elections.	5.4.1 To review the Council's Risk Management Policy
	5.4.2 Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)	In January 2021 the Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Services took over the role of SIRO, which was subsequently passed to	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
		<p>the newly appointed Chief Digital Officer in July 2021.</p> <p>The SIRO reports directly to the Corporate Directors Group and Corporate Governance Group on information security matters.</p> <p>The SIRO is accountable for information risk throughout the Authority and ensures that information risks are treated as a priority across all service areas.</p>	
5.5 Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available	<p>The priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 were informed by an extensive engagement exercise "Let's Talk". This was undertaken in two phases between July 2021 and January 2022.</p> <p>See also 1.3.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)</p>		
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	<p>See 4.13.1 The Council's strategic vision and priorities (set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2027)</p>		
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	<p>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.</p>	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
	See also 2.4.1 Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Policy 2019	The Council has made a commitment to actively examine where it sources its goods and services from to ensure those arrangements are ethical.	
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)	The Council's equality objectives were revised and published as part of the SEP 2020-2024 in October 2020. Actions to meet the equality objectives 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 are to be reviewed during 2022-2023 to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aligned to the Council's revised Corporate Plan 2022-2027	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. 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
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	<u>See sections 4.4.4.5 / 4.10 / 4.11 / 4.12</u>		
6.3 Planning Interventions - establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets	See 5.1.1	See 5.1.1	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		

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
6.5 Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks	See 2.4.2 See 5.4.1 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 4.13.1 Corporate Plan 2022-2027		
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 5.1.1 Corporate Performance and Risk Management System (CPMS)	<p>There is a clear structure in place for delivering the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, which includes a basket of key performance indicators.</p> <p>At the service level, Service Recovery Plans require the inclusion of key service recovery key performance indicators that are linked to service priorities and outcomes and improvements and changes that the service wants to achieve. Key business as usual service performance indicators can be included as well. Officers are encouraged to include qualitative measures of success (inspection/reviews or feedback results/what the aim is/what you want to achieve/ what does good look like?) as well as KPIs.</p> <p>On a quarterly basis Cabinet and relevant Cabinet Boards, receive a report on progress</p>	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
		being made in relation to the well-being objectives and priorities.	
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.	None identified
6.9 Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium-term financial plan	6.9.1 Budget setting process	On 1 st March 2022, Council approved the 2022/2023 budget following stakeholder consultation. No new savings proposals were made and a balanced budget was set.	6.9 Development of a medium term financial strategy during the Spring of 2022.
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		

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
6.12 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		
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		

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

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 purpose, vision and values of the council are contained within the Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027, along with key objectives and priority actions for the next twelve months. The Workforce Plan 2018 – 2022 will be replaced by a Workforce Strategy 2022 – 2027 building on the Future of Work framework strategy developed under the Corporate Recover Board.	<p>The Workforce Strategy will seek to identify the key challenges and priorities for our employees over the next 5 year period, as set out in the Corporate Plan objectives and priorities, Medium Term Financial Plan, Digital Strategy and the Risk Register.</p> <p>An action plan will be developed alongside this 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.</p>	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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Corporate Policy Team work collaboratively with a number of other Welsh Councils in relation to our corporate performance management system to share best practice. • Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) – National data set - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2019/20 and 2021/22 PAM data set was not published by Data Cymru. Data Cymru have recently put arrangements in place so that local authorities can share and benchmark their PAM performance for 	None identified

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

Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement /action
		<p>both 2019/20 and 2020/21 and NPT signed up to this process. However, not all authorities will be providing data, not all PAMs will have data or full data due to the pandemic. Officers are currently working with Data Cymru and other local authorities on developing performance related data in the form of the self-assessment performance dataset.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of services benchmark via APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence). • The Council’s Electoral Services officers participate in the Association of Electoral Administrators network to benchmark electoral administration. • 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 • Some service areas benchmark data with other services from other local authorities which also includes using benchmarking data available on the Welsh Government STATS Wales website. 	

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement /action
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From April 2022, where benchmarking data is available, all services will be required to use benchmarking to inform their self-assessment of performance when they complete their Service Recovery Plans (SRPs). All services through self-assessment will also have to demonstrate if they are achieving their intended outcomes and delivering value for money. The SRP process will help services reflect on and challenge what they do to help them continuously improve. 	
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) 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

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).		
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	<p>The Constitution requires the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to keep a list of all officer delegations made in accordance with the Constitution.</p> <p>The work to review all proposals and to keep a central electronic list of delegations is ongoing. Work with individual Directorates to gather evidence of delegations is continuing with the aim of a report to Corporate Governance Group on methods of record keeping in Spring/Summer 2022.</p>	None identified
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	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	The Monitoring Officer oversees the Council’s Constitution and ensures it is kept up to date.	None identified

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

Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement /action
members and each provides a check and a balance for each other’s authority	Members and Officers. Clear job descriptions for all staff highlight roles and responsibilities.		
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • 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 • Ensuring personal, organisation and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons 	7.8.1 Member support and development.	<p>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 2021/2022 however this was disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The following are examples of seminars that were held during 2021/2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Safeguarding • Invest in NPT • Draft Corporate Recovery Plan • Budget • Replacement LDP • Allergens in Food • Swansea Bay University Health Board • Service Pressures • Recovery Planning • Officer/Member Relationships • South Wales Trunk Road 	None identified

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

Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement /action
learnt from both internal and external governance weaknesses		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20mph speed limit • Destination Marketing • Recover, Reset and Renew – Let’s Talk • Biodiversity • Partnership and Community Cohesion • Trading Standards • Learning and Teaching in Wales <p>Members are also encouraged to participate in the Annual Development Review (ADR) Process, and the Annual Survey of Members which highlights development and training needs.</p>	
	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

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement /action
	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 1.2.2 The vision and priorities for staff		
7.9 Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation	See section 4.5		
7.10 Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections	7.10.1 External regulator inspections	In September 2021, the Council invited an LGA Recovery & Renewal Panel to hold facilitated workshops with senior officers and a cross party representation of Members (Coronavirus Member Panel) to help the Council take stock of and reflect upon the period since the pandemic first impacted and to look at the challenges that lie ahead as the Council was setting out its plans for recovery. Both Estyn and CIW have a programme of inspections based on their annual performance evaluation. 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	The majority of employees within the Council have regular 1:1s or supervision sessions with their manager to address their	None identified

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement /action
		<p>performance and to discuss training and development needs.</p> <p>In 2022, the Learning, Training & Development Team will continue with progress in relation to the implementation of the iTrent HR / Payroll Database in Phase 2 of the Project, launching the Development 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.</p>	
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	<p>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.</p> <p>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</p>	None identified

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance in practice	Evidence of key systems, documents and processes	Assurance of arrangements in place	Suggested improvement /action
		<p>an emphasis on supporting the health and well-being of remote workers.</p> <p>As part of the Future of Work Strategy we have set out an intention to develop a Wellbeing Strategy.</p>	

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			
8.2 Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively			
8.3 Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated			
		See 5.4.1 / 5.4.2 and section 6.5	

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
8.4 Managing Performance - monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post-implementation review	8.4.1 Corporate Performance Management Framework 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.	None identified
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 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.		
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

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
8.7 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 Chief Finance Officer 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
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	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	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
	See also 9.9.1 Internal audit service	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.	
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	Governance and Audit Committee (Terms of reference, Membership and Training)	Governance and Audit committee complies with best practice (Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2013) Three new external Lay Members have been appointed to the Committee and will take up their roles at the first meeting following the May 2022 elections.	A8.13: New responsibilities for the renamed Governance and Audit Committee to be adopted during 2022/2023
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.

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
8.15 Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies	See 8.14.1		
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	The CIPFA Financial Management Code 2019 (FM Code) was introduced during 2020/2021, to improve the financial resilience of organisations by embedding enhanced standards of financial management. Compliance with the code was not mandatory during 2020/2021 but became mandatory for 2021/2022.	The Council will assess its financial position during 2021/2022 in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.
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	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

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
governance (annual governance statement)			officers. Training continued throughout 2021/2022.
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 Ensuring 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	<p>The annual Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Governance & Audit Committee in April 2021.</p> <p>Due to sickness experienced within the team and a vacancy coupled with absences of staff across the council it was necessary to revise the original audit plan and as such a revised Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Governance & Audit Committee in November 2021.</p>	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
		<p>At the meeting in November 2021 the Governance & Audit Committee approved the revised Internal Audit Charter to reflect the changes in relation to the Head of Internal Audit.</p> <p>The Governance & Audit Committee received quarterly updates of progress against the Internal Audit Plan and details of any factors affecting achievement of the plan.</p> <p>Members were provided with the assurance rating of each completed audit.</p> <p>All recommendations made by auditors were accepted by the service managers and implementation will be confirmed during the post audit review process.</p> <p>Compliance with CIPFA’s Statement on the Role of the Head of internal Audit (2010).</p> <p>Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</p>	

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 2021/2022:

Constitution Review & Monitoring (2021/2022)	Internal Audit Service (2021/2022)	Governance Audit Committee (2021/2022)	Standards Committee (2021/2022)	External Auditors (2021/2022)
<p>We undertook a review of the Constitution to look at ways to modernise arrangements.</p> <p>An updated Constitution was taken to Council for adoption in September 2021 and subsequently approved to reflect the work of the review undertaken. This has now been published on the Council's Website.</p> <p>Formal reports by s151 or Monitoring Officer – no reports were issued by the s151 or Monitoring Officer in 2021/22.</p>	<p>The focus of Internal Audit work in 2021/2022 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.</p> <p>The Head of Internal Audit's opinion is that the Council's internal control environment and systems</p>	<p>In 2021/2022 the Governance and Audit Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved the Council's Statement of Accounts including the Annual Governance Statement. • Approved the Council's Internal Audit Plan in April 2021 and a revised plan in November 2021 • Monitored Internal Audit performance against the plan. • Monitored External Audit Performance and received update 	<p>Members Code of Conduct. An annual report for 2020/2021 was presented to the Standards Committee and the Standards Committee has continued to meet through 2021/2022 to date, focussing specifically on dispensation reports and to consider national reviews undertaken by Welsh Government in respect of the standards regime throughout Wales and future proposed changes.</p>	<p>In the Audit Wales – Annual Audit Summary 2021 – which detailed the work completed since the Council's last Annual Improvement Report the Auditor General provided an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements on 30th July 2021, 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)</p>

Constitution Review & Monitoring (2021/2022)	Internal Audit Service (2021/2022)	Governance Audit Committee (2021/2022)	Standards Committee (2021/2022)	External Auditors (2021/2022)
	<p>of internal control in the 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.</p>	<p>reports from Audit Wales.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee received Treasury Management Progress Reports in order to fulfill their obligations in relation to the Scrutiny of Treasury Management activity. 		<p>Measure 2009 during 2020/2021.</p>

Governance Improvement Areas

Table 1 – Governance Improvement Action Plan - 2021/2022 into 2022/2023

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
A1	<p>Reassess governance arrangements as part of recovery planning and the associated governance improvement priorities.</p> <p>Progress - Governance is one of the core activities that will underpin the implementation of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027. The Corporate Governance Group ensures 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>Democratic arrangements - continuous review of arrangements being undertaken to evolve democratic arrangements when meetings will be held remotely/hybrid.</p> <p>Progress - 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 petition schemes from Spring 2022. Work is underway to prepare a Public Participation Scheme in respect of democratic arrangements, which is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Statutory Guidance remains in consultation phase and we await the final version from Welsh Government before adopting our own Scheme. It is aimed that a final Participation Scheme will be subject to public consultation in Autumn 2022.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A1ii	<p>Health, safety and welfare - ensuring risk assessments and associated control measures are robust across the Council to protect the workforce, those who need to use our services and functions and to uphold confidence in the Council's response to the ongoing situation.</p>	Head of Human & Organisational Development

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
	<p>Progress - The Health and Safety Team have worked with frontline teams and trade union health and safety representatives to develop safe systems of work throughout the pandemic and continue to do so as we move into recovery. This included for example specific arrangements within Waste, amending the number of employees who could travel in a vehicle at any time, along with other control measures. Health and Safety Officers continue to work with Waste Teams as they have returned to a more normal service provision, adapting control measures to the changing nature of the pandemic risk. 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 teams, 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. This guidance has been kept under review as the WG guidance has changed during the course of the pandemic and as we move into 'Level 0', and adapted according to the changing circumstances.</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>	

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
	As we begin the progression into a Hybrid Framework, observing health and safety measures continues to be a key message to managers and employees.	
A1iii	<p>Equalities and other impacts - ensuring there is scrutiny of the extent to which the changes implemented and planned discharge the Council’s legal obligations.</p> <p>(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).</p> <p>Progress - 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 petition schemes from Spring 2022. Work is underway to prepare a Public Participation Scheme in respect of democratic arrangements, which is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Statutory Guidance remains in consultation phase and we await the final version from Welsh Government before adopting our own Scheme. It is aimed that a final Participation Scheme will be subject to public consultation in Autumn 2022. Scrutiny Committees continue to meet on a frequent basis to ensure that there is suitable oversight of the Council’s statutory obligations.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services / Strategic Manager – Policy & Executive Support
A1iv	<p>Finance – understanding the one-off and recurring costs associated with the pandemic and its future impact on the Council’s financial health.</p> <p>Progress - 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 be part of the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).</p>	Chief Finance Officer

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
Av	<p>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.</p> <p>Progress - The NPT Cyber Security strategy was approved by Members at full cabinet on the 12 January 2022.</p> <p>The strategy sets out the Council’s approach to protecting our digital 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.</p> <p>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>	Chief Digital Officer
Avi	<p>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).</p> <p>Progress - 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</p>	Head of Human & Organisational Development

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
	<p>recommendations and a plan of action which was provided to Corporate Director Group for their consideration.</p> <p>The Strategic Officer rota was established in 2020, with every Corporate Director and Head of Service participating in 24/7 'on call' arrangements to ensure that the Emergency Planning Team have named senior officer support in the event of a major incident. Online training has been provided and every officer participating in the rota has been provided with hard copy guidance. Officers are given the opportunity to participate in 'exercises', which is a safe way to gain experience of participating in an incident response.</p> <p>Additional funding has been made available to enable the establishment of 2 PROTECT Officers and in February 2022 successful appointment were made to these posts. This will support the development of actions in line with the UK's Counter Terrorism Strategy.</p>	
A1vii	<p>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".</p> <p>Progress - The workforce priorities to support corporate recovery were developed, discussed and reported to the council's Corporate Recovery Board. This has led to the development of a framework 'Future of Work' strategy, and funding has been made available to recruit resources to develop and deliver this strategy.</p> <p>Audit Wales worked with the Head of Human & 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. Wales Audit 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>	Head of Human & Organisational Development

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
	<p>Wales Audit have particularly praised the Succession Planning Toolkit as a means of facilitating service level workforce planning. This was launched just before the pandemic in 2020 and as a result the operational use of the toolkit has so far been limited. Plans are in place in 2022 to support every Head of Service to develop a succession plan for their service which can then inform the development of corporate strategies to support these plans.</p> <p>Additional funding has been made available to support winter pressures identified in winter 2022, as well as to increase capacity as we progress into recovery. Additional resource to support recruitment capacity in the HR Team has led to the creation of a Recruitment Taskforce, working with service managers to establish what recruitment strategies are needed to recruit and retain employees within their services, developing a wide range of actions working with key partners such as DWP, Employability services, Swansea University, Neath College, Trinity St David's University, etc.</p>	
A1.3.1	<p>Undertake a review in 2021/2022 to ensure the revised Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool is embedded into practice by Autumn 2021.</p> <p>Progress - Three separate reviews of the IIA process have been undertaken to determine how well the IIA tool is embedded into the decision making process, its effectiveness and the quality of the IIAs. Two of the reviews were completed by March 2022 (Internal Audit / external consultant) with the last (Audit Wales) due to be completed by July 2022.</p> <p>The recommendations from the reviews undertaken will be implemented to further improve the embedding of the IIA process into decision making.</p> <p>Training to address the recommendations will be part of the New Member Induction Programme following the Local Government Elections in May 2022) for Members. Training will also be arranged for officers in early autumn.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
A1.4.1	<p>Review of Anti-fraud, Corruption and Malpractice Strategy to be completed and reported to Members during 2021/2022.</p> <p>Progress - The review is nearing completion and a revised policy will be presented to Members for approval in the Autumn.</p>	Chief Finance Officer
A2.1.1	<p>Report annually to the Corporate Governance Group on corporate procurement and compliance.</p> <p>Progress - A report will be presented to Corporate Governance Group in Autumn 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
A2.2.1	<p>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.</p> <p>Progress - 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.</p> <p>Training was also provided to Cabinet Members on the importance of the member and officer protocol. Code of Conduct training for elected members also took place in Spring 2021. Members Dispensations were sought at the Standards Committee by individual members throughout 2021/2022</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2021/2022 into 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
A2.3.1	<p>Courses in relation to Recruitment and Selection and Safe Recruitment and other Employment Policies and Procedures to be delivered in 2021/2022.</p> <p>Progress - Five Recruitment & Selection courses were delivered during 2020/2021 with 43 attendees. No courses of this nature were delivered in 2021/2022 due to covid-19. However, training courses on HR policies and procedures will be planned and included in the Corporate Training programme for 2022/2023.</p> <p>Informal Sessions were delivered by HR on the Hybrid Working Framework to Accountable Managers to help them implement Hybrid Working within their services and 6 courses on 'Managing and Motivating Teams' took place with 53 managers attending.</p>	Head of Human & Organisational Development
A2.4.2	<p>To ensure that a copy of all partnership agreements are logged centrally with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services.</p> <p>Progress - This work is ongoing.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A3.2.1	<p>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.</p> <p>Progress - Work is ongoing with the first, highest priority, accounting instruction having been reviewed and re-issued.</p>	Chief Finance Officer

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	<p>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.</p> <p>Progress - This review is presently ongoing with the aim that a report will be presented to members in the Autumn 2022.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A4.1.5	<p>To undertake review of the Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020</p> <p>Progress - This has been delayed to align the review with the publication of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and we will be timetabling a review of this with members.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A4.4.1	<p>To undertake review of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020</p> <p>Progress - This has been delayed to align the review with the publication of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 and we will be timetabling a review of this with members.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A4.7	<p>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.</p> <p>Progress – Key partners have been identified in the Council's recently published Corporate Plan who will continue to contribute / support the Council in achieving its priorities.</p>	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A4.13.1	<p>Where relevant incorporate proposals for improvements from external regulators audit work into the Council's 2021/2023 corporate planning arrangements.</p> <p>Progress - The Council's Corporate Plan 2021/2023 was presented to Council on 26th May 2021.</p> <p>See comment in A5.1.1 below.</p>	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	<p>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).</p> <p>Progress - The findings from the above review were considered as part of the development of the Service Recovery Plan arrangements and are being considered as part of the development of the Councils corporate self-assessment framework (in readiness for implementation during 2022/2023).</p>	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	<p>Additional work on the forward financial plan covering the period April 2022 – March 2025 will be undertaken.</p> <p>Progress - The budget for 2022/2023 was agreed by Cabinet and Council on 28th February 2022 and 1st March 2022 respectively. Work is ongoing on the development of a Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>	Chief Finance Officer

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	<p>To undertake a review of all proposals and keep a central electronic list of delegations.</p> <p>Progress - This work is ongoing 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

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:	<p>New responsibilities for the renamed Governance and Audit Committee to be developed during 2021/2022.</p> <p>Progress - 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. Lay Members to the Governance and Audit Committee have now been recruited and approved by Full Council in February 2022.</p>	Chief Finance Officer / Head of Legal Services & Democratic Services
A8.14.1	<p>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).</p> <p>Progress - This work is ongoing.</p>	Chief Digital Officer / Head of Legal & Democratic Services
A8.17	<p>The Council will assess its financial position during 2021/2022 in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.</p> <p>CIPFA issued a new code The FREM which sets out the standards of financial management for local Authorities. Adoption of the Code commenced in April 2021. Appendix A of this report provides a self-assessment which has been approved by Corporate Directors Group – it gives assurance that the financial management of the Authority are being met.</p>	Chief Finance Officer

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	<p>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.</p> <p>Progress - 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 2022/2023.</p>	Head of Legal & Democratic Services / Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support

Table 2 – Governance Improvement Action Plan - 2022/2023

Ref (action)	Improvement Action to be undertaken during 2022/2023	Responsible Officer
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law		
A3.2.1	Complete the review of Accounting Instructions.	Chief Finance Officer
Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits		
A5.1.1	Develop and implement a revised Corporate Performance Management Framework that meets the new duties under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021	Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		
A5.4.1	Complete the review of the Council’s Risk Management Policy and ensure the Council’s Risk Register is updated regularly.	Chief Finance Officer / Strategic Manager Policy & Executive Support
A6.9	Develop a Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Chief Finance Officer

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

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.	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
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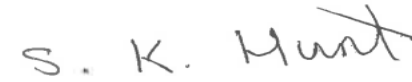
Signed:



Chief Executive: Karen Jones

Date: 5th July 2022

Signed:



Leader of the Council: Cllr Steve Hunt

Date: 5th July 2022

Financial Management Code of Self-Assessment

Section 1: The Responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer and the Leadership Team

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
A	The Leadership Team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority provide value for money.	<p>The Auditor General examines whether the Council has put in place arrangements to get value for money for the resources it uses, and has to be satisfied that it has done this. The 2021 Annual Audit Summary issued by Audit Wales identified no issues in relation Value for money.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>
B	The authority complies with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government.	<p>We comply with the requirements of the code.</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is a CIPFA qualified accountant with over 20 years of local government experience.</p> <p>Reports directly to Chief Executive Officer and sits on the Leadership Team, influencing material decisions and ensuring financial implications are provided in all reports.</p> <p>The CFO is responsible for maintaining and resourcing an effective Internal Audit service and leads on risk management.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>

Section 2: Governance and Financial Management Style

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
C	The leadership team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control.	<p>The Council adopts the Nolan principles as can be evidenced in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) The AGS was signed off by Audit Wales as part of the accounts audit process.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>
D	The authority applies CIPFA/ SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016.	<p>The Governance & audit committee reviews the adequacy of Governance arrangements of the authority, approving the AGS, receiving risk management updates. An independent review of governance arrangements was commissioned during 2021/22 and reported to the Governance and Audit Committee/</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>
E	The financial management style of the authority supports financial sustainability.	<p>Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary for 2021 concluded that the Council is well placed to maintain its financial sustainability and plans to strengthen some areas of financial management.</p> <p>The Authority has a healthy level of usable reserves and is projected to be 5.3% of the net revenue budget for 2021/22 and does not plan to use its general reserve to fund its medium-term financial deficit.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>

Section 3: Long to Medium-Term Financial Management

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
F	The authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment.	<p>The budget setting for 2021/22 includes a statement relating to the robustness of the estimates used in calculating the budget requirement and indicates the budget process has been prepared in conjunction with officers. It also identifies the risk areas that will be actively managed during the financial year.</p> <p>RAG Rating =</p>
G	The authority understands its prospects for financial sustainability in the longer term and has reported this clearly to members	<p>In 2019-20 the Council primarily concentrated on annual budgeting, and did not have a published Medium Term financial plan. During 2020-21 the Council has not made any changes to its approach to develop a medium-term financial plan, as prioritisation was given to the response to the COVID pandemic. Plans are currently underway to develop the forward financial plan and identify sustainable efficiency savings with a view to developing a medium term financial plan linked to the corporate objectives.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Amber</p>
H	The authority complies with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities	<p>The Authority complies will all elements of the Prudential Code.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>
I	The authority has a rolling multi-year financial plan with sustainable service plans	<p>During 2020-21 the Council has not made any changes to its approach to develop a medium-term financial plan, as prioritisation was given to the response to the COVID pandemic. Service recovery plans are being developed</p> <p>RAG Rating = Amber</p>

Section 4: The Annual Budget

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
J	The authority complies with its statutory obligations in respect of the budget setting process	<p>The Council complies with its statutory obligations in respect of the budget setting process as set out in the Local Government Finance Act (1992). A legal and balanced budget set by the Council by the statutory deadline 11 March and assurance has been provided regarding the robustness of estimates and adequacy or reserve levels.</p> <p>The Council is aware of the circumstances under which a S114 notice should be issue.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>
K	The budget report includes a statement by the chief finance officer on the robustness of the estimates on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.	<p>The budget setting report comments upon the robustness of the estimates included therein and a balanced affordable budget has been set.</p> <p>The reserves are reported within the budget setting process and monitored throughout the financial year. Currently the authority reserves are projected to be 5.3% of its net revenue budget, thereby remaining at a reasonable level.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>

Section 5: Stakeholder Engagement and Business Plans

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
L	The authority has engaged with key stakeholders where appropriate in developing its long term financial strategy, medium term financial plan and annual budget.	<p>Key stakeholders are consulted on key projects for example stakeholder views were sought when developing the corporate plan.</p> <p>Member workshops are run at budget setting. Cabinet approved the consultation process with stakeholders on the draft budget. Consultation responses are reported to Council.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Green</p>
M	The authority uses an appropriate documented option appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of its decisions.	<p>The Authority does not have a documented methodology for options appraisals. Criteria have been developed and approved for agreeing Capital Projects. Further work is underway to develop a business case process.</p> <p>RAG Rating = Amber</p>

Section 6: Monitoring Financial Performance

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
N	The leadership team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability.	Monthly reports are considered by budget holders. Significant issues identified are reported to Senior Management Team. Quarterly Finance reports are presented to Cabinet. Treasury management reports are taken to Cabinet on a quarterly basis RAG Rating = Green
O	The leadership team monitors the elements of its balance sheet that pose a significant to its financial sustainability.	The balance sheet is monitored by the CFO. RAG Rating = Green

Section 7: External Financial Reporting

Standard Reference	Financial Management	Rating (Red / Amber / Green)
P	The chief finance officer has personal and statutory responsibility for ensuring that the statement of accounts produced by the local authority complies with the Code Practice in Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.	The CFO's responsibilities are set out in the "Statement of responsibilities" within the Statement of accounts. This clearly sets out that the CFO is responsible for the preparation of the Councils Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. The annual audit letter confirms that the statement of accounts have been prepared on time and in accordance with the code of practice. RAG Rating = Green
Q	The presentation of the final outturn figures and variations from budget allows the leadership team to make strategic financial decisions.	The outturn figures are reported to Corporate Directors Group and included in the narrative report of the Statement of Accounts. RAG Rating = Green